

THE STORM

Written
by

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FADE IN:

INT. INDIAN WIGWAM - DAWN

Badly scarred hands appear in the dim firelight, taking up a primitive hammer and STRIKING a flint stone, splintering it off into a shiny, black sliver. An INDIAN'S VOICE breaks the silence, speaking sullenly in HIS native tongue:

VOICE (O.S.)

(subtitles throughout)

Our people began much like a stone,
solid, whole, at peace with the
earth. Then, a terrible force came
upon the land and like a hammer,
shattered the rock into pieces,
some too small to be remembered.

Flakes of stone rain down, disappearing at the base of the fire. The powerful hand KNAPS the black sliver into an even sharper point, soon resembling the head of an arrow.

VOICE (O.S.)

But other pieces of us, willing to
disrupt the sanctity of the earth,
became an instrument of death. The
hammer feared these, so it set out
to smash all the rocks into dust.
And when the wind is strong, our
people will vanish ... forever.

The unseen Indian Man BLOWS the rock dust off the arrowhead. He grabs a river cane and we catch a glimpse of a sharp eye as it stares down the length of the staff, checking it's straightness.

VOICE (O.S.)

The cane is your spirit.

(sliding in the feathers)

The quills are your guides.

(inserting the tip)

The arrowhead is your heart.

(wrapping with a tendon)

And the sinew ... is your courage.

The hands BIND the arrowhead to the cane, CINCHING it tight.

The Indian finally emerges from darkness. He is a sight to behold with long black hair reaching down his back, glimmering in the firelight, his badly scarred face is hardened but kind.

He extends the arrow across the flames to an INDIAN BOY of ten years, his son FISTS. The boy slowly takes the arrow from his father, BLUE HAWK, studying every inch with respect and awe.

BLUE HAWK

The arrow is your soul Fists. The path you set for it will determine your place in the Sun's presence ... for a true warrior does not kill to end life, he kills to preserve it.

Fists looks to his father who narrows his brow, focusing his wise stare directly at him. Fists takes his cue, doing the same. His father can't help but smile, nodding his head.

BLUE HAWK

And a great warrior you will be.

EXT. INDIAN CAMP - HIGH MOUNTAINS - DAWN

Snow blankets everything in sight including the dozen or so wigwams nestled in the narrow canyon. Mountain peaks stab the misty sky just beyond the tree-line. It's dawn.

Fists and Blue Hawk exit a wigwam on the outskirts of camp. They're the only souls outside. Fists proudly carries his new bow and single arrow. Blue Hawk nods and without so much as goodbye Fists runs off towards the camp.

Blue Hawk proudly watches him go but his expression fades. In his eyes we see grave concern we can only assume is for his son and the fate of his people. The end of times is upon them.

Then, he senses something. He turns to the trees beyond camp. A gust of wind BLOWS through the canyon, it's almost DEAFENING. Blue Hawk staggers back as the wind settles. His expression has changed, he scans the area, eyes bulging, something's wrong.

Blue Hawk drops to a knee, trembling. Blood saturates the snow beneath him. He peels back his pelt. A gunshot wound bleeds out just beneath his ribs.

He looks to the tree-line where a PALE WHITE MAN wearing a collection of scalps across his chest, emerges. His rifle is still smoking as he walks without fear towards the camp. Blue Hawk rises and at the top of his lungs, SHOUTS:

BLUE HAWK

Hunters!

And with that, the forest comes alive as more WHITE MEN come rushing out from the trees on foot, GUNS BLAZING.

AT THE HEART OF THE CAMP. SCREAMING WOMEN and CHILDREN flee past Fists, running away from the volley of BULLETS coming down.

Fist takes cover behind a pile of timber, spotting one of his ELDERS, standing still in the midst of the chaos. He is a true Indian, a man who radiates wisdom, brave and free. Fists CALLS OUT but it's too late and the Elder is SHOT down.

AT THE CREEK. A pack of painted WARRIORS, carrying their morning's kill, halt in their tracks when GUNFIRE echoes across the canyon. They drop the elk and sprint up the mountainside.

AT THE OUTSKIRTS. Blue Hawk takes cover. BULLETS ricochet around him. He pulls an arrow from his quiver -- strings it and fires -- catching a CRAZED MAN in the chest, dropping him efficiently. Blue Hawk strings another arrow and moves out.

THE HEART OF THE CAMP. WHITE INVADERS are everywhere, FIRING at will. A DREAD-LOCKED MAN grabs a BOY of fifteen and SHOOTS him point blank. A BALD MAN shoots an OLD WOMAN in the back. A LITTLE GIRL runs from a burning wigwam -- he SHOOTS her too.

Fists tries to draw back his arrow. The BALD MAN sets his sights on him, COCKING his pistol and then, THORP! He drops face first into the snow, an arrow jutting from his back. Fists looks up to see the shooter, his father.

BLUE HAWK
Run Fists!

BANG! Blue Hawk is SHOT in the back. Fists watches in horror. His father falls in the distance. Two FILTHY MEN rush in and hold Blue Hawk down. The Pale Man adorned with scalps, approaches calmly, drawing a crescent shaped blade.

Fists strains to see, his view obscured by the Men struggling with Blue Hawk who's still fighting. Then, the Pale Man kneels, disappearing. Blue Hawk's body thrashes violently -- then goes limp. The Pale Man rises with a bloody scalp.

Fists CRIES OUT as the Indian Warriors appear behind him, their battle cry SCREAMING in unison mixes with the punctuation of GUNSHOTS and the blurring whirlwind of BATTLE, descending into hellish CHAOS until everything goes -- dark.

TITLES OVER BLACK AND THE FORBODING SOUND OF THUNDER.

"THE STORM"

EXT. HIGH MOUNTAINS - DAY

A stagecoach lumbers up a lonely mountain trail between two, snow-capped peaks. A dark grey sky looms. The start of winter.

The weary COACH MASTER scans the overgrown foliage surrounding him. A shotgun rests on his lap at the ready. Not a chirping bird nor gust of wind goes unnoticed.

INT. STAGECOACH (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

An ELDERLY COUPLE ride close together, surrounded by a cache of overfilled burlap sacks. They do not speak -- she squeezes his hand nervously -- he squints outside the window.

PENNY
What is it?

Then, beyond the dusty glass, a terrible COMMOTION approaches. The coach lurches forward suddenly -- the pace quickening.

RANDOLPH
It's them.

POUNDING HOOVES gain in intensity and proximity -- until, a MASKED BANDIT rides past them in a flurry of dust.

ANOTHER MASKED BANDIT rides up -- peers inside -- and then gallops out of sight. GUNSHOTS ring out -- SHOTGUN BLASTS -- MEN SCREAMING -- ALL HELL BREAKING LOOSE.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - CONTINUOUS

THREE BANDITS, wearing colored bandanas, converge upon the stagecoach. The Coach Master is dead, slumped over the reins. The horses are stampeding out of control and picking up speed.

The RED BANDIT leaps from his horse onto the coach. He discards the Coach Master's lifeless body -- taking up the reins -- slowing the horses down to a full stop.

The BLUE and GREEN BANDIT dismount, surrounding the coach -- pistols drawn. The dust begins to settle. SILENCE. The door slowly CREAKS open. Randolph emerges first, holding his trembling hands skyward.

BLUE
On your knees old man!

RANDOLPH
There's no need for weapons.

Green's expression darkens. He holsters his sidearm in favor of his shotgun. Before Randolph can take another step, Green SLAMS the heel of his shotgun against the old man's knee -- CRACK! He tumbles forward, COLLIDING with the dirt below.

PENNY (O.S.)
Randolph!

Blue drags Penny outside by the hair, shoving her face first into the dirt beside her ailing husband. Randolph tries to get up but the effort is frail and hopeless. Green tosses his pistol into the dirt directly in front of him.

GREEN
Want to be a hero?

Randolph eyes the gun, then Penny. She shakes him off, "don't do it." Randolph goes for broke. KABOOM! Blood splatters his face as his hand is all but obliterated into a pulpy mass.

Penny is SCREAMING beyond hysterical. Randolph curls up, writhing, gasping for air. Green gazes over the HISSING barrel of his shotgun. He enjoyed that.

Red approaches Blue and Green, stern, quietly:

RED
That's enough. Get to work.

Blue and Green snap to, cutting the horses loose.

Red turns his attention towards the coach, climbing inside. He slices open one of the burlap sacks -- shiny gold coins come DANCING onto the floorboards -- pay dirt.

Penny rolls Randolph onto his back. He's bleeding bad. His eyes are open but the life behind them is fading.

PENNY
Hold on Randolph.

Green and Blue appear again, snickering at the sight of this. Penny cradles Randolph in her arms as she lashes out in tears.

PENNY
I know who you are! I recognize
those voices from Ridgeway!

Blue and Green look to Red, concerned. Red approaches.

RED
You must be mistaken ma'am.

PENNY
You'll burn for this Seamus! You
boys were supposed to protect us!
Your brother made a promise!

RED

Don't force my hand.

PENNY

We treated you both like sons! How
could you do this to us?

Red tugs down his scarf, revealing his pale face. Penny begins to sob even harder as he solemnly extends his pistol.

RED

If it's any consolation, Patty
knows nothing of this, and you've
just made certain he never will.

Penny shields Randolph with her body, defiant.

PENNY

Vermin, all of you! I curse you!
I curse every last one of you!

Red takes aim -- a burst of flame and a puff of smoke -- BANG!

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. WYOMING COUNTRYSIDE - AFTERNOON

Ominous THUNDERHEADS RUMBLE across a bleak, winter sky. Below, a lone HORSEMAN gallops across the rugged landscape, gradually slowing his ALBINO GELDING down to a steady trot -- stopping atop a grassy hill overlooking the forboding country.

The Horseman appears to be in his forties, bearded, grubby, strapped with twin revolvers and a shotgun on his back. He dismounts, removing his wide-brimmed hat, fixing his hardened stare at something off in the distance. This is WILLIAM TUCKER.

KABOOM! He doesn't startle but looks skyward. Was that thunder? Suddenly, the ground beside him EXPLODES followed by another KABOOM! His horse whinnies, rears wildly and takes off.

Tucker manages to get a hand on the saddlebags, tearing them down just as -- KABOOM! The ground EXPLODES again, closer this time. He hits the dirt. The Albino Gelding gallops away in full stride towards the horizon. Tucker looks up, disgusted.

KABOOM! Tucker scrambles for cover behind a boulder. He carefully peers over his jagged, granite defense.

A hundred yards away are two structures, a house and barn, surrounded by crop fields and wilderness.

A cloud of black smoke dissipates above the second story window of the house where a sudden flash of fire erupts and then -- KABOOM!

The boulder takes a direct HIT, bits of debris rain down. Tucker doesn't flinch, he just frowns and then moves out, advancing onto the property, finding cover behind a tree.

He readies his pistols -- his movements are quick, efficient, not a gesture wasted.

VIEW ON THE HOUSE. The SHOOTER appears in the upstairs window and fires -- KABOOM!

Tucker moves out, pistols FLASHING. The BLAST splinters apart the tree in front of him. He hits dirt, rolling to safety, SHOOTING until both guns CLICK empty.

He holsters the pistols, whips the shotgun off his back and unleashes hell -- BLASTING out every window facing him. He disappears into the crop fields separating him from the house.

AN UNKNOWN POV. Looking out from behind the shredded upstairs curtains -- down on the crop fields below -- no sign of anyone.

TWO EMPTY BOOTS stand upright in the mud.

Tucker emerges from the swaying crops in his stockings. He moves out swiftly into the treacherous wide open, hustling up the rickety FRONT PORCH steps without making a sound.

He backs up against the wall between the front door and window, holding his breath -- and then -- the business end of a shotgun slowly appears from the window beside him.

Tucker snatches the barrel, ripping the Shooter out through the window in a blur -- sending them both CRASHING through the wooden porch railing -- SPLASHING down into the mud.

It's a violent struggle -- punching fists -- splattering blood. Tucker finally rips the shotgun away, COCKS the hammer back and takes aim -- but he doesn't pull the trigger.

Looking down. The Shooter appears to be in HER mid thirties, beautiful, with long brown hair. She lies there beneath his foot, bleeding, enraged until she recognizes the man standing over her. This is LILLY COLE.

LILLY
Tucker? William Tucker?

TUCKER
Lilly. Where's Henry?

LILLY

He's not ... he's out.

Tucker's reaction is deep and mixed, a whole chapter in his life coming back. He looks around, fretting over what to do next.

TUCKER

Get up ... inside. Now.

INT. COLE HOUSE - VARIOUS - MOMENTS LATER

Tucker ties Lilly down to a chair. Her body language can't hide the fact that she fears him, despite her tough exterior.

LILLY

What are you doing here?

No answer. She tries to make eye contact with her captor but it's no use and his hateful expression never wavers.

LILLY

How did you find us?

TUCKER

Where's Henry?

LILLY

I told you I don't know.

Tucker CINCES the last knot extra tight -- he readies his pistols -- leaving the room.

LILLY

Come back here! William!

Lilly struggles to free herself. Tucker's FOOTSTEPS continue up the stairs. She looks around, the shotgun leans against the wall. She tries to move forward but the chair doesn't budge.

UPSTAIRS. Tucker flips over the mattress, viciously ransacking the bedroom until he comes across a photograph that stops him cold in his tracks. He picks up the ornate frame and stares unhappily at the unseen image for a long, uncomfortable moment.

DOWNSTAIRS. Lilly continues to struggle. Tucker barrels through the door, resuming his path of destruction into the kitchen while she looks on, helplessly.

LILLY

Why are you doing this?

TUCKER

When can we expect your husband?

LILLY

What do you want with him?

TUCKER

We got business to discuss.

LILLY

What kind?

TUCKER

No more questions from you!

She just glares at him. He rips open the overhead cupboards, sending pots and pans CRASHING onto the floor. Lilly SHOUTS over the vicious cacophony of his rampage:

LILLY

He's not in the Goddamn cupboards!

INT. COLE HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - DUSK

Tucker lovingly wipes his oily pistol clean with the table linen. He sits across from Lilly in the near darkness. They're both exhausted, listening to the rain falling outside. He speaks abruptly, breaking the SILENCE, startling her.

TUCKER

I won't lay a hand on him, past is past, you got my word.

LILLY

I'll say it one last time, Henry left for Ridgeway ten days ago and I haven't seen him since.

TUCKER

What's he doing in Ridgeway?

She doesn't answer.

TUCKER

Don't tell me you don't know your husband's affairs.

LILLY

His medical supplies I suspect!

TUCKER

You suspect?

LILLY

I'm not answering anymore of your questions William. You want my cooperation? Untie me and behave like a civilized man.

TUCKER

Is it civilized to unload your shotgun at someone who's just sitting out there on their horse, minding their own business?

LILLY

You weren't minding your own business.

TUCKER

That ain't the point.

LILLY

And all that steel you brought with you, looking like you do, barely recognizable behind those whiskers.

He feels his scruffy beard.

TUCKER

This here's savage country Lilly.

LILLY

Then don't fuss over being shot at.

TUCKER

Christ. You was shooting at me? I must be one horrible teacher.

LILLY

You're only alive because I was trying to scare you off. Next time I won't be so gracious.

She glares at him. He cracks a sly smile.

TUCKER

I always did imagine how it would feel seeing you again.

She spits in his face. He just looks at her.

TUCKER

That's pretty close.

He wipes his mouth and rises from the table, looking out towards the darkening sky beyond the broken window, mulling it all over.

TUCKER

Alright then, let's be civilized.
What's for supper?

They share an uneasy moment. Lightening flashes, THUNDER ROLLS.

FADE TO:

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

A Silhouette rides his black steed along the outskirts of the property, dismounting, lighting up a fat cigar, taking a long look around. The Cole House is warmly lit in the distance.

INT. COLE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lilly stirs a pot of vegetables and broth over the cast iron stove. She gazes uneasily outside the window. Tucker emerges from the darkness behind her with his pistol trained dead ahead.

TUCKER

Ready yet?

LILLY

(concealing her surprise)
Hope you're hungry.

His image recedes. She slides something unseen into her apron.

INT. COLE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lilly and Tucker sit across from each other at a nice candlelit table. She's eating. He's not.

LILLY

Don't tell me you're not starving.

He doesn't budge. She reaches over with her spoon, dips into his bowl and consumes a heaping portion of soup. He watches her finish and then pulls the bowl closer, taking the first bite.

LILLY

Good isn't it?

TUCKER

I've had worse.

He looks at her, under his stare she blushes for reasons only she understands. He takes another bite. She knows he enjoys the soup despite his best efforts to project the contrary.

TUCKER

How are the doctor and his wife
getting along these days?

LILLY

Henry and I never fight.

She drops her spoon, unable to keep up the charade.

LILLY

William, honestly, why are you
here, at my home, sitting at my
supper table after all these years,
eating soup that I spat in?

He looks at her, swallowing his pride along with the contents of his mouth without grimacing.

LILLY

Are you responsible for my
husband's disappearance?

TUCKER

Not yet.

LILLY

Swear on your grandma's grave.

They share an earnest look.

TUCKER

On the old bag's grave, I swear I
ain't touched him this time.

LILLY

Then what use does a sorry bounty
hunter like you have with a man
like Henry who hasn't broken the
law in ten years much less bent it?

TUCKER

I miss his smile.

She FLIPS her bowl into the air, spraying him with soup.

LILLY

I won't allow you to harm my
husband again you bastard! I'll
kill you first!

He calmly wipes his face, shoving his bowl aside. She leans back, astonished. He tosses the greasy rope on the table.

TUCKER

I got no time for this. We can do this the old fashion way if we have to but you're gonna tell me what I need to know about your husband.

LILLY

Some things never change do they?

He SLAMS the rope down against the table with an angry fist.

TUCKER

Does he got money troubles?

LILLY

No.

TUCKER

He don't owe anyone nothing?

LILLY

No!

TUCKER

Who are his friends?

LILLY

Every man, women and child in town.

TUCKER

Enemies?

LILLY

Besides you, none. Honest men like Henry don't have enemies.

TUCKER

You shouldn't count on that.

LILLY

Why not?

He pauses, catching his reflection in the soup.

TUCKER

There are no honest men.

She springs out of her chair -- he grabs her -- she SLASHES at him with a knife -- the blade TEARS through his shirt.

LILLY
What have you done with him?!

He squeezes her wrist until the knife falls away.

TUCKER
Very civilized Mrs. Cole.

LILLY
I'll kill you!

She squirms loose, KNEEING him in the balls not once but twice. His expression sours, struggling to restrain her once more.

TUCKER
You got to hurt me first!

She SCREAMS and CURSES but cannot manage to escape him.

INT. OUTHOUSE - COLE HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

The tiny dank space is lit by a flickering lantern. Tucker lurches forward over the john, spitting blood into the dark void. He GROANS and suffers with tears in his eyes.

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - MOMENTS LATER

Tucker walks past the house where he retrieves his muddy saddlebags from the porch and then limps towards the barn.

LILLY (O.S.)
Untie me! William! Get back here!

INT. COLE BARN - CONTINUOUS

Tucker enters, his lantern cutting into the cold darkness illuminating the bales of hay, farming tools and crude, rusty machinery surrounding him. He takes a drink from his canteen and then stops, water isn't going to cut it on this night.

Tucker eases back against a fat bale of hay. He reaches into one of the saddlebag compartments, retrieving an identical canteen save for the lid being corked and sealed by a wax.

He stares long and hard, wondering if he should visit his liquid friend whom he hasn't seen in quite some time. His knife is ready, tortured eyes reflecting back in the steel of his blade.

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - LATE NIGHT

The RAIN is coming down. A dim light flickers out between the cracks in the barn. The house is boarded up and quiet.

INT. COLE HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - LATE NIGHT

Lilly lies on the ground, exhausted but not sleeping.

INT. COLE BARN - CONTINUOUS

Tucker warms himself in front of a small fire, staring tiredly with bourbon swollen eyes into the face of the crackling flames. Drinking. Lamenting.

Something STIRS outside. He snaps out of his sorrowful reverie.

EXT. COLE BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Tucker moves out, holding an apple in one hand and his revolver in the other, making noises only a horse would respond to.

TUCKER

Smokey?

Lightening flashes, illuminating a WILD BOAR glaring in his path. Its beady eyes lock on him. Tucker takes a step back. THUNDER rolls. The boar squeals off into the wilderness. Tucker bites into the apple.

TUCKER

You're lucky I'm a chicken man.

AN UNKNOWN POV. Watching from a short distance. Tucker retreats through the downpour into the barn.

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - LATER

The Hatted Silhouette prowls through the crop fields, cautiously approaching the barn. The pale moonlight illuminates his jagged tooth smile and sinister Mexican face. This is RAMIREZ.

INT. COLE BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Ramirez sweeps inside through the semidarkness, twirling a pair of deadly blades, closing in on the dying fire where Tucker sleeps under a heavy pile of blankets and hides.

Ramirez makes the sign of the cross -- takes aim -- heaving both blades -- they STRIKE deep into the mass beneath the blankets.

Ramirez rushes in, reclaiming his weapons, no sign of blood on either. He rips back the blankets, revealing neatly arranged piles of straw. Not good.

From the darkness -- KABOOM! The force of the blast sends him flying. He hits the side of the barn and then tumbles forward, guts spilling out, wood splintered across his back.

Tucker emerges behind the SIZZLING double barrels of his sawed-off. He reaches Ramirez, poking the barrels under his chin, taking a good look at him, frowning with disapproval.

TUCKER
Gut shot. Mighty grim, Ramirez.

RAMIREZ
(coughing up blood)
Chinga tu madre Tucker.

TUCKER
Probably best for both of us that I
do not comprende the Spanish.

RAMIREZ
It means fuck your mother!

Tucker punches him square in the wounded gut. Ramirez GASPS!

TUCKER
I know what it means. Make it easy
on yourself hombre. You're buzzard
feed, ain't no changing that, might
as well make like your gut and
start spilling.

RAMIREZ
I am already dead. There is
nothing you can take from me now.

Tucker punches him again, same spot. Ramirez nearly passes out
from the trauma, squirming in horrible agony.

TUCKER
Want to make a wager? Talk.

RAMIREZ
You'll have to kill me!

Tucker punches him again, harder. Blood splatters his face.
Ramirez HOWLS!

TUCKER

You ain't gonna die straight away
unless you start talking!

Ramirez stalls. Tucker grabs him by the hair, draws a blade and goes for his eye. Ramirez slams both of them shut.

RAMIREZ

Stop! Stop! Por favor!

TUCKER

I'm listening.

RAMIREZ

Cole shot and killed two deputies.

TUCKER

Yeah, I read the damn particulars.

RAMIREZ

The sheriff wants his due, nailed a poster to every tree and building within fifty miles of Ridgeway himself. He's hell bent, got a personal score to settle with Cole.

TUCKER

I know Sheriff Parker. The man's a hundred years old if he's a day. He ain't got the stomach for this sort of campaign.

RAMIREZ

Parker is dead. Patty McPherson took over sheriff once he found out about Seamus.

Tucker backhands Ramirez across the face.

TUCKER

That's not possible, he's dead!

RAMIREZ

On the Holy Mother! McPherson lives, I swear to you!

TUCKER

You seen him with your own eyes?

RAMIREZ

I followed his clan here from Ridgeway. He's deputized the best trackers in the territory.

Tucker's attitude changes instantly. This is disturbing news.

TUCKER
Where are they now?

RAMIREZ
Here, in Black Sparrow. He will
pay a handsome bounty for Cole if
you can bring him in alive.

Ramirez chokes on the words, gurgling up blood. Tucker stands up, reloading the shotgun.

TUCKER
Reckon I believe you. Sorry about
all this but business is business.

RAMIREZ
Your day is also coming pistolero
... soon, very soon.

TUCKER
Funny, that's what everyone keeps
on telling me.

Tucker takes aim -- KABOOM! The muzzle flash FILLS THE SCREEN. The noise of the shotgun BLAST echoes against rolling THUNDER.

EXT. MAIN STREET - BLACK SPARROW - LATE NIGHT

Darkened buildings flank the muddy entrance of town where the weather beaten sign reads: WELCOME TO BLACK SPARROW.

A structure marked Willard's Billiards is the only place showing any signs of life on this cold, wet night. PIANO melodies and laughter carry on beyond the entrance which is aglow and casting mingling shadows. A few horses are tethered out front.

INT. WILLARD'S BILLIARDS - LATE NIGHT

The BARTENDER with the sweeping mustache stands impatiently behind the bar under a thick haze of smoke. He's holding a bottle of whiskey, waiting for the black hatted Man seated across from him to finish polishing his drinking glass.

Black Hat finally sets the glass down between them, tucking away his white handkerchief with a gloved hand. The Bartender dispenses a stingy pour evoking a gesture of disapproval from Black Hat whose face remains unseen.

BLACK HAT
Why don't you leave the bottle?

BARTENDER

Because I don't know you, don't see
no money in front of you neither.

BLACK HAT

I'm a friend of Willard's.

BARTENDER

Willard's dead. Been pushing up
daisies five years don't you know?

BLACK HAT

No wonder he don't write.

Black Hat reaches inside his black coat. The Bartender takes a step backward. Black Hat produces a fistful of coins, dumping them onto the bar for emphasis. The Bartender isn't amused, swiping a few of the coins, leaving the bottle behind.

BARTENDER

You watch your step stranger.

BLACK HAT

Don't you worry.

Black Hat turns on his stool, revealing the ghostly pale, clean shaven face of PATTY MCPHERSON. He removes his hat, exposing the circular scar of a gunshot wound just beneath his receding hairline. He wipes his brow, replaces his hat and then drains his glass, sizing up the establishment.

It's a big room with a crude bar, ten tables and some elk heads on the wall. A woman's obnoxious LAUGHTER focuses his angry stare. Everyone else is either drinking, playing cards or both. Strangely, there's not a billiards table in sight.

McPherson tries to ignore the laughter but it only gets LOUDER and more irritating. He pours himself another glass, drinking it down, squirming on his seat as the laughter continues.

Finally, the frustration manifests and he stands abruptly, drawing some attention to himself as the bar stool falls away.

MCPHERSON

What could possibly be so
hilarious?

The aggravation in his tone draws even more scrutiny. He stands there unacknowledged. The PIANO MAN gradually stops playing. The room falls SILENT save for the LAUGHTER. McPherson SLAMS his fist down on the bar.

The floor SQUEAKS under his first, weakened step towards the culprits, a buxom MADAME and her tiny JOHN. She now seems to be laughing at the site of McPherson closing in on her. It's obvious that he's crippled, his left foot pointing inward, dragging on each step. He stops just shy of pulling up a chair.

MCPHERSON

Madame, your repugnant cackling,
surely is not cast in my direction?

Madame bursts into another fit of drunken hysterics.

MCPHERSON

Please, share it with the rest of us, I know I enjoy a hardy chuckle from the likes of a prostitute. Let me have it.

MADAME

It's a private conversation mister, there's no cause to insult me, besides, what's a sorry cripple know about good humor anyhow?

MCPHERSON

I find your lack of social graces positively disturbing.

Madame turns her head slightly to the side, pinches her nose between thumb and forefinger and then blows twin snot rockets onto the floor. McPherson grimaces with utter revolt.

MADAME

How's that for social graces?

TINY JOHN

Take her easy now.

MADAME

He don't scare me. Why don't he show us all how he dances if he really wants to put a fright in us?

Tiny John cringes beside her. Some of the patrons are chuckling at the snide remark. McPherson cracks an embarrassed smile and then draws his revolver -- BANG!

Madame clutches her chest, blood pumping out between her plump fingers. She tries to get up. BANG! She takes another one between the eyes, snapping her head back in a mist of red.

Tiny John makes a run for it. McPherson turns and FIRES twice. BANG! BANG! Two perfect kill shots to the back of the head.

McPherson stands there defiantly under a cloud of gun smoke.

MCPHERSON
Who else? Hmm? No other of you
cowardly drunkards have a peculiar
sense of humor? No? Peaches?

Nobody moves. McPherson holsters his weapon, hobbling from table to table as he carries on.

MCPHERSON
You don't know me so I'll forgive
you all for your lack of
hospitality on this evening. Now,
I happened to notice the sheriff
station here in Black Sparrow to be
vacant. Not anymore. Your lawless
streets are a thing of the past.
You live in America now.

McPherson peels back his coat, revealing a shiny SHERIFF BADGE.

MCPHERSON
Therefore, by the authority vested
in me by the lawmakers of Ridgeway,
I hereby assume all matters of law
enforcement henceforth in Black
Sparrow. Any man wishing to
challenge this authority may do so,
tonight, right here and now.

With that McPherson turns his back, walking away, tossing his pistol to the floor. Two sturdy looking COWBOYS nod to each other from across the room. They follow him outside.

EXT. WILLARD'S BILLIARDS - CONTINUOUS

McPherson stands with his back to the entrance, facing a glowing light emanating from O.S. The Two Cowboys kick open the front doors with their guns drawn. Their confident expressions recede. They lower their weapons and step back.

THIRTEEN HORSEMEN in slickers baring TORCHES and an arsenal of weapons are waiting for them in the pouring rain.

MCPHERSON
I'm afraid I neglected to introduce
my deputies.
(a slight gesture)
Gentlemen ... say hello.

The Horsemen OPEN FIRE on the Cowboys, dropping them both under a hail of bullets. Hello indeed.

INT. WILLARD'S BILLIARDS - MOMENTS LATER

McPherson manages over the blood splattered remains of the fallen Cowboys. He retrieves his weapon from the floor and then pulls a folded piece of parchment from his coat.

MCPHERSON

As your newly appointed sheriff this dapper, one-eyed jack is my first order of business. Killed two of my deputies in cold blood. Did the same to the merchants under their protection. Didn't have to massacre the poor folks but he did. Anyone with information leading to his arrest will be rewarded generously.

He begins hammering the WANTED POSTER into the wall using the butt of his revolver.

THE WANTED POSTER reads:

"WANTED FOR SAVAGE MURDERS OF MR. AND MRS. RANDOLPH WELLINGTON AND SHERIFF DEPUTIES CARL HODGE AND SEAMUS MCPHERSON. IN ADDITION FOR THE THEFT OF HORSES AND PRIVATE PROPERTY. FIVE THOUSAND DOLLAR REWARD. MUST BE ALIVE."

Below the caption is the illustrated likeness of a MAN, neat hair, clean shaven, with an EYE PATCH over the left side of his handsome but badly scarred face.

MCPHERSON gauges the reactions around the room. Some of the patrons obviously recognize the likeness. Nobody says a word.

MCPHERSON

Now we're all speechless?

He hobbles over to the bar, stepping over the Madame's Corpse, swiping his bottle of whiskey and coins.

MCPHERSON

Well, mull it over. It's always a pleasure meeting new constituents, the name's Sheriff Patty McPherson, you all know where to find me.

(MORE)

MCPHERSON (cont'd)
(he tips his hat)
Good evening. God bless.

The patrons look on in terrified SILENCE as he moves out.
Slowly -- we HONE IN on the WANTED POSTER -- closing in on the blackness of the EYE PATCH.

FADE TO:

We emerge from DARKNESS -- travelling between cavernous walls towards dim, flickering LIGHT.

INT. ABANDONED MINE SHAFT - MORNING

Kerosene lanterns line the narrow shaft, illuminating wooden support beams overhead as we CLOSE IN on a large object just off the tracks, it's the Wellington's stagecoach from the robbery.

Penny lies under a pile of blankets beside a small, crackling fire. Beads of sweat collect at her temples, rolling down her bloodless cheeks. She breaths in shallow bursts.

A MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
How we feeling this morning?

She touches her dry mouth with a trembling finger.

A MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Thirsty. That's good.

A hand, holding a white handkerchief, begins tenderly wiping away the sweat from Penny's face.

A MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Your fever's finally breaking.
That's really good news.

The hand lifts her head up while the other brings a tin cup with water to her dry, parched lips. She drinks.

A MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
After we change these bandages I'll go out, rustle up some grub. My wife taught me how to prepare one tasty pot of soup. You're in for a fine treat. I know it always helps me feel better.

She pushes the cup away, looking up with eyes of gratitude, for the moment unable to speak.

A clean cut Man, early forties, wears an eye patch over the left side of his handsome but badly scarred face.

He rises to fulfil his entire, slim stature. He smiles at his patient, reflecting the kindness and reassurance of a doctor with good bedside manner. This is HENRY COLE.

EXT. ABANDONED MINE SHAFT - HIGH MOUNTAINS - MORNING

Henry emerges from the darkened mouth of the secluded shaft. It's daylight but the rain outside is thick. A flash of lightening arcs from horizon to horizon. KABOOM!

EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING

A RABBIT surfaces from its hole. It sniffs around, senses something, springs off its haunches and leaps out of the way.

Henry comes SPLASHING into the mud after it, winding up flat on his ass, sitting there, laughing to himself, letting the rain wash the mud clean from his face.

Suddenly, the ground begins to TREMBLE beneath him. POUNDING HOOVES approach from the distance -- closing in fast. He crawls on his belly through the muddy thicket -- gaining cover -- the commotion now just about on top of him.

A pack of HORSEMEN come galloping past, SIX RIDERS altogether, kicking up hell for leather through the pissing RAIN. Henry narrowly avoids the stampede -- rolling down the steep embankment -- SPLASHING into the flooding creek.

The LEAD RIDER signals the others to stop -- steering his horse towards the creek. He turns to the wiry looking man named BARNEY on his left, shouting over the noise of the water:

LEAD
Did you hear that?

BARNEY
Hear what?

LEAD
Sounds like water splashing!

BARNEY
Splashing's all I hear! Boss, we
been riding these miserable
mountains all night long, without
no rest, we're freezing ass cold.

LEAD
You know how much that murdering,
plundering animal's worth to the
sheriff! You think this here
sprinkling's going to stop me?
(MORE)

LEAD (cont'd)
He's up here Barney and he's coming
back with us by God.

The Lead Rider draws his weapon, leading his horse plunging down the embankment. The others spread out, guns drawn, searching.

The Lead Rider steers his reluctant horse into the shallow, icy water. Looking around -- a large piece of DRIFTWOOD travels past the horse's legs -- moving downstream fast -- heading towards a surging stretch of treacherous rapids.

BARNEY
(shouting from above)
It's him! I see him!

The Lead Rider sees him too -- opening FIRE -- hitting the driftwood several times -- spinning it around -- revealing Henry clinging onto the other side for dear life.

More bullets WHIZ down from above, forcing Henry to let go of the driftwood -- plunging into the roaring torrent -- bouncing over rock swollen waves. He takes a deep breath and goes under, vanishing beneath the violent current.

The Riders follow the course of the stream, galloping in full stride. Pistols FLASHING. The Lead Rider catches up to Barney.

LEAD
What did I tell you?

BARNEY
I know, I know! I can't see him!
I think he went down!

LEAD
Double back!

BARNEY
Wait! There he is!

ACROSS THE CREEK. Henry drags himself over the jagged rocks, gasping for breath. He collapses on the muddy banks just as more bullets come WHIZZING past -- ricochetting off stone -- splashing into the water -- one of them grazing his arm.

THE RIDERS are shooting at Henry from the other side. One of them wades into the perilous current only to be swept away.

Henry claws his way over the muddy terrain -- finding safety from the flying BULLETS behind a cluster of trees and bushes.

LEAD (O.S.)
Don't kill him you assholes!

Henry keeps hustling through the overgrown foliage away from the GUNFIRE, moving fast, never looking back.

EXT. THE WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Barney navigates his horse down a narrow path between the clusters of trees surrounding him. All is quiet save for the falling RAIN. The horse, sensing something, rears violently.

Henry appears, covered in mud, lunging at him. Barney grabs for his pistol -- Henry PUNCHES him first -- Barney topples out of the saddle, HITTING the ground hard. Henry pounces on him, covering his mouth, pressing his knife against his jugular.

HENRY

Hold your tongue if you want to
survive this, understand me?

Barney nods, terrified, injured from the fall. Henry takes his hand away but keeps the blade in place.

HENRY

What's your name?

BARNEY

Barney ... please don't kill me.

HENRY

Alright Barney Please Don't Kill
Me, why are you shooting at me?

BARNEY

You're the man on the picture,
wanted by the sheriff.

HENRY

What sheriff? What exactly am I
being accused of?

Barney gestures to his coat pocket. Henry finds a scrap of paper which he begins to read. His expression convinces even Barney of the probability that these charges are false.

BARNEY

Look mister, I ain't the judge or
jury. Just a hired gun's all.

LEAD (O.S.)

Barney!

Henry shoots Barney a look, "open your mouth and you're dead." Barney complies. Henry backs away, pointing the pistol ahead, leading Barney away towards the cover of brush.

BANG! A bullet WHIZZES between them. BANG! Barney goes down. Henry scrambles, dragging Barney through the mud towards the brush. Henry FIRES two blind shots. He turns to Barney who lies motionless, face down in mud.

Henry keeps his pistol trained at the darkened woods ahead, checking Barney's pulse. Nothing there. He backs away.

LEAD (O.S.)
Put it down mister! You're
surrounded!

HENRY
You just shot your own man! His
blood's on your hands, not mine!

LEAD (O.S.)
We'll worry about him right quick!
Now you best simmer down before
things get a hell lot worse!

HENRY
Stay the hell back I'm begging you!

LEAD (O.S.)
Surrender peacefully and we'll
leave you intact!

HENRY
I'm not a killer but I'll do what I
have to, understand?

Henry inches backwards, poised. A DRENCHED RIDER appears behind Henry, SACKING him full force. Henry looses the pistol. They both go sliding headfirst down the muddy slope -- out of sight.

The Lead Rider comes running in towards Barney. BANG! A man SCREAMS! The Lead Rider takes aim, closing in. The Drenched Rider emerges, clutching his bleeding thigh, almost crying from the pain and fear of his gunshot wound.

LEAD
Kenny?

KENNY
Bastard shot me!

LEAD
Think you'll make it?

BANG! The Lead Rider grabs his shoulder, dropping his pistol.

KENNY
Jesus!

HENRY (O.S.)
Don't move!

The Lead Rider freezes. Henry moves in, collecting another one of their pistols. He keeps both trained ahead.

HENRY
What's your name?

LEAD
Mason.

HENRY
Alright Mason, keep some pressure on that wound, you're in shock, now sit down next to Kenny there.

Mason complies. Kenny has passed out beside him.

MASON
What do you want?

HENRY
I want you to tell whomever sent you that the man in the picture, the man who spared your life, didn't bring harm onto anyone who didn't deserve it. Understand me?

MASON
Yes sir.

A DISTANT VOICE (O.S.)
Boss?!

Henry presses a finger to his lips, whispering:

HENRY
This will help with the pain.

He pistol WHIPS Mason over the back of the head. Good night.

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - LATE MORNING

Tucker rides away from the homestead on the back of Ramirez's steed with the deadman slung over his own saddle bags.

He steers up a high, wind-swept bluff towards its dangerous edge overlooking a fast moving, rain swollen creek.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE BLUFF - MORNING

Vultures circle high in the slate-gray sky overhead.

Tucker unceremoniously drags Ramirez towards the edge. The tied steed thrashes loose and breaks free. Tucker watches the majestic horse gallop away, disgusted. He presses on, propping Ramirez onto his feet, standing there for a reverent moment.

TUCKER

Probably should of asked if you could swim. Via con Dios, Ramirez.

Tucker shoves him over the drop. Ramirez plummets into the roaring RAPIDS -- vanishing beneath the frothy undertow.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - BLACK SPARROW - MORNING

By morning's light the narrow street is awash. McPherson's POSSE of HORSEMEN and RIFLEMEN are out accosting the handful of Townspeople tending to their business. Even the Sturdy Workmen laying down planks over the mud are being harassed.

McPherson surveys, riding horseback alongside REVEREND CARTER, his right hand man, body guard and spiritual council.

REVEREND CARTER

You've certainly assembled an interesting band of heathens this time around, Patrick.

MCPHERSON

Despite their abundant misgivings, they are the best at what they do.

REVEREND CARTER

They all follow the decrepid path of the beast. As your spiritual council I advise caution.

MCPHERSON

Well Reverend Carter, that's why I brought you along, to protect my ass as well as my soul.

NEAR THE STOREFRONTS.

A YOUNG INDIAN, slight, smeared in primitive camouflage, prowls between the narrow passage of two structures, closing in on the sound of a CONFRONTATION taking place somewhere close by.

MAN (O.S.)
I'm only asking one more time!

YOUNG WOMAN (O.S.)
Please!

MAN (O.S.)
Not until you explain!

YOUNG WOMAN (O.S.)
He's just a boy!

He reaches the crack of daylight looking out onto the street, observing the scene which has drawn a handful of Townspeople.

The TWO RIFLEMEN are Fat Mike and Ugly Joe, two degenerate bounty hunters dressed in buckskin and possum pelts and wearing badges. They have a YOUNG WOMAN and her CHILD cornered against the wall. Ugly Joe shoves the Wanted Poster in their face.

FAT MIKE
Best start talking boy.

YOUNG WOMAN
He don't know anything! He ain't never seen him!

The Child looks away, grabbing onto the Young Woman's dress.

UGLY JOE
I don't believe you. You better come with us.

Fat Mike takes up his rifle. McPherson and Reverend Carter ride up on the scene.

MCPHERSON
What seems to be the problem?

THE INDIAN reacts to the arrival of McPherson, showing a mixture of fear and hatred in his expression. From this, we recognize the familiar face of FISTS, now fourteen years of age.

UGLY JOE
The boy recognizes our friend.

YOUNG WOMAN
He don't know what he's saying!

McPherson dismounts, careful not to dirty his clean trouser legs or shiny boots. The Woman and Child hold onto each other tight.

MCPHERSON
Don't be frightened little one.
Everything's going to be fine.

YOUNG WOMAN
Please don't hurt my boy!

McPherson nods. Ugly Joe pries the Child away from the Woman.

MCPHERSON
Tell us what you know, son. It's
always best when we tell the truth
in life, isn't it Reverend?

REVEREND CARTER
Amen.

YOUNG WOMAN
Wait! I'll tell you, I'll tell you
what I know!

Suddenly, the Child squirms loose -- Ugly Joe lunges after him, gun raised -- the Young Woman reacts, reaching for his pistol, they get tangled, and then -- BANG! The Young Woman DROPS dead.

FISTS reacts as if shot himself.

Reverend Carter does a Hail Mary, shaking his head.

McPherson grabs Ugly Joe and SLAMS him against a storefront.

MCPHERSON
That wasn't necessary.

UGLY JOE
She went for my piece!

MCPHERSON
She was protecting her kin!
(collecting)
Besides, she was going to talk.

FISTS moves to retreat, slamming into the side of the structure, scrambling for cover.

McPherson hears it and is first to react, shoving Ugly Joe aside, reaching the small gap between structures, seeing nothing. Fat Mike and Ugly Joe mount up.

MCPHERSON
You. Check around back. You.
Find that kid. Now!

FISTS is hidden well out of sight beneath one of the structures.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - MORNING

Establishing. Tucker appears on the horizon, walking.

INT. COLE HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - MORNING

Tucker, winded, enters the darkened room, looking around at the shredded lengths of rope spread out across the floor.

TUCKER
Shit.

CLANK! Tucker goes DOWN in a heap. Lilly stands over him, holding a cast iron skillet.

INT. COLE HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Lilly holds Tucker at gunpoint with his own revolvers. He sits there on the floor, coming to, stunned and bleeding.

LILLY
You son of a bitch. You know where
I stand on being tied up.

TUCKER
Married life dulled you a bit?

She COCKS back both hammers.

TUCKER
Lost your sense of humor too?

LILLY
Where you been all morning?

TUCKER
Looking for my horse.

LILLY
Don't test me William.

TUCKER
What are you gonna do, shoot me?

She FIRES twice. He freezes, bewildered, staring at the two SMOLDERING holes in the floorboards between his legs.

LILLY

I'll turn you from a rooster to a hen, so help me. I want you off my land, dead or alive is up to you.

TUCKER

First off, I ain't got no horse. Secondly, most importantly, you're in real danger. There are things that you don't got any notion of. I can't leave you here alone.

LILLY

Save your lies, you're leaving. And as far as a horse is concerned, I've got just the one for you.

EXT. BARN - COLE HOMESTEAD - DAY

A beautiful White Mare watches Lilly and Tucker enter.

TUCKER

I can't deprive you of such a fine creature.

LILLY

I agree.

Lilly points over to the next stall. A broken down Old Nag in the process of squeezing out piles of dung from her fly buzzing backside looks on -- PLOP -- PLOP -- GAS. Tucker edges closer to the gate thinking the coast is clear -- PLOP -- GAS -- PLOP.

TUCKER

Guess she won't colic on me.

LILLY

Get moving. She don't bite.

Tucker opens the gate, the Old Nag flashes some teeth aggressively. He takes a step back.

LILLY

You take good care of her. She's better than you deserve.

Tucker grimaces, carefully navigating across the shit strewn confines of the tiny stall.

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - MOMENTS LATER

Lilly keeps her distance, still holding Tucker at gunpoint. The Old Nag snorts, anxious to lose the saddle. Tucker has her by the bridle, holding her with some effort as he pleads his case.

TUCKER

You're making a mistake. I'm here to protect you, let me explain.

LILLY

That time has passed. Hurry up.

He shoves a foot in the stirrup to mount but the horse shies and he goes DOWN in the mud, looking most undignified. Lilly doesn't react. He gets up, wiping the grime from his face.

TUCKER

Henry's in trouble, he's wanted by the law, got one hell of a price on his head. It ain't safe here.

LILLY

You're a Goddamn liar. Now get!

TUCKER

Sending me off unarmed? Might as well shoot me in the back.

LILLY

Don't tempt me!

Tucker finally manages to mount the honoree Old Nag. Lilly fires a shot off skyward -- BANG! -- spooking the Old Nag into a full gallop, carrying Tucker away against his best efforts.

TUCKER

You always did take me for granted!

LILLY

Only thing I'll take for granted about you William Tucker is that you're a violent, unpredictable man who can't be trusted! Now get lost and don't you dare come back here!

He swiftly gains control of the Old Nag, turning her around for one last look -- nothing more to say -- and then he rides off towards the stormy horizon. Lilly watches him go, still poised with the weapons, fighting back unwanted tears.

FADE TO:

PULLING AWAY from BLACKNESS -- only now we're looking at HENRY COLE. Blinding daylight fills the SCREEN around him. He's crouched behind a big rock, listening.

A WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Vermin, all of you! I curse you!
I curse every last one of you!

Henry's eyes widen. He reaches for his rifle and stands up.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

We're back at the opening robbery. Bandits Blue and Green surround the Wellington's stagecoach. Red pulls the trigger -- a burst of flame and a puff of smoke -- BANG! Randolph is shot.

PENNY
Randolph!

CRACK! A shot hits the ground just inches from Red's foot. He leaps out of the way.

RED
What the piss?

Blue and Green look at each other, confused. Penny cradles Randolph in her arms, CRYING her heart out. Red senses it.

RED
The trees!

CRACK! Red clutches his throat. He's hit. Blood pumps out between his fingers. He drops to his knees GASPING for breath. Blue and Green scramble for cover.

BLUE
You see 'em?!

GREEN
Run for it!

CRACK! A shot hits Blue in the crook of the leg, knocking him down. CRACK! Another shot hits Green in the shoulder, spinning him around like a top. Red struggles to raise his pistol.

BANG! Red shoots Penny in the chest at point blank. CRACK! Red tumbles over, shot dead between the eyes.

HENRY rushes in, checking Penny's pulse, there's something there, she's hanging on. Green staggers towards his horse. Henry spins around and quickly takes aim.

HENRY
Don't move!

GREEN
You wouldn't shoot an unarmed man,
would you slim?

Henry hesitates, watching Green saddle up on his horse and gallop away in a flurry of dust.

BANG! A shot hits the dirt inches away from Henry. He swings his rifle around, aiming at Blue who's holding the smoking gun.

HENRY
Put it down! Don't make me do it!

A brief look of rage from Blue -- and then he pulls the trigger.
BANG! Henry fires at the same time. CRACK!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED MINE SHAFT - NIGHT

THUNDERHEADS rumbling outside and the REVERBERATION they inflict against the cavern walls jars Henry from a restless sleep. He looks around, as if the shot was just fired, seeing Penny, lying awake and gazing into the crackling flames.

PENNY
(in a feeble voice)
Why won't you let me die?

Henry sits up, grimacing from the pain shooting through his wounded shoulder, looking at Penny, faking his best smile.

HENRY
Because you're getting better.

PENNY
Where's my Randolph?

HENRY
You don't remember?

PENNY
I mean, did you commit his body to
the ground?

HENRY
Yes ma'am.

PENNY

Where?

HENRY

High on the mountain, overlooking
the valley, facing the sunrise.
Very peaceful.

Penny slightly smiles. She looks at Henry across the fire.

PENNY

You have to promise me something.

Henry moves to her side, taking her hand.

PENNY

I want to be laid to rest beside
him ... no matter what ... you must
promise to keep us together.

HENRY

Ma'am, you're not going to ...

(he thinks twice)

I promise.

Henry blots the sweat from her forehead. He knows the end is coming. He sees the suffering in her eyes.

HENRY

It's alright ma'am. It's alright.

PENNY

It's not alright. What kind of a
world? Your whole life builds to
this, violent conclusion? All the
years together? To be slaughtered
like animals? We deserve better.

HENRY

There's a better place ma'am.
You'll see your husband again.

PENNY

What is this great evil? Where
does it come from? How is it still
alive in the world?

HENRY

Bible tells us it was put here on
earth to balance the scales. I
don't think it will ever go away.

Penny closes her eyes. A tear streams out.

PENNY

Yes it will. If it ever loved, I
mean truly loved something for only
a brief moment ... it would cease
to be evil.

Henry respectfully nods, acknowledging her passionate words. He applies something dark and moist to her massive wounds which seem to sooth her pain if only for the moment.

PENNY

Are you married doctor?

HENRY

Yes ma'am.

PENNY

Then, please ... end my suffering.
Go to your woman ... she's in as
much danger as you are ... take her
with you and ride away, far away.

Henry glances at the Wanted Poster next to his coat.

HENRY

Who were those men?

PENNY

They were supposed to protect us,
our escorts out of town but they
never came. That lying snake,
pretending to be looking out for
Randolph and me.

HENRY

Who?

PENNY

Seamus McPherson.

Henry shakes his head, not familiar.

PENNY

He's the brother of the man who's
going to hunt you down ... put you
in your grave for helping us.

HENRY

Those bandits were lawmen?

Penny struggles to stay focused, painfully nodding "yes."

HENRY
Save your strength. We have time.

PENNY
No ... we don't ... Patty McPherson
only valued one thing in this world
... his rotten little brother ...
and now he's going to come looking
for the man who killed him.

She reaches out and squeezes Henry's hand as hard as she can.

PENNY
Please doctor, put me out of this
misery, send me to heaven so I can
be with my Randolph and get back to
your woman before it's too late.

He looks away, his mind racing.

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Establishing. A break in the storm brings an eerie silence. We HONE IN on the house -- DRIFTING closer to the upstairs window, the only window not boarded up, where a dim light shines.

INT. COLE HOUSE - VARIOUS - CONTINUOUS

Lilly prepares for sleep. She washes her face and slips into her night gown, unaware that the bedroom door has blown open slightly from the breeze.

She picks up a wooden music box next to the bed and winds it up. A tinny MELODY pours out. She sits on the bed, taking up one of Henry's coats, smelling the stale cigar smoke as she squeezes.

LILLY
Henry, please come home.

A NOISE from downstairs unsettles her, slight at first, then gaining in intensity, like the BANGING of wood against wood.

She picks up Tucker's shotgun and moves out using a kerosene lamp to light the way -- leaving the bedroom -- moving into the hallway -- down the staircase -- the NOISE getting LOUDER and LOUDER with every step.

DOWNSTAIRS. She comes upon the NOISE, realizing that it's only the sound of loose shutters CLANKING in the heavy WIND. Relieved, she reaches out and closes them.

We follow her from room to room -- moving through the darkness -- all the way back up the CREAKING staircase.

UPSTAIRS. Lilly closes the door, returning to her bedside. The music box tune is slowing down. She rests the shotgun against the wall and kicks off her slippers, noticing mud on the floor.

She reaches down, touches it, swirling it on her fingers. Just then, a DIRTY HAND reaches out from underneath the bed, GRABBING her, taking her down. She HITS the floor kicking and SCREAMING!

A GRIZZLY behemoth of a man emerges from the darkness. Lilly gouges at his eyes as he tries to smother her beneath his enormous weight. She reaches for the shotgun but it's no use. He pins her down, leering at her with beady, perverted eyes.

GRIZZLY

Quiet now!

LILLY

Get off me!

He SPITS his disgusting tobacco spat all over her face. She SCREAMS even louder -- THRASHING under his stinking girth. This only serves to titillate her attacker.

LILLY

What do you want from me?!

GRIZZLY

Same thing as your friend did.

He presses his forearm hard against her throat.

GRIZZLY

Hurts don't it? Circulation cut off. Not able to breath.

(he leans in closer)

Don't play stupid with me. I'm not getting up until you tell me exactly what I need to know.

He smiles, revealing a mouthful of tobacco stained teeth, grinding his pelvis into hers, slowly easing off of her throat, leaving her GASPING for air.

GRIZZLY

Where is he?

LILLY

Gone. Take a look for yourself.

He leans in, licking the crook of her neck.

GRIZZLY

Then you and I can get cozy.

LILLY

You son of a bitch!

He SMACKS her across the face. She responds with a brutal HEAD BUTT to the nose, instantly drawing blood.

GRIZZLY

Yeah! You got sass in you, missy!

He reaches for his pants. She sinks her teeth into his neck. He swings his powerful fist, CONNECTING with the side of her face, bouncing her head against the floor. She's out.

The door BUSTS open. Grizzly looks up. Tucker rushes inside. Grizzly makes a move for the sawed-off. Tucker TACKLES him, sending the shotgun sliding away across the floor.

Tucker bloodies Grizzly with his fists. Grizzly wraps him up -- squeezing with back breaking strength -- hurling Tucker clear across the room into the vanity -- CRASH!

Grizzly SHATTERS a bottle against Tucker's head -- he absorbs the hit -- Grizzly lunges with the jagged bottleneck -- Tucker fends with his hands which are slick with blood -- he KICKS Grizzly in the chest -- sending him staggering into the --

HALLWAY. Tucker appears -- shoving Grizzly into the railing -- it BUCKLES against their weight and then BREAKS -- Grizzly grabs hold of Tucker -- they both plummet over the edge.

DOWNSTAIRS. Tucker's will prevents him from blacking out. Grizzly crawls towards the staircase, dragging his broken leg. Tucker leaps on top of him. Grizzly ROARS onto his feet, ripping Tucker down, sending him HARD to the floor.

Grizzly TEARS away a piece of the bannister -- swinging at Tucker who rolls, barely avoiding its devastation. Grizzly swings again -- Tucker keeps moving, running out of space fast.

Grizzly's got him. He winds up for the death blow but he's HIT in the back with tremendous force! He reaches behind him, unable to remove an AXE between his shoulder blades.

GRIZZLY

Smells like somethin's burning.

He tumbles forward, LANDING on top of Tucker. Lilly stands there above them, smiling at Tucker for the first time.

LILLY
You alright?

Tucker squirms beneath the dead man's crushing weight.

TUCKER
No.

INT. A DARK ROOM - BLACK SPARROW - NIGHT

McPherson soaks in a tub of steaming hot water under the dim light of an oil lamp. He's SCRUBBING his hands raw with a stiff-bristled brush.

A KNOCK at the door rouses him from the mirth of his solitude.

MCPHERSON
What is it?

REVEREND CARTER (O.S.)
You wanted to see me?

McPherson gestures to the chair beside him next to the tub. Reverend Carter enters, taking a seat.

McPherson stares ahead, plagued by something. Reverend Carter respects his privacy, never meeting eyes. Facing the same direction, it's reminiscent of a confessional.

REVEREND CARTER
What troubles you, Patrick?

MCPHERSON
Seamus was a decent man, a man of the law, a man who in God's name sheltered the weak against the madness of this world, a madness that I allowed to corrupt me for so very long. I should be the one rotting in the earth, not him.

REVEREND CARTER
Do not judge yourself against your brother as God and I do not.

MCPHERSON
On the morning I awoke from that terrible sleep and realized God had given me a second chance, I vowed to follow in his path.
(MORE)

MCPHERSON (cont'd)

I begged to be absolved of my past
abominations and yet I forsake my
oath with him every passing day.

McPherson takes up his brush again and begins SCRUBBING.

REVEREND CARTER

The metal wedged inside your brain
must be twisting and distorting
your perception. You are God's
hand, ridding this town of sinners.
I bear witness that your path of
vengeance is just, Patrick.

MCPHERSON

And what if I'm wrong?

REVEREND CARTER

Then God help you. Let us pray.

McPherson looks at the grime hopelessly embedded beneath his
nails and then to Reverend Carter, each bow their heads.

INT. COLE HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

Tucker sits at a table beside the window, gulping down bourbon
while Lilly finishes bandaging his hands.

LILLY

I wouldn't say you're as good as
new but you're definitely something
William Tucker.

TUCKER

Thank you kindly.

He tries flexing his hands, excruciatingly painful. She sits
down across from him at the table. The bottle of bourbon and
two glasses separates them. He downs the last of his glass in
one gulp and then gingerly pours another.

LILLY

You keep going on like that and
those demons are bound to drown
forever. Then what would you do?

TUCKER

I just got the tar whipped out of
me by a son bitch tougher than a
five cent steak. Leave me alone.
I'm healing.

He lashes the shot back. She pours herself a glass.

LILLY

I suppose I should thank you.

TUCKER

That would be mannerly.

LILLY

Who was he?

TUCKER

Never seen him before. Bounty
hunter I reckon.

LILLY

What makes you think that?

TUCKER

Because he was carrying this.

He passes over a bloodstained scroll of paper. She unrolls the WANTED POSTER. She scans it, struck hard upon seeing the image of her husband above such a vicious list of crimes.

LILLY

This can't be true. Murder.
Robbery. William, you know Henry.
You know he isn't capable of this.
These are lies. They must be.

TUCKER

It don't matter. Don't you see?
It's dangerous here. Ride with me.
Tonight. We'll hit the trail.
(he reaches out)
You'll be safe I promise.

LILLY

Let go of my hand.

She pulls away, incredulous. He sits back, feeling tired, defeated, taking up his glass for another long drink.

LILLY

Are you sick? I would never go
anywhere with you. I'm not leaving
until my husband returns safely.

TUCKER

(his mood darkens)
Your husband. How could you? How
could both of you?
(MORE)

TUCKER (cont'd)
Know what, far as I'm concerned, I
don't feel one ounce of guilt. He
got what he deserved.

LILLY
Henry respected you, he'd have
never done you wrong.

TUCKER
He was in love with you.

LILLY
I pursued Henry. I was in love.
It was my doing not his. He was
always so sweet to me back when you
was so rotten. But he pushed me
away on account of his friendship
with you.

TUCKER
You're just trying to make me feel
sorry for the son of a bitch.

LILLY
That night, Henry was about to
leave, on his own, without me.

TUCKER
Horse shit.

LILLY
I threw myself at him. I begged
him not to leave me. I pushed my
lips onto his and then you come
bursting through the door all full
of piss and bourbon, convinced you
was betrayed.

TUCKER
I was betrayed!

LILLY
By me! Not him you bastard! Me!

She picks up the bottle and throws it. He ducks -- it SMASHES
against the wall behind him. He instantly begins laughing. She
stands up, furious.

LILLY
Want to get even with me? Now's
your chance! Come on! Do it!

She SMACKS him across the face. He stops laughing and stands up. She stands up and swings again but this time he catches her at the wrist -- their eyes lock -- uncertainty, until --

Tucker KISSES Lilly deeply and for a moment she kisses him back, HARD -- then she pulls away, horrified, confused. She stares him down for a long moment. It's either straight to bed or a another fire fight.

LILLY

Take your hands off me.

After a moment, Tucker releases his grip. Lilly collects, trying to ignore the whole thing.

LILLY

You ought to be ashamed for the rest of your miserable life, for what you did to a good man, for the bad man you're always going to be.

Tucker sits back down, picking up his glass.

TUCKER

That's a mighty big cross to bear.

LILLY

I want you gone come morning. I can fend for myself.

TUCKER

You did one hell of a job before I got here.

LILLY

Well, now I know the stakes! And don't pretend like you're here to be helpful. You're just waiting for Henry so you can take him in and cash in that reward yourself. It all makes perfect sense now!

TUCKER

If this Sheriff of Ridgeway finds you, or Henry, he'll slaughter the both of you in a manner you can't possibly imagine. Now I won't allow that happen but you got to trust me.

LILLY

Nothing in this world will ever make me trust you again.

(MORE)

LILLY (cont'd)
 Don't go thinking I'll ever change
 my mind about you, Tucker. You
 ain't no good and you never will
 be.

TUCKER
 I'll drink to that.

He picks up the glass, dejected, clanking it against hers. She watches him guzzle down, arriving at some sort of decision in her mind. She turns away and leaves the room without so much as a word. He leans back, pulling his hat down over his face.

TUCKER
 Sleep tight.

FADE TO:

Over BLACK. A WOMAN SCREAMS a repeated phrase unfamiliar to us.

INT. INDIAN WIGWAM - DAWN

The VOICE belongs to a NAKED INDIAN WOMAN. She tries desperately to rouse Tucker from a whiskey-induced coma. Faint GUNSHOTS and SCREAMING overlap in the distance.

INDIAN WOMAN
 (subtitled)
 Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!
 (in English this time)
 Wake up!

Tucker's bloodshot eyes blink open.

EXT. INDIAN CAMP - HIGH MOUNTAINS - MOMENTS LATER

Tucker stumbles out of the wigwam into the snow, wearing only his pants. He surveys the CHAOTIC BATTLE raging before him. We're back at the opening attack. He straps on his weapons.

In the distance. The Bald Man is losing his battle with an Indian Warrior, reaching out for his gun, fighting against the Warrior's blade hovering inches from his throat. He spots Tucker approaching and assumes that he's one of them.

BALD MAN
 Shoot him!

Tucker fires -- BANG! Bald Man's head snaps back from the impact. Wrong assumption. The Warrior looks up, recognizing Tucker, nodding. Tucker rushes in and takes Bald Man's pelt.

OTHER SIDE OF CAMP. The Pale Scalper maneuvers over the bodies of fallen Indians and White Men -- coming upon a wounded Warrior -- SHOOTING him -- moving on -- SHOOTING more -- even Women and Children as they lie helpless, bleeding out into the snow.

The Pale Scalper spots Young Fists struggling in vain to string his large bow. He raises his pistol, taking aim. Fists is frozen in terror at the sight of the man who killed his father.

A different pistol CLICKS behind the Pale Scalper. He turns. Tucker stares at him, his gun trained dead ahead -- BANG!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ABANDONED MINE SHAFT - PRE DAWN

Establishing. The GUNSHOT overlaps with THUNDER.

HENRY (O.S.)
Oh Lord, please help me.

INT. ABANDONED MINE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

Henry, on his knees in prayer, speaks softly so not to wake Penny who lies sleeping beside the fire.

HENRY
If I leave her here she'll die.
Please help me. Please protect my
wife, Lord. Please watch over
Lilly. If anything were to happen
I ... please show me the way.

PENNY
Doctor Cole.

Penny's eyes open. Henry moves to her side.

PENNY
I can't feel my legs anymore. We
both know it ... whether it takes a
few hours ... a few days.

HENRY
Ma 'am.

PENNY
Your wife needs you.

HENRY

I know what you're asking but, your
death is not written in stone, it
is not for you or I to determine.

PENNY

You're a good hearted man Doctor
Cole but you're making a mistake.

She reaches out unexpectedly, touching her finger to his eye
patch for a brief and fleeting moment. His first reaction is to
pull away but then he stops himself and allows her to feel along
the jagged scar that marks his cheek.

PENNY

Who did this to you?

HENRY

An old friend.

PENNY

Did you deserve it?

HENRY

I took something very dear to him.

PENNY

You run off with his woman, didn't
you doctor?

Henry looks to her, surprised.

PENNY

Friends don't become enemies unless
it's over the likes of a woman.
Was she worth it?

She suddenly GASPS, clutching onto Henry's wrist. Her eyes
bulge wide open -- her body stiffens from the pain. She turns
her head, looking at something. He follows her eyes over to the
rifle, leaning against the cave wall.

PENNY

Please doctor ...

Penny turns back to Henry, his tortured expression drifting from
the rifle into the black void of the cave.

EXT. MAIN STREET - BLACK SPARROW - DAWN

Establishing. A pack of wild dogs roam the street. Frightened faces part the curtains of lamp lit windows. New storm clouds are gathering overhead.

Two SILHOUETTES struggle their way across the muddy street towards on a nondescript building marked COUNTY OFFICE.

TERRY

Now you let me do all the talking
and we'll make out good, real good.

JASPER

I don't know, this ain't a very
bright idea, you don't bargain with
the law, Terry.

TERRY

Just keep your trap shut until I
tell you other how. And whatever
you do don't go laughing at his
gimpy wheel.

INT. COUNTY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A large, municipal chamber filled with desks and jail cells. McPherson's Posse has taken over, most are sleeping, others are keeping watch.

McPherson sits behind a desk, writing manically on pieces of parchment that are filled from margin to margin.

All is QUIET -- and then the door BURSTS open.

TERRY (O.S.)

Good morning!

In barge TERRY and JASPER, two shabby looking coal miners. Every GUN in the room is now trained on them. Terry doesn't move an inch. Jasper reaches for the sky.

JASPER

Oh Lord! Don't shoot!

McPherson continues writing, finishing his thought before finally looking up. He removes his spectacles, struggling up from his seat. His men chomp at the bit behind their triggers.

MCPHERSON

And a fine morning to you sir.

McPherson moves past Jasper, who unsuccessfully ignores his handicap. McPherson stops in front of Terry, sizing him up.

MCPHERSON
May I help you gentlemen?

TERRY
Sure can. Got some rock solid
info. Good stuff. About the
fellow with the eye patch.

MCPHERSON
Curiosity is piqued, continue.

Terry, feeling empowered, grabs a chair and takes a seat. He leans back, milking this brief moment of significance.

TERRY
I think we need to discuss the
financial parameters first, yes?

MCPHERSON
No.

CRACK! The chair snaps and Terry crashes to the floor. He scrambles to his feet.

TERRY
What do you mean, no?

Hammers COCK back on pistols throughout the room.

JASPER
Maybe we ought to push off, Terry.

TERRY
Shut the hell up Jasper and show
the man your leg.

JASPER
Awe, Terry.

TERRY
Lift up them britches!

Jasper lifts his trouser leg, exposing a wooden stilt.

TERRY
Got his foot run over in the mine
shaft about a year ago. Doc said
he had no choice but to lob the
thing off at the ankle. Almost
killed poor Jasper.

(MORE)

TERRY (cont'd)

Now look at him. Down in the mines, he's about as useful as a bag full of dicks.

Jasper looks at Terry, who catches his misstep. Terry looks to McPherson, terrified. McPherson actually smiles at that one.

JASPER

He was alright Terry. He did what had to be done. He was nice to me.

TERRY

Hush up! Adults are having a conversation here!

(to McPherson)

So here's the predicament. Poor Jasper can't support himself nor his kin. Now that old reward money sure would come in handy.

McPherson is losing patience. Terry picks up on it.

TERRY

Hey, the doc's your man. Name's Cole. Jasper's been to where he lives out in the country. Spent three weeks there in recovery.

JASPER

I don't remember how to get there but I think I could find it.

MCPHERSON

Let me understand something before we continue, Terry. Have you ever visited this doctor's fair abode?

TERRY

No sir.

MCPHERSON

Then why are you here?

TERRY

I'm along on account of representing Jasper here in matters of reward, you know, condensation.

McPherson cringes, his irritation is evident.

MCPHERSON

Compensation?

TERRY

That too.

MCPHERSON

Yes of course. Lest we forget your
stake in these matters.

TERRY

I thought that was the arrangement.

MCPHERSON

Pardon me, Terry.

McPherson moves away from Terry to Jasper. The smaller man
cowers as the imposing shadow crosses his face.

MCPHERSON

I want you to stay calm for me
Jasper, do we have an accord?

JASPER

Yes sir.

McPherson draws his revolver, BANG! Head shot -- Terry's dead
before he hits the ground. Jasper SHRIEKS! McPherson holsters
the smoking gun.

MCPHERSON

I can't abide the greedy.

He puts his arm around Jasper as if to comfort him.

MCPHERSON

Now, I want you to tell me
everything you know about this
doctor friend of yours.

JASPER

Are you going to kill me?

MCPHERSON

That remains up to you, Jasper.

McPherson leads Jasper towards his desk, carefully stepping over
Terry's body along the way.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - FIRST LIGHT

Establishing. A peaceful stretch of highland. Henry's
Silhouette digs into the earth beside a large mound of soil.

EXT. GRAVE SITE - MOUNTAIN RANGE - MORNING

Henry stands over the Wellington's grave, hat over heart for a long, solemn moment.

He holds a small, leather-bound journal, looking over a handwritten prayer, trying to collect himself long enough to deliver the sermon he's performed over so many graves.

HENRY

Make me an instrument of Thy peace.
Where there is hatred ... let me
sow love. Where there is injury,
pardon. Where there is doubt ...

Henry looks to the heavens, searching for the words.

HENRY

Faith. Where there is despair,
where there is despair ...

He stops, unable to finish, closing the journal.

MONTAGE

A sad STRING BALLAD, PLAYS over the following images:

TUCKER wakes up alone, downstairs at the COLE HOUSE, his weapons are nowhere to be seen. He leaps out of the chair in a panic. His tantrum is swift and violent from room to room as he searches for Lilly. Nothing is left undisturbed.

REVEREND CARTER stands, holding a crucifix up high, prophesying from his bible as MCPHERSON and most of his POSSE ride away from BLACK SPARROW. A terrified JASPER travels alongside McPherson at the front of the pack.

FISTS, watches the procession travel down MAIN STREET from the window of a small, darkened HOTEL ROOM. He looks on intently, smoking on a pipe, disguised in a wide-brimmed hat, dressed up like the white man.

TUCKER enters the STABLES. The Old Nag reacts to his presence. The White Mare is gone. He bends down to inspect the fresh hoof tracks left on the wet earth leading away.

THE WELLINGTON'S GRAVE. Marked by two simple crosses. Adorned with flowers. Overlooking the magnificent valley.

HENRY up on his stallion, riding hard, through the wilderness.

THE STORM churns overhead, charged with electricity, darkening the skyline.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - AFTERNOON

McPherson, Jasper, and a surly tracker named OLD BOB, wait on horseback atop a ridge overlooking the forboding frontier landscape. McPherson leans over, whispering to Old Bob.

MCPHERSON
What do you think?

OLD BOB
I think he's full of shit. There
ain't nothing out here.
(his pistol half drawn)
Want me to take care of it?

McPherson thinks it over, then nods. Jasper tries to steer his horse closer to the conversation.

JASPER
What's going on?

OLD BOB
Chatting about the weather is all.

Old Bob swipes the reins off Jasper's horse.

JASPER
Wait, it's out here I promise, just
give me a minute, it all just looks
so familiar.

OLD BOB
Apologies Jasper. That's the price
you pay for wasting his time.

A MAN (O.S.)
Boss!

McPherson motions for Old Bob to wait, turning around to face six more of his Deputies galloping up on their position.

The leader of the pack is a young man with his arm in a sling, this is HANDSOME JESSE. The others are BIG DANE, DIRTY BILL, Ugly Joe, and RAY GARDNER. They're towing another horse, it's Tucker's albino gelding, Smokey.

BIG DANE
We found him wandering the ridge.

HANDSOME JESSE
Belongs to a W. Tucker.

RAY GARDNER
Bounty hunter?

McPherson nods, steering closer to poor, struggling Smokey, inspecting the horse for anything telling.

DIRTY BILL
Maybe the doc got him?

MCPHERSON
For the moment we must assume that this bounty hunter found what he was looking for but paid the ultimate price. Perhaps we're on the right path after all.

McPherson turns to Jasper and smiles.

MCPHERSON
You may survive this yet.

EXT. RIVER'S EDGE - COUNTRYSIDE - AFTERNOON

Lilly rides at full tilt through DOWNPOUR. It's getting hard to see as she steers her white mare through the trees and mud that line the rain swollen RIVER. She squints to see in both directions. There is no other place to cross.

She kicks the horse, urging her on towards the rushing water but the horse whinnies and fights back.

LILLY
Get! Come on, damn it!

She whips the horse and they lurch forward. The White Mare, upon contact with the frigid water, rears wildly almost throwing her. She gains control of the horse, pulling her back.

LILLY
Henry! Henry!

She spins the horse around looking for another way but the streaking rain is blinding.

LILLY
Damn it!

Lilly kicks her horse in, galloping away.

EXT. MAIN STREET - BLACK SPARROW TOWNSHIP - AFTERNOON

The buildings groan from the moisture and cold wind howling between them. The people are on lock down. A Silhouette on crooked horseback comes staggering up the street.

Tucker steers the Old Nag. He's got one hand tucked into his long duster, hiding the fact that, for the moment, he's unarmed. He tips his hat at FOUR CASKETS lined up for burial on his way past the church graveyard.

Reverend Carter stands in the doorway of the Church, watching Tucker as he passes. Tucker nods. Reverend Carter backs away, closing the door. The WANTED POSTER hangs there.

Tucker presses on, spotting a MAN closing the shutters of a second-story window of a building marked: HOTEL BLACK SPARROW.

INT. HOTEL BLACK SPARROW - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Beams of daylight penetrate the filthy window at the end of the slim corridor. Tucker inches forward through the darkness. The last door on the left slowly CREAKS open. Tucker raises his bandaged hands, speaking in an Indian dialect.

TUCKER
(subtitled)
Fists. It's me.

Fists peers over the barrel of his shotgun which he promptly lowers upon recognition of his friend and mentor. He smiles.

FISTS
You're early.

TUCKER
I know.

Tucker embraces Fists and then moves inside, closing the door.

INT. HOTEL BLACK SPARROW - SINGLE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Fists closes the drapes while studying Tucker's condition.

FISTS
What happened?

TUCKER
There were complications.

FISTS

You look bad, been drinking the
white man's fire water again?

TUCKER

We all have our vices.

Fists shrugs, loading the bowl of his pipe. Tucker goes to his things, finding a slightly less filthy shirt. He puts it on.

FISTS

Did you find your enemy?

TUCKER

He wasn't home.

FISTS

Someone else was, yes?

TUCKER

I don't want to talk about her.
Coming out here was a big mistake.
My thinking isn't clear when it
comes to those two, it never was.

FISTS

Your thinking is not the problem
William Tucker. It is your heart
that is going to get us killed.

TUCKER

Nice to know you think I got one.

Tucker looks at Fists, humbled by his wisdom. He notices the troubled look in the face of his friend.

TUCKER

What is it?

FISTS

A band of crazy white men rode into
town two nights past, they also
seek your enemy. The White Ghost
rides among them. It is a dark
presence, as if evil protects him,
surrounds him like the good spirits
protecting us.

Tucker sits down beside Fists.

TUCKER

Your instincts are right, kid.

FISTS
So what are we going to do?

TUCKER
We're not going to do anything.
You're going back.

Fists tosses his pipe, standing up, defiant.

FISTS
I will not leave without you.

TUCKER
I can't protect you from what's
coming this way. Hell, I can't so
much as protect myself these days.

FISTS
Then I will protect you.

TUCKER
What I have to do, I must do alone.

Fists looks away, disgusted.

FISTS
You welcome death in a way that is
very sad. True warriors do not
travel that path.

TUCKER
Don't go thinking you got me
figured out just yet, kid.

Tucker moves across the room towards a pair of rifles propped up
beside the bed. He chooses one, COCKS it open, checking its
action, carefully inspecting its condition.

FISTS
Last night, I experienced a vision.

TUCKER
You shouldn't be smoking that
Goddamn peace pipe so much.

FISTS
I was consulting the spirits. They
are very angry. Just look at the
sky, listen to the wind. Darkness
is falling and soon blood will
spill like floodwater.

TUCKER

The spirits are right to be angry.
But it ain't going be your blood
spilling kid. My call stands.

Tucker straps the weapon over his shoulder and pockets a handful of shells. He makes for the door. Fists blocks his path.

FISTS

You are not yourself these days,
William Tucker. You need my
guidance now more than ever.

TUCKER

If I so much as catch sight of you
over my shoulder there's gonna be
hell to pay. Now you listen to
your Goddamn elder and hit the
trail. Pronto.

FISTS

What are you going to do?

TUCKER

What I should have done a long time
ago ... don't worry about me kid.
See you in two days.

Tucker musters a slight smile and then exits.

EXT. HOTEL BLACK SPARROW - AFTERNOON

Fat Mike and UNCLE BONES wait on either side of the entrance with their guns drawn. Tucker parts the swinging doors, stepping out and he doesn't see them until it's too late. He stops and raises his hands slowly.

TUCKER

Easy boys.

FAT MIKE

(referring to the rifle)
I'll take that.

TUCKER

But it ain't yours.

UNCLE BONES

Don't make me shoot you right here.

Tucker allows Uncle Bones to disarm him. They pat him down.

FAT MIKE

Sign on the way in says check your
arms in with the Sheriff.

TUCKER

I don't read well.

Fat Mike PUNCHES Tucker in the gut. He goes down on one knee.

UNCLE BONES

You're under arrest.

We DRIFT up the facade of the building -- arriving at Fist's window -- where he assesses the situation.

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - AFTERNOON

We FOLLOW Lilly on horseback, galloping up towards the house. She stares nervously at the bullet pocked walls and boarded windows. She slows down, dismounting a few yards away, arming herself with the shotgun from the saddle.

INT. COLE HOUSE - VARIOUS - AFTERNOON

Lilly pushes open the door with the barrel of her sawed-off. It CREAKS open -- wall to wall devastation. She barricades the door -- fortifying every last inch of space before moving upstairs with the same purpose.

Lilly kicks open the bedroom door. Everything is turned upside, everything except for the PICTURE FRAME -- a wedding photograph of Henry and Lilly. She picks it up, holding it close to her heart, anger and sadness filling her eyes with tears.

Lilly listens to the silence. She slowly gets to her knees and begins crawling towards the window sill. She peers out between the wooden planks, staring out at the swaying crop fields.

Could there be someone out there? And then a flock of SPARROWS bursts up from the stocks -- flying off into the sky.

Her eyes widen. There's someone out there -- KABOOM! The wood next to her SPLINTERS into a million pieces. She hits the deck. She HEARS the commotion of men and horses getting closer. She scrambles for the sawed-off and scattered shells.

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - AFTERNOON

McPherson and the rest of his Posse come galloping down the grassy hilltop in the distance. They fan out in teams -- taking up strategic positions -- surrounding the house and barn.

McPherson, Big Dane, Dirty Bill, Handsome Jesse, Old Bob, and Ray Gardener are sitting upon their horses in front of some trees, badges gleaming upon their chests.

MCPHERSON

Dr. Henry Cole! The Sheriff of Ridgeway has you surrounded. You are under arrest for the charges of robbery and murder.

McPherson checks the time on his pocket watch.

INT. COLE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lilly lies on the floor loading every weapon in sight.

MCPHERSON (O.S.)

You have thirty seconds to surrender!

OUTSIDE.

McPherson watches the seconds tick away, raising his hand, giving the signal.

MCPHERSON

On my mark.

Fingers touch triggers in unison. And they wait.

INSIDE.

Lilly crawls on her belly with two shotguns, finding cover behind the toppled dresser in the center of the darkened room.

MCPHERSON (O.S.)

Twenty-five!

LILLY

My husband's innocent!

MCPHERSON (O.S.)

Come outside and we'll discuss it!

LILLY

Where's the Sheriff of Black Sparrow? Find him and we'll talk!

MCPHERSON (O.S.)

You're speaking to him! And you're running out of time!

A THUNDERCLAP explodes overhead. Lilly flinches, scared to death. And then, RIFLE FIRE sounds off from a short distance -- IMPACT. The planks over the windows begin SPLINTERING apart.

The kerosene lamp EXPLODES. She balls up. Bullets WHIZ past. Feathers are adrift everywhere from the shredded pillows. She looks down at her bare feet -- shattered glass accumulates -- and then the RIFLE FIRE ceases.

Lilly peaks over the bullet-riddled dresser. Burning kerosene is spreading across the floor in every direction. She looks around the room, contemplating and then she sees it, the wash basin clear across several feet of shattered glass.

She rips out a dresser drawer, flips it over, and crawls on top, avoiding the mangling chards. RIFLE FIRE sounds off again -- more BULLETS reek havoc. She reaches the basin. Smoke fills the room, burning her eyes. She douses the flames with water.

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - CONTINUOUS

McPherson reloads. The house is shot up bad. The porch overhang BREAKS loose and collapses onto the front steps. Black smoke trickles out between the cracks upstairs. McPherson takes aim, assessing the situation.

MCPHERSON
Go on, Ray.

RAY GARDNER
Ain't it Old Bob's turn?

OLD BOB
No Ray, it's your turn, it's always
your turn because going in first is
what you do.

MCPHERSON
Ray, move.

Ray glares at Old Bob and then dismounts. We follow him into the swaying crops that separates them from the house. He moves slowly, carefully through the foot of mud, emerging from the swaying stocks into the treacherous wide open.

CRACK! Ray clutches his chest. His legs give out. He collapses beside his fallen rifle. CRACK! Another shot WHIZZES past Old Bob, spooking his horse something fierce. She bucks wildly, tossing him.

McPherson, Big Dane, Carter, and Handsome Jesse all return FIRE, retreating towards the cluster of trees behind them. Old Bob picks himself up off the ground and follows them to safety.

INSIDE.

Lilly FIRES one more shot through a hole in the bedroom wall and then picks herself up, leaving the empty rifle behind, taking up the two shotguns, hustling out of the bedroom just as another volley of BULLETS come tearing through the walls.

OUTSIDE.

McPherson and his Deputies UNLOAD. After a moment, McPherson stops shooting and Big Dane, Carter, Old Bob, and Handsome Jesse all follow suit. They each take a moment to digest the fact that one of their own is lying dead in the mud a few yards away.

BIG DANE

How many we dealing with?

MCPHERSON

Impossible to be certain.

HANDSOME JESSE

I'll ride back and get the others.

MCPHERSON

Not yet.

McPherson turns his attention to Jasper who is sitting on the back of Smokey with his hands bound behind his back and a noose fastened snugly around his neck.

JASPER

(on the verge of tears)

Please, I don't want any money, I just want to go home to my family.

McPherson responds by jerking Smokey's reins, leading Jasper away from the trees towards the wide open.

INSIDE.

Lilly vaults down the staircase -- into the dining room -- finding cover beneath the dinner table.

MCPHERSON (O.S.)

Doctor and Misses Cole! Since you hold no value on your own lives, I have no alternative but to put the life of someone else on the line!

OUTSIDE.

McPherson is standing beside Smokey with Jasper, set to be hanged, looking on in tears.

MCPHERSON

You now have thirty seconds to surrender or this man will hang!

(to Jasper)

That's the jury in there. Plead.

JASPER

Please, I don't want to die!

MCPHERSON

Concise, to the point. Let's wait for the verdict. Twenty seconds!

We HONE IN on the house -- TRAVELLING past Ray's body -- over the debris of the porch -- finally arriving at the --

FRONT DOOR.

Lilly steps into daylight behind the barrels of her sawed-off, assessing the situation. McPherson motions to his Deputies. They keep their rifles aimed.

JASPER

Misses Cole, thank God!

MCPHERSON

Put it down!

LILLY

What kind of sheriff threatens an innocent man with hanging?

MCPHERSON

What kind of woman shoots down a Sheriff Deputy serving an arrest warrant? What kind of doctor robs and murders the elderly?

(points to Jasper)

This man? Innocent? Hardly. You have five seconds to lower your weapon or he and you will die.

LILLY

This is all some kind of terrible
misunderstanding. My husband saves
lives, he doesn't take them.

MCPHERSON

Three ... two ... one.

McPherson raises his open palm inches from Smokey's hide.

Lilly tosses the shotgun aside. McPherson holds his position,
signaling Big Dane, Carter, and Handsome Jesse to move in.

HANDSOME JESSE

Where's the doctor? He better not
be waiting someplace in there ready
to take a shot at us!

LILLY

He's not here you stupid son of a
bitch!

McPherson whispers to Old Bob.

MCPHERSON

Anyone opens fire from that house I
want you to drop this murdering
whore without hesitation.

OLD BOB

Yes sir.

MCPHERSON

Get moving.

Old Bob moves out. McPherson returns his attention to Lilly.

MCPHERSON

Walk slowly towards my deputies!

Big Dane and Handsome Jesse close in on Lilly.

HANDSOME JESSE

Reach for the sky Goddamn it!

BIG DANE

On your knees!

Handsome Jesse kicks Lilly square in the back, she goes down
stunned, face first in the dirt. Big Dane gets on top of her,
binding her wrists with barbed wire. Lilly grits her teeth,
suppressing the pain as the razor edges tear into her flesh.

MCPHERSON

Inside!

LILLY

You said you'd let him go!

MCPHERSON

Of course I did.

McPherson SLAPS Smokey's hide. Jasper's weight shifts as the horse goes out from under him and the noose CRACKS!

LILLY

Jasper!

Jasper twists from the rope, legs kicking in the wind, urine darkening his trousers. Handsome Jesse and Big Dane struggle with Lilly, using all their combined strength to drag her away.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - BLACK SPARROW - AFTERNOON

Establishing. Horses drink from the trough. TALL PAUL stands watch out front. Something he sees in the distance draws him down from the front steps.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - BLACK SPARROW - CONTINUOUS

Uncle Bones is mopping blood off the floor. Terry's body lies covered up in the cell next to Tucker.

UNCLE BONES

You've come a long way for nothing old boy. We got him first. That means none of you greedy sons of bitches see one red cent.

Tucker stays silent, surveying his surroundings.

UNCLE BONES

Don't worry, Sheriff will be back to hang, I mean, release you soon.

(laughs)

He hates bounty hunters something fierce but that's nothing personal.

Tall Paul bursts through the door.

TALL PAUL

We got trouble!

UNCLE BONES

What kind?

TALL PAUL

Someone set a damn fire in the hotel! Fat Mike and Ted Cooper are trapped in there! Come on!

Uncle Bones and Tall Paul rush out the door. Tucker steps up to the bars. His eyes focus on the set of keys left behind. The front door slowly opens. Fists pokes his head inside, smiling.

TUCKER

Your pipe catch fire?

FISTS

We must hurry.

TUCKER

(pointing to the keys)
Over there!

Fists takes up the keys, hurrying across the room.

FISTS

Our horses are out back. At least I think she's yours. What's with that horse William Tucker?

TUCKER

It was a surprise for you, kid. I'll need to borrow yours though. I got to be somewhere fast.

Fists opens the cell door. Tucker crosses the room, collecting his weapons, his affects and his hat.

FISTS

Where do you want me? And don't say out of town.

TUCKER

Out of town but stay close ... just like Thunder Canyon, understand?

Fists nods. Tucker makes for the door.

FISTS

How will I know when to return?

TUCKER

When all hell breaks loose.

And with that, he disappears.

EXT. MAIN STREET - BLACK SPARROW - MOMENTS LATER

Tucker gallops away on a majestic Black Horse while Fists struggles to keep the Old Nag upright, travelling away from Main Street in the opposite direction.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - AFTERNOON

Establishing. The bellowing storm overhead can not drown out the horrible SOUND of Lilly's STRUGGLE inside.

INT. COLE HOUSE - VARIOUS - CONTINUOUS

We travel from room to darkened room -- signs of a more recent struggle are evident -- blood stained shreds of familiar clothing are draped over broken furniture limbs.

THE BEDROOM. Lilly lies on the floor, a bloody mess. McPherson, Big Dane, Handsome Jesse, Dirty Bill, Ugly Joe, and Old Bob are looking down upon her, surrounding her in a claustrophobic circle.

DIRTY BILL

I wonder if her husband would go through this kind of hell for her?

BIG DANE

She doesn't know anything.

MCPHERSON

I'm still not convinced.

Handsome Jesse teases the edge of his serrated blade.

HANDSOME JESSE

Her pretty face is about to go away forever if she don't start singing.

MCPHERSON

(bending down)

Do you hear that? Do not force me to turn you over to their animal instincts. This can all be over with. Quickly, humanely.

LILLY

(struggling to speak)

My husband didn't do those things. He's a good man.

McPherson SLAMS her face into the ground and stands up.

MCPHERSON

It seems this woman's calling you a
liar, Jesse.

Handsome Jesse bends down beside Lilly, wiping away the blood from her streaming mouth and nostrils with his GREEN BANDANA.

HANDSOME JESSE

You calling me a liar, girl?

LILLY

If you say you was there? You're
Goddamn right I am.

Handsome Jesse grabs a handful of hair, pulling her close. McPherson studies him closely, something's not right.

HANDSOME JESSE

I seen him do it. Ambushed me and
my boys. Shot them poor old folks
to bits. He had what he came for.
He didn't have to kill them but he
did. I'd of been lying dead right
beside them if it wasn't for the
grace of our good Lord.

McPherson catches it. Right then and there, he knows Handsome Jesse's been lying about the entire account. He stifles any sign of emotion for the moment. Handsome Jesse glares at Lilly with lascivious intent.

MCPHERSON

Fact is you killed a lawmen today
Mrs. Cole. And for that you will
suffer. What I'm about to let
happen to you might be considered
an evil deed but let me assure you
... one evil deed begets another
... and I always make certain I
commit the last one.

Lilly looks around the room, realizing her fate is sealed.

LILLY

Some day, when it all goes terribly
wrong for you, and you wonder why,
you will remember this day.

MCPHERSON

Perhaps.

McPherson retreats into the shadows as the group moves in.

Lilly lunges forward, grabbing a heavy stick of furniture -- with every last ounce of strength she has to muster -- she SMASHES it into Ugly Joe's face -- bouncing him off the wall.

The Deputies soon gain control -- getting a hold of her -- tying her hands and feet to the bed posts as McPherson exits.

THE HALLWAY. McPherson stands at the top of the staircase. He pulls a handkerchief, roughly wiping the blood from his hands. In the background, through the crack in the door we SEE glimpses of Lilly and HEAR her THRASHING and SCREAMING.

McPherson looks back solemnly. The look in his eyes spell out confusion and conflict. He moves down the stairs and out the front door.

We TRAVEL down the hallway -- away from the bedroom door -- towards the windows -- past the bullet shredded curtains -- travelling smoothly --

OUTSIDE

-- moving out into the freezing afternoon. Ominous THUNDERHEADS rumble across the bleak, winter sky.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - AFTERNOON

The same ominous THUNDERHEADS. Tucker rides like hell across the open plains, halting atop the grassy hill overlooking the Cole Homestead.

Thick black smoke and red hot embers spew from the BURNING barn. The house hasn't yet caught fire. The surrounding landscape burns sporadically with flying embers.

Tucker kicks the horse into a furious GALLOP down the hill -- between the trees -- riding through the crop fields -- all the way up to the FRONT DOOR. He dismounts before the horse can even stop and charges into the house.

INT. COLE HOUSE - VARIOUS - CONTINUOUS

Tucker bursts through the door with his rifle.

TUCKER

Lilly!

No answer. He races upstairs -- down the cluttered hallway -- into the BEDROOM where he stops cold.

TUCKER

Lilly!

What he sees in front of him causes his legs to give out.

Daylight beams through the bullet holes in the walls, casting an eerie glow upon the bed -- bloody sheets are draped over the LUMP lying on the mattress -- bare hands and feet exposed, bound to the bed posts. Scrawled in more blood, arcing across the wall behind the bed is the word: **MURDERERS**.

Tucker staggers to his feet, repressing the simultaneous feelings of rage and guilt baring down upon him, approaching the bedside, not wanting to look, turning his head away, his hand reaching for the top of the bed sheet. He peels it back.

TUCKER

Oh God.

He searches the room, finds a chard of broken glass, and begins cutting her hands and feet loose from the bed posts. She's not moving. He puts his head on her chest, listening. He covers her with a blanket from the floor and takes her hand.

TUCKER

Lilly, can you hear me? I need you to wake up. Lilly?

Lilly lies there, barely recognizable from the beating, looking convincingly dead until her eyes blink open. She tries to focus on him, in the throws of delirium, barely able to utter:

LILLY

Henry?

Tucker tenderly brushes her cheek.

TUCKER

Lilly, it's William.

LILLY

It's cold in here.

TUCKER

You got to hold on, please, don't go to sleep, stay with me, alright?

He looks around the room, unsure of what to do next.

TUCKER

Lilly, I'm coming right back.

LILLY

Where are you going?

TUCKER

We need medical supplies. They're downstairs, right?

LILLY

Don't leave me.

TUCKER

Don't close your eyes. Promise me.

Tucker turns to face the door, frozen by the sight of --

HENRY, standing in the doorway holding onto his rifle, paralyzed by confusion and horrified disbelief.

TUCKER

Henry?

Henry instinctively snaps to, COCKING the hammer back, lining up his sights, stepping into the room.

HENRY

Get away from her!

Tucker moves away from the bed slowly with his hands up. Henry passes him, closing in on Lilly, realizing the severity of her condition, chilled to the bone by what he sees.

HENRY

William, my God, what have you done to my wife?

TUCKER

Henry, I didn't do this.

HENRY

Lilly? Sweetheart? Talk to me.

LILLY

I won't sleep. I'm not dreaming.

Henry looks to Tucker with daggers in his eyes.

TUCKER

I'm guilty of a lot of bad things but I would never do this to her.

HENRY

I ought to kill you right now.

TUCKER

Then do it! Shoot me where I stand
but do it fast because right now
she needs your help!

The two men stare each other down. Henry edges closer and closer to Lilly. Tucker stays put.

HENRY

Don't you make any sudden moves.
You've been warned. You got that?

TUCKER

Just go easy, I won't do nothing.

Henry lowers his rifle, setting it aside, moving to his wife's bedside. She turns her head to look at him. A slight smile spreads across her face. He fights to keep his emotions in check. His trembling hand takes hers.

HENRY

Oh God ... what happened ... who
did this to you?

Henry wipes away his tears, realizing that he must let the doctor inside take over for now, snapping to, checking her pulse, touching her forehead.

HENRY

How long?

TUCKER

Sometime today. This afternoon.

Henry braces himself -- and then peels back the sheets -- looking her over with heartbroken eyes. He just stares for a long, sad moment -- and then secures the sheet and blanket back in place. His voice begins to crack as he speaks.

HENRY

We need more blankets to keep her
comfortable. Hot water. Sponges.

TUCKER

Where do I go?

HENRY

I don't know, just find them! Give
me a minute alone with my wife!

TUCKER
Alright, Henry.

THE HALLWAY. Tucker makes his way to the staircase but stops just shy of taking the first step, instead looking back sorrowfully towards the bedroom door.

THE BEDROOM. Henry weeps quietly beside Lilly, hands clasped in prayer, speaking to her as she drifts in and out of consciousness.

HENRY
You have to hang on. I can't imagine this world alone without you. There are so many things we have left to do, so much life left to live. The family we'll have some day. Oh God. How could this happen? Please don't take her. Don't take her I'm begging you.

He takes her hand, burying his face in the pillow beside her.

FADE TO:

EXT. TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

A beautiful sky full of stars. A jubilant FIDDLE joined by a BANJO -- two grinning Musicians finding their rhythm -- Men and Women wearing their best clothes are dancing, celebrating the eve of a new year.

Walking among them hand and hand are Tucker and Lilly. Henry keeps pace behind them, tagging along. They are younger. Tucker is clean cut. Henry still has both of his eyes. Lilly is radiant, full of life.

They're laughing and having a good time.

HENRY
What's the hurry you two?

LILLY
We need something to toast with.

TUCKER
Be right back.

Tucker staggers off towards the booze wagon. Henry and Lilly stay back, a bit awkward in each other's presence, waiting.

LILLY

Henry Cole we need to find you a
woman in the next five minutes.

HENRY

How come?

LILLY

Don't you want someone to kiss at
midnight?

HENRY

Awe, it's alright, wouldn't be the
first year I rang in alone.

LILLY

Don't you ever want to find
someone? Don't you get lonely?

HENRY

Sometimes. It's just that I'm real
busy with my studies and all.

LILLY

Well then, you're going to be one
hell of catch for some lucky girl
out there one day.

HENRY

Thank you Lilly that means a lot.
William's a real lucky man to have
found someone like you.

Lilly smiles. Henry is embarrassed. Tucker arrives with the
drinks. Everyone takes a glass. Tucker salutes.

TUCKER

Here's to you, here's to me, may we
never disagree but if we do, to
hell with you, here's to me!
(laughing)

To my very best friends in the
whole wide world. I love you both.

HENRY

Thanks pal.

LILLY

Quite the wordsmith William Tucker.

Cheers. Tucker goes to drink. Someone KNOCKS into him sending
his glass falling to the ground where it SHATTERS.

TUCKER
Hey Goddamn it!

He looks up, way up at the BIG MAN whose arm he's now squeezing onto, not backing down in the slightest.

BIG MAN
Sorry partner. Happy New Year.

Tucker doesn't let go. Big Man knows by the look in Tucker's eyes, there's going to be a fight.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)
Better call off your friend here
before he gets hurt.

Tucker swings, CONNECTING with Big Man's chin. Big Man absorbs the hit -- shoves Tucker off balance, sending him to the ground, almost taking out Lilly. Henry jumps in the middle.

HENRY
Whoa! Gentlemen! William, come on, it was an accident. Sir, I apologize for my friend, he means no harm.

TUCKER
Hell I don't!

Lilly grabs Tucker by the shirt collar.

LILLY
William you're out of line!

TUCKER
He bumped into me!

LILLY
And he apologized!

TUCKER
That ain't good enough!

She shakes her head, looking at him with disappointment. Tucker turns his back on her. Henry is making peace, walking Big Man away. Tucker turns around. Lilly is gone. His moment of realization has come, he's wrong and he knows it.

MOMENTS LATER.

Lilly sits away from the action, alone with her drink. Henry approaches and sits down beside her.

LILLY

Don't try to defend him Henry.

HENRY

William's always had a hot temper.
It doesn't make him a bad man.

LILLY

It's getting stale and if he don't
watch out it's going to get him
killed. Then what do I do?

HENRY

It doesn't change the way he feels
about you.

Tucker pokes his head out from a nearby tree. Henry sees him
and nods, they're working together to win her back.

HENRY

It's difficult for him to show his
emotions ... for instance, has he
ever told you what he thinks about
your eyes?

Lilly turns, defensive but curious. Tucker strains to lip read.

HENRY

They crush him every time the sun
hits them or a candle flickers
inside. It's when ... he says it's
when he can see your soul. And
it's beautiful.

FIRECRACKERS EXPLODE above. GUNSHOTS ring out.

Lilly stares into Henry's eyes, searching for the truth and
finding it. She leans toward him.

LILLY

Happy New Year.

HENRY

Happy New Year.

TUCKER (O.S.)

Happy New Year!

Tucker plops down between them.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

The house is dark save for upstairs. Fire has reduced the barn down to its frame, most of the flames are flickering out as the cold wind HOWLS across the landscape. THUNDERHEADS rumble overhead, reminding those below of Mother Nature's presence.

INT. BEDROOM - COLE HOUSE - NIGHT

The room is aglow with peaceful candlelight and a bit of moonlight shining through the tiny bullet holes in the walls.

Lilly lies on the bed, washed clean, resting as comfortably as possible between clean blankets and sheets. Henry and Tucker sit on either side of her, keeping vigil.

The long SILENCE is broken as Tucker asks softly:

TUCKER
Is she going to make it?

HENRY
You'd better hope she does.

TUCKER
Henry with God as my witness I ...

HENRY
Save it William. Not even someone like you is capable of something this heartless. Who did this? What happened? Where were you?

TUCKER
I woke to her gone this morning, thought she run off to find you. I had too much to drink and ...

HENRY
What were you doing here in the first place, in my home, having a drink with my wife?

Lilly's eyes open slightly. Neither man notices. Tucker wrings his hands together, searching for the words.

HENRY
Answer me!

TUCKER
Henry I wish I could tell you my intentions was pure.
(MORE)

TUCKER (cont'd)

I wish I could say I came out here
to help you two but I didn't.

HENRY

How did you find us?

TUCKER

Finding people's what I do, been
chasing after you two for a long
time now, ever since Tennessee.

HENRY

Yeah? What took you so long?

TUCKER

It's a big country. Lots of other
folks needed locating. Then, last
week I stumbled across your
likeness on that wanted poster.

HENRY

What were you planning to do once
you caught up to me? Turn me in,
cash in some measly reward?

Tucker takes a long breath. No more deceit.

TUCKER

I came here to kill you Henry, for
the wrong you done me.

Henry glares at Tucker, sizing him up.

HENRY

You haven't changed at all. Still
that same selfish, bitter drunk.

TUCKER

She was the love of my life. The
only happiness I ever had.

(leaning toward him)

I should of taken both your eyes.
You got off easy. You were my best
friend. So damn right I'm bitter.
On both accounts. Damn right.

HENRY

You just couldn't let us live in
peace could you? It was either me
or her but one of us had to die,
isn't that right William?

Tucker YANKS his COLT. Henry matches with his RIFLE. Both men COCK back the hammers simultaneously -- both livid, it takes everything for each of them not to squeeze the trigger.

TUCKER

You listen here you son of a bitch,
no matter what's between you and
me, let it be known, I would have
died protecting her from this.

HENRY

But you didn't.

TUCKER

Neither did you Henry ... we're
both damned.

Henry and Tucker stare each other down. Neither man gives an inch but this is not the time nor the place. Stalemate, until --

HENRY

We'll settle all matters between
you and I soon enough.

TUCKER

I'm counting on it.

Both men slowly lower their firearms.

INT. COLE HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

The melting candles indicate the passing of several hours. Henry is praying beside Lilly as she sleeps. Tucker sits quietly in a chair on the other side of the bed.

AND THEN LATER. The candles now flicker down to their bases. A kerosene lantern burns near the window, providing minimal light.

Tucker keeps watch by the window. Henry blots away the sweat from Lilly's delirious brow with great tenderness. She's breathing in short and shallow bursts, his expression telling us that the end is near.

Lilly reaches out to Henry which catches him by surprise. He takes her hand, his voice cracking with sorrowful emotion:

HENRY

Lilly, can you hear me?

She nods. Tucker moves to the bed.

HENRY
Are you in pain?

She shakes her head "no" -- reaching out to Tucker. He looks to Henry and then gently takes her hand. She draws each of their hands closer to her chest, until they finally rest upon her body. She holds onto both of them firmly. Their eyes meet, each man wondering whether or not to pull away but -- they do not. All three of them stay connected in the embrace.

HENRY
We're here Lilly.

She looks at each man and smiles -- first Tucker -- then Henry -- and then she lies back in the pillow and closes her eyes.

TUCKER
Hold on Lilly.

HENRY
Stay with us.

She clutches her grip down tight on both of them, squeezing with every last bit of strength she has.

Then, the kerosene lantern on the window ledge flickers out, leaving the scene in darkness.

FADE TO:

EXT. COLE HOUSE - NIGHT

Tucker stands beneath what's left of the porch, gazing across the darkened landscape. His warm breath clashes against the freezing air in clouded bursts.

He pulls his liquor canteen, bringing it to his mouth and then stops, staring at it. He hurls it into the crop fields. Tears begin streaming down his cheeks, disappearing into his beard.

The door CREAKS open and out steps Henry. His stoic countenance contrasts with Tucker's who collects himself quickly. Each man quietly acknowledges the other man's presence and they stand there in SILENCE for a long moment.

TUCKER
We both know what has to be done.

Henry looks out to the distant mountains. He nods.

HENRY
Kill them all.

TUCKER

You prepared to put a man into the ground without so much as looking into his eyes?

HENRY

Goddamn straight I am.

TUCKER

Good because the bastards who did this are ruthless.

HENRY

McPherson?

TUCKER

Indians believe he's immortal, spawned from great evil, they call him *Wanagi Lu-ta*, the White Ghost.

HENRY

Do you really believe that?

Tucker turns to Henry, the answer is written on his face.

TUCKER

Years back, I had contracts in the Northern Territory. I traded with a Blackfoot tribe near the frontier. They were my friends until a crazy band of scalp hunters came in and wiped them all out. McPherson was their leader.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. INDIAN CAMP - HIGH MOUNTAINS - DAWN

Tucker fires -- BANG! The Pale Scalper/McPherson goes DOWN, almost disappearing into the snow.

Tucker kneels, wiping away the snow from McPherson's bearded face -- his eyes are open -- he's not breathing -- blood seeps out from the gunshot wound just below his hairline.

TUCKER (V.O.)

He was more dead than I'd ever seen a man, no question in my mind.

Tucker backs off, making his way to Fists. Fists runs to him, clutching on and not letting go. Tucker holds him tight, scanning the area for any last survivors.

We PULL UP and over them. Dead bodies are strewn all around as far as we can see. Tucker and Fists are the only souls alive.

BACK TO:

EXT. COLE HOUSE - NIGHT

Henry stares out into the night. Tucker approaches him.

TUCKER

Do I believe the myth? Is
McPherson a ghost? No, I think
he's the Devil himself.

HENRY

Then let's send him home.

Henry turns to Tucker. The night sky behind him turns white, the first snow of winter comes dumping down.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - BLACK SPARROW - DAWN

Establishing. The town is blanketed snow. Exquisite, silent, hypnotic snow flurries dance against the slate grey sky.

EXT. MUNICIPAL BUILDING - ROOFTOP - DAWN

Tall Paul watches the entrance of town through the site of his rifle from above.

INT. WILLARD'S BILLIARDS - CONTINUOUS

A spirited scene of debauchery that's lasted through the night. MUSICIANS play an IRISH JIG at full tilt while drunken WOMEN dance atop the tables much to the delight of the drunken MEN. The Bartender has his hands full serving the rowdy bunch.

McPherson keeps a watchful eye on the front door from a table near the back. He's flanked by Reverend Carter and Handsome Jesse, sitting there, suffering through a throbbing headache. It seems everyone is enjoying themselves but him.

Handsome Jesse notices, shouting over the noise:

HANDSOME JESSE

Come on Patty, turn that frown
upside down brother!

Handsome Jesse reaches for the whiskey.

HANDSOME JESSE
Here, this will help ...

McPherson grabs Handsome Jesse by the hand, never addressing him with his eyes, staring off into the distance.

MCPHERSON
You will address me as Sheriff.

HANDSOME JESSE
Ah, don't be like that Patty.

MCPHERSON
And you are not my brother. My
brother is dead. As you well know.
Do we understand each other?

HANDSOME JESSE
Sheriff, I'm sorry, I didn't mean
any offense.

MCPHERSON
Do you really understand what it
means to be a lawman Jesse?

McPherson tightens his grip. Old Bob and Big Dane turn their attention towards the heated conversation.

HANDSOME JESSE
(drunk and confused)
I don't get your meaning.

MCPHERSON
It's very simple. Lawmen are
unique in that we are cut from a
finer cloth, not many of our ilk in
comparison to the rest. That is
why lawmen must trust in each
other. Lawmen must remain
impervious to greed and corruption.
The oaths we as lawmen have sworn
to uphold must be our religion. So
I'll ask you again Jesse... are you
a man of the law?

HANDSOME JESSE
Of course I am.

Handsome Jesse tries to free himself from McPherson's grip but it only gets painfully tighter.

HANDSOME JESSE

Come on Sheriff. Maybe we all had a little too much to drink.

MCPHERSON

Part of that oath is to faithfully ensure the trust and safety of the people we are tasked to protect. Much like those poor souls you watched die alongside my brother.

HANDSOME JESSE

Please, I think you're mistaken.

Reverend Carter grabs Handsome Jesse's other hand. He struggles but to no avail. McPherson finally looks at Handsome Jesse with the eyes of a lunatic.

MCPHERSON

For far too long I have denied an awful truth to myself about my brother and certain of his minions. This afternoon, when the good doctor's wife called you out and the truth was written all over your pathetic face, I could no longer ignore what I feared must be true.

HANDSOME JESSE

I don't know what you're talking about Sheriff!

EXT. WILLARD'S BILLIARDS - DAWN

Henry Cole and William Tucker stand across the street. They're both armed to the teeth, dusters buttoned up to the chin, hats pulled down. They share a quiet exchange -- and then they walk.

INT. WILLARD'S BILLIARDS - CONTINUOUS

McPherson pulls his coat aside, exposing his sidearm. Reverend Carter continues to restrain Handsome Jesse. Big Dane and Old Bob are hanging on their every word.

MCPHERSON

Every man should have one last opportunity in his lifetime to truly purge himself of his wrong doings. I am certain that this time has come for you now Jesse.

AT THE ENTRANCE. The door opens. Tucker enters first. Henry follows. Nobody seems to notice. Henry spots Ugly Joe clapping along with the band, rifle at his side. Tucker is already walking towards him.

MCPHERSON AND HANDSOME JESSE

HANDSOME JESSE
 Sheriff please ... we was ambushed!
 God as my witness!

TUCKER walks up on Ugly Joe, out from underneath his coat comes the shotgun. Ugly Joe looks up to see the famed bounty hunter behind the barrels hovering inches away from his face.

UGLY JOE
 Oh Jesus God.

MCPHERSON draws steel, pressing it under Handsome Jesse's chin.

MCPHERSON
 Then he shall witness this you
 lying son of a bitch!

HANDSOME JESSE
 Wait!

TUCKER presses the shotgun against Ugly Joe's face and pulls the trigger -- KABOOM! The MUSIC stops.

MCPHERSON redirects his steel. Pistols CLICK around the room. Handsome Jesse sneaks away in the confusion. Anyone without a weapon makes for the back. The Bartender hunkers down. All eyes shift to the front door.

TUCKER stands there holding the smoking shotgun. Ugly Joe's headless body topples out of the chair onto the floor. An odd moment of confusion -- no one is quite sure what to do -- and then a woman SCREAMS! A match to a flame.

The scene EXPLODES, everything happening in split seconds.

Fat Mike opens FIRE from the second floor. Tucker unleashes two FLASHING pistols -- gunning him down -- Fat Mike CRASHES through the railing -- splattering just a few feet away from Henry.

Ted Cooper rushes in, levels his ten-gauge shotgun and BLASTS away. Tucker and Henry scramble. Henry dives behind a fallen table. Tucker leaps over the bar. Henry pops up with his shotgun -- KABOOM! Ted Cooper's chest splays open.

Reverend Carter holds McPherson back. More BULLETS hit the wall behind them, just missing.

REVEREND CARTER
We'll take them outside!

MCPHERSON
Goddamn it!

In a flashing move, McPherson pivots and then rapid FIRES his pistols -- 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12 times -- forcing Henry and Tucker down for cover.

REVEREND CARTER
Let's move!

Reverend Carter and McPherson dash out the back door with Old Bob and Big Dane in tow.

Handsome Jesse has a clear shot at Henry and it takes it -- BANG! The bullet just misses its mark. Tucker lays down suppression FIRE from behind the bar as Henry runs for cover.

Uncle Bones pops up from behind the piano, UNLOADING at Tucker, forcing him down, narrowly avoiding the volley of BULLETS. Bottles EXPLODE raining broken glass and booze everywhere. Tucker doesn't flinch, reloading.

EXT. WILLARD'S BILLIARDS - CONTINUOUS

McPherson and his gang spill out into the street. Patrons are everywhere, running past like chickens with their heads cut off.

MCPHERSON
Why didn't we see them coming?!

REVEREND CARTER
There!

Reverend Carter points to the rooftop. McPherson looks up. Tall Paul hangs over the ledge, throat slit, a large blade jammed through his back.

MCPHERSON
Get every man and weapon from the cache ... now!

INT. WILLARD'S BILLIARDS - CONTINUOUS

Henry pops up from behind his defense and FIRES -- hitting Handsome Jesse twice in the upper body, his pistol tumbles loose. He DROPS, bleeding bad, looking towards the back door.

The Bartender is holed up near Tucker. He extends his shaky hand, holding out a six shooter.

BARTENDER
On the house.

TUCKER
Cheers.

Tucker moves out from behind the bar, maneuvering between the toppled tables and chairs. Uncle Bones jumps up a few feet away holding the frightened PIANIST at gunpoint.

UNCLE BONES
Drop them guns or I'll drop him!

Tucker doesn't comply.

UNCLE BONES
I'll blow his ivory tickling brains
out I swear to Christ!

PIANIST
Please, do what he says!

Tucker FIRES -- hitting the Pianist in the leg, he drops. Uncle Bones is exposed -- Tucker FIRES TWICE -- blowing him away -- his body SLAMS against the piano keys -- DA-DA!

The Pianist agonizes on the floor in pain.

PIANIST
You shot me in the leg!

TUCKER
He was fixing to blow your brains
out, figured you wouldn't mind.

Tucker moves out. The Pianist looks on, confused.

Henry kicks aside tables and chairs, following Handsome Jesse who is meagerly crawling towards the back door. Henry catches up, KICKING him in the ribs hard enough to spin him over.

Henry looks down on Handsome Jesse who has plugged the hole in his torso with the GREEN BANDANA. Handsome Jesse looks up with a sly grin on his face, holding his hands out in submission.

HANDSOME JESSE
You wouldn't shoot an unarmed man,
would you slim?

Henry glares down at the man he now recognizes, the bastard who started it all. He extends his pistol, COCKING it back slowly.

HANDSOME JESSE
Please mister, please don't ...

BANG! Blood splatters Henry's face, never revealing the sight of Handsome Jesse's grim demise. Tucker returns to his side, carrying an arm full of recovered weapons.

TUCKER
Let's finish it.

Henry stands there for a moment and then follows Tucker outside.

EXT. MAIN STREET - FIRST LIGHT

Henry and Tucker make their way out into the middle of the street. Waiting for them a hundred feet away through the falling snow are McPherson and his six remaining Deputies, fanned out across the road.

TUCKER
I guess this is as fair a fight as we could've hoped for.

Henry assesses the situation.

HENRY
Tucker, no matter what happens, I'm real glad to have you with me.

TUCKER
(looking over)
Thanks Henry. Means a lot.

McPherson drags his bad leg forward, pulling his long coat back, exposing his weapons.

MCPHERSON
Well, this is quite a sight! The cat and mouse united!

Henry and Tucker stand their ground -- as do McPherson and his Deputies -- no one blinks -- all hands gripping steel.

MCPHERSON
Ready to surrender?

HENRY
(he shakes his head)
We're ready to send every last one of you pigs straight to hell!

McPherson grins. Reverend Carter, Old Bob, Big Dane, Dirty Bill, CURLY RED and MOHAWK JOHN all step forward.

MCPHERSON

Surrender and I promise you a fair trial!

Tucker yanks his Colt and fires -- BANG! Hitting Reverend Carter square in the forehead -- DROPPING him in the snow beside McPherson from a hundred feet away. Everyone is stunned -- most of all Henry who looks to Tucker.

HENRY

Why didn't you just shoot McPherson?

TUCKER

I was trying to.

McPherson looks at Reverend Carter, his eyes crazed.

MCPHERSON

Put 'em down!

Everyone begins SHOOTING. Black silhouettes move in and out of smoke screens behind rapid muzzle FLASHES. The Deputies scatter leaving McPherson alone in the street.

Tucker and Henry split up -- running towards the storefronts on opposite sides of the street -- FIRING back the entire time.

McPherson, alone, trudges brazenly down the middle of the street, taking SHOTS at Tucker and Henry who are both busy fighting off the approaching Deputies. He gets off a lucky shot that PINGS off the wall and HITS Tucker in the forearm.

Tucker looses his piece and goes down after it. BANG! BANG! BANG! The pistol FIRE is relentless, bullets spraying snow high into the air. Tucker can't find the Colt so he rips the shotgun off his back and goes for broke.

KABOOM! Big Dane leaps out of harm's way -- exposing Old Bob to a massive HIT that bursts open his upper body. Big Dane returns fire -- BANG! Tucker falls, disappearing between the buildings.

Henry FIRES at McPherson, BANG! He misses. McPherson FIRES at Henry -- BANG! Henry's legs give out -- he flops backwards onto the porch of a darkened, building. His shirt goes red but he keeps moving -- finding cover behind a wall of barrels.

Big Dane peaks his head down the narrow gap between buildings. He can't tell whether anyone is hiding in the darkness or not and then, KABOOM! The massive BLAST knocks him off his feet.

Tucker emerges from between the buildings. He bends down and pries Big Dane's piece from his cold, dead hand. BANG! Tucker falls forward, struck hard by a bullet in the back.

Mohawk John closes in on him behind two smoking pistols.

MOHAWK JOHN
(aggressive)
Go ahead! Make a move! Come on
I'm begging you! Come on!

Tucker climbs up the side of the building, his legs and arms still working, realizing that he's alright but defenseless. He painfully raises his hands up over his head and surrenders.

TUCKER
You got me.

MOHAWK JOHN
Yep and I got one more for you.

Then -- a horse WHINNIES nearby and suddenly -- THORP! Mohawk John's expression goes blank and he drops his pistols, he slowly turns to look behind him, a tomahawk is buried through the back of his skull. He falls forward, dead.

Fists rides up at full speed, shirtless, war painted just like the Old Nag kicking ass beneath him. His BATTLE CRY echoes throughout Main Street over the sound of the endless GUNFIRE.

Dirty Bill SHOOTS wildly. He spots Henry in the distance, taking aim and then hearing POUNDING HOOVES close in. He spins around -- directly into the path of another flying tomahawk. CRACK! Fists looks back at his handy work, drawing his bow.

Curly Red spots Fists, aims and -- CLICKS EMPTY! He goes to reload but Fists has him lined up -- THOOP! An arrow through the chest. Fists KICKS him to the ground as he blows past.

Henry trades FIRE with McPherson who is hiding behind a terrified horse tethered to a post. The horse bucks -- exposing McPherson for the briefest of moments -- BANG! Henry hits him in the gut -- McPherson tumbles backwards into the snow.

Henry moves out, collapsing down the front steps -- his head HITTING the frozen ground -- he lays there motionless.

Tucker stumbles into the middle of the street. He tosses his empty rifle aside. Fists rides circles around him, eyes scanning the rooftops, poised with his trusty bow.

McPherson -- eyes wild and bulging -- a bloody hand clutching his wound -- staggering up the street -- bearing down on Tucker and Fists through the smoke and snow.

Tucker raises his arms -- giving McPherson a clean shot at him.

TUCKER

Come on!

Fists kicks the Mighty Nag into a heavy gallop -- passing Tucker -- picking up momentum -- lining up his arrow -- SCREAMING a thunderous battle cry.

TUCKER

Fists! No!

Fists unleashes the ARROW. McPherson SHOOTS. Fists falls from his horse -- into the snow, shot and bleeding. McPherson stands there, looking to the arrow that's devastated his right shoulder and is still sticking out.

Tucker TACKLES McPherson from behind, grabbing the arrow and twisting. Insanely, the pain somehow energizes McPherson. He flips Tucker over his shoulder, shoving his face deep into the snow. Tucker fights back but he's weakened from injury and struggles to save himself.

MCPHERSON

I'll kill you!

Tucker THRASHES -- sinking deeper and losing steam. McPherson doesn't relent until he is convinced Tucker is suffocated.

McPherson rises to his feet -- leaving Tucker behind -- moving past Fists who isn't moving -- towards Henry who is just coming to consciousness across the street.

McPherson stops at Big Dane's body, retrieving her pistol, checking the chamber -- loaded. He reaches Henry and takes aim.

MCPHERSON

Henry Cole?

Henry, unarmed and helpless, nods "yes."

MCPHERSON

You killed my brother.

HENRY

Yes I did.

McPherson is put off momentarily by Henry's curt reply but he quickly regains his composure and raises his pistol.

Henry, resigned to his fate, closes his eyes -- BANG! He flinches but nothing happens to him. He opens his eyes. Tucker stands there between him and McPherson, shot in the stomach.

Tucker takes a step. McPherson FIRES another shot. Tucker doesn't go down. McPherson looks at him with disbelief. Tucker latches onto his coat, whispering into his ear.

TUCKER
Remember me you son of bitch?

McPherson coldly studies his face.

MCPHERSON
No.

McPherson fires again -- BANG! Tucker GRUNTS, sliding further down McPherson's body. McPherson lines up the kill shot.

TUCKER
What about him?

McPherson turns -- and then -- THWACK! He looks down at the arrowhead protruding from his broken sternum.

McPherson is stunned. Fists unleashes another arrow -- CRUNCH! Right through his gaping mouth -- EXPLODING through his skull. He stiffens and then face plants in front of Tucker.

HENRY
William!

Henry pulls Tucker out of the street. He checks his pulse. Grave concern furrows his brow.

INT. WILLARD'S BILLIARDS - MOMENTS LATER

Henry and Fists lie Tucker down on his back. The Bartender moves in with a pale of water and wet cloths. Henry peels back Tucker's bloody shirt. The wounds are serious. Tucker struggles to breath, trying to keep his eyes open.

TUCKER
Give it to me straight doc?

Henry shakes his head, unable to hide the truth. Tucker knows it. Fists takes his friend's hand, rocking back and forth, sobbing. Tears are streaming down Henry's cheeks as well.

HENRY
You want a drink or something?

TUCKER

Think I'm ready to lick that habit
once and for all.

Tucker tries not to laugh, coughing up blood instead. He collects and grabs Henry, gesturing to Fists.

TUCKER

Watch over him, will you?

Henry's barely able to hold it together.

FISTS

You have to fight William Tucker.
It is not your time to go.

TUCKER

I'll do my best kid.

Tucker draws Henry closer.

TUCKER

Doc ... I got one last thing to ask
and ... it ain't going to be easy.

HENRY

I'm listening.

TUCKER

Bury me beside her ... if that's
not too much to ask I'd be obliged.

Henry looks into his eyes, holding back the flood of emotion.

HENRY

William ...

After a moment, Henry finally nods, unable to speak.

TUCKER

Much obliged doc.

Fists and Henry hold onto their friend.

FADE TO:

EXT. COLE HOMESTEAD - AFTERNOON

Establishing. The land and what remains of the house and barn are blanketed by fresh powder. A precession of Black Sparrow Townspeople are gathered, waiting to pay their respects.

Henry and Fists stand over the final resting place of Lilly Cole and William Tucker; Henry is midway through his sermon.

HENRY

Where there is injury, pardon ...
where there is doubt, faith ...
where there is despair, hope ...
where there is darkness, light ...
and where there is sadness, joy.
Grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console ... to
be understood as to understand ...
to be loved as to love ... for it
is in giving that we receive, it is
pardoning that we are pardoned, and
it is in dying that we are born to
eternal life.

Henry closes his journal, placing a single white flower on Lilly's grave.

Fists steps up. He pulls a blue feather from his arm band and stands it in the soil above Tucker.

FISTS

A true warrior does not kill to end
life, he kills to preserve it. You
are a true warrior William Tucker.

We DRIFT away from the funeral -- upwards into the winter sky --
the storm clouds are finally parting on the horizon -- and
shining through them, a single ray of light.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END