

KIN OF KUDZU

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FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Bullfrogs and crickets croak and chirp throughout a dark forest. A man's labored breathing cuts through the nature sounds. MOSES SMALLS, 34, tears through the woods. Brambles scratch his face and tear at his already ragged clothes. He trips on an exposed root, but the nearing sound of barking and hollering spurs him to feet.

MOSES

Don't stop. You can't stop.

EXT. FOREST - SAME

WILLIAM MURPHY, 35, runs through the woods. His RIFLE and RUCKSACK bounce on his back as he runs. He quickly cuts through a thicket and hides behind a tree to catch his breath. The lanterns dimly light up his face.

SOLDIER 1 (O.S.)

SOUND OFF.

SOLDIER 2

Nothing here.

SOLDIER 3

I've got a trail. Behind the tree  
at 10 o'clock.

A bullet zips by and CRACKS into a nearby tree. William sprints forward. The soldiers quickly follow.

WILLIAM

Shit.

EXT. FOREST - SAME

CRACK. Moses ducks instinctively at the gunshot. He looks around scared. He continues his torrid pace, but he stops as he hears the voices of the soldiers ahead of him. It's a lot more organized than the hollering of the Slave Catchers.

William slows as he hears the BARKS and HOLLERING in front of him. Another bullet whizzes by and forces him forward.

Moses runs hard, his head down. He's blind to everything but his own survival.

William runs hard, holding his rifle to him with one hand. William turns around to see how far his pursuers are.

CRASH.

Moses and William run into each other. They both get up quickly. Moses has his fists up and William holds his knife. They both look over the others shoulder and see the other's pursuers. They take a second to the look the other in the eye before taking off in the same direction.

They jockey for the front position. They don't have to be fast, just faster than the other. But the physicality only makes them slower as the lanterns from the groups get brighter and brighter.

They're neck and neck rushing fast into the dark woods until suddenly--

They fall forward down a steep hill. They keep falling, eventually clearing the trees and into the iconic muddy waters of the MISSISSIPPI RIVER. Both men struggle to stay afloat in the rough water. Clearly, neither man can swim.

Moses swims to a piece of driftwood and clings to it. He catches his breath and watches William flail around. He reaches a hand out to William. William reaches out, but stops once he realizes he doesn't have his bag.

MOSES

Grab my hand. You won't make it if you don't.

William looks at him then looks for his bag. IT's floating a few feet from them. He turns to go for the bag, his heads bobs underwater a few times. He reaches out and grabs the bag. He's running out of energy as he goes under.

Moses stretches out his hand, but William is already underwater. He starts to pulls his hand back until--

The barrel of Williams rifle jolts through the water just in reach of Moses. He pulls the rifle slowly towards him until he can grab William's hand. William makes it to the raft. He coughs up water and rests his head on the driftwood.

MOSES (CONT'D)

That bag worth your life?

William just looks up, but the's too tired to answer. The sun starts to rise as the current carries the two men away.

SUPER: KIN OF KUDZU

EXT. CAMPSITE - MORNING

William and Moses sit across a dying fire staring at each other. Moses' slave clothes and William's Confederate coat dry next to each other. William eyes the SCAR TISSUE in the shape of the letter R.

WILLIAM  
Runaway slave, are you?

Moses' eyes flick towards the grey coat.

MOSES  
Moses. You a little soldier boy?

William wags his finger at Moses. He cranes his neck over to show him his TATTOO of a capital D.

WILLIAM  
William. Not anymore. Can't stand people telling me what to do. You can probably understand why.

Only embers remain in the fire pit. Moses stokes it, but it doesn't come back to life.

MOSES  
Your turn to gather wood.

William's eyes flick towards his bag. He makes a show of slinging his rifle over his shoulder, just as a reminder.

WILLIAM  
Don't touch my stuff.

Moses nods, but as soon as William walks off, his eyes go right to the bag.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

William walks through the woods. He's carrying a bundle of sticks. He bends down to check for some dry wood among a fallen, rotting tree. He stops as he hears a twig SNAP.

He sees a fox about ten yards away. The fox, however isn't looking at William, but behind him. William slowly turns around to see a black man, RICHARD, staring at him expressionless. William breathes a sigh of relief.

WILLIAM  
Whew, it's just you.

The man turns his head towards the direction of the camp.  
William turns and hurries towards the camp.

EXT. CAMPSITE - MOMENTS LATER

Moses rifles through William's bag. He pulls out a LOCKPICKING KIT, BULLETS, and a RED BOOK. He opens it to see all the pages torn out and only one thing written in it. "To Franklin Foster, Holly Springs would be shit without you."

Before he can even wonder what the hell that means, A gun barrel presses up against his skull.

WILLIAM

Here's a tip, don't try to steal  
from a thief.

Moses raises his hands with the book and slowly gets up.

MOSES

Wasn't stealing. Just wanted to  
know what's so important that you'd  
die for it.

William snatches the book from him.

WILLIAM

That's for me to know.

He packs his bag up. He shakes some of the water off his coat before putting it on. He starts to walk away.

MOSES

Who's Franklin Foster.

William stops.

WILLIAM

Who?

Moses looks at him like he's crazy.

MOSES

From the book.

William stares in amazement. He drops his bag and fishes out the book.

WILLIAM

You can read?

MOSES

You can't? I thought all white folk could read.

WILLIAM

I learned a different set of skills growing up.

He opens the book and holds it to Moses' face.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Tell me what this says.

MOSES

Only if you tell me why it's so important.

WILLIAM

Why would I do that.

MOSES

Because you owe me. I saved your life.

William closes the book in frustration. He walks off but then stops.

WILLIAM

Shit. Fine. But your life was better off before knowing this.

MOSES

I doubt that.

He holds the book up to his face again.

WILLIAM

This is a treasure map. There's loads of Confederate gold hidden away.

MOSES

How much we talking?

WILLIAM

Allegedly, More than either of us could spend in one lifetime.

Moses absentmindedly rubs his scar.

MOSES

Count me in.

WILLIAM

No no, no counting anyone in. This is a solo ride.

MOSES

You need me.

WILLIAM

Oh, I disagree. I was doing just fine on my own.

MOSES

Ya, You did a great job of saving your own life in the river.

William sits on the ground and sighs.

WILLIAM

Fine, but if I save your life, I don't you anything.

MOSES

Ya, but fat chance that happens.

William throws the book in his bag and gets up.

WILLIAM

Let's make tracks and make some ground up. Grab your stuff.

Moses looks around. He doesn't have any stuff.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Right, nevermind then. Let's go.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

William squints at a map. He looks at his compass and points Southwest.

WILLIAM

That way. Map says there's a road not too far. We can camp off the side of it.

MOSES

That don't bother me. I feel like I've been running for days.

The sun keeps setting. The forest canopy makes it seem darker than it is. Something slithers nearby. Both men stop and drop low to the ground.

WILLIAM  
Did you hear that?

MOSES  
Some kind of snake?

WILLIAM  
In my experience, snakes don't  
usually try to make noise.

Whatever it was gets drowned out by something far more pressing. BARKING.

They look behind them and see the lanterns of the slave catchers glowing behind them.

MOSES  
Can't outrun dogs.

WILLIAM  
Don't see much of a choice.

The light from the lanterns shows some more snake-like things moving. The two men pay no mind as they run.

The dogs are getting louder. And louder. Moses turns and sees the fangs of a dog hot on his trail. He lowers his head and runs hard.

MOSES  
Damn it all.

One of the dogs WHELPS.

Then another. Then another.

The two men slow and look back. The dogs are gone.

WILLIAM  
What the hell.

MOSES  
Maybe a bobcat or something gottem.

The lanterns keep their pursuit.

SLAVE CATCHER 1  
I see em over here.

SLAVE CATCHER 2  
Where'd them mutts get off too?



SLAVE CATCHER 3  
Worry bout them later, let's catch  
us a runaway coon.

The slave catchers close in. One of them fires a rifle shot that snaps into a nearby tree.

MOSES  
Fire back at them.

WILLIAM  
I'm not stopping for shit.

Suddenly one of the slave Catchers cries out in terror.

SLAVE CATCHER 1 (O.S.)  
JESUS CHRIST, SOMEBODY HELP ME.

William and Moses look at each other while they run.

WILLIAM  
Never heard a bobcat make a man  
scream like that.

MOSES  
You wanna stop and ask him? Keep  
running fool.

The remaining two men get closer. One of them TACKLES William. His lantern falls to the ground. Moses keeps running with the other in pursuit

MOSES (CONT'D)  
Oh shit.

William and the man struggle on the ground. The slave catcher overpowers William and gets leverage on top. He notices his tattoo.

SLAVE CATCHER 3  
I'm gonna get me a deserter and a  
runaway? It's my lucky day.

Something stops the redneck. Until --

Something WHIPS him away and hoists him up. William grabs the lantern and holds it up. Kudzu vines wrap around him as he's being hung from the canopy. The vine leaves take over his body until he stops kicking.

WILLIAM  
Jesus Christ.

He turns and runs. The light illuminates the Kudzu crawling and slithering over almost everywhere.

He runs until he sees Moses and the last slave catcher wrestling. Though Moses is doing considerably better than William did. William sees his chance and kicks the slave catcher in the ribs. He helps Moses up and they take off.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

That makes us even.

MOSES

Like hell, I was whipping his ass.

WILLIAM

Any longer and you would've been in even bigger trouble.

Before he can explain. William TRIPS. A Kudzu vine snakes its way up his leg. The thine vine cuts into his leg, drawing blood. Moses rushes back to him.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Bayonet side pocket.

Without hesitation, Moses grabs the knife and cuts away at the vine. He helps him up and they keep running.

MOSES

Now, you still owe me.

WILLIAM

We're not out of this yet.

Moses points to an opening. The moon lights the road up on the other side of some foliage. The foliage is slowly getting darker and darker with vines. They rip and cut the vines, but to no avail.

MOSES

What do we do.

WILLIAM

I have no idea. Keep killing weeds.

They tear at the vines going up their leg. The foliage has completely covered the opening. Darkness. Until --

A hand SHOOTs through the foliage, unharmed. The a second hand. The first throws some sort of powder at their feet. The vines wither and fade in front of their eyes.

ABIGAIL (O.S.)

Take my hand. Hurry!

They quickly grab the hand and they pull themselves out and onto the road. A Native American sits on the road. She wears a blue dress with the shawl of a medicine woman. This is ABIGAIL (32).

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Don't worry, the Kudzu won't come to the road.

MOSES

What the hell was that.

ABIGAIL

The vines get hungry.

WILLIAM

I don't care. Thanks for the help, but we gotta be on our way.

ABIGAIL

That's how you talk to someone who just saved your life?

MOSES

Ya, it kind of is.

William gets up and helps Abigail up, then Moses.

ABIGAIL

You ain't gonna be going far in this darkness.

He looks around. Good point.

WILLIAM

Fine, we'll camp here, but at first light, me and Moses are out of here.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

William and Moses walk down the dirt road, William's limping. William scowls. Probably because Abigail is trailing them. Moses looks back at her then back at William.

MOSES

She's still following.

WILLIAM

Ya, I reckoned.

MOSES

What do you think she wants?

WILLIAM  
I really don't care.

Moses slows up until he gets near Abigail.

MOSES  
Why are you following us?

ABIGAIL  
You ever see a horned snake?

MOSES  
No, can't say I have.

William turns and walks backwards.

WILLIAM  
That's because they don't exist.

He turns back around.

MOSES  
Thought you didn't care.

He doesn't bother to respond.

ABIGAIL  
They do exist. I've seen one.

MOSES  
Really? Where?

She turns her head and smiles at him. Up ahead, William stops.

ABIGAIL  
Near the road. Right before I saved y'all.

William walks with them now.

MOSES  
What's so special about this snake.

ABIGAIL  
His name is Sinti Lapitta. He only visits wise men. It's a very good omen. A medicine woman in training can't ignore an omen like that.

William stops the group.

WILLIAM  
Ok, lady, What is it you want?

MOSES

Don't be so rude.

ABIGAIL

No it's alright. Nanapesa sent the omen to me. He's leading me towards the great task I need to accomplish.

WILLIAM

And why do you need to accomplish this great task?

Abigail fidgets in place. She's not comfortable answering the question.

ABIGAIL

It's for the benefit of my tribe.

William walks off again.

WILLIAM

I don't think so.

Moses grabs Williams shoulder and turns him around.

MOSES

C'mon now, we do owe her. She saved us from Lord knows whatever that was.

WILLIAM

That was nothing. The light was playing tricks on us.

ABIGAIL

I don't know much about your journey, but I can tell it'll be full of "tricks of light" just like that.

WILLIAM

Just give me one good, concrete reason why we should let you.

Abigail looks at Williams tattoo. William tries to cover it, but it's too late.

ABIGAIL

Runaway slave and a deserter aren't gonna a second look in a southern town, are you.

WILLIAM

No, but planning on camping out most of the time anyway.

ABIGAIL

The I'm sure you won't have any trouble hunting, trapping, and cleaning animals will you.

WILLIAM

We got plenty of hard tack. Cheap and easy.

Moses grimaces at "hard tack". She pushes William down on a nearby log. She rolls up his pant leg. The wraps around his wound fall to the ground. She pulls out some herbs from her bag and starts chewing.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Just stop. We don't want your snake oil. Even if it the snake has horns.

She spits the wad of green in her hand and rubs it into the wound.

ABIGAIL

You white men sure do like to talk.

She quickly dresses it and rolls down his pant leg.

She gestures for him to get up. William eases up and tests his leg. He hangs his head in resignation. Abigail smiles.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Being a medicine woman ain't just about the spiritual stuff.

She clasps them both on the shoulder and gives them a push ahead.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Now, where are we headed.

EXT. CONFEDERATE CAMP - DAY

Tents line up in order int he campgrounds. Some soldiers walk by carrying supplies. A soldier cleans his rifle while another spit shines his boots.

A grungy soldier escorts a slave catcher in ripped shirt and beat up pants to the big tent.

## INT. COMMANDER'S TENT

The tent is neat and orderly. The cot is made up and tucked in to regulations. A map is spread out on a table in the middle. Grey and blue figurines are scattered across it. A personal bar sits next to a wash station being used.

A salt and peppered man looks into the mirror. Bits of shaving cream cover most of his face, except one last swathe of cream on his jugular. Most men would hesitate cutting so close to the vein, but not COMMANDER PHILLIPS (56). In one fell swipe, he perfects his shave.

The dirty soldier leads the torn up man into the tent.

DIRTY SOLDIER

Sir, we've got a man who as there  
when we lost William.

Phillips washes his face and turns too the two of them. A few notable scars cover his face. He offers the man a seat.

PHILLIPS

Please, take seat. You're a guest  
of mine in this camp.

SLAVE CATCHER

Thank you, sir.

PHILLIPS

Now what were you doing the night  
my men lost William.

SLAVE CATCHER

I was trying to do my job, sir.

He pours two glasses of whiskey from his personal bar.

PHILLIPS

Enlighten me to what that is, son.

SLAVE CATCHER

I catch and return runaway  
property.

He offers his glass in a toast.

PHILLIPS

A mighty fine profession. Without  
folks like you, I'd dare say we'd  
been living in a chaotic land.

SLAVE CATCHER

Thank you, respect from a Confederate officer is always high praise.

PHILLIPS

Think nothing if it. Now, if you can help me out, I'm sure we'd be mighty thankful.

SLAVE CATCHER

Yessir, our dogs picked up some tracks. We've got an idea of where they're headed.

PHILLIPS

Come here.

He gets up and walks to the map on the table. The slave catcher follows. He runs his finger down the Mississippi. He stops close to where they were last seen.

SLAVE CATCHER

Yup, that's where they were last seen.

He points out a sand bar a couple of inches down.

SLAVE CATCHER (CONT'D)

We reckon this is where they'd land.

Phillips runs his finger perpendicular to the river until he meets HOLLY SPRINGS.

PHILLIPS

So he's going for it after all.

SLAVE CATCHER

Pardon.

PHILLIPS

Oh, nothing. This man stole something very valuable to me and I intend to get it back. Thank you for this valuable info, this helps the Confederate cause greatly, brother.

The slave catcher smiles to himself. He nods to the grungy soldier standing guard.



PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

Sir, can you see our friend out of here.

He turns to the slave catcher and winks.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

And make sure he's well stocked up for the journey back.

SLAVE CATCHER

Thank you, sir!

The soldier nods and leads the slave catcher away.

Phillips eyes Holly Springs once more before moving a grey piece on top of the city.

EXT. HOLLY SPRINGS - MORNING

The trio walks past a dirty worn sign reading HOLLY SPRINGS. A passing trader scowls at them as they pass. Moses notices the man. He pulls the group aside. He waits for the man to get out of earshot.

MOSES

Something tells me people won't offer us much help in town.

WILLIAM

I suspect you'd be right.

ABIGAIL

Should we wait in the outskirts while you ask around?

William casts a glance in the direction the man walked.

WILLIAM

A deserter won't get treated much better. Let's stick together, if problems arise, it'd be best to handle it as a group.

MOSES

I think you mean *when* problems arise.

William shrugs and sets off towards town.

WILLIAM

Well, my momma always taught me to look on the brightside.

Abigail and Moses follow.

EXT. HOLLY SPRINGS TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

The trio walk down the main street in the town square. All eyes are on them. Women whisper to each other as they pass. A kid selling newspaper stops his barking when they pass. William rubs his neck to try and hide his tattoo.

WILLIAM

To be honest, I didn't think we'd make this far this easily.

MOSES

So much for positivity.

William points out a SALOON.

WILLIAM

There's our best bet for information.

INT. COTTON GIN SALOON - CONTINUOUS

As they walk in, all the eyes in the bar go to them. They carefully walk to the bar. A surly man at the bar side eyes them. An old man at the table in the back watches curiously. They don't know it yet, but this is FRANKLIN FORRESTER (75). Abigail notices he's the only one not glaring.

WILLIAM

'Scuse me sir.

The bartender ignores him.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Excuse me, SIR.

The bartender sighs audibly and walks over.

BARTENDER

Listen, son, you gotta lotta nerve comin in here like you are and ordering me around.

WILLIAM

Begging your pardon, just wanted to get your attention is all.

BARTENDER

Well now you got it. Better hurry up and tell me what it is you want.

The surly man shoots his whiskey and slams it down loud enough to grab their attention.

SURLY MAN

Y'all look like y'all could use a joke. A deserter, a nigger, and a red woman walk into a saloon.

The N word rouses Moses. He walks right up to the man.

MOSES

And what happens next, white boy.

The man gets up and smiles wickedly. His grin is missing more than a couple teeth.

SURLY MAN

You're and yours are fixing to find out.

MOSES

Keep talking and you'll lose some teeth. And you look like you don't have much to spare.

William quickly slams down some money.

WILLIAM

Barkeep, make sure this mans cup doesn't ever run dry.

William slaps the man on the back hard enough to get him to sit down.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Give us 5 minutes and I promise we'll be out of your hair.

The man turns to say something, but the bartender puts a full whiskey glass in front of him. It placates the drunkard.

BARTENDER

Get to the point. People like you are bad for business.

WILLIAM

Fair point. I'm looking for a man named Franklin Forrester.

The bartender's eyes flick towards the old man in the back.

BARTENDER

And why would you want to know about a man like that.

WILLIAM  
Got some questions for him.

BARTENDER  
All I can tell you is that he'll  
find you.

WILLIAM  
That's awful vague.

The bartender's eyes go back to the old man. He's gone.

BARTENDER  
That's all I can say. Now please  
get out.

WILLIAM  
Well, thanks for nothing.

They start to walk out. Abigail glances at the empty table.

EXT. HOLLY SPRINGS TOWN SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

The trio walk through the square. Everyone seems to be  
staring at them now. Some hide their stares but some don't  
bother.

MOSES  
You'd think they'd never seen a  
black man before.

ABIGAIL  
I think they're just judging your  
taste in clothes.

He looks down at his tattered shorts and pants.

MOSES  
I guess they don't do us any  
favors, huh.

William looks around the square. He spots a TAILOR building.

WILLIAM  
I can help you out. Y'all go on  
ahead. And you might wanna be quick  
about it.

They nod and hurry away. William heads towards the Tailor.

EXT. TAILOR - MOMENTS LATER

William hides his gun and bag in a nearby shed. He slinks to the back door of the building and looks around before knocking on the door. He presses his ear and waits for footsteps. Nothing. He pulls LOCK PICKS out of his bag and goes to work.

WILLIAM

C'mon.

Voices carry nearby. He freezes.

They fade away and he continues. The lock snaps open.

INT. TAILOR - CONTINUOUS

He gently closes the door and locks it back from the inside. A dress sits on the table almost finished. The finished clothes hang by the back door. Random shoes and belts litter the place.

William immediately goes to the rack of clothes. He quickly peruses his options before deciding on a button down with brown trousers.

WILLIAM

Hell, I hope this fits.

SURLY MAN (O.S.)

Should of beat those men when I had the chance. Lawmen probably wouldn't even give a shit.

The door turns as it's unlocked by a key. William hurries and hides himself behind the rack. The surly man from the bar saunters in. William rolls his eyes.

WILLIAM

(sotto)

Damn it to hell.

The man sits at the table. The chair groans at the weight of this man. William spies a pair of boot just barely out of arms length. He stretches out for it. He can just barely touch one of the laces.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Come on you son of a bitch.

The man gets up and inspects the dress. William's hand shoots back into the rack. The man turns to hang the dress up. He's inches away from discovering William before --

RING RING. The front door bell rings as Franklin Forrester walks in

FRANKLIN  
Hello? Anyone hear.

The man turns and calls back.

SURLY MAN  
I'll be right there.

FRANKLIN  
If you could please hurry, I'm got someone I need to meet soon.

He puts the dress back on the table and walks to the front desk. William sees his moment and grabs the boots. He sneaks over to the door but freezes in place. Franklin is making eye contact with him. He unfreezes William with a wink.

The surly man turns to see what Franklin was looking at, but he only sees the back door slightly ajar. He goes to close it, but when he returns, Franklin is gone as well.

EXT. HOLLY SPRINGS TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

William hurries down the road. He's hold his rifle sling in one hand and the boots in the other. He walks past an alley, but someone calls out to him.

FRANKLIN  
Not many people I know would want to steal from a man like that.

William turns to him.

WILLIAM  
Well, he owed me. My partner would've kicked his ass to Kosciusko and back, had I not stepped in.

Franklin chuckles.

FRANKLIN  
You know, I bet you're right. You keep some strange bedfellows.

WILLIAM  
What would you know about it?

FRANKLIN  
Oh, just what they told me. Nice people.

William eyes him up and down.

WILLIAM  
Just who are you old man?

FRANKLIN  
I heard you'd been looking for me.  
My name is Franklin Forrester. I think you want to come with me.

EXT. FRANKLIN'S SHACK - LATER

An old shack sits comfortably in a clearing in the woods. A couple chickens peck at the few bits of chicken feed on the ground. The BLUE DOOR with a MIRROR next to it stands out amongst the brown shack.

INT. FRANKLIN'S SHACK - SAME

The inside of the humble shack crowds the 4 of them together. Abigail sits on a chest while the rest stand. Franklin puts on a kettle. William throws Moses the clothes.

MOSES  
I guess it's true, Franklin Forrester does find you.

FRANKLIN  
I don't get many visitors, so I get excited when I do.

Abigail looks outside the window into the isolated property.

ABIGAIL  
It seems you prefer not getting visitors.

FRANKLIN  
You're not wrong. Only certain visitors I get excited for.

William strolls around the room and stops at a horseshoe hanging on the wall. He picks it off the wall and inspects it.

WILLIAM

And what about us excites you?

Franklin takes the horseshoe and carefully hangs it back up. It's slightly crooked.

FRANKLIN

Cause you folk are about to go on the journey.

MOSES

The journey?

FRANKLIN

For the treasure.

William stops looking around.

WILLIAM

How'd you know we we're looking for it?

FRANKLIN

I saw y'all in the saloon. It felt very familiar.

MOSES

Why didn't you grab us in the Saloon?

FRANKLIN

I meant to catch up when y'all left, but your sticky fingered friend here split off too quick.

Moses holds his new clothes away from him.

MOSES

What the hell? You stole these?

WILLIAM

One: I already told you I was a thief. Two: it was that burly racist guy I stole from.

Moses brings his clothes back to him.

MOSES

Oh, no problem here then.

ABIGAIL

Back to the point.

Franklin pours some tea for everyone.



FRANKLIN

Yes, yes. How did you folks find out about the treasure and my connection to it?

William fishes the book out of his bag and tosses it to Franklin. He gingerly opens it and runs his hand over the inside cover.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Whew, this takes me back. Lot of memories making this book.

MOSES

Can you tell us where to find it?

FRANKLIN

Where's the fun in that? I can, however, guide you to the next piece of the puzzle.

He walks over to the chest.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Excuse me, miss.

She gets up and peaks over his shoulder. He digs out a piece of paper and holds it up.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

This right here is your next stop.

Moses grabs it and reads it out loud.

MOSES

The campaign has taken me to Clarksdale. I've met a strange fellow who has shown me much kindness since I arrived. Martha would just love his fancy mansion.

He shows it to Abigail and William. The back of the page has a sketch of an opulent mansion.

FRANKLIN

That place was quite the few nights. Lovely man, give him my regards will you?

Abigail takes the book and the page. She rifles through her bag and pulls out sewing supplies. She sits and starts sewing the page back in.

MOSES

This seriously all you can tell us?

FRANKLIN

Can tell you? I could tell you all about things the terror and despair we faced, all the hope and joy, the entire spectrum of purely good to purely evil. I could tell you all this, but you couldn't believe me if I did

WILLIAM

Try us.

Franklin smiles coyly at William.

FRANKLIN

I could, but where's the fun in that. The only thing I'll tell you is to enjoy the journey because it'll most likely be your last.

The horseshoe falls from the wall. Franklin rushes over, pushing William aside and carefully puts the horseshoe back up.

ABIGAIL

Is there anything else?

Franklin shakes his head.

WILLIAM

Then we'll be off. We're burning daylight.

They grab their stuff and make their way to the door. Franklin stops them one last time.

FRANKLIN

Oh I did forget one thing.

All eyes on him.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Good luck.

INT. COTTON GIN SALOON - DAY

Phillips walks into the bar flanked by two soldiers. All eyes on them. The bartender eyes the fine grey coats and rushes over to help them.

BARTENDER

Good afternoon gentlemen, please let me know whatever I can do to help heroes such as yourselves.

PHILLIPS

A whiskey is tempting, but I'm afraid I'm working. A coffee will be fine.

The bartender leads them to the bar. He pulls a pot of coffee out and pours 3 steaming cups.

BARTENDER

Something tells me that you want to know about a deserter traveling with companions.

PHILLIPS

Smart man. Indeed I am. Could you help me out? You can start with his companions.

Another patron enters in, but the bartender barely gives him a glance.

BARTENDER

The nigger and the Injun? The red woman wasn't so bad, she at least kept to herself. The man started all sorts of trouble with my regulars.

PHILLIPS

Oh, that's awful. I'm sorry to hear that. No manners, those beasts. I'm curious to why you would even serve those people.

Phillips takes a sip of his coffee, never breaking eye contact.

BARTENDER

Begging your pardon sir, it's been tough times since the war ended. I gotta take money when I can get it.

He puts his cups down hard enough to spill a little bit. The bartender starts cleaning it up.

PHILLIPS

The war ain't over, not as long as these lungs draw breath.

BARTENDER

Amen.

PHILLIPS

Now, did they ask you about a certain Franklin Forrester?

BARTENDER

Yessir, they did. I didn't tell them where he is.

PHILLIPS

And what did you tell them.

His eyes flick towards the table where Franklin normally sits.

BARTENDER

I said Franklin would find them.

PHILLIPS

If I ask you where to find him, would you give me the same answer?

BARTENDER

Sir?

PHILLIPS

An answer like that would be detrimental to our cause. Every second wasted is a second they get further away. You wouldn't want to hurt the cause would you?

One last look at the table.

BARTENDER

Do you have a map?

Phillips nods his head towards one of his soldiers. He quickly produces a map of the area and lays it across the table. The bartender marks a clearing away from the city.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

He lives alone in a shack right about here.

PHILLIPS

I truly thank you, sir.

He pulls out a hundred dollar bill with Lucy Holcombe Pickens on it and lays it on the bar. The bartender gingerly picks it up.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)  
 Now there's no excuse to serve  
 colored folks for a while.

He and his soldiers walk to the exit. The two soldiers exit,  
 but before Phillips can --

BARTENDER  
 The south will rise again!

The saloon hollers in agreement. Phillips waits until it dies  
 down.

PHILLIPS  
 If I had it my way, it'd rise again  
 tomorrow.

EXT. CLARKSDALE - MORNING

The trio rolls into town. A group of black men play the Blues  
 on a nearby corner. A group of gangly white guys eye them. A  
 blind man begs in between them.

MOSES  
 So where do we start?

ABIGAIL  
 Hell if I know.

WILLIAM  
 I guess just start asking folk.

They approach the Blues band. They stop playing when they see  
 William. The gangly white guys whisper amongst themselves and  
 shake their heads.

MOSES  
 What's that y'all playing.

GUITARIST  
 Don't got a name, we just play what  
 we feel. What do you folk want?

William digs out the book and hands it to Moses. He shows it  
 to the band.

MOSES  
 You seen a place like this around  
 here?

The beggar Stops his begging and listens in. Only abigail  
 notices.

GUITARIST

Ain't no building I ever seen,  
sorry.

The gangly white guys approach the group with all the confidence of men a hundred pounds heavier.

REDNECK #1

What're you spooks doing?

GUITARIST

Nothing, we don't want no trouble  
boss.

The band starts gathering their instruments, but Moses steps in between them and the rednecks.

MOSES

Ain't no harm in a little music, is  
there.

REDNECK #1

And who the hell are you? Ain't no  
black in this city dressed like  
you.

He looks down at his threads.

MOSES

I got em from your daddies closet  
after I got done fucking your  
momma.

REDNECK #1

What the fuck did you just say.

He bows up to Moses. Moses just muscles him back down with his chest.

MOSES

I think you heard me right.

The redneck shrinks back after sizing up Moses.

MOSES (CONT'D)

I think you better run along now, I  
don't think you can afford to lose  
anymore teeth.

The redneck scowls at Moses before turning away. The beggar laughs at his embarrassment. The redneck responds by KICKING his cup of coins over.

Abigail comes over and starts picking them up. He hands the cup back and looks hard at him

WILLIAM

As fun as that was, we better get a move on before they come back with friends.

MOSES

Good idea.

Moses and William start to walk off before --

ABIGAIL

Hold on, let's ask this gentleman.

William stoops by her and waves a hand in front of the beggars cloudy eyes. Nothing.

WILLIAM

Somehow, I don't think he'd be much help to us.

He puts a few coins in the beggars cup for good measure.

ABIGAIL

Humor me.

William shrugs and hands the book to Abigail.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Sir, do you know where we can find this house?

The beggars shaking hand grabs the book. He opens it and gingerly runs his hand over the page.

Moses and William keep a lookout for the rednecks.

BEGGAR

It's been a while since someone asked about this place.

William snaps his attention to the beggar.

WILLIAM

How'd you do that?

BEGGAR

Just cause I'm blind doesn't mean I can't see. Don't be so closed minded.

ABIGAIL  
Where is it, then?

BEGGAR  
There's an opening in the trees on  
the main road south of here just  
out of town. Follow the setting sun  
through the trees.

MOSES  
That's very cryptic. Can't you just  
tell us where it is?

The beggar turns his head to Moses.

BEGGAR  
That I can't. I'm sure this eagle  
eyed young lady understands.

He winks a cloudy eyeball. She smiles back and takes charge  
by walking towards the south part of town.

ABIGAIL  
Let's go, high noon is closing in.

Moses and William shrug at each other and follow. The blind  
man shakes his cup of coins and laughs to himself.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

The trio stands at a deserted road outside of town. William  
sits on a log and eyes his pocket watch. Abigail shields her  
eyes as she looks at the sun. Moses searches for a trail  
hidden in the brush.

WILLIAM  
Are we sure this is the right way.

MOSES  
That's what the man said.

ABIGAIL  
He actually said to wait until  
afternoon, then you'll find the  
trail.

WILLIAM  
Why are we trusting the words of a  
blind beggar.

ABIGAIL  
Would it kill you to have some  
faith.



WILLIAM  
 Maybe, not having faith has gotten  
 me this far.

He puts his pocket watch away.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
 12:15. So where is this magical  
 trail?

As he says this, the sun sets through the tops of the trees.  
 The light shines through, illuminating a small trail hidden  
 from sight.

ABIGAIL  
 It appears so.

They start off down the trail.

MOSES  
 What made you trust that guy  
 anyway? Seemed like you didn't ever  
 doubt what he was saying.

ABIGAIL  
 A couple of reasons.

William gestures towards the forest trail.

WILLIAM  
 We've got time. Enlighten us.

ABIGAIL  
 Hmm, well, for starters, he  
 definitely knew of the place we're  
 going.

WILLIAM  
 He could've been working an angle  
 to get us to give him money.

Moses playfully shoves him.

MOSES  
 You're the one who gave him money.

WILLIAM  
 He's blind! I would've given him  
 money regardless.

ABIGAIL  
 Anyway, The other reason was the  
 thing about the Sun.

MOSES

What's the Sun got to do with it?

ABIGAIL

It reminded me of a Choctaw legend.

William rubs the bridge of his nose

WILLIAM

I'm sure this will be grounded in reality.

ABIGAIL

Shut up. There's two brothers that wonder where the Sun goes at night.

WILLIAM

And they probably asked it or something.

She grabs a pinecone on the ground and whizzes it by his head.

ABIGAIL

Hush up, the next one won't miss.

He locks his lip and throws away the key.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

So these two brothers decide to follow it when it sets. They follow it everyday until they reached the shore. They watched it dip behind the ocean and they followed it still.

MOSES

They followed it into the ocean?

ABIGAIL

They did, and you know what they found?

MOSES

The sun's home?

ABIGAIL

Exactly. The sun led them to where they wanted to go. It struck something inside me when he mentioned it.

William looks back at them.

WILLIAM  
You sure like your stories.

ABIGAIL  
Without these stories, you two  
would be dead.

MOSES  
You mentioned the horned snake,  
what does that mean.

She looks at him and winks.

ABIGAIL  
Sinti Lapitta? He's the guardian  
spirit of life. He visits wise  
young men.

She raises her voice loud enough for William to here.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)  
Though, it seems to me that he only  
visited you, Moses.

William turns around to face them while he keeps walking.

WILLIAM  
Hey, I never claimed to be wise.  
Now hurry up, we're wasting the  
precious sunlight.

INT. FRANKLIN'S SHACK - DAY

Phillips sits in front of Franklin. Both men silently observe  
the other. Franklin makes a move.

PHILLIPS  
I hope you aren't planning on doing  
anything drastic.

He points to the kettle.

FRANKLIN  
Just a bit parched.

PHILLIPS  
Make it two.

Franklin pours one cup for himself, then he dumps the rest  
down the drain.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)  
Come now, is that any way to treat  
a fellow soldier?

FRANKLIN  
War's over. You ain't a soldier  
anymore.

PHILLIPS  
Don't be so negative. It's not  
over, just delayed. Tell me what I  
want to hear and the war effort can  
continue in earnest.

Franklin sits down and takes a sip.

FRANKLIN  
You won't find it.

PHILLIPS  
I beg your pardon.

FRANKLIN  
The treasure. It won't be yours.

PHILLIPS  
I disagree, my friend. It's as good  
as mine. I just need you to tell me  
where it is.

FRANKLIN  
I'm afraid I can't do that.

Phillips calmly gets up and walks to Franklin. He calmly  
takes the cup from him before --

WHAM. He cold cocks him Franklin hits the floor hard.

PHILLIPS  
And I'm afraid I don't have time  
for this. Every second I'm not  
moving forward is a second they get  
further away.

Phillips stands over Franklin. He pummels him in between each  
word.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)  
Where. Is. The. Treasure.

Franklin holds up a hand. He spits blood on the ground.

FRANKLIN

You're asking the wrong thing. I can't tell you where the treasure is, but I can tell you where the next piece of the puzzle is.

Phillips steps over him and wipes the blood from his knuckles on a wash cloth.

PHILLIPS

Well go ahead then.

FRANKLIN

Clarksdale. Southwest from here.

PHILLIPS

Does it always take this much to get information from you.

Franklin chuckles to himself.

FRANKLIN

Actually, I tell everyone who asks where the next step is.

Phillip stops cleaning his hand.

PHILLIPS

You what?

FRANKLIN

Anyone who asks, I answer. Plain as that.

Phillips slowly wraps the rag around each of his hands.

PHILLIPS

That's a shame. I can't have anyone else coming after my treasure.

He quickly wraps the taught rag around Franklin's throat. Franklin claws at the make-shift garrote. He kicks and fights against Phillip, but he only manages to knock over the table with the tea on it. He goes limp.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

Should've enjoyed your retirement.

He looks at the knocked over tea.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

Shame, I was thirsty.

One of his soldiers comes in.

SOLDIER  
Sir, is everything ok.

PHILLIPS  
Indeed it is. Slaughter some of the chickens to go. We ain't stopping till we get to clarksdale.

He and the soldier exit. The door closes hard enough to shake the horseshoe from the wall.

EXT. BURNT OUT HOUSE - EVENING

The skeletal remains of a burnt out house imposes itself in the small clearing of trees. The Sun sets right over it.

Moses pushes through a thicket, holding it open for Abigail. He walks through and bumps into her.

MOSES  
What's the holdup?

ABIGAIL  
We made it.

WILLIAM (O.S.)  
We did? What's there?

Before either one can answer, the sun dips below the house. AS the darkness envelops the house it TRANSFORMS. The burnt out skeleton comes back to life as a lavish southern mansion.

MOSES  
Great question.

William emerges from the brush and looks at the house, then back to Moses and Abigail.

WILLIAM  
It's a house? Granted, the old man was right, but it's just a house.

A well-to-do butler emerges and beckons them from the porch.

ABIGAIL  
I guess we're about to find out what it really is.

EXT. MANSION PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

The butler MASON, not a grey hair nor crease out of place, bows for them.

MASON

Welcome to Master Samuels manor. He would like a few words with you folk.

WILLIAM

He expecting us?

MASON

He's always expecting company, sir.

ABIGAIL

We'll have to thank him for his generosity.

She smiles and pats his shoulder as she walks by. Moses hasn't taken an eye off him.

MASON

Something the matter, sir?

MOSES

Where I'm from it's not a good thing to be brought into the house, especially one like this.

MASON

I assure you, no harm will come to you here, you have the master's word.

Moses nods slowly, never breaking eye contact as he walks by. William goes to walk by, but he's stopped by Mason.

MASON (CONT'D)

I can take your bag, sir.

WILLIAM

Tanks for the kindness, but if it's all the same, I think I'll hold onto it.

He slings the bag higher up on his shoulder. He walks by Mason.

MASON

And what about your fourth?

WILLIAM

Fourth?

He looks back. At the edge of the woods, the BLACK MAN from earlier stands. He stares at William. William ignores him.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Ain't nobody out there, just us  
three.

He pushes past Mason. Mason follows and, as he's closing the door, he gently nods at the man.

INT. MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

A fire warms up the parlour of the home. SAMUEL (42) dressed like he's meeting the governor, stands by the wet bar. Moses and Abigail sit on crushed velvet chairs, while William sits on the bench of a grand piano.

Samuel offers a snifter of brandy to the group, but only Moses and William partake.

SAMUEL

Well, if you three aren't the  
motliest crew to ever darken my  
doorway. It's quite a pleasure to  
have you.

He raises his glass to them. William and Moses follow suit. Moses takes a sip but coughs up the harsh alcohol.

MOSES

This what you white folks like to  
drink?

WILLIAM

Trust me, you should try drinking  
the cheap stuff.

Samuel walks to the window. He carefully rubs a smudge from the glass.

SAMUEL

Quite right, though it's hard to  
beat a cheap whiskey while playing  
poker at the tavern.

ABIGAIL

Talking about favorite types of  
hooch is all well and good, but  
we've got some questions.

He breaks away from staring out of the window and returns to the open seat next to Moses and Abigail.



SAMUEL

I'm sure you do. I hope I can answer you in a satisfactory manner.

ABIGAIL

What are you?

SAMUEL

I'm sure you know.  
 (to Moses)  
 I'm sure he has an inkling.  
 (To William)  
 And he doesn't want to know.

William gets up from his bench and forces his way into the circle.

WILLIAM

You could be the most evil son of a bitch this side of the Mississippi, but if you help us get to where we're going, I couldn't care less.

MOSES

I'd have some reservations.

ABIGAIL

I agree, tarnishes on the soul are hard to rub off.

SAMUEL

Well, I'm sure some people somewhere take exception to me, but I like to think I am an honest, god-fearing man.

Moses takes a smaller sip and holds it down this time.

WILLIAM

Peaches, this'll go easy then.

SAMUEL

I do begrudge one request before I tell you about the treasure.

Everyone stops. The fireplace crackles.

ABIGAIL

And what's that.

SAMUEL

Indulge me company for dinner tonight.

(MORE)

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Mason is a wonderful friend, but it gets lonely out here.

William casts a glance out the window.

MOSES

I've had worse deals.

ABIGAIL

And I could use a bath as well.

WILLIAM

Fine, just dinner though, we can't be spending too much time in one place.

SAMUEL

Splendid. Mason?

Mason appears in the doorway to the parlour.

MASON

Yessir?

SAMUEL

Please show our guests where to freshen up.

MASON

Right away sir.

They get up. William throws back his drink and Moses takes his with him. Mason leads them out.

INT. MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

Upstairs, the hallway leads into four doors. Mason guides Moses to the first one on the right, Abigail the first on the left, and William the second on the right.

MASON

Each room has a tub, chamber pot, and mirror. The tubs are full and you need only light the coals underneath for heat.

MOSES

Really?

Moses drinks the last of his drink.

MASON

I recommend a fresh one with a hot bath.

Moses hands him his drink and he departs.

WILLIAM

Alright, don't take long. We gotta get moving.

ABIGAIL

I'll take as long as I like, thank you. Not everyday a lady gets a hot bath like this.

MOSES

I agree, I've got a feeling we won't get luxury like this for awhile.

WILLIAM

Ugh, fine. But any longer than 30 minutes and I'm lighting a fire under y'all.

They each depart to their rooms.

INT. ABIGAIL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Abigail sits at the mirror with a towel and brushes her wet hair. She smiles softly to herself and begins braiding her hair.

INT. MOSES'S ROOM - SAME

The embers under his tub burn. Moses's feet hang out one end as he takes a drink from his fresh drink.

MOSES

Alright, I see the appeal.

He takes a big stretch and some water splashes out.

INT. WILLIAM'S ROOM - SAME

William paces back and forth. His bag rests on the chair by the mirror. He glances back at the door.

WILLIAM

Well, maybe I can save us some time and find the page before dinner.

He cracks open the door. The coast is clear. He creeps his way to the remaining door. He gives it a slight knock and waits. Nothing. He eases the door open and slides inside.

INT. SAMUEL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A neatly made up four post bed faces the standard tub and mirror setup the other rooms have. The only real difference is the large PAINTING of Samuel and a woman and a balcony overlooking the yard.

William rifles through a chest at the end of the bed.

SAMUEL (O.S.)

You know, son, curiosity killed the cat.

William gently closes the chest.

WILLIAM

But they say satisfaction brought it back.

Samuel smiles at him from the doorway.

SAMUEL

Right you are. Most of the folks on your journey ahead won't be so forthcoming with giving up the goods, so to speak.

WILLIAM

Well, we've got a tight schedule and we need to be making tracks here soon.

SAMUEL

In due time.

He wanders over to the seat and looks at the painting.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Why do you need this treasure?

WILLIAM

Why? I want the money. Plain and simple.

SAMUEL

See, I don't believe that. If you wanted money that bad, you could always get a job.

William studies Samuel.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Tight lipped I see. I get it. Can I tell you a story.

WILLIAM

I don't know if we have the time.

SAMUEL

Your friends might be a while. Since you decided to explore instead of take care of yourself, maybe you can sit a spell.

William rolls his eyes and sits on the chest.

WILLIAM

Fine, go ahead.

SAMUEL

See that angel in the painting.

WILLIAM

She's a looker.

SAMUEL

A man of taste. She was only love, Andrea. A true southern belle, almost perfect for me. But she broke my heart.

WILLIAM

Ain't it how it goes. How'd it happen. Another man?

SAMUEL

I wish it was as simple as that. No, she betrayed me in far worse manner.

William leans forward a little.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

See, I was raised to always be hospitable. Don't matter who knocks on my door. White folk, Indians, runaway slaves.

Samuel winks at William.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

I helped them all, but my beloved didn't see eye to eye with me.

(MORE)

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

She thought we should only house  
the white folk.

WILLIAM

Not an unpopular opinion.

SAMUEL

I reckon not, but one night, a man  
comes beating down the door, like  
the devil was behind him. Runaway  
slave being chased, not unlike your  
friend Moses. So I give him  
sanctuary and not long after the  
catchers come calling.

WILLIAM

And you didn't turn him over?

SAMUEL

Would you?

William looks away.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Now this was the straw that broke  
the camel's back for Andrea. She  
leaves the house at dinner and  
comes back with the catchers. They  
didn't like that I lied, but they  
hated the fact I helped a black  
man.

Samuel's face bubbles with anger underneath. He shakes his  
head thinking about it, messing up his perfect hair.

WILLIAM

Surprised they didn't kill you then  
and there.

SAMUEL

Well, they set fire to my house  
while we were all inside. And I  
thank the good Lord for my man  
Mason. He helped him escape the  
back with some supplies to get him  
on the way.

WILLIAM

Set fire to this house?

William stomps the floor to test it.

SAMUEL

The very same, her love for me died  
that night.

WILLIAM

Why keep the painting.

SAMUEL

A reminder. Sometimes you'll lose  
everything trying do what you  
believe, but that's life.

WILLIAM

What was the point of telling me  
that story.

Samuel looks into the mirror and fixes his hair. His eyes  
move to William's reflection.

SAMUEL

I think you're similar company. I  
think you want that money because  
you believe in something. Something  
you do anything for. But you won't  
be able to do it alone. Protect  
those two across the way cause  
they're sure to protect you.

William opens his mouth to respond but he gets cut off by --

PHILLIPS (O.S.)

PRIVATE WILLIAM, I HAVE COME.

EXT. MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Captain Phillips and three soldiers stand at the edge of the  
forest. One of the soldiers holds the leash to a hound dog.

INT. MANSION - CONTINUOUS

William and Samuel peek through the window. Moses comes  
through the door. His half dressed body drips water onto the  
floor.

MOSES

What the hell's going on?

SAMUEL

Friends of yours?

WILLIAM

Not in the slightest.

William hurries out of the room. He walks past Abigail. She heads to the window as well.

MOSES

How'd they find us? Should've been impossible to follow us from the road.

ABIGAIL

Looks they got your scent

Outside, the dog handler lowers a torched scrap of fabric the nose of the dog. The dog smells it and pulls the leash towards the house.

MOSES

How? We burnt those clothes.

ABIGAIL

I guess not all of it.

William rushes back in with his Spencer Repeater. He loads a couple rounds into the chamber and cocks the lever.

WILLIAM

I'll stall him, let's get the page and get the hell out of here.

MOSES

Good idea.

SAMUEL

I'll grab it.

He takes down the painting. The PAGE is attached to the back. He hands it to William.

ABIGAIL

First, we gotta get rid of our scents. Taking a bath was a good first step.

MOSES

How do we do that?

She thinks for a second before turning to Samuel.

ABIGAIL

Do you have any coffee grounds?

SAMUEL

I'm not sure. Follow me to the kitchen.



He hurries out and Moses and Abigail follow. William opens the window and cocks the hammer on his rifle. He sticks his head out and calls out to Phillips.

WILLIAM  
How'd you find us?

PHILLIPS  
Some nice young men had a run in with your, ahem, associate. They were kind enough to let me know which way you had gone, then Sallie here figured the rest out.

He bends down and rubs her belly. She licks his hand.

WILLIAM  
So you met Franklin? Isn't he a nice guy?

PHILLIPS  
Well, he was. I'm afraid he ran his mouth a bit too much for my taste, So I shut him up.

William takes aim with is rifle. CRACK. The bullet kicks up dirt a few yards in front of the group. Phillips laughs.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)  
I remember. The only thing worse than your attitude was your aim.

William cocks the lever and pulls the hammer back.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)  
Now, I don't want to shed blood anymore than you want yours to be shed, So I've got a proposition. Come on out, journal in hand, and we won't hurt your friends.

William slowly releases the hammer of his gun.

INT. MANSION PORCH - CONTINUOUS

In the kitchen, Abigail rifles through the trash. Moses and Samuel searches the cabinets for coffee.

ABIGAIL  
Nothing in here. Any luck.

Moses grabs a tin labeled COFFEE. He shakes it. Nothing.

MOSES

Nothing. What do we do now?

SAMUEL

I'm terribly sorry. I can't believe we ran out.

Mason comes up behind and reaches over Moses. He slides a few jars of preserves to the side and grabs an unmarked tin. He opens it up. Fresh ground coffee. Samuel grabs it and takes a whiff.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

A secret stash? Mason you cad.

Abigail snatches it from Samuel.

ABIGAIL

Come here, Moses.

Moses hurries over. Abigail grabs a handful and shakes it over him. She then puts some on her for good measure.

MOSES

That's one problem down.

William races by towards the study.

ABIGAIL

Wait, where are you going? You're not actually going out there are you? You trust him?

William sticks his head in. He eyes pantry.

WILLIAM

About as far as I can throw him, but I've got a plan. Samuel, do you have any salted beef?

SAMUEL

Maybe a half pound left.

Samuel grabs it and hands it to him.

WILLIAM

Perfect. When I give the signal, y'all go out back. I'll find y'all after.

ABIGAIL

What's the signal?

He doesn't answer. He's already on his way out.

He stops at the door and lowers his bag. He takes the book out. He searches bag further. He finds SOMETHING and puts it into his mouth.

EXT. MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

William emerges from the front door. He holds up his RIFLE in one hand and the BOOK in the other. One of Phillip's men comes and takes both.

PHILLIPS

Color me surprised. I never thought you'd be one to save your friends instead of yourself.

William glares at him.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

At a loss for words? It's a marked improvement I think. Tie him up.

One of his soldiers binds his hands with rope. He shoves William down beside a tree. William winces. The other soldier hands Phillips the book. He thumbs through it.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

Excellent, even got me the next page. Take care of his friends, would you?

The two soldiers pick up kerosene jugs and trudge over to the porch. They douse the wood, paying extra attention to the exits. They light it. Flames roar to life. William's eyes go from the fire to Phillip's. He's got murder in his eyes.

PHILLIPS (CONT'D)

Oh, don't look at me like that. Any good soldier knows not to leave loose ends and there's a couple of very loose ends in there.

The soldier head around to the back of the mansion.

INT. MANSION - CONTINUOUS

In the kitchen, Moses and Abigail wait with Samuel and Mason.

MOSES

Anybody else smell smoke?

Smoke creeps into the room.

SAMUEL

I hope his signal isn't burning my house down.

Abigail looks out the kitchen window. She quickly ducks as the two soldiers walk by.

ABIGAIL

Sadly, I don't think it is.

MOSES

Quick to the back.

The rush to the back door. The soldiers beat them there and splash kerosene like they did to the front.

MOSES (CONT'D)

Is there anywhere else.

SAMUEL

Second floor would be your best bet, but you're liable to break a leg jumping from there.

ABIGAIL

Better than waiting to burn to death, c'mon.

She leads the charge up the stairs. Samuel and Mason don't seem to be in a hurry though.

In William's makeshift room they open the door to the balcony. The soldiers light the fire underneath. The smoke pours through the wooden boards.

EXT. MANSION - SAME

William works something in his mouth. He face contorts with pain before he --

SPITS out a razor blade from his mouth. He takes a second to spit a swallow of blood out as well. He goes to work cutting his binds, never taking his eye off Phillips.

The binds fall limp from his wrists and he creeps over to his bag and rifle. He grabs the beef and tosses towards the dog. The dog smells it and starts eating. Phillips turns at the noise but --

CRACK. He's met with the but of william's gun. He's out cold on the ground. William hovers over him. He shakily aims the gun before --

INT. MANSION - SAME

BANG.

The shot rings out. The soldiers underneath tear off in the direction of their commander.

MOSES  
That's gotta be it. Let's go.

ABIGAIL  
Right.

They step to the edge and peer over. Twenty five feet looks a lot shorter on the ground.

MOSES  
I'll go first.

He jumps and lands with on a roll. He beckons Abigail to come on. She takes a breath and jumps. Moses catches her. Moses looks back for Samuel and Mason, but they're nowhere to be seen.

ABIGAIL  
Leave them. I don't know if they could come anyway.

MOSES  
What do you mean.

She looks at the burning house.

ABIGAIL  
I'll explain later, cause we gotta go.

MOSES  
Good point.

They take off in the opposite direction as the soldiers into the woods.

EXT. MANSION - SAME

William stands over Phillips. His gun points to the sky, barrel still smoking. Phillips is unharmed on the ground. William grabs his bag and looks down at Phillips.

WILLIAM  
Always said I were a coward.

He hikes his back up and heads towards the back of the house, opposite from the soldiers on their way. He stops as he sees Samuel in the window of the burning house. He toasts a glass of brandy to him as the flames swell around him. William tears his eyes away as he heads to the back.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

In the dead of the night, Moses and Abigail leg it through the woods.

MOSES

Spirits?

ABIGAIL

As far I can see. Nothing else explains it to me.

MOSES

Aren't they supposed to be evil?

ABIGAIL

Not necessarily, maybe they had unfinished business they had to take care of.

MOSES

Wonder what it could be.

They drop low as they hear RUSTLING. They look hard to see the cause of the noise.

It get's closer and closer, until --

A low branch rises to reveal William. Everyone detenses.

ABIGAIL

You scared the shit out of us.

MOSES

How'd you even escape.

WILLIAM

Let it be known that no one catches William Harper twice.

Abigail eyes the gun.

ABIGAIL

Did you kill him?

WILLIAM

No, I couldn't.

MOSES

Sure would've made our lives easier  
if you had.

The sunrise creeps over the canopy. William covers his eyes from the light. He rummages through his bag and pulls out the journal. He tosses it to Moses.

MOSES (CONT'D)

"my journey takes me further south.  
A town called Philadelphia. Most  
towns sleep at night, but I don't  
know if this one's ever gotten a  
wink in it's life."

He turns the book around to show them the drawing. Rows and rows of cabins, strung up with lights. Every porch has people drinking and drinking, but the faces seem different. Almost demonic.