

ROGUE LAWMAN

THE HANGING TREE

Created by

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Story and Screenplay by

Peter Brandvold

based on his novels

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Western novelist **Peter Brandvold** has penned over 90 fast-action westerns under his own name and his penname, **Frank Leslie**. He is the author of the ever-popular Rogue Lawman books featuring Gideon Hawk as well as the Lou Prophet and Yakima Henry novels. The Ben Stillman books are a long-running series with previous volumes available as ebooks. Recently, Brandvold published two horror westerns—*Canyon of a Thousand Eyes* and *Dust of the Damned*. Head honcho at “Mean Pete Publishing,” publisher of lightning-fast western ebooks, he has lived all over the American west but currently lives in western Minnesota with his dog. Visit his website at www.peterbrandvold.com. Follow his blog at: www.peterbrandvold.blogspot.com.

Rogue Lawman

TEASER

EXT. WESTERN BADLANDS – NIGHT

THREE RIDERS wearing DEPUTY U.S. MARSHAL BADGES cross a shallow stream and kick their horses up a low cut bank. The lead horse suddenly jerks its head up and pricks its ears, agitated.

Its rider, DEPUTY U.S. MARSHAL GIDEON HENRY HAWK, pulls back on the reins and looks around.

HAWK—30's, half-Indian, intense green eyes, a shock of dark-brown hair falling to his shoulders. He wears a black, low-crowned, flat-brimmed hat, but make no mistake—he's a "white-hatted" lawman.

HAWK

Whoa.

The horse behind Hawk's whinnies. Its rider, DEPUTY BRIT HANLEY (early 20's), looks around warily, sliding his rifle from its scabbard.

HANLEY

What the...?

HAWK

They smell somethin'.

The third deputy, LUKE MORGAN (late-20s), sniffs the breeze.

MORGAN

Wood smoke.

HANLEY

That ain't all.

(His horse shakes
its head,
whickers...)

My paint don't get the fantods
this bad less'n there's blood on
the breeze.

MORGAN

What say you, Gid?

Hawk looks calmly around, sniffing the wind like a dog.

HAWK

The bastards picked up the stage trail ahead of us. I'll bet aces to eights they're at the roadhouse. Smoke's driftin' on the southeast breeze.

(after a beat)

Keep some space between you. Keep your eyes skinned for lookouts.

Morgan shakes his head, grins with good-natured challenge.

MORGAN

Uh-uh. You're wrong, Gid. I say they continued straight on. What we're smellin' is a deer carcass hung to season in some farmer's woodshed.

HANLEY

The roadhouse is a long ride outta the way if we're only trackin' a dead deer, Gid.

Hawk gives them a quick glance of strained patience.

HAWK

You younkers quit your gassin' and heel your mounts.

Hawk boots his buckskin up the trail.

MORGAN

(to Hanley)

He thinks I'm just a dumb tinhorn. I was right about that pretty little dove in Cottonwood Falls, wasn't I? She *did* give French lessons!

He and Hanley laugh and boot their horses after Hawk.

Hawk, riding point, trots his horse along a dry wash. He stops the horse suddenly, looks around tensely. He turns his horse on a dime, looks up.

HAWK

Brit, on your left!

A rifle BARKS. The slug swipes Hanley's hat from his head.

Hawk raises his henry, FIRES THREE QUICK ROUNDS.

An OUTLAW is standing atop a tall boulder. Hawk's bullets slam into his chest, knocking him backward. He drops his rifle, falls to his knees, and rolls forward off the boulder.

He lands in the wash near where Hanley and Morgan are trying to control their horses. He quivers as he dies.

Hawk wheels his horse around as he surveys the area for more lookouts.

Morgan and Hanley share a dubious look.

HANLEY

Thanks, Gid. How'd you spot him, anyway?

MORGAN

Heard him, most like.
(looking admiringly
at Hawk)
They say ole Gid's got the ears of
a bat and the eyes of a prairie
falcon.

Hawk looks annoyed, impatient, as he boots his mount on down the wash.

HAWK

Like I said before, you younkers—

MORGAN

Yeah, we know. Quit gassin' and
heel our mounts...

He and Hanley gallop off after Hawk.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. ROADHOUSE — NIGHT

A badly weathered and bullet-pocked sign over the front porch of the rambling place announces EAGLE CANYON STAGE RELAY STATION--FOOD/WHISKEY/GIRLS.

Hawk and the two other deputies follow the trail into the yard. They stop and look down at a dead man lying belly down. The right hand has been blown away, leaving a bloody stump with protruding bone shards.

All the fingers of the left hand have been shot off. The pieces lay nearby--small, bloody sausages.

MORGAN

(dryly)

That had to hurt.

The SQUEAK of a rusty hinge.

HAWK

Down!

A second-story shutter swings open and a rifle barrel is poked through the window, parting the curtains. The rifle BARKS as Hawk throws himself from his saddle, hits the ground, and rolls, bringing his Henry rifle to bear.

He fires two quick rounds at the window. One shatters the glass. The other barks off the rifle barrel. The shooter screams and drops the rifle out the window.

The other two deputies have thrown themselves from their own saddles and are looking around warily.

HAWK

Take the porch—I'll cover you!

Hawk fires five rounds at the window as Morgan and Hanley run up onto the porch and press their shoulders to the front of the roadhouse, on either side of the front door.

Hawk fires again at the second-story window then gains his feet and runs onto the porch, kicking the front door in and...

INT. ROADHOUSE — NIGHT

...bounds inside, swinging his rifle around, looking for a target.

The drinking hall before him appears empty. The other two lawmen run in behind him. Hawk swings toward the plank board bar. A FAT MAN is cowering behind a barrel holding up one end of the bar.

HAWK

You! Up!

The fat BARMAN climbs to his feet.

BARMAN

Glad to see you boys. Did you see what they done to my hostler out there?

MORGAN

Where are they?

The barman cants his head toward a door at the back of the room and keeps his voice down.

BARMAN

Two in there. Two upstairs. My girls are with 'em.

HAWK

There a back door?

BARMAN

Behind the stairs.

HAWK

Brit, go out and watch the back door. Luke, watch the stairs.

Hanley runs out the front door.

MORGAN

What're you gonna do, Gid?

Hawk walks, rifle extended, toward the back door.

HAWK

I'm gonna say hidy to our friends back here.

BARMAN

(whispering,
 cowering again
 behind the barrel)
 Shouldn't be too hard after all
 they drank last night. Please
 don't hurt the Mex girls. They
 really bring the drovers in on
 Saturday night!

Hawk presses his back to the wall beside the door. Morgan moves up to the bottom of the staircase and aims his rifle up the stairs, ready for anyone who might shoot from the second story.

Hawk BANGS on the door with his rifle butt.

HAWK
 U.S. Marshals!

A LOUD EXPLOSION. A pumpkin-sized hole appears in the door.

A SECOND LOUD BLAST. The pumpkin-sized hole is the size of two pumpkins now.

BARMAN
 Mercy!

Hawk kicks open the ruined door.

INT. SALOON BEDROOM — NIGHT

Hawk bolts into the bedroom. A BIG FULL-BLOOD INDIAN, naked save for the two pistols holstered on his hips, stands before a dresser right of the bed. He tosses the smoking shotgun away and reaches for the pistols.

HAWK
 Grab those hoglegs, and die!

The big Indian doesn't stop. Hawk shoots him twice through the chest with the Henry, throwing the man back hard against the dresser, blood splattering its mirror.

Hawk swings toward two others on the bed—a YOUNG WHITE MAN with long, stringy red hair and a tobacco pouch hanging from around his neck--and a chubby puta. The young man holds a wide-bladed bowie knife against the puta's neck.

She sobs, scared to death.

YOUNG WHITE MAN

Drop it or I'll cut her head off!

Hawk coolly draws a bead on the young man's right temple. He can see every freckle and blemish. Hawk narrows as eye as he aims down the barrel.

Realizing he's about to die, the young outlaw snaps his eyes wide in shock.

Hawk's rifle THUNDERS.

The young man's head is smashed back against the headboard. He drops the knife and rolls off the bed to the floor. The puta rolls in the opposite direction and hits the floor screaming.

Hawk glances at the ceiling through which we can hear the SOFT THUNDER OF RUNNING FEET and ENRAGED SHOUTING.

TWO GUN BLASTS. MORE SHOUTING.

Hawk wheels and runs out of the bedroom.

INT. MAIN DRINKING HALL — NIGHT

Hawk dashes out the bedroom door and over to the stairs. He takes three steps at a time, heading for the second story where we continue to hear LOUD FOOTSTEPS and MUFFLED SHOUTING.

INT. SECOND STORY HALL — NIGHT

At the top of the stairs, Hawk stops and aims his rifle straight out ahead of him, toward a MAN IN BUCKSKINS lying at the far end of the hall, barefoot. Dead. A pistol lies near his feet. Blood oozes from two holes in his chest.

A girl pokes her head out a door flanking the dead man. Her eyes discover Hawk, widen in fear. She pulls her head back into the room and SLAMS the door.

Shadows move behind a half-open door nearer Hawk, on the hall's right side. Voices ebb from the room.

MEXICAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Drop the gun or I'll kill him! So help me, I will! In *spades!*

MORGAN (O.S.)

You ain't gettin' out of here!

MEXICAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(shrill)

Drop it!

MORGAN (O.S.)

Calm down—I'm setting it down!

HAWK

(softly, to
himself)

No, goddamnit...

He runs down the hall and bursts into the room.

INT. BEDROOM — NIGHT

Hawk tracks around the room with his rifle. Morgan is down on one knee, his back to Hawk. The deputy is about to set his six-shooter down on the floor.

Facing him and now Hawk, as well, is a WIRY, FERRET-FACED MEXICAN (26)--in blue denims and grimy undershirt. His face and arms are brightly, grotesquely tattooed and he has two sliver front teeth.

He holds Brit Hanley in front of him. Hanley bleeds from a wound in his right shoulder. He's breathing hard, sweating, eyes bright with terror. The Mexican holds a pearl-gripped, silver-plated revolver against Hanley's right temple.

Holding his pistol two inches above the floor, Morgan glances over his right shoulder at Hawk. The Mexican is staring at Hawk now, too, and he narrows his eyes and laughs through his silver teeth.

MEXICAN

I'll paint the walls with his
brains, amigos!

HANLEY

(sobbing)

Don't do it. He'll kill us all!

Hawk keeps his rifle aimed at the Mexican, who shifts his head farther behind Hanley to avoid a possible bullet.

HAWK

He's right, Morg.

MEXICAN

Soon as you drop those irons, I'm
out the window.

He glances at a half-open window behind him.

MEXICAN (CONTINUOUS)

The lawman gets to keep his life!

Morgan glances again at Hawk. His eyes are darkly tense. He keeps his pistol a couple of inches above the floor, nearly releasing it.

Hawk tries to draw a bead on the Mexican's head, but he can't get enough separation between the Mexican and Hanley.

HAWK

Morg, we give up our guns, we give
up our ghosts.

MEXICAN

As soon as you throw down your
guns, I'm out the window. This
simpering little badge-toter
lives, and you never see me again!
Throw them down, amigos--now!

After several tense beats...

MEXICAN (CONT'D)

I'm counting to three! If I don't
see your guns on the floor, I'm
drilling a slug through this
lawman's head! *Comprende?*

Morgan glances again at Hawk, shakes his head in defeat.

TIGHT ON HIS HAND as he sets his pistol on the floor.

MEXICAN

(to Hawk)

You, too, *hombre grande!*

HAWK

Goddamnit, Luke!

HANLEY

Don't do it, Gid...

MEXICAN
 (feeling confident)
Uno...dos...

HAWK
 Goddamnit!

He throws his rifle onto the bed.

The Mexican smiles savagely. We're tight on the pistol pressed tight to Hanley's temple.

MORGAN
Noooo!

The Mexican drills a round through Hanley's head and drops the quivering, dead lawman as he WHOOPS VICTORIOUSLY and extends his pistol toward Hawk. His revolver ROARS twice.

Hawk dives onto the bed, avoiding the bullets. As the Mexican leaps out the window, Hawk rolls across the bed, whipping up his two pistols and FIRING through the window.

We hear SEVERAL THUDS and GROANS as the Mexican rolls down the porch roof and then lands in the yard below.

MEXICAN (O.S.)
 (with anguish)
Owww-shit!

Hawk runs out of the room. Morgan stares in horror at the dead Hanley and then follows Hawk out of the room.

EXT. ROADHOUSE – NIGHT

The Mexican lies writhing in a puddle of light in the roadhouse yard. Hawk strides out of the roadhouse and into the yard, holding his pistols straight down at his sides.

Morgan follows him out into the yard, and they stare down at the Mexican who is trying to reach for his silver-plated revolver. Morgan steps up past Hawk and aims his .45 at the man's head, grim purpose in the deputy's grief-stricken, haunted eyes.

HAWK
 Hold on, now, Morg. What in hell
 you think you're doin'?

MORGAN

I'm gonna kill this weasel, Gid.
He's gonna get as good as he gave
Brit!

Hawk places his hand on the younger deputy's shoulder.

HAWK

We are not judge, jury, and
executioner, Luke. Judge Lynch
don't ride with me. Remember what
we talked about?

(looks pointedly at
the Mexican, voice
hard and flat)

I know it's tempting, but Judge
Lynch don't ride with Gideon Hawk.

MORGAN

(teeth gritted)

We can't let this vermin live. Not
after what he done to Brit!

The Mexican snickers through his teeth then stops, stares
apprehensively up at Morgan.

HAWK

(coolly reasonable)

He'll go before a judge and jury.
And, then, if the jury sees fit,
he'll hang.

MORGAN

Brit's wife's in the family way.
She's due next month...

His gun trembles in his hand as he keeps the barrel pressed
against the Mexican's head.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

What's his wife gonna do now?
What's his kid gonna do? 'Cause o'
this burnin' bag of low-down dirty
dog shit?

HAWK

Brit gave himself over to the law.
He knew the risks. You do, too.
The frontier's full of bottom-
feeders like this one here. Let
him stand trial. He'll hang...if a

judge and jury see fit to hang
him. That's the way it works
whether you and I like it or not.

MORGAN

Who'd know if we just killed him
and threw him in a ravine, let the
hawks and wolves take care of him?
(looks up at Hawk)
Who'd *know*?

Hawk places a fatherly hand on the young deputy's shoulder.

HAWK

(firmly)
It's the law, Deputy. Now, ease
that hammer down and holster your
weapon.

Morgan stares down at the Mexican, who stares back at him,
grinning. Morgan jams the gun harder against the Mexican's
head. FEAR shows in the Mexican's eyes.

MORGAN

Goddamnit!

He pulls the gun away from the Mexican's head and depresses
the hammer.

MEXICAN

(mockingly)
I'm gonna need a doctor, amigos!

MORGAN

(to Hawk)
This one ain't worth it, Gid. You
can tell Lucinda Hanley what he
done to Brit.

Hawk looks at the grinning Mexican. He holds a pair of
handcuffs up in front of Morgan.

HAWK

Cuff him.

EXT — ROADHOUSE — DAY

FIVE SCUMBAGS follow a winding trail up a grassy hill atop
which a sprawling, remote roadhouse sits. The place looks a

little like the Bates house. The lead scumbag is NED MEADE—lizard-skinned and ugly as sin.

The others are CRAZY CHUCK, JOHNNY "BEAVER FACE" PYLE, KEN DAWSON, and LUCIUS RUNNING BEAR.

It's *WINDY*. Dusters flap like wings. Dust flies.

As they ride up the hill...

MEADE

What time is it, Crazy Chuck?

CRAZY CHUCK

Why in hell you keep askin' me the time, Ned?

MEADE

Shut up and give me the time.

CRAZY CHUCK plucks a battered turnip from his vest pocket, which he wears beneath a ratty duster.

CRAZY CHUCK

It's ten minutes past the last time you asked what time it was.

Meade stares ahead, stone-faced, as the group continues climbing the hill toward the wind-battered roadhouse.

Crazy Chuck falls back to ride beside Johnny "Beaver Face" Pyle, a buck-toothed young outlaw wearing big pistols in shoulder holsters.

CRAZY CHUCK

Hey, Johnny, what the hell's with Ned and the friggin' time? He got an appointment with a ten-dollar whore?

Beaver Face Pyle glares at Crazy Chuck.

BEAVER FACE PYLE

His brother's due to hang at high noon, ya wooden-headed dung beetle.

Scowling with chagrin, Crazy Chuck watches Beaver Face Pyle trot his horse on ahead of him.

CRAZY CHUCK

Oh...shit....

LATER...

Meade and the others rein their horses up to the hitchrack before the sprawling, unpainted house and a badly blistered sign above the front porch announcing: MR. THOMAS'S PLACE. They dismount and head up the porch steps.

INT. ROADHOUSE - DAY

Meade and the other riders walk into the roadhouse crudely, sparsely furnished with a smoky wood stove, several display cases and shelves of dry goods. Part mercantile, part saloon, it's vast and dirty. It's seen better days...a long time ago.

At the back is a high bar fronted by pickle barrels and topped with two five-gallon jars of pickled eggs and ham hocks. There's a door behind the bar.

Mostly, there's dirt, grime, and spider webs.

The room is empty.

MEADE

(yelling)

Mr. Thomas?

The door at the back of the room opens. A man no taller than a candy barrel or a six-year-old child enters, his pudgy arms filled with brown beer bottles. His legs are fat, little pistons clad in denim overalls, the cuffs of which are shoved down into his tiny, black cowboy boots.

MISTER THOMAS has a scraggly goat beard—an old man's face on a near-infant's body. He's a smug, self-assured little bastard.

Seeing the little man, Crazy Chuck openly laughs, frankly amused by the dwarf.

CRAZY CHUCK

Hey, Shorty! You run this place
all by your little lonesome, do
ya?

Meade and the others say nothing. Gathered near the door, they all stoop to peer under the bar. Mr. Thomas has set

the beer on the floor and was now depositing each bottle into an icebox standing as high as the top of Mr. Thomas's head.

CRAZY CHUCK

(seriously baffled)

What's the matter, shorty? Cat got your tongue?

Meade and the others give Crazy Chuck a look of acute castigation but say nothing.

Mr. Thomas closes the icebox, brushes his hands on his pants, and ambles out toward the newcomers, limping deeply on one leg.

It's as though he hasn't heard Crazy Chuck.

MR. THOMAS

Ned, where you been keepin' yourself, you old polecat?

He and Meade shake hands.

MEADE

Always good to see you again, Mr. Thomas.

Meade glances at his cohorts standing to his right. Crazy Chuck is to Meade's left.

MEADE

Mr. Thomas, you remember Beaver Face Pyle and Ken Dawson. The half-breed's Lucius Running Bear.

Meade shakes hands, looking up at the towering Running Bear.

MR. THOMAS

New blood, eh, Ned? Tall drink o' firewater, ain't he?

MEADE

You know how I am, Mr. Thomas. Out with the old, in with the new. An' bigger the better.

Mr. Thomas limps over to stare up at Crazy Chuck, who's a little befuddled by the little man's non-responsiveness.

MR. THOMAS

Who's this one?

MEADE

Chuck Holbrook from out Wyoming way. Otherwise known as 'Crazy Chuck.'

MR. THOMAS

Crazy Chuck. You're supposed to be faster'n Clinton Harvey.

CRAZY CHUCK

(grinning)

True enough, Shorty. In fact, I'm—

Mr. Thomas grabs Crazy Chuck's crotch and chomps down on his lower lip as he squeezes. Crazy Chuck loses a GIRLISH SQUEAL. He's immobilized with the worse kind of agony.

Mr. Thomas releases Crazy Chuck's crotch and stomps a heel of one little cowboy boot down hard on Crazy Chuck's right foot.

Crazy Chuck leaps back, howling and reaching for a pistol.

TIGHT ON CRAZY CHUCK'S FACE AS ANOTHER BOUT OF AGONY ROLLS THROUGH HIM. He sucks a sharp breath, drops his pistol, and stares down to see the hooked point of A RAZOR-EDGED BOWIE KNIFE pressed taut to his crotch.

A little, wrinkled hand is wrapped around the knife's handle.

CRAZY CHUCK

Goddamn—you *crazy*?

Mr. Thomas smiles mildly up at Crazy Chuck.

MR. THOMAS

The name's *Mister* Thomas.
Comprende, amigo?

Crazy chucks grunts and pants as though he's in labor. He looks at Meade and the others as though for help.

MEADE

I done told you, fool. You call my friend here Mr. Thomas. Not

"Shorty" or "Sawed-Off" or "Half-Pint" or "Stretch" or anything else. It's *Mister Thomas*.

MR. THOMAS

More than one man has learned the hard way. I've fed more men their own oysters than a Chiricoway squaw.

Chuck stares down in horror and desperation at the little man still poking the bowie's point against his scrotum.

CRAZY CHUCK

S-Sorry, Mr. Thomas. It won't happen again. I promise. Now *please* pull that pig-sticker out of my *balls!*

A smile blossoms on Mr. Thomas's ugly face.

MR. THOMAS

Glad to hear that.

He pulls the knife away from Chuck's scrotum and returns it to the sheath belted at the small of his back. He ambles back behind the bar, leaps onto a crate, and leans forward against the bar planks.

MR. THOMAS

Now that we got that bit of ugliness out of the way, what can I do for you, Ned?

Meade plucks a sucker from a wooden box and slacks into a chair, unwrapping the sucker. His partners have all taken seats around the same table as Meade, near the bar behind which Mr. Thomas stands like a wizened little court judge.

MEADE

Mr. Thomas, I'd like to know anything you can tell me about a certain deputy U.S. marshal residin' in these parts. I figure if anyone knows about anyone around here, it's you. His name is Gideon Henry Hawk--half-breed lawman.

He sticks the sucker in his mouth and begins sucking.

MR. THOMAS

Hawk.

(nodding, scowling)

I hate that son of a bitch.

Licking the sucker, Meade crosses his knees and smiles.

MEADE

He does live around here, then...

MR. THOMAS

He lives up in Crossroads, six miles up the road. Son of a bitch keeps a tight rein on my Injun trade. Somehow, he always seems to know when I'm about to make a trip over to the reservation with my whiskey, which you know, Ned, is second to none. Those poor Injun bastards...

(glances at Running Bear)

...uh, with apologies to you, sir...them bastards love my skull pop better'n life itself. You'd think that when people have so little and love somethin' so much, Hawk'd see fit to look the other way now and then. But does he?

(shakes his head)

Pshaw! Don't give an inch! Big, mean, nasty, green-eyed half-breed bastard son of a bitch!

Mr. Thomas looks pointedly at Ned Meade.

MR. THOMAS

Cross you, did he, Ned?

Meade stares at the floor with a strange, faraway, sad expression. Finally, he glances at Crazy Chuck.

MEADE

What time is it, Crazy Chuck?

Crazy Chuck fishes his tarnished timepiece out of his vest pocket, and flips the lid. He shapes his lips to whistle but stifles the impulse. He looks troubled as he snaps the watch closed.

CRAZY CHUCK

It's just now noon, Ned.

TIGHT on Meade's face as the emotion builds slowly in his eyes, as he stares straight across the room.

MR. THOMAS

What's at noon, Ned?

Mr. Thomas and the other four men in the roadhouse regard Meade expectantly. Meade holds up his hand for silence. In the other hand, he holds the sucker. He looks toward the ceiling as though to see his brother's spirit being wafted away to Heaven.

Mr. Thomas frowns and looks at the others, curious.

The others nudge each other, remove their hats, and bow their heads.

Meade gives a long, worbling sob. Closes his eyes, nearly overcome with grief.

MEADE

My little brother, Ted, was just hanged in the territorial capital.

Mr. Thomas clucks and shakes his head. He leaps down off his crate, ducks under the bar and comes out and places a little hand on Meade's knee.

MR. THOMAS

(fondly)

Gee, Ned, that's tough. Little Ted. I remember him well.

LUCIUS RUNNING BEAR

Hawk brought him in.

KEN DAWSON

Took him when he was diddlin' a whore. Defenseless.

MR. THOMAS

Ain't it just like that green-eyed dog-eatin' son of a bitch...

(glances quickly at
Running Bear)

...uh, beggin' your pardon.

BEAVER FACE PYLE

Took him in, hanged him two months later.

Meade holds up his left hand and his chewed sucker in his right. His left hand has only three-fingers, thus his nickname. The last two fingers are gone. He's still chewing pieces of the sucker as he speaks.

MEADE

We all know about Little Ted's taste for children. Sure, he liked little boys. He liked little girls, too.

(shakes his head)

But you can't tell me Little Ted chopped that boy up and threw him down that well--no, sir...

LOUDLY CRUNCHING THE SUCKER, Meade looks pointedly at Mr. Thomas.

MEADE (CONT'D)

Tell me about Hawk, Mr. Thomas. Where does he reside? I hear he's married. How many kids?

END OF ACT 1ACT 2

INT. GIDEON HAWK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Hawk family--Gideon; LINDA, a pretty, frail blonde in her late twenties; and JUBAL, 10--is gathered around their supper table. Jubal, round-faced with flat, almond-shaped eyes, "isn't right in the head."

The WIND is still blowing, HOLWING AND PELTING SAND against the dark windows.

Linda Hawk spoons green beans onto her son's plate.

LINDA

Good beans from your momma's garden. Eat up, Jubal.

Jubal is galloping a beautifully carved black horse along the edge of the table, ignoring his plate.

LINDA (CONT'D)

If you're going to have more potatoes and gravy, you have to have more green beans, as well. A growing boy needs plenty of vegetables.

She glances at Hawk who looks on, smiling.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Isn't that right, Pa?

As Hawk pours himself more coffee...

HAWK

That's right, Jube. Green beans give you *muscle!*

Hawk reaches over and closes his hand around the boy's skinny arm, then musses the boy's hair. He loves his son like nothing else in this life except possibly the boy's heartbroken mother.

Jubal just rolls his eyes up at his parents. Not much of a talker. He reluctantly takes the horse in just one hand and picks at the beans with his fork in his other hand.

Hawk glances at Linda again, as she brings two slices of pie to the table and sets one down by Jubal and one down in front of Hawk. She returns her husband's look and, brushing a tear from her cheek, kneels down beside Jubal to press her cheek against his.

Hawk looks on, smiling. But his heart is broken for both of them.

HAWK

Jube, how 'bout you and me go fishin' tomorrow--after school, of course?

Nibbling another bean off his fork, Jubal grins with delight.

LATER...

Jubal has gone to bed. Hawk dries the dishes as Linda washes them.

LINDA

That boy breaks my heart, Gid. He turns me inside out—I swear!

Hawk sets down the plate he's been drying and wraps his arms around her, drawing her close. She half-turns to him, tears running down her cheeks, hands in the soapy water.

HAWK

He's a tough boy. Texas maverick stock from your side. He'll grow up to be a strong, good man. Don't worry about him.

Kisses her forehead.

LINDA

You and I both know he's slow. I was walking by the school the other day and heard some of the boys teasing him. And it just *killed* me! Teddy Roach was one, of course. I could wring his scrawny neck, Gid!

HAWK

Do you want me to talk to Teddy's father?

LINDA

Do you think it would help?

HAWK

Not really. The boy needs to fight his own battles. But if you're really worried, I'll go and have a talk with Roach.

Linda considers, purses her lips, sighs...

LINDA

I think I should keep him at home, Gid.

Hawk makes a face—not this conversation again.

LINDA (CONT'D)

I just don't see what good it's doing—sending him to school just so the other boys can—

HAWK

Linda, the only way the boy's gonna grow and learn to get along in the world is by being out there. He's not gonna grow, just stayin' here at home with us.

Linda sighs and looks off. Hawk kisses her cheek.

HAWK (CONT'D)

Don't worry. Jubal's just laggin' a little behind the others. He'll get along fine...in time. He's just a little softheaded, like your pa.

Hawk smiles, teasing.

LINDA

Gideon Hawk!

Hawk raises his hands in supplication, chuckling.

HAWK

And look how well that old rascal did for himself?!

Hawk draws her to him. Linda keeps her lips closed, but a grin tugs at them. Hawk kisses her, opening her lips with his until she complies and they share a passionate embrace.

HAWK

He'll be fine. I promise.

Linda nods.

HAWK

Now, how about you and I head upstairs and think about maybe makin' the boy a sister?

Linda looks shocked but delighted.

LINDA

Gideon—*really?*

Laughing, Hawk picks her up in his arms and carries her toward a staircase.

HAWK

God, you're easy. If you ain't careful, woman, I'm gonna get the notion I married a Jane-about-town!

Linda laughs as Gideon carries her upstairs.

EXT. MAIN STREET FRONTIER TOWN - DAY

Ned Meade, Pyle, Dawson, Crazy Chuck, and Running Bear ride into the little prairie town of Crossroads. They pull up in front of the Dakota Hotel. Again, it's windy, and clouds are building.

DAWSON

Ain't this where Mr. Thomas said Hawk has an office?

Meade stares grimly at the hotel's gaudy façade.

MEADE

Indeed, it is. A room at the back.

RUNNING BEAR

How 'bout we go in, have us a drink or two, shoot Hawk, and blow on outta this jerkwater? I'm damned tired of the wind on this prairie!

CRAZY CHUCK

I second the motion!

MEADE

Now, let's not get impatient.

PYLE

What're you talkin' about, boss?

Meade stares at the hotel.

MEADE

It ain't Hawk we're gonna kill.

Ignoring them, Meade gigs his horse over to the porch of a drygoods store, where an OLD, GRAY-HEADED LADY is nailing a FRESH EGGS sign back onto the wall beside the door.

MEADE

Say, Granny—can you tell me where
the school is?

GRANNY turns to Meade, frowning around the nail she holds between her thin lips.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE — MOMENT'S LATER

We are behind the four SCUMBAGS led by Meade as they ride down a slight hill toward a white school that looks even whiter now as the sky turns darker. Children are playing outside, girls skipping rope, playing with dolls or standing in small clumps, telling secrets.

Boys shoot marbles and run around, chasing each other, yelling, wrestling. It's a small, self-contained, raucous sphere of social activity.

STILL FROM A WIDE ANGLE BEHIND THE FOUR SCUMBAGS, Meade and his men stop near a small group of boys, one of whom points toward the far side of the school yard, where a large cottonwood stands. The boy laughs mockingly as he points.

The outlaws glance at each other and then ride on around the edge of the playground. They stop under the tree, where...

Not all of the boys are playing together. Jubal Hawk is sitting under the tree, playing by himself with another small, wooden horse. In fact, he's CARVING the horse with a folding knife, occasionally making "gidyup" sounds as he bounces the horse along the ground before carving on it some more.

He's dreamy-eyed, content, happy to be far away from the horrors of the schoolyard, in a world of his own imagination.

The shadow of Ned Meade slides over the boy, who looks up to see the five menacing-looking riders staring down at him. Meade is smiling but there is nothing warm in the man's smile.

MEADE

What you got there, son?

At first, Jubal looks apprehensive. But then he follows the man's gaze to his horse, and his face brightens. Someone outside of his own family is actually interested in Jubal's world!

Jubal holds up the horse and mutters.

Ned glances at the others, whose eyes brighten with mockery.

MEADE

Why, it's a buckin' bronc!

Jubal mutters and mumbles in delight.

MEADE (CONT'D)

Well, sure enough it is. You like horses, do you, boy? Say...what're you doin' there?

TIGHT ON THE FOLDING KNIFE IN JUBAL'S HAND.

MEADE (CONT'D)

You *carvin'* that horse?

Jubal mutters and mumbles. He holds the horse up and Meade leans out to take it and hold it up and look at it in appreciation of the expert craftsmanship.

MEADE (CONT'D)

Well, lookee there. Fellas, you ever see the like...?

CRAZY CHUCK

He didn't carve that. Why, he's a coconut, that boy. Look at him...

BEAVER FACE PYLE

He's just pretendin' to carve on it. Chuck's right. He's got cork for a brain.

Jubal frowns, offended. His lips quiver. He's about to cry.

Meade feigns an admonishing scowl at the others.

MEADE

Now, look what you gone and done.
 Why, the boy's about to cloud up
 and rain! Now, now, son—he didn't
 mean nothin' by that. He was just
 funnin' with you. You like
 horsies, do you, boy?

Meade hands the boy back the horse. Fighting tears, Jubal takes it and holds it close against his chest, like a doll. He nods.

Crazy Chuck laughs and Beaver Face Pyle swats him with his hat. Meade ignores them, keeping his attention on the boy.

MEADE

Yeah, you like horsies. Of course,
 you like horses! Who doesn't like
 horsies?

(he pats his own
 horse's neck)

As a matter of fact, your pa sent
 us over here to discuss that very
 subject with you. We understand
 you'd just love to have a horsey
 of your very own—that right?

Jubal looks at him, eyes bright.

MEADE (CONT'D)

Of course, you would. Of course,
 you would. Well, me an' the boys
 here told him about this pony we
 have for sale, see? Your pa thinks
 it might make a right fine horse
 for you—that's what he told us,
 didn't he, boys?

The others are stifling their laughter.

DAWSON

Sure enough, he did. Thinks it
 might be time for you to have
 yourself a *real* hoss...stead of
 just a *wooden* hoss.

Crazy Chuck is really getting into the ruse.

CRAZY CHUCK

Well, shit, while it might look
purty—you can't ride no *wooden*
horse!

Jubal's eyes are getting bigger and bigger as he stares up
at the men, clutching the wooden horse to his chest.

Meade is playing the part frighteningly well, with not a
trace of irony on his ugly features.

MEADE

Sure, sure. Your pa thinks it
might be time you had a *real* horse
to feed an' ride an' such. Well,
me an' the boys just happen to
have such a horse. Looks much like
that one you got there, in fact.

Jubal looks down at the horse in his hands.

DAWSON

Yeah, yeah it does!

MEADE

Your pa said that if the price is
right for this *real* horse, and you
like the horse well enough, he'll
buy it for you.

TIGHT ON JUBAL'S EYES READY TO POP OUT OF HIS HEAD!

Crazy Chuck snickers almost uncontrollably, but Jubal is
riveted on Meade.

MEADE

So your pa sent us to fetch you,
see? To take you over to where
we're keepin' the horse. So you
can take a look at the horse
yourself.

CRAZY CHUCK

Yeah, you know--to check its teeth
an' look under its tail an'
such...

Beaver Face Pyle looks at Chuck and says with exasperation
but under his breath:

BEAVER FACE PYLE

Under its tail?!

Crazy Chuck shrugs. Meade is continuing to hold his private conversation with the boy, who is fixated on him.

MEADE

Your pa just wants you to make sure the horse appeals to you, you understand. That you like it. And, if so--well, hell--he said he'd buy it for you!

RUNNING BEAR

Now, ain't that a surprise?!

Jubal jerks around slightly, as though he's charged with electricity. Smiling like a fond uncle, Meade extends his gloved hand to the boy.

MEADE (CONT'D)

So, hop on, son. Let's go have a look.

Jubal glances toward the school where the YOUNG SCHOOLTEACHER, MISS CRAFT (20), is now jumping rope with some girls not a whole lot younger than she is, near the school's front steps. She hasn't seen the horseback riders gathered around Jubal. She's not looking this way.

TIGHT ON JUBAL EXTENDING HIS SOFT HAND TOWARD MEADE'S HAND.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Meade and his partners gallop off away from the school, toward a low line of wooded hills. Jubal looks so small and vulnerable, riding behind Meade. The boy glances a little sheepishly toward the schoolyard.

The schoolteacher, Miss Craft, glances up from where she's skipping rope, sees the riders, and stops skipping rope. She frowns as she stares, shading her eyes with her hand.

MISS CRAFT

(half to herself)

Is that...Jubal...?

INT. HAWK'S OFFICE - DAY

Hawk's office is in a back room of the Dakota Hotel. Hawk is kicked back in his chair behind his roll top desk, reading a thick, leather-bound law book. Small, round spectacles are perched on his nose. He's smoking a hand-rolled quirley, knocking the ashes into an ashtray on his desk. A cup of coffee steams near the ashtray.

Hawk is intent on the book, slowly turning a page, when a man's voice sounds outside his office, from the hotel's main drinking hall. It's the voice of the Irish bartender, O'MALLEY (50).

O'MALLEY (O.S.)

Why, miss Craft—sure never expected to see you in here!

MISS CRAFT (O.S.)

I'm here to see Marshal Hawk, Mr. O'Malley. Isn't his office back here somewhere?

O'MALLEY

Yes, ma'am. That door right back there beneath the stairs. I know he's in there, too, because I seen him just a few minutes ago. He came out for a cup of coffee.

Footsteps echo beyond Hawk's door. They grow louder. Looking concerned, Hawk tosses the book and his glasses onto the desk, and rises from his chair. He opens the door. Miss Craft is before him, frozen in mid-knock.

HAWK

Miss Craft? Anything wrong?

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIL — DAY

Under a sky growing darker and looking more and more like rain, Hawk gallops up to the schoolhouse yard. He slows his horse, staring north toward where a trail climbs into wooded hills, then gigs his mount into a gallop across the yard and toward the trail.

A MOMENT LATER...

He's galloping up the trail while the wind blows and THUNDER RUMBLES. Lightning flashes.

Hawk studies the trail he's following into the hills.

The wind blows his hat off his head.

He drives spurs into his mount's flanks, and gallops up the next hill sheathed in cottonwoods and heavy brush, studying the tracks before him.

Behind him an Irish-accented VOICE that we recognize from the saloon, SHOUTS:

O'MALLEY (O.S.)

Gideon!

Hawk whips his head around to see the bar tender, O'Malley, galloping after him and holding a shotgun in one hand. He wears a bowler hat. He points with the barrel of his shotgun.

O'MALLEY

There!

Hawk whips his head back forward and his eyes widen in shock.

Beyond him and off the trail a ways, A LARGE, DEAD COTTONWOOD stands atop an otherwise barren butte. The sprawling branches of the cottonwood sway to and fro, like a stiff old lady dancing by bending her knees and spreading her arms.

Beneath a stout branch sits two horseback riders silhouetted by the gray-purple sky behind them. The one on the left is Ned Meade, long, pale hair blowing in the wind. The other, smaller figure is Jubal Hawk.

Jubal's hands are tied behind his back. A noose is draped around Jubal's head, connected to the rope wrapped around the stout branch above the horses, tied off near the cottonwood's base.

Three other riders flank the tree, spread out to either side of the first man and Jubal.

Ned Meade waves his right hand broadly in the air above his head, and WHOOPS loudly.

MEADE
 (taunting)
 Payback for my brother, Hawk!

We can barely hear him above the wind and the intermittent rumble of thunder.

Hawk rises up in his saddle to shout at the tops of his lungs:

HAWK
No!

Meade laughs then slaps the rump of Jubal's horse.

The horse lurches forward. The rope draws taught and the noose lifts the boy free of the saddle. The horse gallops off down the hill toward Hawk while Jubal swings in the wind, kicking and twisting and turning at the end of the rope.

Hawk gallops frantically forward.

HAWK
No, goddamn you!

TIGHT ON THE FACE OF O'MALLEY, who follows Hawk from a distance, stunned.

O'MALLEY
Oh...my...god!

While Ned Meade and his compatriots rein their horses around and ride casually off down the hill's far side, Hawk gallops up the hill toward his son, LIGHTNING FLASHING, THUNDER RUMBLING around him.

Hawk stares in horror at his boy, whose body is beginning to fall slack at the end of the rope.

HAWK
 (under his breath)
 My god, no!

Hawk pulls up near Jubal. Rain is lashing him now—rain and wind, the storm demons cutting loose their fury. Hawk reaches up for the boy. He can only reach up to Jubal's knees. He moves around helplessly, both wanting to cut him down and relieve the strain on the boy's neck.

He can't do both at the same time!

O'Malley gallops up to him, dismounts.

HAWK

O'Malley, cut him down. Cut him
down, goddamnit! Cut him down!

O'Malley looks around, helpless, shocked. Hawk is pushing up on Jubal's legs to put some slack into the rope. He fumbles a bowie knife from the scabbard on his shell belt, and thrusts it toward the barman.

HAWK

Here—cut the rope. *Hurry!*

O'MALLEY

All right, all right, all right!

HAWK

Cut the rope!

O'Malley lumbers over to where the rope is tied off to a stub of a branch low on the tree. He swipes at it with the knife. He's nervous, misses.

HAWK

(voice trembling)

For chrissakes, cut the rope,
O'Malley!

O'Malley slashes at the rope three more times. Finally, it's cut! Jubal tumbles down into his father's arms. Hawk cradles the boy, bending his knees and lowering Jubal to the ground.

HAWK

Jube? Jube? *Jubal!*

Jubal's eyes are closed. The hammering rain lashes his face.

Hawks lays him out on the ground and removes the noose from around his neck, tosses it aside.

HAWK

Jubal! Jubal! Can you hear me,
son? Oh, god—can you HEAR MEEEE?!

O'Malley stares down in horror, hands to his head.

O'MALLEY

Oh, for cryin' out loud. Who would
do such an awful bleedin' thing?

Hawk is fumbling around with his son's slack body, not sure what to do. He smooths the soaked hair away from Jubal's face.

HAWK

He's not dead! He's not dead!

Hawk lowers an ear to Jubal's chest.

HAWK (CONT'D)

You're not dead—are you, son?

He peels open an eyelid.

HAWK (CONT'D)

You're not dead, are you, boy?
Jubal, goddamnit, you answer me!

Hawk shakes the boy's shoulders.

HAWK (CONT'D)

Jubal, you stop foolin' around an'
answer your father!

O'Malley places a hand on Hawk's shoulder, sobbing.

O'MALLEY

Oh, for the love of all the bloody
saints in bleedin' Heaven—I think
he's gone.

HAWK

He's not dead!

O'MALLEY

Oh, Christ, Gid—I think he is. I
think our dear pretty one has gone
to live with the saints in Heaven!

HAWK

Shut up, O'Malley!

Hawk shakes the boy again, violently.

HAWK (CONT'D)

Jubal, goddamnit—you open your eyes! We're goin' fishin' today!

O'Malley is kneeling beside Hawk now, one arm around the lawman's shoulders. He's bawling openly.

HAWK

Jubal, you open your eyes right now. We're going *fishing*, goddamnit!

(two beats)

Jubal...Jubal...

(voice breaking)

goddamn...goddamnit...Jubal, we're...going fishing...today....

Hawk pulls the boy's slack body to his, wraps his arms around him, engulfing him, and bawls.

He and O'Malley kneel there together while the storm rages down upon them, bawling.

Finally, Hawk lowers the boy's body to the ground. Through tear-veiled eyes, he sees the wooden horse lying nearby. He picks it up, holds it before him in both hands, much as Jubal himself did a few minutes ago.

Hawk's face is blank now with shock. His eyelids are heavy. He rises slowly, clutching the horse before him, stumbles a few feet away from O'Malley and his son's body, and then collapses back down to his knees, pressing his forehead against the ground.

His face is a mask of agony. He bawls soundlessly.

TIGHT ON THE HORSE HE HOLDS IN ONE HAND, PRESSED AGAINST THE MUDDY GROUND.

END OF SECOND ACT

ACT 3

EXT. CEMETERY — DAY

Jubal's funeral. A crowd sits in chairs by the freshly dug grave. A pine box sits by the grave.

Sitting beside his wife so bereaved she can only blankly stare out from the black veil of her widow's weeds, Hawk

FINGERS JUBAL'S HORSE, which he holds on his lap while the minister drones on.

MINISTER

Worry not that this beautiful child has passed. You see, Jubal Hawk was too beautiful for this world. Thus the Lord our Father has seen fit to pluck him from the mud of this mire. Young Jubal has saddled a golden cloud and ridden off to a far, far better land. In fact, I can tell you with utmost certainty that Jubal Hawk is an angel now—even more than he was an angel in *this* life--and he is now sitting on the lap of none other than the Lord Our Father who art in Heaven himself...with Saint Nicholas hovering very near on golden wings, his pockets filled with chocolates and rock candy!

The minister smiles out at the crowd, awaiting a positive response to this last. A couple of old women beam at one another, but most folks merely look bewildered.

Neither Hawk nor Linda is listening. Hawk merely continues to FINGER THE HORSE IN HIS HANDS.

LATER...

Hawk and Linda stand at the head of the line of mourners, paying their final respects to their little boy, who lies beneath the lid of a simple pine coffin, on the ground beside the grave and the mound of soil.

In the background, three ladies SING "Bringing In the Sheaves."

Hawk works his mouth, trying to come up with something to say. He's choking back tears. Linda just stares down at the box from behind her veil, dry-eyed, too bereaved to even cry.

HAWK

G-Goodbye, son.

He tosses some dirt on the box. He looks at Linda. She looks at him dully, then moves forward, kneels down, and places a single rose on the lid of the coffin.

Hawk helps her back to her feet, and she faints in his arms.

EXT. MAIN STREET — DAY

Hawk drives a one-horse buggy along the street, heading urgently for his house. Linda lies slumped beside him. On the other side of Linda sits A GRAY-HAIRED OLD MAN, DR. BLANKENSHIP (70).

As Hawk passes the Dakota Hotel, he sees Deputy U.S. Marshal Luke Morgan just then dismounting his dusty horse. Morgan turns to Hawk, looking concerned, and pinches his hat brim. Hawk rides on past the deputy.

INT. HAWK HOUSE — DAY

The door to Hawk's and Linda's bedroom opens and Doc Blankenship walks out of the room, carrying his leather medical kit. While the door is open, we can see Linda Hawk lying in the bed behind him, asleep.

Hawk rises from his parlor chair, as does the neighbor lady, MRS. NELSON, (70), here to help with Linda.

Hawk just stares at the doctor.

DOC BLANKENSHIP

I've given her a sedative. She'll sleep for several hours.

HAWK

What can I do? I mean, besides bring her son back to her...

(his voice cracks,
he composes
himself)

...what can I do?

DOC BLANKENSHIP

Give her time. While you're at it, you're gonna have to give yourself some time, too, Gideon.

After a beat...

HAWK

I have to go to my office for a bit. Will that be all right?

The doctor nods. Mrs. Nelson stands, places her hand on Hawk's arm.

MRS. NELSON

You go ahead. I'll be here with her, Gideon. She's in good hands.

INT. DAKOTA HOTEL SALOON — DAY

Hawk enters the building through the front door and walks down along the bar. Luke Morgan is standing at the bar, sipping a beer. His dusty hat sits on the bar near his beer.

As he walks past Morgan, Hawk doffs his own hat.

HAWK

Come on back.

INT. HAWK'S OFFICE — DAY

Stepping into the office, Hawk tosses his hat on a rack and hikes a hip on a corner of his desk. Luke Morgan comes in behind him and closes the door. He's dusty from the trail he's ridden several nights in a row to get here.

MORGAN

Sorry I'm just gettin' here, Gid. I didn't get the telegram until I got back to Watertown, and then the weather played hell with the trail.

HAWK

It's all right. You're here now.

MORGAN

How you holdin' up?

Hawk shakes off the question.

HAWK

I tried to track 'em the next day, but the rain had wiped out their sign. And I had to get back here

to...to make arrangements. And
Linda can't be alone right now.

MORGAN

Linda—my god, how is she?

Hawk shakes his head.

HAWK

All I know is they headed west.
They're probably in Colorado. From
there, who knows where they'll go?
Maybe Mexico. Maybe Montana.

MORGAN

There were five of 'em?

HAWK

Yeah. "Three-Fingers" Ned Meade is
the leader. There are three whites
ridin' with him, and a big Indian
named Lucius Running Bear. I'm not
sure who the other whites are.
Mrs. Cravitz is the only one in
town who got a good look at 'em,
but I recognized Meade when I was
ridin'...

He lets his voice trail off and brushes a fist across his
chin to cover his emotion.

Morgan comes over and places a hand on Hawk's shoulder.

MORGAN

I'm so sorry for your loss, Gid.
Jesus, how could anyone do
something like that to someone as
innocent as Jubal?

HAWK

Well, they did. Ned Meade did...

MORGAN

We'll catch 'em. I'll leave from
here first thing tomorrow. I'm
gonna meet Bill Butterfield up the
trail a ways, and I've already
sent out telegrams to three other
deputy marshals. There's a Wells
Fargo agent in the area, too.

Name's Stanley—a damn good tracker. We'll get these guys.

HAWK

I'll be along soon. I just can't leave Linda right now.

MORGAN

You don't need to go anywhere. You stay here with Linda. We'll take down these guys and bring 'em back here for trial.

Hawk nods.

HAWK

All right. Okay.

He straightens, grabs his hat off the rack.

HAWK

I'd best get back...in case she needs me.

MORGAN

Sure. You go on home.

Morgan follows Hawk out of the office...

INT. SALOON — DAY

Hawk heads for the front door. Morgan moves back to the drink he left at the bar.

MORGAN

Don't worry, Gideon. I learned from the best. I'll get those guys!

Donning his hat, Hawk WALKS RIGHT ON PAST THE CAMERA AND OUT THE DOOR.

EXT. HAWK'S FRONT YARD — DAY

Hawk enters his yard through a gate in the white picket fence, mounts his front porch, and enters his neat, clapboard house.

INT. HAWK'S HOUSE — DAY

Hawk enters his parlor and stops. Mrs. Nelson is slumped in her chair, dead asleep. Concern plucks at Hawk. He hurries to his and Linda's bedroom door, opens it.

Linda is not in bed. The covers are thrown back.

Through a window on the other side of the bed, LINDA, clad in a cotton nightgown, HANGS FROM A COTTONWOOD TREE IN THE BACK YARD.

Hawk runs out of the room but we stay in the bedroom, looking out the window as Hawk runs into the yard and hugs Linda's hanging body around the waist, bawling.

EXT. CEMETERY — MORNING

Linda's funeral.

Hawk stands with a small crowd gathered around him and the preacher and Linda's freshly dug grave next to Jubal's mounded one. It's raining. O'Malley holds an umbrella over Hawk's head, who stands staring dully, holding Jubal's horse in one hand down low by his side.

MINISTER

Ashes to ashes...dust to dust...

The minister tosses a clump of mud onto Linda's coffin.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

Gideon, would you like to say
goodbye?

The preacher steps aside as Hawk steps forward to stand over Linda's grave. He stares down hard at her grave, at Jubal's grave, then back to Linda's grave.

Overcome with emotion, he drops to his knees and throws himself onto Linda's coffin, pressing his cheek hard against the lid. It's as though he were hugging Linda herself.

After a time, O'Malley steps forward, presses a hand on Hawk's shoulder.

O'MALLEY

Come on, Gid. Enough now.

O'Malley tries to pull Hawk away from the coffin, but Hawk resists, bawling.

HAWK

My family...my *family*...!

Finally, the minister comes over to help O'Malley pry Hawk off Linda's coffin. Hawk snaps, jerks up and around, and swings his fist, which he SMASHES against the preacher's face.

The preacher staggers backward, cupping his bloody mouth in his hands and staring at Hawk, shocked and horrified.

Hawk looks at his fist, bewildered by his sudden violence. Slowly, he lowers the fist to his side. The crowd MUTTERS.

A HUSKY, BALD MAN stands way back behind the mourners, near where the horses and buggies are parked. He's tall and bald and he wears a black patch over his right eye. He wears a three-piece suit but no hat. Another MAN (30's), similarly dressed, holds an umbrella over him and the bald man.

The bald man, whose name is "HATLESS" ED RICHARDS (50), looks wistfully up the hill toward where Hawk has just punched the preacher. He glances at his attendant, says something, and they walk away, climb onto a buggy, and ride off.

EXT. WHOREHOUSE YARD - NIGHT

We're on the high plains of eastern Colorado. Ned Meade and his fellow scumbags ride into the yard of a large Victorian whorehouse flanked by several corrals and a big barn and bunkhouse. The entire place is lit up like a busy city hotel.

A sign over the large front veranda announces WELCOME TO QUEEN VICTORIA'S!

SOFT PIANO MUSIC PATTERS OUT THROUGH THE LAMPLIT WINDOWS.

Meade and the fellas dismount at one of the front hitchracks.

BEAVER FACE PYLE

'Bout time we get here. I been dreamin' about Queen Victoria's doxies for weeks!

CRAZY CHUCK

Yeah, my loins need bleedin' off
before they explode like a keg of
black powder!

The group mounts the porch. Meade knocks on the front door, which is opened by QUEEN VICTORIA herself, a stout blonde (45) wearing a velvet ball gown and smoking a long, black cheroot.

At first, Queen Victoria looks pleased as punch for the business, but when she sees Meade and his motley bunch on her porch, her smile turns fragile.

QUEEN VICTORIA

Well, look who's here--N-Ned
Meade...and...and the boys....

INT. WHORE'S ROOM - NIGHT

A light glows softly on a dresser. Mostly in silhouette, we Ned Meade lies back on the bed. The whore is blowing him under the blankets. Her head bobs around under the covers.

TIGHT ON MEADE, his expression blissful.

After a couple of beats, a thought disturbs him. He frowns.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. HANGING TREE - NIGHT

Gideon Hawk galloping up the hill toward where Jubal hangs from the tree. Hawk SCREAMING.

Hawk kneeling with his head pressed to the ground, a few feet away from Jubal and O'Malley, the storm blasting around him.

Ned Meade is standing from the top of another hill, looking down at Hawk, a satisfied smile quirking his lips.

Then Hawk slowly lifts his head toward Meade. His eyes are a demon's eyes--as red as two pulsating coals.

BACK TO PRESENT

Meade grimaces and presses his fists to his temples in frustration. The PRETTY, SAUCY WHORE (20) flings the covers back from her head, frowning.

YOUNG WHORE

Well, don't go bad-mouthin' me to Queen Victoria, because I give the best French lessons in the business. And don't go expectin' your money back, neith-

The young whore stops as Meade shoves his pistol into her mouth, and cocks it.

MEADE

One word about this to anyone, I'll cut out your tongue and slit your throat. Bleed you dry. We got an' understandin'?

The whore nods vigorously, wide-eyed.

LATER...

The whore snores, child-like, on the bed. Sound asleep.

Meade sits in a chair by a window, smoking. He's half-dressed, haunted by night thoughts. He smokes nervously, flicks ashes into a tray, throws back a whiskey shot, pours out another.

WE HEAR THE SOUNDS OF ONE OF HIS MEN AND A WHORE MAKING LOVE IN THE NEXT ROOM—the kind of raucous, unbridled fun Meade should be having...

Movement out the window catches Meade's eye.

Quickly, he blows out the lamp and crouches before the window, looking out into the whorehouse yard.

MEADE

Could swear I seen someone out there...

He looks around carefully, worriedly.

MEADE (CONT'D)

Hawk, you come callin' on ole Ned, have ya...?

Ned considers. Then he grabs his cartridge belt and pistol off the bedpost.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. WHOREHOUSE YARD — NIGHT

Meade steps slowly out the whorehouse's back door. Pistol extended before him, he makes his way around the house to the front, crouches at the corner, and looks around.

MEADE

Seen somethin'. Know I did.
Less'n...less'n I'm just seein'
ghosts in the night....

WE HEAR THE FAINT RING OF A SPUR.

Meade whips around. A SHADOW MOVES BY THE BARN.

Meade starts moving slowly toward the barn.

He opens a small side door of the barn and steps quickly inside.

INT. BARN — NIGHT

Meade stands there inside the barn, back pressed against the wall beside the door, staring into the darkness.

For several seconds, silence.

MEADE

Hawk...?

Deep in the darkness, A MAN SNEEZES.

DEPUTY LUKE MORGAN (O.S)

Hold it, Meade—you're under arrest
for the murder of Jubal Hawk!

Meade throws himself straight forward to the floor and starts SHOOTING.

Guns flash in the darkness. Meade rolls to his right, fires again, then stands, runs, and, while several other men shoot toward him, he knocks a lamp off a hook in a ceiling beam.

Meade hurls himself into a stall, rolls up, and fires at the lamp.

A FIRE IMMEDIATELY BOILS UP around the lamp and spilled coal oil.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Fire!

Meade swings around and dives out a window as bullets punch into the wall around him, escaping the barn.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DAKOTA HOTEL — DAY

Hawk sits alone at a table near his office. His hat, a bottle, and a shot glass are on the table before him. He stares blankly off—a bereaved man alone.

"Hatless" Ed Richards is sitting with his attendant near the front of the saloon. Richards stares toward Hawk, throws his drink back, then rises, picking up his bottle and his glass. He crosses the saloon to stand over Hawk.

He puts his RIGHT HAND on one of the four empty chairs around Hawk.

RICHARDS

This chair taken?

Hawk sees that the man is not only missing his right eye, he's missing his right thumb.

Hawk doesn't say anything.

Richards pulls the chair out, slacks into it, and holds up the bottle.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

Buy ya a drink?

HAWK

I have a bottle.

Richards refills Hawk's empty shot glass.

RICHARDS

Oh, well...always best to drink someone else's forty rod. Save yourself a dime.

Eyeing the stranger skeptically, Hawk sips the drink and sets the glass back down on the table.

HAWK

That ain't forty-rod.

Richards pours himself a drink.

RICHARDS

It was a job of work to locate a bottle with a label in this town.

HAWK

Have we met?

Richards grins and holds up his hands, showing the missing thumb.

RICHARDS

Oh, come on—you'd remember a fella sportin' one eye and one thumb. Good lawman like you.

(extends his right hand)

"Hatless" Ed Richards. Some call me "No Hat" though I don't have a drop of Injun blood.

His grin is met with a blank stare. Richards clears his throat.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

Look, I realize this isn't a good time for you. I'm just passin' through, but...I heard what happened. Made me decide to stay on an extra day or two.

Richards waits. Hawk doesn't say anything, just continues to narrow an eye across the table at the man.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

Let's just say, I...I, uh, sympathize with your plight. For I, too, lost my family to no-accounts similar to those you lost yours to.

Hawk glances beyond Richards to his attendant now drinking alone at the table that Richards vacated. The attendant returns Hawk's stare. Richards glances over his shoulder at the man.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

Oh, don't worry about him. His name's Black. Donny Black. He's my right-hand man, seein' as my own right hand is messed up, not unlike my eye—the thumb bein' gone an' all.

Hawk takes another sip of the good whiskey.

HAWK

What happened?

RICHARDS

I'm a...man of...of *means*, Mr. Hawk. That makes me especially vulnerable to predators, similar to the class of no-account vermin that took your life in their jaws and gave it a good shake.

He pauses, makes eye contact with Hawk across the table.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

I grew up in Iowa. Poor farm stock but *hard-working* farm stock. Fought in the war on the side of the Union. Came west to build a life the hard way—by earning it. Busted my ass doin' everything from layin' railroad track to swampin' out saloons much more humble than this one here. Invested in a little mine in which I broke rock for five long years...till I hit a vein. Took the money, bought a saloon, bought a mercantile, bought a whorehouse, even bought a ranch though I find few things uglier than the backside of a cow.

Sips his drink. Hawk just stares at him.

RICHARDS

I live in Denver now—a big house on Sherman Avenue. Run my holdings from there. Anyway, to get back to the topic of vermin, my wife and two daughters...

(pauses, shakes his
head, clears his
throat)

...still have trouble talkin'
about it.

(louder)

They took a little trip to New
Mexico to see some relatives.
Their stage was followed out from
Denver by men who knew my family
was riding it, and thought they
could cash in. I'm thinking that
the vermin intended on a
kidnapping but their passions got
the better of them. They held up
the stage, robbed my wife and
daughters, raped them, locked them
naked with three other badly
abused passengers inside the
coach, and ran the coach off a
cliff.

Takes another bracing drink, pours out another.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

Suffice it to say that the law was
ineffective in delivering justice.
You see, the West is growing
quickly, but it would grow much
more quickly, and more *good men*
would prosper, if we could
exterminate the kind of vermin
coming west to take advantage of
those coming West to honestly
better their lot. In other words,
the West is not yet a civilized
place. Thus the laws of the
civilized world don't work here. I
myself had to go after those who
killed my wife and daughters. And,
believe me, Mr. Hawk, the
satisfaction I found by exacting
revenge from those demons was
worth every bit of my eye and my
thumb. In fact, I'd have given up
both eyes and *both* thumbs—hell, my
hands, feet an' my *balls* to boot!—
-to do what I was compelled to do.

Sits back in his chair. A madness burns in his eye, in the flush in his cheeks.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

That's how satisfying it was.
That's how *right* it felt!

HAWK

You're telling all this to the wrong man, Mr. Richards. I'm a man of the law.

RICHARDS

Good for you. But if at any time you decide that the law is no longer working for you, I just want you to know that I'll back your play. Whatever you need—money, gold, train tickets...

(holds up the
bottle)

...labeled bottles, women—you name it. I will provide you with whatever you need to fortify you in your efforts to exterminate the vermin that needs to be exterminated in able for the West to become *truly* civilized. Seein' as how I, uh, can't do so *myself*, bein' minus one eye and one thumb, on my shooting side....

He stands.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

You can find me...any time...on Sherman Avenue, Denver. Enjoy the bottle, Marshal Hawk.

He nods and turns away, turns back to Hawk.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

Oh, by the way, I heard a rumor going around. Might be of interest to you.

Looks around, lowers his voice.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

It was an ugly dwarf who goes by
the name of Mr. Thomas who told
Ned about your boy.

Richards nods again and walks away. Hawk stares after him,
expression tense with thought.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. MR. THOMAS'S PLACE — DAY

Hawk sits his BLACK HORSE on a hill overlooking the rear of
Mr. Thomas's falling-down roadhouse. The place looks
deserted.

Hawk wears both his pistols—the .44 Colt on his right side,
and the top-brake Russian positioned for the cross-draw
over his left hip.

His Henry repeating rifle juts from his saddle scabbard.

Hawk studies the roadhouse and then rides down into the
backyard, stopping and tying his horse to the corral. He
shucks his rifle and walks cautiously to the back door.

The rickety back door is locked. Hawk opens it easy with a
single swipe of his bowie knife, breaking the lock, which
tumbles to the floor. Hawk opens the door and goes on in.

INT. MR. THOMAS'S PLACE -- DAY

There doesn't appear to be anyone here. But when Hawk makes
his way to the front room, he begins to hear A COMMOTION in
the ceiling. A MAN'S MUFFLED VOICE AND THUMPING SOUNDS.

He climbs the rickety stairs, wincing as the planks squawk
beneath his boots. As he climbs, the sounds clarify—it's
Mr. Thomas wheezing and chuckling and yelling:

MR. THOMAS (O.S.)
Give me a whinny, Stretch! Come
on, give me a whinny, damn ya!

A STRANGLING SOUND.

MR. THOMAS (O.S. CONT'D)
(breathless)

Come on, come on—give me a whinny,
Stretch!

INT. MR. THOMAS'S PLACE, SECOND STORY HALL -- DAY

Hawk gains the top of the stairs and walks down the hall. About halfway down is a slightly open door. Hawk walks to the door, nudges it open wider and looks in to see...

INT. MR. THOMAS'S BEDROOM -- DAY

A FULL-SIZED, HORSE-FACED WOMAN (30's) on all fours on a brass-framed bed, facing away from Hawk. This is Mr. Thomas's woman, STRETCH.

Stretch is naked. So is Mr. Thomas save a red bandanna and the child's cowboy hat he is wearing. Mr. Thomas is pulling back on a belt wrapped around the woman's neck as he thrusts his skinny hips against her.

As he does, he continues to yell at his "wild bronc" while his "wild bronc" tries to make WHINNYING SOUNDS that sound more like STRANGLING SOUNDS, and pitches up off her hands as though bucking.

Tight on Mr. Thomas's ugly face:

MR. THOMAS

There ya go! There ya go! That's
it. Hee-hee! Oh, yeah—oh, yeah—
you're a nasty buckin' bronco,
aren't ya, Stretch? Hee-hee.

A RIFLE IS LOUDLY COCKED. Mr. Thomas jerks his head around with a start to see HAWK AIMING THE HENRY AT MR. THOMAS'S HEAD. Mr. Thomas drops the belt and raises his hands above his head.

MR. THOMAS

Ach! Don't shoot! Don't shoot!

Stretch screams, scrambles onto the floor and crawls into a corner, sobbing and covering her nakedness with elbows and knees.

MR. THOMAS (CONT'D)

Hawk, you big bastard! What're you
doin' here? This is my place. You
can't just waltz in here

unannounced, aiming a rifle at me.
I know my rights!

Hawk lowers his rifle as he walks slowly into the room, and depresses the Henry's hammer.

HAWK
You're right, Mr. Thomas. How rude
of me.

Mr. Thomas whips around to snatch a pistol from a holster and cartridge belt wrapped around the bedframe. As he turns back toward Hawk, CLICKING the hammer back, Hawk thrusts the rifle barrel into the dwarf's mouth and slams Mr. Thomas's head back against the bed frame.

Mr. Thomas FIRES the pistol into the ceiling and drops it.

Stretch screams.

STRETCH
Please don't hurt him!

Keeping the Henry's barrel in Mr. Thomas's mouth, Hawk glares down at the dwarf and cocks the rifle again loudly.

Mr. Thomas writhes and gurgles around the barrel.

STRETCH (CONT'D)
Please don't hurt him!

HAWK
I know you told Meade about my
boy.

Mr. Thomas gurgles and flails helplessly on the bed.

HAWK (CONT'D)
He killed my boy. I suppose you
know that, since you know
everything around here.

Mr. Thomas gurgles.

STRETCH
Please don't hurt him!

HAWK

I suppose you also know that my wife hanged herself. I'm sure that gives you great pleasure.

Mr. Thomas gurgles. STRETCH MOANS, horrified.

HAWK (CONT'D)

What do you have to say for yourself?

Hawk pulls his rifle barrel out of Mr. Thomas's mouth. Mr. Thomas swallows, licks his lips, composing himself, then glares up at Hawk.

MR. THOMAS

I know my rights, you big bastard. I got unalien rights. You can't just waltz in here and—

Hawk cuts him off by shoving his rifle barrel into the dwarf's mouth again.

STRETCH CONTINUES TO MOAN AND SOB...

HAWK

Where is he? Where's Meade? You know everything about everyone, Mr. Thomas, and I'm guessin' you know where Meade holes up when he holes up and he's not out killin' an' rapin' an' robbin'. Now, where is he?

Hawk pulls the rifle barrel out of the dwarf's mouth. Now, staring into Hawk's haunted eyes, Mr. Thomas is scared.

MR. THOMAS

I don't know! I swear I don't know! I swear I don't.

(pretends to cry,
holding his hands
up in front of his
face)

I swear I don't know. If I did, I'd tell you. I didn't know he was gonna kill your boy! Oh, what an awful thing! I swear I don't know where he is, Hawk! If I did, I'd tell you!

He covers his face with his arm and bawls.

MR. THOMAS (CONT'D)
 Oh, please don't kill me! Who'd
 care for Stretch? She's *helpless*
 without me!

Hawk pulls back while the dwarf sobs on the bed and Stretch sobs in the corner. Hawk isn't going to learn anything here. He should have known better.

HAWK
 I'm goin' after him. And after
 I've brought him to justice, I'm
 gonna come back here and shut you
 down once and for all.

He swings around and leaves the room.

INT. ROADHOUSE, SECOND STORY HALL — DAY

Tight on Hawk as he walks down the hall, eyes hard and determined.

STRETCH (O.S.)
 Oh, Mr. Thomas—tell me he didn't
 hurt you, baby!

Mr. Thomas makes STRANGLING SOUNDS, then:

MR. THOMAS (O.S.)
Goddamn half-breed bastard!
Goddamn dog-eatin' half-breed son
of a bitch! I got unalien rights!
You remember that, Hawk!

EXT. CANTINA — DAY

SUPER: "ARIZONA TERRITORY, SIX MONTHS LATER"

Hawk sits on the brush-shaded patio of an adobe cantina at the edge of a small Mexican village. He's smoking a cigarette and drinking tequila. He has taken his Russian pistol apart and he's rubbing it down, lovingly, with an oily rag. Some parts of the gun and six bullets rest on a red bandanna.

Hawk's Colt, glistening clean, resides on the table near his glass. His Henry rifle is also on the table.

Hawk looks up occasionally from his careful work to watch four horseback riders moving slowly toward him from across the open desert, floating through an ocean mirage.

Something shiny is reflecting off each rider.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT — DAY

Crazy Chuck, Ken Dawson, Lucius Running Bear, and Beaver Face Pyle are riding through the foothills of some nameless desert mountain range, heading toward the red tile roofs of a small Spanish town—a *pueblito*--taking shape before them.

Pinned to their shirts are five-pointed, silver-chased badges.

Running Bear turns to Dawson.

RUNNING BEAR

What did that telegram say again?

Impatiently, Dawson plucks a pink telegraph flimsy from his shirt pocket, and thrusts it at the big half-breed.

RUNNING BEAR (CONT'D)

You know I can't read, you smart-ass son of a bitch!

Dawson pokes the badge on his chest and grins.

DAWSON

That's *Sheriff Dawson* to you, Lucius. Don't make me tell you again!

BEAVER FACE PYLE

Oh, fer chrissakes!

He reaches over and plucks the flimsy from Dawson's hand.

BEAVER FACE PYLE

I'll read it to him.

Crazy Chuck laughs.

CRAZY CHUCK

When did you learn how to read, Beaver Face?

BEAVER FACE PYLE

I can read! A man who can't read
ain't worth spit!

Running Bear glowers at him. Crazy Chuck laughs again.

Beaver Face holds the note up close to his face and reads haltingly, sounding out the words, pointing at each word as he reads it.

BEAVER FACE PYLE

Meet me in Rio Conception. Stop.
Three o'clock tomorrow afternoon.
Stop. To discuss a certain boy and
the upcoming election in Silver
Lode. End Stop.

RUNNING BEAR

That's all it says? Nothing about
who wrote it or *where* we're
supposed to meet the bastard in
Rio Conception?

BEAVER FACE PYLE

Lucius, a man who never took the
time to learn hisself how to read
should be a little more trusting
of those of us who did.

Running Bear pulls a bowie knife, holds it up
threateningly.

RUNNING BEAR

Kiss my red ass, you beaver-faced
ferret!

Crazy Chuck laughs.

Beaver Face Pyle opens his mouth to respond, but Dawson
throws up a hand, cutting him off.

DAWSON

Shut up and start acting like
professionals. You're supposed to
be my deputies. Lawmen do not, I
repeat, *do not* fight amongst
themselves!

When Dawson sees that he has successfully quashed the
argument, he rides quietly, brooding, as do the others.

DAWSON (CONT'D)

I got me a feelin' whoever sent that telegram knows what we done up in Crossroads with Ned. Gotta feelin' he's gonna try to squeeze money out of us, or he's gonna blow the whistle on our game up in Silver Lode. If we lose the election, MacGregor ain't gonna like it—not after all the work he done and money he spent to get me elected and to get you three appointed deputies.

CRAZY CHUCK

How you wanna play it, Kenny?

DAWSON

How do you think? We're gonna kill him! And if there's more than one of him, we'll kill *them*, too! It'll be easy—hell, we're the law in this county!

They boot their horses into gallops toward the pueblito ahead of them.

EXT. VILLAGE — DAY

Dawson and the others gallop into the pueblito, scattering chickens in the main square. They rein up in front of an OLD MEXICAN MAN pushing a handcart loaded with straw.

DAWSON

Por favor, amigo, can you tell me where...

He lets his voice trail off when the old man tips his head toward the cantina. The sign over the low, arched door reads: CANTINA DEL CONCUELO. A black horse stands in the shade of a brush arbor, along with two or three other saddle horses.

The old man continues pushing his cart toward a barn across the square.

DAWSON

Gracias, amigo!

He and the others ride over, tie their horses under the brush arbor, shuck their rifles, and, adjusting their pistols on their hips, enter the cantina.

INT. CANTINA - DAY

Dark and cool.

Dawson and the others cautiously walk through the cantina, where a FAT MEXICAN WOMAN stands behind a crude bar, a cat lounging on her shoulder. Seeing no one but Mexicans in traditional Mexican vaquero garb sitting at the dozen or so tables, our gang moves through another arched doorway out onto the patio.

EXT. CANTINA PATIO - DAY

As our gang moves onto the patio, THREE OLD MEXICAN MEN size them up warily, and glance at the lone, dark-haired gringo sitting out there—the only other customer on the patio. The old Mexicans get up from their table and hurry into the cantina, MUTTERING.

Both of Hawk's pistols are on the table before him—both fully assembled. The rifle is on the table, too. Hawk sits back, boots crossed on the edge of the table. He is pouring himself a fresh glass of tequila.

A quirley smolders between his lips.

Our gang just stands near the old Mexicans' table, staring toward Hawk, who looks at them as he sets his bottle on the table.

HAWK

Gentlemen, are you gonna just stand their scratching your asses, or are you gonna come over here so we can talk turkey?

The outlaws glance at each other and then spread out as they move toward Hawk. They stop about six feet from his table.

DAWSON

Well, you got us here. What the hell do you want?

Hawk just stares up at them, expressionless. He sips his whiskey.

DAWSON (CONT'D)

I just asked you—

HAWK

Congratulations on the new job,
Ken.

BEAVER FACE PYLE

Who the hell are you, Mister?

HAWK

Where's Ned?

Dawson opens and closes his gloved hands nervously around the rifle in his hands.

DAWSON

Never mind about Ned. You said in your telegram you wanted to talk about the election. So, get on with it.

CRAZY CHUCK

Yeah, so get on with it, ya half-breed son of a bitch!

Running Bear and Chuck share a look.

HAWK

I don't want to discuss the election. I just said that to get you over here, away from that crooked town and that crooked council that hired you after they killed the sitting sheriff last month. I know about MacGregor and his plans to take over the county, fleece the miners and cattlemen. I know about it, and for the moment, I don't care. MacGregor can wait.

(a beat)

And I don't care, for the moment, to discuss the boy you hanged up in Crossroads. That, too, can wait for another time, another place. All I wanted from you four was Ned Meade.

BEAVER FACE PYLE

(voice quavering)
W-why, you're Hawk...

Hawk slides his vest back away from his deputy U.S. marshal's badge.

HAWK
You boys give me Meade, and you can turn around and walk out of here. Free as sparrows. You don't give me Ned, I'm taking you in...to hang.

CRAZY CHUCK
(to Dawson)
Why, that's Gideon Hawk!

Running Bear cocks his Winchester.

RUNNING BEAR
Shut-up, Beaver Face.

HAWK
Don't do anything you won't live to regret. Just tell me where you last saw Ned Meade.

Dawson is sweating. All "the boys" are sweating.

DAWSON
Where we last seen Ned, you say?

HAWK
Yep.

Beaver Face Pyle is breathing hard, really sweating. He shares a tense, anxious glance with Crazy Chuck.

BEAVE FACE PYLE
(to Hawk)
Shit, don't you know when you're outnumbered, you crazy bastard?

Hawk shakes his head slowly, fatefully, calmly.

HAWK
Don't do it.

Beaver Face drops the barrel of his Winchester toward Hawk, screaming. Hawk saw it coming. He raises his right hand,

jerks his wrist slide, which smoothly deposits a double-barreled, pearl-handled derringer into his palm.

His index finger slides through the trigger guard, and—

POP! POP!

Beaver Face Pyle and Crazy Chuck pinwheel backwards, triggering their rifles into the air.

Hawk drops the pistol, grabs both his Colt and his Russian off the table, and shoots Ken Dawson and Lucius Running Bear as they fire their own rifles at him, both shots flying wide.

Dawson and Running Bear fly backward, screaming, over separate tables.

Beaver Face manages to gain his hands and knees and fires a shot at Hawk. It misses. Hawk moves forward slowly, and shoots Beaver Face twice in the chest.

Running Bear staggers to his feet, bringing a pistol to bear on Hawk. Hawk shoots him in the head.

Ken Dawson gains his feet and runs, screaming and yelling and clutching both his bloody sides, into the cantina.

Hawk looks around. Crazy Chuck is down but reaching for a pistol. Hawk finishes him and then walks into the cantina.

INT. CANTINA — DAY

Dawson runs through the cantina, bellowing like a poleaxed bull, staggering. Hawk walks in behind him and extends his pistols but holds fire. The fat Mexican woman is in the way but quickly hurries behind her bar.

Dawson stumbles outside.

EXT. CANTINA — DAY

Dawson runs out into the square, clutching his wounds.

DAWSON

Help! Help me! Someone, please
help me! I'm...I'm the sheriff
from Silver Lode and this son of a
bitch is tryin' to kill me!

Hawk walks out of the cantina and follows Dawson into the square. Several Mexicans dash into shops and slam doors and window shutters.

DAWSON (CONT'D)
 Somone, help me! I'm your sheriff,
 and this bastard is tryin' to kill
 me!

He stops and looks around. Aside from Hawk walking steadily up behind him, he's alone. He drops to his knees, sobbing.

Hawk walks up to him, stops.

DAWSON (CONT'D)
 Go ahead and kill me and get it
 over with, you son of a bitch!

Hawk aims his pistols at Dawson. He wants to shoot him. He wants to, but he can't.

He shakes his head, lowers the guns.

Hawk's voice quavers slightly.

HAWK
 Ken Dawson, you're under arrest
 for the murder of my son, Jubal
 Hawk.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. CEMETERY — DAY

Hawk stares down at the graves of his wife and son. His hat rests on the ground beside him.

He sets a bouquet of wildflowers down on Linda's grave then pulls a small burlap pouch out of his coat pocket. He pulls from the pouch two wooden horses—SO EXPERTLY CARVED THAT THE HORSES LOOK LIKE THEY COULD GALLOP RIGHT OUT OF HAWK'S HANDS.

He shoves one of the horses back into the pouch, returns the pouch to his pocket. Then he kneels down and places the other horse atop Jubal's grave, STANDING IT UP so that it appears to be galloping.

Hawk stands with his head down for a few seconds, maybe praying, then looks at the graves.

HAWK

I gotta go away again for a time.
 Heard Ned Meade's in Montana,
 runnin' with another gang. I'll be
 back soon, just as soon...as soon
 as I've brought Ned
 to...justice...for what he done to
 you both.

Hawk looks off for a time, then looks at the graves again. He nods as though convincing himself of his words.

HAWK (CONT'D)

You'll have justice.

He squeezes his eyes closed as though against the hollow sound of what he's saying, then continues fighting the good fight...

HAWK (CONT'D)

You'll have justice. We'll all
 have justice. You two sleep tight.
 I'll be back before you know it.

Hawk dons his hat and leaves the cemetery.

EXT. DAKOTA HOTEL — DAY

Luke Morgan and ANOTHER, OLDER LAWMAN, Frank Murphy (60) are walking out of the Dakota Hotel as Hawk rides up. Hawk's black horse is outfitted for a long trip—bulging saddlebags, possibles bag, and bedroll tied behind his saddle.

MORGAN

Oh, there he is. Gideon, this is Frank Murphy, deputy marshal out of Cheyenne. He was on his way back from Kansas City when he got the order to rendezvous with us here. He'll be headin' to Montana with us.

Hawk nods to Murphy, who has a large, grisly scar on one side of his face. In the book, a fellow, drunk buffalo hunter threw molten bullet lead in his face over a girl, many years ago.

Morgan and Murphy head for their horses tied at the hitchrail.

MURPHY

Hawk, I've heard a lot about you.
Pleased to finally meet you.

HAWK

Same here.

MURPHY

Sorry it's not under better
circumstances. Meade's up in
Montany, eh?

HAWK

That's what one of his old gang
members said. I reckon he wanted
to get a long way away from here,
after what he done.

MURPHY

Let's go run the coward down.

The three lawmen spur their horses.

MORGAN

We'll hop the train in Cheyenne!

EXT. MONTANA CAMP — EARLY MORNING

A gloved hand tugs on Meade's shoulder. The hand belongs to one of Meade's new outlaw partners—"POKER" JOE CARLYSLE (40). Meade is chuckling in his sleep.

POKER JOE

(chuckling)

Ned, wake up. Ned, fer chrissakes,
wake up. You're havin' a dream an'
givin' yourself fits, by god!

Meade snaps his head up with a gasp, eyes wide. He snaps his pistol up, as well, and cocks it. He aims at Poker Joe, who backs away, raising his hands. Meade swings his pistol toward one of his other five partners—CLAYTON ELLARD (35), standing by a river willow, loading one of his six-guns.

Trail gear surrounds Meade—blankets, saddlebags and such. The OTHER THREE MEN are rolling blankets and gathering gear

as they smirk at Ned. Horses are picketed nearby. A coffee pot GURGLES on a low fire.

Meade glares at Poker Joe.

MEADE

Keep your goddamn hands off me,
and don't ever put 'em on me
again--you understand, Joe?

Poker Joe holds his hands up in supplication.

POKER JOE

Sure, sure, sure, Ned! It was just
that you was laughin' in your
sleep an' all, and...we was just
wonderin' what you was dreamin'
about. Chucklin' an' such...

He shares a glance with Ellard.

ELLARD

Must've been one helluva dream,
Ned. What was her name?

Meade stands and starts gathering his gear. Poker Joe goes over to the fire and pours himself a cup of coffee.

MEADE

Not *her* name. *His* name. Jubal
Hawk. I was laughin' cause I was
dreamin' about Hawk ridin' up to
his punkin'-headed boy hanging
from that cottonwood me an' the
boys hung him from in Nebraska.

Meade laughs and shakes his head, fondly remembering.

ELLARD

(tentative)

We was sort of wonderin' about the
story behind that.

MEADE

Suffice it to say Gideon Hawk
hanged the wrong son of a bitch's
brother. Can't wait to see him
again someday, tell that very
thing to his half-breed face. Have
a good laugh over the man's

dunder-headed wife, too--hangin'
herself over the boy.

Meade throws his head back, does a bizarre little dance,
and howls with delight.

MEAD (CONT'D)

Oh, that was sweet!

The others in his gang share cautious glances, wondering
just what kind of hombre they've signed on with.

Meade punches the coffee pot and the cup out of Poker Joe's
hand.

MEADE (CONT'D)

Goddamnit, Poker Joe, we don't got
time to lounge around drinkin'
coffee.

Bedroll slung over one shoulder, saddle on his other
shoulder, Meade stomps off toward the horses.

MEADE (CONT'D)

We got us a bank to rob!

EXT. FRONTIER TOWN — DAY

SUPER: ENNIS, MONTANA TERRITORY

Ned Meade and his new gang ride into town, glancing around
the street lined with false-fronted businesses. SCATTERED,
MILLING TOWNSFOLK glance suspiciously at the gang.

Meade notes the town's bank sitting about midway through
town. There is an OPEN sign in a window and AN OLD LADY is
just now stepping out the front door, closing her reticule.
Meade studies the bank with a hungry look.

Poker Joe rides to one side of Meade, Ellard to the other
side.

Poker Joe keeps his voice down.

POKER JOE

We done been scoutin' this town
for the past three weeks, and this
place is a fuggin' gold mine, Ned.
Rich ranchers movin' in, stowin'
their money away in the Stockman's

there.

Ellard glances toward the little adobe brick jailhouse, whose sign merely reads JAIL. Out front, AN OLD MAN WEARING A TIN STAR is kicked back in a chair, boots crossed on the porch rail before him. Sound asleep.

A younger man—A DANDY WEARING TWO PISTOLS—slouches in the jail's open doorway, staring toward Meade's bunch. He has a WHITE BANDAGE over his nose.

ELLARD

Here's the popper. The only law here is one old man—a broken down—ex-Texas Ranger—and his deputy, the tindhorn son of a stockman from England. Word is the Brit thinks his son is the next Bat Masterson, only the kid can't shoot fer beans, and the half-breed railroad hunters come to town every Saturday night and kick the holy shit out of him.

Ellard and Poker Joe laugh. Meade remains poker-faced as he looks around, all business.

They ride on down the street and pull up to the GALLATIN SALOON. They tie their horses to the hitchrack.

Meade glances back at the bank once more, removes his hat, runs his hand through his hair. He looks at the other three gang members who stare back at him, awaiting his orders.

MEADE

All right—like we planned out last night. You three go on over and take care of the law in this town—what there is of it.

The other three gang members nod and stride nonchalantly down the street, not heading directly toward the jail.

ELLARD

(to Meade)

Shall we go on in and have a drink to calm ourselves down?

Meade and Poker Joe head up the saloon's front steps.

MEADE

What? Your nerves need calming,
Ellard?

He glances back over his shoulder, grinning.

He sees a figure just then step off a boardwalk on the other side of the street, and retreat into a dark, open doorway. The figure was murky, but it was wearing a black, low-crowned, flat-brimmed hat. It was carrying a rifle. At least, Meade *thinks* so. It was a very brief look.

He blinks as though his eyes are playing tricks on him.

Hawk? Nah. Couldn't be. They were too far from Hawk's territory.

ELLARD

What's wrong, Ned?

Meade blinks again, stares across the street. Nothing.

POKER JOE

Ned?

MEADE

What do mean—what's wrong? What's wrong with you two?

POKER JOE

You look like you seen a ghost or somethin', Ned.

MEADE

Jesus H. Christ—can't a feller get a little dust in his eye? Shut the hell up and buy me a drink.

He takes one more fleeting glance across the street and then goes on inside the saloon.

INT. GALLATIN SALOON — DAY

Meade, Ellard, and Poker Joe belly up to the bar, sipping shots of rye. A YOUNG, RED-HEADED DOXIE (19), scantily clad in a revealing corset and bustier, drifts up to the men, catching Poker Joe's eye.

YOUNG DOXIE

You boys in town long?

POKER JOE

(grins)

You mean long enough for a
mattress dance?

The redheaded doxie rams her hip against Poker Joe's,
flirting.

YOUNG DOXIE

No, I mean long enough to get
married. Of course I mean long
enough for a mattress dance.

ELLARD

How much, sweetheart?

POKER JOE

Hey, she was talkin' to me.

YOUNG DOXIE

I've been known to entertain two
at a time.

(glances at Ned)

Sometimes three at a time...if
everybody's nice....

Ned turns to her, scowling.

MEADE

Beat it!

The whore gives him an indignant look.

MEADE (CONT'D)

You heard me—scram!

YOUNG DOXIE

Well, I guess everyone's *not* nice,
are they?

She moves on down the bar.

POKER JOE

(meekly)

Don't hurt to be nice, Ned. She's
gotta make a livin' just like
everybody...

Poker Joe lets his voice trail off when the other three outlaws walk into the saloon. They step up to Meade, Ellard, and Poker Joe, looking anxious.

OUTLAW ONE

(keeping his voice
low)

They weren't there.

ELLARD

What?

OUTLAW TWO

We went into the mercantile just to make it look like we wasn't headin' directly to the town marshal's office. Wasn't in there but a minute. When we come out, them lawmen were nowhere to be seen. We went over to the jailhouse, and the place was locked up tighter'n a nun's corset!

MEADE

(wistful)

It was, was it?

ELLARD

I don't like it. Somethin' might be up.

POKER JOE

You ain't thinkin' we should call it off—are ya, Clay?

MEADE

They probably just went out for an early lunch, that's all. Let's go out and get the bags, and head on over to the bank. If we don't hit it today, we ain't never gonna hit it. As much as you idjits been pussy-footin' around town, folks is liable to get suspicious.

POKER JOE

You in, Clay? Or you gonna walk away from that gold mine over there?

Ellard draws a breath, bracing himself. He juts his chin at Poker Joe.

ELLARD
Hide an' watch!

Ellard tosses some coins on the bar and walks out. The others follow him and their fearless leader.

EXT. FRONTIER TOWN - DAY

Outside the saloon, the outlaws shuck their rifles from their saddle boots and then split up into two groups of three. The three unnamed outlaws walk up along the street on the opposite side from the bank. Meade, Poker Joe, and Allard walk up the side of the street the bank is on.

Meade looks around suspiciously.

Finally, his bunch reaches the bank and stops, looking around, trying to look casual. The other three stop on the other side of the street, look around, and then head across toward the bank. Number One is laughing.

As he approaches Meade's group:

OUTLAW ONE
This is gonna be as easy as
opening a peach tin!

MEADE
Let's do it and stop chinnin'
about it.

He leads the group to the bank's front door. Meade turns the knob. Only, it won't turn. He frowns at the door.

Locked? What the fuck?

Allard's looking at the CLOSED sign in a front window.

ALLARD
Hey, what the...?

Meade jerks his head around. He freezes when he sees Gideon Hawk step out of a small saloon on the street's opposite side. Hawk is holding his Henry rifle up high across his chest. He's all business.

TIGHT ON MEADE'S EUPHORIC GRIN...

POKER JOE
Hol-lee, shit...

The outlaws look around them. Luke Morgan, aiming a Winchester, steps out around the far front corner of the bank while Frank Murphy, wielding a big, double-barreled shotgun, comes walking along the boardwalk behind the outlaws.

A cigar jammed between his lips, he aims the shotgun straight out from his side.

As if the whole town knows what's up, the street is quickly deserted.

SILENCE.

Hawk stops at the edge of the far boardwalk.

HAWK
Bank closed early today, Ned. Best
have your boys throw those guns
down. You're all under arrest.
(curls his lip)
Ken Dawson says hello.

POKER JOE
(cocky)
Under arrest for what?

FRANK MURPHY
If ugly were a crime, that'd be
enough to see you hang, Joe.

Hawk's voice is low and hard, nostrils flaring. He's trying to keep his killing fury on a leash.

HAWK
But since it ain't, all the
various and sundry warrants for
the arrest of every single one of
you will have to do. Meade, you'll
be comin' back to Nebraska with
me...to answer for my boy...and my
wife.

MEADE
(mocking)

Good Lord—what happened to your
wife?

A commotion rises to Hawk's left. The street had been deserted, but now a YOUNG BLONDE WOMAN and an OLDER WOMAN, her MOTHER, come out of the YOUNG LADIES FINERY shop three doors down from Hawk.

They're arguing, oblivious of what's happening in front of the bank. Both carrying boxes and paper shopping bags, they climb into a leather chaise, which has a sleek, blooded horse harnessed to it.

MOTHER

Nancy, I told you—your father would simply *die* if I bought you that picture hat. Ostrich feathers, indeed! Where on earth would you *wear* such a hat out here? My dear, in case you've forgotten, we no longer reside in Philadelphia!

Hawk and the other lawmen regard the oblivious women tensely. TIGHT ON MEADE staring at the women. He's starting to see an opportunity.

HAWK

Goddamnit, you two ladies get the hell off the street!

Mother and daughter are so busy arguing that they don't hear him.

DAUGHTER

Mother, you do know that Horace Fitzsimmons will be visiting in one month, don't you? Or did you forget the way you seem to forget everything else except when it's time to polish the silver?

As the mother pulls the buggy away from the boardwalk and heads the horse toward the bank.

MOTHER

Horace Fitzsimmons indeed! He and the entirely Fitzsimmons clan are common!

MORGAN
 Goddamnit—*ladies!*

Ned Meade's eyes get big as he sees the buggy draw close.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 Who invited him out here, anyway?
 I know your father hasn't approved
 this little...this little *tryst* of
 yours with a boy so common that he
 isn't fit to work in our....

FROM A HIGH, OVERHEAD VIEW OF THE STREET--

Meade raises his rifle and, while Morgan is regarding the buggy, fires toward the deputy, blowing Morgan's hat off.

Mother and daughter SCREAM at the gun report. The buggy horse pitches, whinnying shrilly. The mother tries to get it under rein.

Meanwhile, Poker Joe swings his Winchester toward Frank Murphy. Before Joe can get a shot off, Murphy triggers a barrel of his barn blaster, lifting Poker Joe three feet up in the air and throwing him six feet back into the street.

PANDEMONIUM!

All the outlaws swing their rifles toward either Murphy or Morgan. Hawk's view is blocked by the buggy and the bucking buggy horse.

Hawk runs into the street, gesturing wildly.

HAWK
 Get that rig the *hell* out of here!

Murphy sends a round of buckshot into Allard. Flying backward, Allard triggers a shot into Murphy. At the same time, one of the other outlaws shoots Murphy, as well. Murphy BELLOWS and falls.

Luke Morgan cuts down two of the other outlaws.

Hawk runs toward the buggy, trying to move around it toward the other side of the street.

But then Ned Meade climbs up into the buggy from the other side, and aims his Winchester at Hawk. He fires two rounds,

one round slamming into Hawk's left arm, twisting him around and throwing him back into the street.

The women SCREAM as Meade grabs the mother and hurls her out of the buggy and into the street. As he grabs the reins and slaps them against the horse's back, he kicks the girl out of the buggy and into the street, as well.

She falls, screaming, on top of Hawk just as he's rising and bringing his Winchester to bear once more.

Hawk throws the girl aside. He winces at the pain issuing from his bloody left arm.

HAWK (CONT'D)

You all right, Miss?

The girl, all dust and mussed hair, her dress torn, is screaming shrilly, out of her head with panic.

Ned Meade gallops the buggy off down the street, revealing both Morgan and Frank Murphy lying in the street. Only Luke Morgan is moving. The five outlaws appear dead.

Hawk gains his feet and looks at Morgan and Murphy.

HAWK (CONT'D)

You two all right?

Morgan runs toward Murphy, who is not moving, and waves toward Hawk.

MORGAN

Get after him, Gid!

Hawk runs up the street to a horse tied out front of the Gallatin Hotel. He scrambles into the saddle and gallops on down the deserted street toward the buggy just now leaving town.

Hawk gallops hard. Meade glances back to see the lawman coming after him. Meade whips the reins across the horse's back, urging more speed.

As Hawk closes on him, Meade fires at him.

Hawk unsheathes one of his pistols and returns fire.

Both men empty their pistols at each other. They're each jostling too violently for accurate shooting.

Meade empties his pistol at Hawk. Hawk empties both of his. Now he's even with the buggy, draws even closer and then...

LEAPS OFF HIS HORSE AND ONTO NED MEADE!

THEY FLY OFF THE BUGGY TOGETHER, HIT THE FAR SIDE OF THE TRAIL AND ROLL VIOLENTLY.

Hawk GRUNTS at the misery in his wounded shoulder.

He looks up to see Ned Meade—worse for the wear, covered in dust—stumbling over to him. Neade has a knife in his hand. Grits his teeth. He continues to move toward Hawk.

MEADE

I'm gonna cut your throat Hawk,
send you off to that coconut you
called a son!

Hawk snaps his right arm down, activating the slide. THE PEARL-GRIPPED DERRINGER DROPS INTO HIS HAND.

He RATCHETS the hammer back. His lips quiver with emotion. Tears are dribbling down his cheek.

HAWK

You're under arrest for the murder
of Jubal Hawk, Meade. Please don't
drop that knife! Keep comin', you
son of a bitch!

Meade looks at the knife. He looks at the pistol in Hawk's grip.

He grins, knowing that in at least one way, he's beat Gideon Hawk at his own game. He drops the knife and holds his hands up, palms out, grinning.

MEADE

You gonna stand there ballin' like
you're coconut son was ballin'
when I tied that noose around his
neck? Or you gonna cuff me?

Hawk steps up to him. He glares at the man through his tears then grits his teeth and slams his pistol across Meade's cheek, laying him out cold.

EXT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE — DAY

SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER
 KING COUNTY COURTHOUSE
 HILLSBORO, NEB. TERR.

INT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE HALLWAY — DAY

Hawk waits, hat in his hand, on a bench outside double doors on which a sign reads: 3rd DISTRICT COURT. Hawk's left arm is in a sling.

The schoolteacher, Miss Craft, waits on a bench on the far side of the hall from Hawk. She's all dressed up. They share a glance. Miss Craft gives a tense smile.

HAWK

Nervous?

MISS CRAFT

I've never had to testify in court before.

HAWK

It's easy. Just tell the jury what you saw. Tell the truth. The rest is up to the judge and jury.

She gives another edgy smile and averts her troubled gaze.

One of the double doors opens. An OFFICIAL LOOKING GENT with a trimmed mustache and wearing a three-piece suit and deputy U.S. marshal's badge looks at Hawk.

OFFICIAL-LOOKING GENT

The prosecutor's called you to testify, Gid.

INT. COURTROOM — DAY

The courtroom is about one-third full. Judge, lawyers, a six-person jury all in their usual places. As Hawk walks down the room along the central aisle, heading for the dais on which the witness chair sits, he shares a glance with Ned Meade.

Meade is gussied up, hair shorn and slicked down. He looks like a respectable businessman, albeit an ugly one.

Hawk looks coldly at him but also with an air of satisfaction. Meade gives Hawk a cordial nod.

Hawk turns away from him and continues down the aisle, sharing a glance with the COUNTY PROSECUTOR, WAYNE BOOKER (60). Booker is a soft, fleshy man. Booker looks vaguely troubled, sheepish, but Hawk doesn't seem to notice.

Booker shares a fleeting, covert, troubled look with THE JUDGE, HERMAN WALCOTT (65). He's fat, wears several rings, and is balding though the horseshoe of gray hair around his bald pate is long.

INT. COURTHOUSE HALL - DAY

The courtroom door is pushed open by the official-looking gent, making way for Hawk, who steps out into the hallway. Hat in his hands, he smiles confidently at Miss Craft.

HAWK

Your turn, Miss Craft.

As Hawk walks off along the hall, donning his hat, Miss Craft gets up and walks into the courtroom.

As Hawk walks past an office door in which CHIEF MARSHAL HENRY CLAY is stenciled in gold-leaf lettering, Luke Morgan walks out.

MORGAN

Oh, Gid...

HAWK

Luke.

MORGAN

I heard Meade's trial was starting today.

HAWK

I just testified, in fact.

MORGAN

I reckon you'll be hanging around till sentencing...

HAWK

(shrugs)

I don't see why. Meade'll hang whether I'm here or not. Why? What's up?

Morgan gestures, and they walk together down the hall.

MORGAN

Just powwowed with the Big Chief. Cattle rustlers killed a ranch family up north of Fort Pierre, on the Cheyenne River. I'm goin' after them, and I'm gonna need help. I'm off to send a telegraph to Iron Wade up in Bismarck, have him meet me at the Rock Creek Stage Station, on the Missouri...

They walk quickly together down a staircase. Hawk removes the sling from his arm and tosses it away.

HAWK

Have him meet *us* at the Rock Creek Station.

MORGAN

You're not gonna stay and watch the trial?

HAWK

Hell, no. It's a done deal, Luke. There's more bad guys out there, so let's get after 'em!

MORGAN

(delighted)

All right—I'll have him meet *us* at Rock Creek, then!

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

MONTAGE — VARIOUS

A) EXT. CAMP IN WOODS — MORNING

Hawk, Morgan, and two other deputy U.S. marshals surround a camp in which FOUR OUTLAWS lie sleeping under blankets. A fire smokes.

HAWK (O.S.)

U.S. Marshals—you're all under arrest. Stay where you are!

Almost as one, all of the outlaws spring out of their blankets and start SHOOTING. The lawmen return FIRE from the trees surrounding the camp.

YELLING and CUSSING.

LATER...

Hawk looks around at the four dead outlaws.

HAWK

Well, that's four. Where are the other five?

MORGAN

Looks like they abandoned the stolen horses and split up after dark last night. Must know we're on their trail.

Hawk kicks a coffee pot.

HAWK

Yeah.

B) EXT. FARMHOUSE YARD - NIGHT

Hawk, Morgan, and IRON WADE (45), walk into a farmhouse yard. The farmhouse's windows are lit.

THE SCREAMS OF A GIRL EBB FROM THE FARMHOUSE. MEN SHOUT AND WHOOP.

Hawk and the other lawmen spread out and close on the front of the cabin, carrying rifles. They stop near the bodies of A MIDDLE-AGED MAN and A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN. Both lie dead. Hawk kicks over the man's body to see a bullet hole in the man's forehead.

Morgan turns over the woman's body to see a bullet hole in her left cheek, eyes staring up at him.

SCREAMS and SHOUTS CONTINUE FROM THE CABIN.

SMASH CUT TO:

C, CONTINUOUS) INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Hawk kicks the cabin door in. An OUTLAW who has been raping a YOUNG BLONDE GIRL over the kitchen table, reaches for a

pistol, fires. The bullet burns a line across the outside of Hawk's neck. Hawk flinches as he SHOTS the man.

A SECOND OUTLAW, raping another girl on a fainting couch, also brings a pistol to bear. Both Morgan and Iron Wade dispatch him.

The girls run to each other, screaming and crying.

D) INT. MERCANTILE/SALOON - DAY

Hawk and the other two lawmen push through the batwings on the saloon side of the mercantile, and spread out. They face the crude, plank bar at which six men are standing, drinking. Three are the LAST THREE RUSTLERS.

The other customers scatter, leaving the three rustlers alone at the bar. The FAT, LONG-HAIRED BAR TENDER hightails it. The three rustlers face Hawk, Morgan, and Iron Wade.

HAWK

Fellas, this is the end of the trail. I suggest you unbuckle them gunbelts, let 'em fall to the floor. There's only one undertaker in these parts, and he's done got all the business he's gonna need for a while.

The rustlers glance at each other. Their hands hover over their guns.

The SHORTEST RUSTLER'S eyes get big.

SHORT RUSTLER

Like hell!

HAWK

Had a feelin'...

The DEAFENING pistol BLASTS continue...

...to the outside of the mercantile/saloon and we rise to see the main street of a very little prairie town, startled horses running around in a pole corral.

END MONTAGE

INT. SALOON - DAY

Hawk stands at the bar, nursing a beer and fingering Jubal's horse carving with a pensive air. He has a bandage on one side of his neck and on his cheek.

SUPER: BISMARCK, DAKOTA TERRITORY

MORGAN (O.S.)

Gid!

Hawk turns to see Luke Morgan moving toward him from the batwings. Morgan holds a telegraph flimsy in his hand. He looks deeply disturbed, befuddled.

He moves up to Hawk, slowing his pace, shocked, saddened. Reluctant to hand over the flimsy.

Hawk frowns at him curiously. He takes the flimsy. While he reads...

MORGAN

It's from Chief Clay. The judge declared a mistrial.

HAWK

Mistrial?

MORGAN

Said there weren't enough reliable witnesses.

Hawk is subdued with shock. He looks at Morgan as though the younger man might really have an answer to his question.

HAWK

What? I wasn't reliable enough for him? Miss Craft wasn't? *O'Malley* wasn't?

EXT. CROSSROADS, NEB. TERR. — DAY (AFTERNOON)

Hawk rides into town after the long trip back from Bismarck. He sees Mr. Thomas and Stretch over at the mercantile.

Mr. Thomas stands in the bed of a wagon. Stretch is handing feed sacks and sacks of drygoods down to him from the loading dock. Mr. Thomas stacks the sacks in the wagon box.

Mr. Thomas sees Hawk, pokes the brim of his little hat up off his forehead, and grins. Hawk rides over. Mr. Thomas and Stretch, who is dressed in men's work clothes, stop working.

Hawk's face betrays little of the storm raging behind it, but the storm is there, all right. Building in fury.

MR. THOMAS

If you don't mind me sayin' so,
Marshal Hawk, you're lookin' a
little off your feed this
afternoon.

Hawk leans casually forward against his saddlehorn and thumbs his hat up off his forehead, frowning down at Mr. Thomas.

HAWK

Never thought I'd hear myself say
this, but I for once am glad I ran
into you today, you sawed-off,
half-pint little mule-eared
bastard.

Mr. Thomas seethes with fury.

HAWK (CONT'D)

I got a feelin' if anyone knows
why Ned Meade is free, you do.

Mr. Thomas smiles, feeling better now.

MR. THOMAS

Heard about that, did ya, Hawk?

HAWK

Spill it.

Mr. Thomas glances at the dull-eyed Stretch. He chuckles with delight. He narrows an eye at Hawk, runs a gloved hand across his chin.

MR. THOMAS (CONT'D)

What do you think, Stretch? Do we
owe any favors to a man who's
vowed to shut us down? Hmmm...let
me think. What is the wisest
course of action here...?

He looks up at Hawk and jerks with a start.

MR. THOMAS (CONT'D)

Ach!

Stretch sucks a startled breath through her teeth.

TIGHT ON the barrel of Hawk's Russian .44 leveled at Mr. Thomas's head. TIGHT ON Hawk's eyes fairly blazing with barely bridled fury.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JUDGE'S HOUSE — NIGHT

Judge Herman Walcott's house is both comfortable and opulent. The Judge is wearing his pajamas and smoking jacket. He climbs his carpeted stairs, a cigar in one beringed hand, a half-filled brandy snifter in the other hand.

The Judge's immaculately coifed WIFE (60) sits on a brocade sofa in the parlor below the stairs, slowly turning the pages of a magazine.

JUDGE WALCOTT

Just going to lay out tomorrow's work before I retire, dear. I'll be in my office.

His wife does not respond.

The judge climbs the stairs.

INT. JUDGE'S OFFICE — NIGHT

The office is dark. The judge comes in, dotters around, and turns up the wick of the lamp on his massive oak desk. He's humming softly. Very happy. He sets his brandy on the desk, takes his cigar between his teeth, and turns to the small safe behind the desk.

He glances quickly back at his desk, sees the little, wooden horse standing near a cedar humidor. The judge picks up the horse, scrutinizes it, then shrugs and sets the horse back down by the humidor.

He rubs his hands together greedily, and then squats down by the safe. He turns the dial, opens the door, and extracts a bag. He sets the bag on his desk, sits in his

leather chair, and dumps several gold coins from the bag onto the desk.

The coins WINK in the lamplight.

Gideon Hawk steps out from behind a long, velvet drape. He's holding his big, silver-chased Russian .44. The judge sees him, jerks back with a start.

JUDGE WALCOTT

Oh, good Lord! Hawk, what on earth are you doing here?

He looks down at the loot on his desk, doesn't quite know what to say. He flushes.

HAWK

Aren't you going to ask me to sit down, Judge?

The judge is obviously nervous now. Tries to cover it.

JUDGE WALCOTT

How in the hell did you get in here?

HAWK

Never mind. I'll stand.

JUDGE WALCOTT

You have some answering to do, Deputy Hawk.

HAWK

I reckon we got that in common, then. That's a purty pile of coins you got there, Judge. Where'd you get 'em?

JUDGE WALCOTT

Well, if you must know—I sold some horses recently. Breeding stock. Please, put away that pistol.

HAWK

Congratulations. But you're lyin'. That's from Ned's own private stash.

JUDGE WALCOTT

You're out of line.

HAWK

You were, too...when you turned
Ned Meade loose.

JUDGE WALCOTT

I had a feeling that's what this
was about.

HAWK

So, you got a mistress and some
gambling debts and a bad case of
greed...

Walcott heaves himself to his feet and points at the door.

JUDGE WALCOTT

Get out! Get out of here right
now!

JUDGE'S WIFE (O.S.)

(from downstairs)

Herman? Herman, who on earth are
you talking to up there?

JUDGE WALCOTT

Uh...uh...no one, dear!
Everything's fine!

Walcott sits back down. Keeps his voice low.

JUDGE WALCOTT (CONT'D)

Booker had no reliable witnesses.
You said you recognized Meade's
gray hair. That's not enough!
Especially from that distance, on
a dark and rainy night!

HAWK

What about O'Malley? Miss Craft.
They weren't reliable, either,
huh?

JUDGE WALCOTT

Miss Craft didn't even see the man
from the front, so she couldn't be
at all sure that one of the men
she saw on the playground that day
was Meade! And O'Malley was even

farther away from Meade than you were!

HAWK

It was Meade, all right. You know that as well as I do.

JUDGE WALCOTT

I have ruled, Deputy. I followed the law.

HAWK

Don't call me Deputy, you dung beetle. I don't work for you anymore. I don't work for Chief Clay anymore. I don't work for *anyone* anymore. And neither do you.

JUDGE WALCOTT

(voice quavering)

Hawk, listen...

HAWK

I've done heard your testimony, Judge. Time for your reckoning.

JUDGE WALCOTT

Please, Hawk...Gideon. You don't understand the strain I've been under.

HAWK

You mean gambling over your head and diddling parlor girls? Takin' a bribe from a know child killer...?

JUDGE WALCOTT

If this were to get out, my career...my life...would be ruined. I didn't want to let Meade go, but I had to.

HAWK

What about the gold?

JUDGE WALCOTT

Christ, after all they put me through...having three men show up

in my house unannounced...like you here tonight.... The threats to my career, my life.... Why not take the money? It wasn't going to change the fact that Meade is free.

HAWK

Practical man.

Walcott studies Hawk. The judge is sweating now. An eye twitches as he studies the revolver aimed at his chest.

JUDGE WALCOTT

My god. What do you have on your mind, Gideon?

Hawk doesn't say anything. His eyes are black beneath the brim of his hat.

JUDGE WALCOTT (CONT'D)

Take me back to the county seat. Take me back to Hillsboro. I'll stand before the judge. What I've done is wrong. I admit that.

HAWK

Noble of you.

JUDGE WALCOTT

This isn't your role, Gideon. You can't judge me...only arrest me.

The judge's voice quavers. He begins to sob.

JUDGE WALCOTT (CONT'D)

Gideon...my god...you've always been the most upstanding lawman I've ever known. Take me back to the county seat, lock me up in jail, but for Christ's sake, don't do this. Think of your own career.

Hawk's tone is low, flat, teeming with menace. His eyes are coals.

HAWK

My career has taken a, uh, *turn*. Meade hung my boy, Jubal. My wife, Linda, hung herself out of grief.

I arrested that son of a bitch,
 trusted Booker to prosecute him,
 trusted you to judge him fairly.

Hawk laughs, now, bizarrely. It's like the laughter of some other, deranged man. It's as though Hawk has become possessed. Walcott stares at him in shock.

HAWK (CONT'D)

Tell me, Judge. Did you give one thought to my son, my wife?

JUDGE WALCOTT

Of course, I did, Gideon.

HAWK

Should've given 'em two.

TIGHT ON the judge's face as he opens his mouth to scream.

EXT. JUDGE'S HOUSE NIGHT

We hear SIX LOUD BLASTS, ONE AFTER THE OTHER. The blasts are spaced about one second apart. WITH EACH BLAST, WE'RE SHOWN ANOTHER ANGLE OF THE JUDGE'S HOUSE.

A woman screams shrilly.

The judge's front door opens. Hawk walks out, lighting a cigar.

INT. PROSECUTOR BOOKER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Booker's WIFE (50), hair brushed out, wearing a flowered bathrobe and obviously ready for bed, opens the dining room door. Booker is in the dining room, enjoying a bowl of berries and cream. He wears a bib. He is in his pajamas and robe.

Booker's wife looks a little weirded out. She holds her robe closed at her throat.

BOOKER'S WIFE

Wayne, uh...Gideon Hawk is here to see you.

Hawk moves past her into the dining room. Hawk dwarfs her. He is a massive, dark figure. His face is in shadow. Booker's wife steps back and closes the dining room door.

Gideon steps up to Booker, who looks up at him, his eyes widening in fear.

EXT. PROSECUTOR BOOKER'S HOUSE — NIGHT

A neat brick house with a buggy shed behind it. Nice but not as big as the judge's house. Hawk's horse is tied to the hitchrail out front.

We hear SIX LOUD BLASTS, ONE AFTER THE OTHER. WITH EACH BLAST, WE'RE GIVEN ANOTHER ANGLE OF BOOKER'S HOUSE.

After a few seconds, a woman screams shrilly.

BOOKER'S WIFE (O.S.)
Oh, my god—you're *maaaad!*

Hawk walks out, mounts his horse, and rides away.

END OF ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

EXT. CEMETERY — DAY (MORNING)

Hawk spent the night sleeping with his head resting up against his son's grave. Buttery morning light finds him lying on his back, holding Jubal's carving of a bucking bronco on his belly. He's unshaven.

His black horse stands nearby, saddled, ground-reined.

Hawk lifts his head, pokes his hat up off his forehead. He rises, stares down at Linda's and Jubal's graves. He fingers the horse in his hands.

He's a different man from the one we knew before. Darker. Brooding. Disillusioned. He's also a volcano broiling with dark purpose. He could erupt at any time.

HAWK
You'll be avenged.

He stows the horse in his coat pocket, mounts his black, and rides away.

EXT. MR. THOMAS'S PLACE — DAY (A LITTLE LATER)

Hawk is riding along the trail that takes him west past Mr. Thomas's place, which stands like Bates Motel on a near

butte. He glances up at the butte to see a familiar figure sitting a horse near Mr. Thomas's front porch.

Mr. Thomas is on the porch. Stretch is splitting wood in the yard near the porch.

Both Luke Morgan and Mr. Thomas are staring toward Hawk.

Hawk makes a face then leaves the main trail and rides up the trail and into Mr. Thomas's yard. He stops his horse near Luke Morgan, who stares at him stonily but also with an air of sadness and disappointment.

MORGAN

Just rode over from the county seat, Gid.

Hawk says nothing. Mr. Thomas stares through the unpainted porch rails at the men, shuttling his amused gaze between them.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Gideon, goddamnit, did you—?

HAWK

Yes.

Morgan stares at his mentor uncomprehendingly. Stretch continues splitting wood, occasionally glancing at the two lawmen but mostly disinterested.

MORGAN

You...killed them both...in their own homes...?

Hawk says nothing. Mr. Thomas grins in hushed delight.

Morgan is exasperated.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

You're a lawman, Hawk! The best I've ever known. Hell, you taught me....

(shakes his head,
not sure how to
continue)

No Judge Lynch, Gid! Ain't that what you always said?!

HAWK

I upheld the law. Those two
scoundrels are dead.

Morgan rises up in his saddle, leaning toward Hawk,
enraged.

MORGAN
You're not a judge, Gid!

HAWK
I am now.

Morgan stares at him, jaw hanging.

MORGAN
Gideon, look at yourself. I know
you're grieving, but you're not in
your right mind.

Hawk draws his Russian, aims it from his side at Morgan.

HAWK
Step down from the saddle, Luke.

Morgan looks at the gun, even more befuddled than before.

HAWK (CONT'D)
Step down. I'm takin' your horse.

MORGAN
Bullshit. I'm takin' you back to
Hillsboro!

HAWK
You ain't takin' me anywhere,
Luke. No one's comin' between me
an' Meade.

MORGAN
You'd kill me, Gid?

HAWK
If you force my hand, Luke, I
will.

MORGAN
You taught me to follow the law.
No Judge Lynch, Hawk!

HAWK

I was wrong. Didn't realize that
in some cases the law don't work.

MORGAN

Maybe Walcott and Booker didn't
work. Two men going bad doesn't
mean the whole system is corrupt.

HAWK

Everybody's corrupt. The system
don't work. No system works. Step
down, Deputy I'm takin' your horse
so you can't follow me.

MORGAN

Don't do this, Gid. You'll be
hunted like the men you hunted!

HAWK

As I recall, you often wanted to
do the same thing as I just done.

Morgan is almost sobbing.

MORGAN

But I always had you there to stop
me, to turn me back right!

HAWK

Step down, Luke.

MORGAN

The lawmen need to be as vile as
the lawbreakers—that it?

HAWK

Appears so.

Hawk clicks the hammer of his Russian back. Morgan looks at
the gun. A single tear runs down his cheek. Reluctantly, he
dismounts his horse and throws the reins angrily up at
Hawk, lips quivering with emotion.

MORGAN

You go to hell, Gideon Hawk!
You're one of them now!

HAWK

Just takin' the law to their
level. I'll leave your horse up
the trail a piece.

He turns his horse away and, leading Morgan's horse,
gallops on down the hill toward the main trail.

HAWK (CONT'D)

Don't follow me, Luke. I'll kill
you!

EXT. DENVER, CO - NIGHT

SUPER: DENVER, COLORADO TERRITORY

Hawk reins up to a large, ornate, two-story saloon and
gambling parlor on Larimer Street. The place is subdued
tonight, as it's after closing time, but normally it is one
rollicking, festive place.

Big sign over the porch: HATLESS ED RICHARDS' SALOON DE
PARIS.

Hawk dismounts, mounts the broad front porch.

INT. SALOON DE PARIS - NIGHT

Vast drinking hall with an elaborate, ornate, horseshoe bar
and backbar. Crystal chandeliers. Huge, carpeted staircase.
Second-story balcony runs around three walls.

We are at the lee end of a customarily busy night. A
subdued air. A BARMAN stocks shelves behind the bar. A
COUPLE OF SWAMPERS sweep and mop. THREE SCANTILY CLAD
WORKING GIRLS sit at a table, drinking, smoking and
talking, occasionally laughing.

Ed Richards sits alone at a table under a large grizzly
trophy snarling down on him. Richards has rolled up his
sleeves, loosened his string tie. A bottle and a glass are
on the table before him.

Hawk walks over.

HAWK

Your man said you had some
information for me.

Richards looks Hawk up and down. He admires this man whom
he believes to be his surrogate vigilante. He approves of

the dark change he sees in Hawk. Richards could talk all night, but he sees that Hawk is all business.

Richards pushes a scrap of paper across the table. Hawk unfolds it, reads "Bonnie Springs Canyon, AZ. Terr."

RICHARDS

Meade's holed up at a hacienda owned by a Mexican crime boss who owes him a favor or two. Vicente Ruiz. Don't know how you're gonna get in there and out again, but I for one can't wait to hear!

Grins with delight.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

Drink?

Hawk shakes his head.

HAWK

I got a train to catch.

He turns away.

RICHARDS

Hold on.

He slides a fat envelope across the table. Hawk picks it up, runs a thumb across the wad of greenbacks inside. He arches a brow at his benefactor.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

You're a hunted man, Hawk. I don't see you able to earn any jingle. Take that. It's for food, travel...

(grins)

...and ammunition. You're gonna need a woman sooner or later. Every man does.

He glances at the working girls. They glance back at him and Hawk, coolly appraising the tall, dark stranger standing before their employer.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

On me.

Hawk looks at the girls.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)
Go ahead. Do you some good.

HAWK
No, thanks.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)
Too soon, huh? Well, how 'bout
some food? If you don't mind me
sayin' so, you look like bat shit.

HAWK
You know what could happen if
you're caught helpin' me...

RICHARDS
(laughs)
I got enough money to keep me out
of any trouble you or anyone else
could get me into...including
myself!

Hawk pockets the money and starts toward the door.

HAWK
All right, then.

RICHARDS
If there's ever any doubt, kill
'em all.

Hawk gives a very faint smirk, and leaves.

EXT. HACIENDA, ARIZONA TERRITORY - NIGHT

The crumbling hacienda lies sprawled in a desert canyon. The main casa is a vast Spanish-style adobe with a red tile roof and many patios and gallerias. Torches and outdoor fires illuminate the place. It sits on a rocky rise above the yard surrounding it.

A large, dead nut tree stands at one front corner.

Once owned by a wealthy *hacendado*, the place is now an outlaw hideout. It is swathed in rocks and chaparral.

SUPER: MEXICO BORDER

INT. HACIENDA — NIGHT

Meade and A DOZEN OTHER MEN sit around a large, Spanish-style wooden table, in high-back chairs, playing poker. Some men sit in chairs or sofas haphazardly arranged around the big, airy room boasting high ceilings and arched windows, shutters and galleria doors thrown open to the cool night air.

The room is lit by torches bracketed to the walls.

ONE STOCKY MEXICAN sits back, asleep, on a leather sofa with a half-dressed senorita asleep on his lap.

The MAN DEALING THE CARDS (30s) is long-boned, bearded, and wearing at a rakish angle a slouch hat trimmed with hammered silver discs. His name is RANCE.

RANCE

How many cards you want, Meade?

Meade scowls at him. He's smoking a cigar.

MEADE

It's *Mister* Meade to you, sonny!

Rance regards him cautiously.

RANCE

Oh, sure, sure! How many cards would like, *Mister* Meade?

The others glance around at each other, a little amused by Meade but also frightened of him.

MEADE

(grins)

Just one...*sonny*.

A ONE-EYED MEXICAN sitting in a brocade armchair against the wall, chuckles. This is the Mexican gang leader, VICENTE ORTIZ himself, (48). Traditional bandito garb complete with crisscrossed bandoliers on his chest, a big pistol in a shoulder holster, a knife sheathed under the opposite shoulder. He holds a tequila bottle in his hand.

Grins at Meade.

ORTIZ

Ned, I can't tell you how good it is to see you again, mi amigo. We made much money together down here, when we rode together...before our little, uh...*disagreement*.

He takes a drink from the bottle.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)

Now that we are together again, and have let bygones be bygones, I know we are going to make even more money than we did before!

MEADE

Couldn't agree more, Vicente. Couldn't agree more.

Miguel sits to Meade's left.

MIGUEL

Drawing to a straight or a full house, Senor Meade? Give me three, Rance.

RANCE

Got a pair, I see. Three it is, Miguel!

MIGUEL

Mierda!

Angrily, Miguel scoops his cards off the table. Meade sits back in his chair and looks over his cards.

MEADE

I'll bet the lim-

He scowls at a shadow moving on the veranda just outside the room. The shadow is wearing a flat-brimmed, low-crowned hat. Meade palms his revolver up off the table and, rising, fires three quick rounds.

BAM! BAM-BAM!

A man SCREAMS. The shadow falls. A man GROANS.

ORTIZ

Holy shit!

The men around the table all stare in shock toward the veranda.

RANCE

Jesus H. Christ—I do believe he
shot John—John.

Meade blinks and looks around, incredulous. The others, including the stocky Mexican and the senorita who are now wide awake, go out and stand over the figure slumped on the veranda.

Meade walks over and looks down at the man he shot—a short, stocky Chinaman wearing a black smock, hair in a queue. Meade looks around. No hat. Just broken bottles and glasses as well as the tray the Chinaman had been carrying them on.

Tense silence. Stunned, Ortiz turns to Meade.

MEADE

Well, I'll be damned. Could've
sworn I seen a flat-brimmed hat.

Another tense silence. Then Ortiz breaks the tension by chuckling.

ORTIZ

Lucky it was just the Chinaman—eh,
Ned? Hah! Hah! Hah!

He sobers as he stares down at the broken glass. He toes a broken bottle.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)

Too bad about the liquor, though.

He glances at two of his men, jerks his head. The men pick up the dead Chinaman and cart him away. The other men return to their game. Meade and Ortiz remain on the galleria.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)

What has you on edge, Ned?

Meade looks insulted.

MEADE

Now, there's a difference, my
friend Vicente, between bein' on

edge an' bein' cautious. Just so happens I piss-burned one lawman from up north, a coupla months back. Sorta been expectin' him to pay a visit one of these days.

He studies the coal of his cigar.

MEADE (CONT'D)

Been lookin' forward to it, in fact. But it pays to be cautious, don't ya know!

ORTIZ

This lawman you must have piss-burned pretty bad, eh?

MEADE

(chuckling)

Bad enough, bad enough.

Meade frowns as he makes eye contact with Ortiz.

MEADE (CONT'D)

Say, you got guards down there at the mouth of the canyon, right?

ORTIZ

Of course, of course, amigo. Four guards with a Gatling gun, no less. Trust me, mi amigo...

(places a
reassuring hand on
Meade's shoulder)

...no one gets into this canyon without getting punched so full of lead they rattle when they walk!

The two laugh loudly, slapping each other's backs.

They stop laughing and frown as they slowly turn to stare out into the night from where THE RATTLING OF AN APPROACHING WAGON SOUNDS.

MEADE

What the hell is that?

ORTIZ

A...wagon...?

EXT. HACIENDA — NIGHT

Meade, Ortiz, and the other men scramble down out of the hacienda and into the yard before it, where a wagon is slowing approaching, pulled by a mule.

Meade and Ortiz share a curious glance. Then, drawing their pistols, they walk around behind the wagon. They are flanked by the dozen or so other men from the hacienda.

Meade and Ortiz look into the wagon. Four men lie dead in the box. Dead and bloody, eyes staring. A knife is stuck in one. A leaf of paper has been attached to the knife handle.

Again, Meade and Ortiz share an incredulous glance.

Meade removes the leaf from the knife. Holds it up and reads:

SPECIAL DELIVERY FROM JUDGE LYNCH.

RANCE

What's it say, boss?

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE as a Gatling gun OPENS UP, FLASHING BRIGHTLY, from the very galleria that Meade and the others have vacated.

BANG!-BADA!-BANG!-BANG!-BANG!-BANG!-BANG!-BANG!-BADA!-
BANG!-BANG!-BANG!-BANG!-BADA!-BANG!-BANG!-BANG!-BANG!-
BANG!-BANG!-BADA!-BANG!-BANG!-BANG!

Deafening, seemingly endless blasts...

The men around Meade SCREAM AND BELLOW AND CURSE as the bullets tear into them. They hop, skip, jump, twist around, are hurled through the air, and fall.

A couple try to make a run for it only to be cut down.

Ortiz tries to run away but there's really nowhere to run out here, away from the casa. He makes a mad dash first in this direction and then in that direction before the bullets chew into him and he falls in a screaming, bloody heap.

The mule, BRAYING RAUCOUSLY, bucks and then gallops away, pulling the wagon along behind. It stops about forty yards away.

Meade dives to the ground and covers his head with his arms, sure that he's about to die with all the others.

THE GATLING GUN FALLS SILENT.

Meade slowly lifts his head, eyes wide. He looks around. He is baffled that he seems to be the only one who hasn't been shot. He sits up, runs his hands down his chest, down his legs.

He stares up toward the casa illuminated by torchlight. A tall figure stands between two burning torches—a big hombre in a flat-brimmed, low-crowned hat and frock coat. He stands beside the GATLING GUN.

Meade's lower jaw sags in shock.

MEADE

(with hushed awe)

Hawk!

Meade looks around desperately. He sees the mule and the wagon. He heaves himself to his feet and runs toward the wagon, breathing hard.

He almost makes it to the wagon when the Gatling gun STARTS BELCHING AGAIN. Four shots plume dirt around Meade's boots. Two more tear into his right leg. He GRUNTS as he falls and rolls.

The mule takes off with the wagon and doesn't stop this time. It BRAYS as it gallops off into the distance, WAGON CLATTERING.

Meade writhes on the ground, CURSING and GROANING.

FOOTSTEPS SOUND, GROW LOUDER.

Hawk strides out from the casa. He enters the yard. He has a rope coiled around his left arm. He aims a pistol in his right hand.

Meade reaches for his own revolver. Hawk shoots it out of his hand.

MEADE

Bastard!

Hawk strides over to him, stands over him.

HAWK

Huh-uh. The name's Lynch. *Judge*
Lynch.

MEADE

Huh? You're crazy. I give myself
up. I turn myself over to you,
Hawk. I need a doctor!

Hawk chuckles. Meade stares at him, shocked.

MEADE (CONT'D)

Are you mad? Cuff me, if you think
it's necessary. Take me back to
Crossroads to stand trial!

Hawk laughs, louder. Then he wraps an end of the rope
around Meade's neck. Meade struggles but Hawk wraps the
rope too quickly taut around the man's neck.

Meade gags, tries to get his fingers under the rope, but
then Hawk pulls the man to his feet by the rope. Meade
runs, staggering and wheezing behind Hawk as Hawk leads him
toward the dead nut tree.

The hanging tree...

Hawk stops beneath a stout branch of the tree. Meade drops
to his knees, manages to loosen the noose enough to speak.

MEADE

Hawk, for godsakes, show some
mercy. You killed my brother!

Hawk tosses the other end of the rope over the branch.

HAWK

Your brother deserved to die. My
boy did not.

MEADE

You have to take me in. I deserve
a fair trial!

HAWK

Done tried that. We're gonna do it
my way this time.

Still struggling to remove the noose, Meade juts his chin
at Hawk, like a wedge.

MEADE

You're a lawman. A *deputy U.S. marshal!* You have to take me in!

Hawk jerks the rope taut, jerking Meade slightly up off his knees. Meade strangles, chokes, coughs. Horrified.

MEADE

(strangling)
Oh, god!

HAWK

(laughing)
You're lookin' in the wrong direction, Ned.

Holding the end of the rope taut in his hands, Hawk drops to a knee beside Meade.

HAWK

You're gonna die slow, Ned. Real slow...so the *devil* has a good, long time to recognize your ugly face, enough time to get the stoves stoked extra hot.

He jerks on the rope. Meade rises a little higher in the air.

MEADE

(raspily)
Please, now...I'm begging you...Gideon....

Hawk chuckles. He continues to chuckle as he pulls on the rope, taking it hand over hand, lifting Meade higher and higher in the air.

Meade's boots leave the ground. Meade kicks, gasping, clawing desperately at the rope.

TIGHT ON HIS BULGING EYES AND PUFFING CHEEKS.

Hawk continues to pull the rope. When Meade's boots are five feet off the ground, Hawk ties off the end of the rope to a nub of a branch low on the tree's trunk.

He stands there, watching Meade dance a desperate, horrified, violent dead man's jig in mid-air, turning around and around beneath the branch.

Ever so slowly, Meade stops dancing. His body quivers as though he's suddenly deeply chilled.

URINE RUNS DOWN MEADE'S LEG TO DRIBBLE ONTO THE GROUND BENEATH HIM.

Meade's fingers release the noose. His arms drop to his sides. His eyes are wide open, staring lifelessly into space.

Hawk turns, sticks two fingers between his teeth, and whistles.

HOOVES THUNDER TOWARD HIM.

His horse gallops in, stops nearby. Hawk climbs into the saddle, unwraps the reins from around the horn. He looks at the slack figure of Ned Mead still turning, turning beneath the branch.

He pulls JUBAL'S HORSE from his coat pocket. He kisses it like a crucifix and then returns it to his pocket.

He removes his DEPUTY U.S. MARSHAL'S BADGE FROM HIS SHIRT, gives it a good, long look.

He begins to make a throwing motion, but stops.

He looks at the badge again. No, he's not going to throw it away. He's still a lawman...of sorts.

He pins the badge upside down to his shirt.

The Rogue Lawman gallops off into the night.

FADE OUT:

THE END

