

EPITAPH

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. ARIZONA PLAINS - TRAIN TRACKS - 1879 - MORNING

Train tracks stretch into the desert horizon. In the opposite direction, there is a giant, smoldering divot where the tracks have been blown up. Beyond the twisted iron is a stopped train. Two horses are hitched to the locomotive.

INT. LOCOMOTIVE - CONTINUOUS

The engineers are bound and gagged and struggle to get free.

INT. PASSENGER CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car is full with roughly 20 people from different economic backgrounds who are busy speculating about the delay. JIMMY (20) has his head out a window. SARAH (20), his wife, prods him.

SARAH

Well? What do you see, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Hard to say. Hold my belt.

Sarah does so, revealing Jimmy's holstered PISTOL. Jimmy leans farther out the window.

SARAH

Anything?

JIMMY

Looks like something's wrong with the tracks. I see smoke.

SARAH

This is silly. Get back in here before you fall and crack your head. We've been here for twenty minutes. If you're not going to go see what's wrong, then I will.

She lets go of Jimmy's belt too soon and he almost falls out the window. He struggles to pull himself back in as Sarah heads up the aisle to exit the car.

JIMMY

Sarah, wait!

Too late. She's about to reach the front door of the car, but it suddenly flies open, revealing two MASKED MEN with guns. They step inside, sending Sarah running back to Jimmy's side.

MASKED MAN #1 is dressed in a dusty, black gentleman's outfit and gambler hat and sports two nickle-plated pistols with ivory grips at his hips.

A red bandana hides his face below the eyes. A black vertical stripe on the side of the bandana ends in a point. It looks like a long canine tooth.

MASKED MAN #2 stands behind him dressed in a dusty poncho and a cattleman hat. His face is also obscured by a red bandana with a similar design. He aims a rifle at the passengers.

MASKED MAN #1
Ladies and gentlemen!

He raises his hands to calm the passengers who shrink into their seats. He speaks with a bemused air about himself.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
I apologize for the delay, but on behalf of the Unofficial Coalition of Chinese Railroad Workers, I regret to inform you that there's a problem with the tracks. But don't worry; once the station ahead realizes you're late, workers will be sent to have you on your way.

OLD PASSENGER
Coalition of Chinese what? Never heard of you.

MASKED MAN #1
Well, we're a very small group.

A third masked man rides up on a cart drawn by two horses. He pulls up alongside the passenger car and draws a rifle aimed at the windows. Some passengers yelp when they see him.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
Your donations today will help grow our membership.

Masked Man #2 shoulders his rifle and moves down the aisle with a large sack.

UGLY PASSENGER
Donations? You mean rob us blind!

MASKED MAN #1

Call it what you want, but there's
no reason to be ugly. So if you
will kindly deposit your jewelry,
money, and any other valuables,
then we'll be on our way.

(beat)

And you'll be alive.

The passengers reluctantly deposit their valuables in the sack while Masked Man #1 twirls a pistol insouciantly. When Masked Man #2 sees expensive luggage, he tosses it out the window at MASKED MAN #3 who places it on the cart.

When Masked Man #2 gets to Sarah she tries to cover her WEDDING RING, but the man sees it and grabs her wrist. Jimmy intervenes, and a scuffle ensues. Masked Man #2 pulls out a knife, and Sarah screams.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

What's going on over there?!

Masked Man #2 makes a strange sound like a deaf person and raises Sarah's hand to show the ring.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

Ma'am, you either take it off or he
cuts it off. Either way, we're
getting that ring.

Angrily, Sarah twists off the ring and throws it at Masked Man #1. He snatches it out of the air then bites down on it with his molars. He makes an impressed face at Jimmy before tucking the ring into a breast pocket.

With nothing left, Masked Man #2 rejoins Masked Man #1 at the front of the car, sweeping the crowd with his rifle.

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

We appreciate your generosity!
Please, have a safe journey.

He motions, and his partner exits. He turns to leave--

JIMMY

You bastard. YOU BASTARD!

(stands)

I know who you are!

MASKED MAN #1

Oh?

(turns to face Jimmy)

Who am I?

JIMMY

You're that Chinaman train robber goes by The Long Fang. You and your partners are killers wanted across three territories for murdering lawmen, women, and children.

He drops his hand by his side near his pistol.

Masked Man #1 tips his hat back until it slides off his head and dangles down his back by some cording, revealing a man of 45. His hair is longish and greying at the temples. He slides his bandana down to reveal a manicured goatee and moustache.

MASKED MAN #1/LONG

My name is Fang Long. The Long Fang if you prefer. I've killed a lot of people. And I'll kill you too if you do something stupid.

Jimmy tries to build enough nerve to draw his gun. Some of the male passengers look pleading eyes with him, but Jimmy lets the moment pass in frustration. Satisfied that nothing is going to happen, Long turns to leave--

JIMMY

There's also a bounty on your head.
\$2,000. Dead or alive.

The fear drains in some of the male passengers' faces. One man notices a PISTOL already in another man's lap. That man notices the first and nods. Near the back of the car, a pistol is heard cocking. Jimmy grimaces in determination.

LONG

(in Cantonese)

You stupid sons of whores.

Three men with pistols stand and open fire as Jimmy begins drawing his gun. But, with incredible speed, dexterity, and accuracy, Long draws his own pistol and shoots from the hip, fanning the hammer and killing the three men instantly.

Long trains his pistol on Jimmy who is stunned, covered in blood spatter, and hasn't cleared his holster. In awe, Jimmy re-holsters his weapon. Long turns to leave amid the wails of wives and daughters who just lost the men in their lives.

One unarmed FEMALE PASSENGER near the back of the car starts running at Long, screaming--

FEMALE PASSENGER

I'LL KILL YOU! I'LL KILL YOU!

Long turns to handle her but is surprised when a gun shot to the head makes short work of her. He turns to see Masked Man #3 standing on the cart outside with his rifle trained on the woman's dead body through the broken window. He winks.

EXT. PASSENGER CAR - CONTINUOUS

Long exits, unhappy. Masked Man #3 meets him on the ground a few feet away from the passenger car.

MASKED MAN #3
(pulling off mask)
Told you I'd come in handy.

Long approaches with determination. When he's close enough, he punches Masked Man #3 (45) who staggers back.

LONG
What did I tell you? No women!

MASKED MAN #3
I just saved your life!

LONG
Like hell you did. She was unarmed!
Where were you five seconds before
when I was fighting for my life
against three men with guns?
(beat)
Sam Duke. Deadliest Rifle West of
Tennessee my ass!

MASKED MAN #3/SAM
Go to blazes. I was fiddlin' with
the luggage. Besides, those
corncrackers couldn't hit a bull's
rump with a handful of banjos.

LONG
(beat)
Sam, if that's English, then I
regret learning it.

Both men look sternly at each other before chuckling. Sam rubs his jaw.

SAM
I like you, so I'm gonna let this
one go. Now tell your little
brother to ease up on the iron.

Long turns to see Masked Man #2 on his horse a few yards away with his rifle trained on Sam.

LONG
 (in Cantonese)
 Bao, everything is fine. Bring the
 horses.

Masked Man #2/Bao (35) reluctantly shoulders his rifle and
 rides up with Long's horse in tow.

SAM
 We better git. The natives are
 getting restless.

Long looks up at the passenger car windows and sees curious
 faces peeking out. He draws his pistol on them, and they
 scurry away. All three men mount their horses and ride away
 from the train as passengers peek out timidly.

Bao points at some blood on Long's coat.

LONG
 (in Cantonese)
 Bao, I'm fine little brother. Just
 some white man's blood.
 (beat)
 Did you know my bounty is at \$2000
 now?

Bao grunts and motions to himself.

LONG (CONT'D)
 They didn't say anything about you.
 Sorry.

Bao rides ahead indignantly. Long chuckles and falls back to
 Sam on the cart.

LONG (CONT'D)
 Alright, Sam. Stash this at the
 hideout and meet us at Sally's.

SAM
 I got it. I got it.
 (beat)
 This ain't much to split three
 ways. Heck, this ain't even enough
 for one of us.

LONG
 (beat)
 Don't get any ideas. This haul
 isn't half as good as what's
 waiting for us in town. And you
 don't want me on your tail.

SAM

Christ Almighty Long. You're the one who's as crooked as a dog's hind leg. You just make sure the loot on our next job is worth my time. I ain't no purse snatcher.

Sam looks back at the luggage in the cart and spits. Then he whips the horses and speeds away as Long and Bao watch him go. They head off in a different direction.

INSERT MONTAGE

EXT. ARIZONA PLAINS - LATER

Long and Bao give wide berth to an active military fort with a large contingent of soldiers performing military drills.

Later, Long and Bao move quietly as they pass by a group of Indian bandits attacking a wagon with a settler family on it. As a woman screams helplessly, Long and Bao leave quickly.

Crossing a well-traveled road, Long and Bao briefly cross paths with a Snake Oil Salesman transporting his goods on a horse-drawn cart. The side of his cart reads "Petrov's Potent Potables".

Outside of a silver mine, Long and Bao slowly ride through the operations out front. They take note of the many Chinese workers hauling and processing the ore before moving on. The name on a hanging sign reads "Profitt Silver Mine".

Finally, they see the town of Epitaph in the distance. It's large for a desert town and the buildings are packed tightly together. In the center is an old fortified outpost. There are also train tracks that pass through one side of town.

Long points in a direction off to the other side of town.

END MONTAGE

EXT. DESERT OUTSKIRTS - AFTERNOON

Long and Bao arrive in a secluded clearing with raised ground all around. They tie their horses to a crude hitching post and make their way into a natural passage that has formed in a large, deep crack in the desert surface hidden by flora.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

A sign nailed to the wall of the train platform reads: "Welcome to Epitaph". The STATION MANAGER steps out, looks down the tracks, then pulls out a pocket watch and shakes his head. He whistles to a group of workers standing around.

The men grumble as they draw a handcar out onto the tracks and load it with new rail, spikes, and sledgehammers. The section crew then begins pumping the handcar down the tracks. The Station Manager goes back in the office.

Standing alone on the platform is U.S. Marshal EVERETT JAMES (45). His black duster is dusty, and weary eyes peek out from beneath the brim of his ridge top hat. His aggressively grizzled facial hair illustrates his time away from town.

The town sheriff STAN HOLDEN (35) approaches.

STAN
Howdy, Marshal.

EVERETT
Sheriff.

They stare into the desert for a few moments.

STAN
Unless my eyes deceive, I don't see a train. So, you were right. The Long Fang bites again.
(beat)
Are you sure he's coming this way?
(Everett doesn't reply)
I mean, those boys we got posted all over town haven't seen hide nor hair of him.
(Everett remains silent)
C'mon Marshal, you've been riding those boys pretty hard for days. Let's call 'em in.

EVERETT
He'll be here. I know it.

STAN
Blazes Everett. We all know what this means to you. How long you been chasing Fang? What's one more day? Let these men see their families tonight.

Everett sighs heavily. He softens.

EVERETT

Alright, Stan. Tell them boys to meet at Porter's to resupply. Then tell them to get some chow. We'll ride out tomorrow morning.

STAN

Will do, Marshal!
(he begins to leave)

EVERETT

Stan.

STAN

Yeah?

EVERETT

10 years.

STAN

What's that?

EVERETT

You asked me how long I've been chasing Fang. 10 years.

STAN

Dang, Marshal. Ain't there some kind of statute of limitations?

EVERETT

Not for what he did. Not in this life. Not ever.

A stiff breeze blows past as Stan leaves to round up the posse. Everett pulls out his pocket watch and opens the clasp to check the time. There's a whisper of a smile on his face. Then it vanishes. Everett puts his watch away and leaves.

INT. SECRET PASSAGEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Long and Bao make their way through the natural separation in the earth. As they continue, the passageway becomes braced by wood boards and support beams. They arrive at a lantern illuminating the underside of heavy cellar doors.

Long tries the iron handles, but the sturdy doors won't budge. He bangs hard on them. After a moment, scraping is heard on the other side. Then the doors open revealing ZEKE BONNER (50) a portly man with a bushy beard and bowler hat.

ZEKE

Well, if ain't the Tooth Fairies!

LONG
Really, Zeke? Every goddamn time?

Zeke laughs as he helps Long and Bao out of the passageway.

INT. SALLY'S SALOON - BACK CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

ZEKE
Fang Brothers. Tooth Fairies. That
never gets old!

Zeke slams the cellar doors shut and slides a bar in place.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
Mighty fine to see you two again.
It's been a while.

LONG
Far too long.

He shakes Long's hand vigorously and slaps Bao on the back heartily. He begins walking them to the front room where the din of saloon activity can be heard.

LONG (CONT'D)
We'd stop in more often, but in
case you haven't heard, we're
wanted men. Outlaws.

ZEKE
Yeah. I think I heard that rumor.

Zeke and Long chuckle, and Bao smirks.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
Glad you still remembered to use
the back door. Marshal's in town.
Rounded up a posse. But I got eyes
on those boys.

LONG
Marshal? Which one this time?

ZEKE
Everett James. Quiet type.

Long and Bao look at each other in recognition.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
You know him?

LONG
Let's just say he's very dedicated.

ZEKE

Well, no need to soil your britches. He and them boys are riding on tomorrow morning. He'll be none the wiser.

LONG

That's what I like to hear. You still got those spare rooms?

ZEKE

Fresh sheets. Just for you two.

LONG

Ah. Looking forward to sleeping in a bed for a change.

ZEKE

Want me to send some girls from the 9 Lives up?

Bao slaps the back of his hand into the palm of his other hand and shakes his head firmly. Then he pantomimes drinking.

LONG

Maybe later. Right now, we drink.

INT. SALLY'S SALOON - FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The large room is bustling with activity. Unsavory-looking people sit at most tables. Some play cards. Others compare scars and tattoos while the more dangerous types either arm wrestle or keep to themselves. An aging Indian man sweeps.

A man plays lively tunes on the upright piano by the stairs that lead up. Long and Bao saunter up to the bar. SALLY STRETCH (55), a woman whose obvious beauty has long since faded, mans the bar. She wears an old cabaret dress.

SALLY

Well, lookee here! It's the Sabre Tooth Brothers. Who's got a kiss for Sally Stretch?

When she speaks, her voice is hoarse. She offers her cheek to Long and absentmindedly scratches at the scar around her neck that could only result from rope burns. Long leans over the bar and kisses her cheek.

Sally offers her other cheek to Bao, but when he leans to kiss it, Sally quickly turns and kisses Bao on the lips. She grabs both sides of his head so he can't escape even though he struggles, wide-eyed. Sally finally releases him.

SALLY (CONT'D)

I know you missed that!

Long laughs as Bao wipes the slobber off his face.

LONG

Careful, Sally. You'll make Zeke jealous.

ZEKE

(lighting cigar, scoffs)
Better him than me. It's like kissing a prune.

SALLY

Oh, hon, better than kissing that briar patch of a face.

(to Long)

Now, what'll it be, sugar?

LONG

Gin.

Bao knocks on the bar top twice, then signals with two fingers to pour one for him as well. Sally does so then moves down the bar to two sullen-looking men, BILL (30) and BUD (30). They're prospectors. Bill chews tobacco. He spits.

BILL

Don't give up, Bud. We're close.

BUD

I know, Bill. We've just been digging for so long...

Bill pats Bud on the arm, and Bud winces. His forearm is poorly bandaged to care for a bloody wound.

BILL

Maybe you should see Doc Murphy about that.

SALLY

You boys want another one?

(they nod)

How about you show me your coin before I pour?

The men's shoulders slump and they slink out. They pass by the aged Indian man CHIEF RED FEATHER (55) sweeping the saloon. Chief is dressed in a poncho and his hair is long and unkempt as it hangs down the sides of his face.

Every aspect of him looks broken, from his slumped shoulders and long weary face to his thousand-yard stare and absentminded sweeping. He is a man clearly passing time in a sentence he is serving. He sees men leaving a table.

Chief sets the broom down to clear the empty table of glasses and bottles. One of the bottles still has liquid. Chief eyes the room before quickly grabbing the bottle to drink from it.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Put that down, Chief! You know you can't drink that.

Chief can't decide. The alcohol is so close. So delicious.

SALLY (CONT'D)

It's for your own good. You know how you get. Remember what happened last time? All the damage you did?

Chief brings the bottle closer to his lips but stops when Sally draws a pistol, aims, and cocks it. Chief sets the bottle down slowly and silently weeps. Zeke walks over and slaps him on the back.

ZEKE

Relax Chief! Once you work off your debt, you'll never have to come back, and you can drink all you want somewhere else.

Chief raises his head and looks somberly up above the bar. Zeke follows his gaze to two identical tomahawks displayed above the bar, crossed -- like a trophy.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Don't worry; you'll get those too.

Chief looks down and grimaces with renewed determination and goes back to cleaning. Zeke walks back to Long.

LONG

Well, Zeke, about your message. You said this was worth my time.

ZEKE

(puffing hard on cigar)
Long, we've hit the mother lode.
And I mean it.

INSERT MONTAGE

INT. PROFITT SILVER MINE - DAY

Chinese workers swing pickaxes against the mine wall.

ZEKE (V.O.)

Them Chinamen been slaving away
night and day in the silver mine.
And there's been enough silver to
draw prospectors from miles around.
But not like this.

One weary worker looks like he's going to pass out, but gives one more swing. As the rock falls away from the wall, the worker's face illuminates from the silver revealed. The vein is so rich, other workers stop and marvel at the silver wall.

WORKER #1

Boss! BOSS!

EXT. PROFITT SILVER MINE - LATER

Cart after cart of silver ore is pushed out of the mine. Workers then load the ore onto a horse-drawn cart under the supervision of foremen.

ZEKE (V.O.)

The silver flowed like a river.
Just cart after cart. All coming
out of Old Man Profitt's mine.

OLD MAN PROFITT (65), a bespectacled man with a slight frame and with only a few fine strands of hair left on his scalp, watches from a platform and grins ghoulishly.

EXT. WELLS GREENE BANK - LATER

A large sign with the bank's name hangs over the entrance. A solitary guard stands outside by the door with a shotgun. The cart full of silver ore pulls up, and armed men spill off the back as another cart full of Chinese workers arrives.

ZEKE (V.O.)

The closest smelter is in Bisbee,
and the old man has already sent
for a guarded transport. It'll take
them a couple of days for them to
get here.

INT. WELLS GREENE BANK - CONTINUOUS

Behind the teller stations and the Manager's desk, a giant vault dominates the rear of the room. The front door opens and Old Man Profitt approaches a CLERK and drops a giant silver ore at his station.

ZEKE (V.O.)

In the meantime, all of that ore is being stored under lock and key at the bank.

END MONTAGE

INT. SALLY'S SALOON - FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Long looks at Zeke, waiting for him to finish his story. When Zeke doesn't--

LONG

And...?

ZEKE

And...that's where you come in.

LONG

So, we're bank robbers now?

ZEKE

Sure. Why not?

LONG

We've never robbed a bank before.

ZEKE

How much harder could it be?

LONG

I don't know. *We've never done it before.*

ZEKE

There's a first time for everything. You didn't rob trains before, but now you're an expert! Give me one good reason why you can't rob a bank?

LONG

Too many people. Too many guns.

Bao knocks on the bar. Zeke and Long turn. Bao draws a star on his left breast with his finger then points at two locations on his palm.

LONG (CONT'D)
Yes, let's not forget that the Sheriff is across the street.

Zeke waves away their objections.

LONG (CONT'D)
Why not just ambush the transport on its way to Bisbee?

ZEKE
Long, the men Old Man Profitt hired to guard his fortune are just some boys from around town looking for honest work. The men coming from Bisbee are professionals. Used to be in the army under Sherman.
(beat)
We're not gonna get the jump on them. And if things go south, we'll have real trouble. Get me?

The discussion seems to be at an impasse as the men look away in frustration.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
Look, with me, Sally, you, Bao, and your new partner what's-his-name--

LONG
Sam.

ZEKE
Yeah, Sam. That's enough guns to handle whatever's waiting for us. And I've got a plan to keep the Sheriff busy.

LONG
Oh? What's that?

ZEKE
He's sweet on one of the girls at the 9 Lives. Let's just say that we'll catch him with his pants down. The rest is up to you.

Long and Bao look at each other skeptically.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Look, boys, this is a real chance for us to finally live the lives we've always wanted. Sally and me can't sell swill to these swine forever. And one day the Law is going to catch up to you. You got the fastest draw I ever seen, but how fast you gonna be next year? Or the year after that? Or ten years from now? You still want to be sleeping with one eye open when you're Sally's age?

SALLY

(from down the bar)
I heard that!

LONG

(thinks about it)
Alright, Zeke. We need time.

ZEKE

Sure. Sure. Just think about it. You've always been a great planner, and we can't do this without you.
(beat)
Just don't take too long. Transport is coming tomorrow night.

He leaves as Long and Bao huddle and discuss the idea.

EXT. PORTER'S GENERAL GOODS - CONTINUOUS

The general goods store is busy with all walks of life coming in and out with the necessities for their day. Stan leans on the wall by the door. The undertaker MORTIMER CHARON (50), a slow, well-meaning man exits with a box of nails in hand.

STAN

Afternoon Mortimer! How's the undertaking business?

MORTIMER

A little slow, Sheriff. Not sure if I should be grateful for that.

STAN

Well, I'm sure business will pick up soon. The only thing you can count on in life is death.

Stan smiles at his own cleverness, but it takes Mortimer a few moments to realize it. Then he smiles big and leaves. As he does, the school mistress MS. STAPLETON (20) approaches.

MS. STAPLETON
Sheriff.

STAN
Ms. Stapleton.

Her eyes brighten and she blushes.

MS. STAPLETON
You know my name?

STAN
Well, you're the school mistress. I thought it was wise to know the lady teaching our young.
(she smiles)
What are you here for?

MS. STAPLETON
Oh, just some supplies. I'm teaching the children penmanship, and I need some chalk. I thought I might pick up some--

STAN
Yeah, that's mighty nice. Good seeing you.

His attention is drawn to the buxom blonde woman walking his way dressed in finery with a small hat and parasol. She's dressed to emulate a refined woman, but her corset is a little too tight and her makeup a little too thick.

Ms. Stapleton sees what Stan is looking at and sulks into the store. The blonde woman, REBECCA HAYES (25), approaches Stan.

STAN (CONT'D)
Rebecca. You are the highlight of my day.

REBECCA
Careful, Sheriff. This is how rumors start. You don't want people talking, now, do you?

STAN
Let them talk all they want. As long as I'm the only one who gets to touch.

REBECCA

We'll see about that tonight.

She kisses her finger tip and playfully touches the tip of Stan's nose with it before walking away. Every man she walks by turns to watch her pass. Stan grins and takes his place by the store door once more.

Everett approaches and stands on the other side of the door with Stan. Several of Everett's posse file by. They nod, tip their hat, or otherwise thank him with some small gesture, as if knowing better than to speak to him.

STAN

The boys sure are grateful. I'm sure they all miss their families.

EVERETT

Don't we all.

Stan and Everett stand in silence for a moment.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

Where's the best place to get a drink around here?

STAN

Hey now! I never pegged you as the drinking kind. I always thought you were dryer than a snake's belly.

Everett gives him an expectant look.

STAN (CONT'D)

OK, since you want the best, there are only two bars worth going to in this town. The 9 Lives or Sally's. 9 Lives is cat house but liquor ain't watered down and the girls put on a little show on stage, if that strikes your fancy.

Everett's attention is focused on an approaching horse-drawn cart. Riding on it are MAGGIE MILLER (30), her son TOMMY (7), and her hired Negro help RAY (35).

STAN (CONT'D)

Sally's is even more unsavory if you can believe that. Mostly the dregs of society and that includes Sally. Rumor is that they strung her up in Texas but that tough bitch wouldn't die.

(MORE)

STAN (CONT'D)

So, you won't like the clientele,
but at least Sally pours 'em stiff.

Stan realizes Everett isn't listening and gives him a knowing smile. He leaves, entering the store.

When the cart stops, Everett doesn't approach, but his eyes smile. Ray hops off and begins gathering sacks and containers from the cart. Maggie is the first to see Everett.

MAGGIE

Fancy seeing you here again,
Marshal.

EVERETT

Ms. Miller.

MAGGIE

Please, Everett. I told you; call
me Maggie. Are you chasing another
dangerous outlaw?

EVERETT

Yes ma'am, I am.

MAGGIE

There must be so many for you to be
coming around as often as you do.

(beat)

Are you sure there's not another
reason?

Everett blushes, unsure of what to say. Then--

TOMMY

Howdy Marshal!

EVERETT

Howdy Tommy. You looking after your
ma?

TOMMY

You bet! When I grow up I'm gonna
be a marshal, too.

He pulls a piece of wood shaped like a crude pistol from his belt and pretends to shoot from the hip.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Bang, bang, bang! You bad man!
Don't shoot my daddy!

Everett smiles awkwardly, taken aback by the honesty of a child's innocence.

MAGGIE

That's enough Tommy. Go help Ray
fetch what we came for.

Ray, a formidable black man dressed in field hand attire,
nods at Everett as he approaches, containers in hand.

EVERETT

Ray. Working hard?

RAY

Yessuh, I am. If Ms. Maggie can't
run that ranch of hers all by her
ownself, I'm happy to work.
(to Tommy)
C'mon now. Git.

TOMMY

Aw. Bye Marshal!

He gives a friendly wave before entering the store with Ray.
Maggie moves closer to Everett.

MAGGIE

You'll have to excuse him. You've
made quite an impression on him.
(locks eyes with Everett)
I wish you would stay longer this
time.

EVERETT

Maggie...I...

MAGGIE

It's alright. Just think about it.

She lays her hand on his chest over his heart then goes
inside the store. Everett watches her go, then he dusts his
hat off on his thigh.

EVERETT

Hell. Where's that drink?

He begins walking down the street.

INT. SALLY'S SALOON - FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Long weighs the pros and cons of Zeke's plan with Bao.

LONG

The Sheriff will be busy. Not sure
how many men in the bank.
(MORE)

LONG (CONT'D)

But if Zeke is right about the silver, that's plenty to split five ways.

Bao counts five people on his hand then makes a gun shape out of his pointer finger and thumb. Then he counts four. He looks at Long expectantly.

LONG (CONT'D)

Yes, five of us are going in, but only four of us are shooting, if it comes to that.

Bao looks away and shakes his head. Then he faces Long and makes severe gestures to himself and Long.

LONG (CONT'D)

I know you want to protect me. But I don't want you killing anyone. I never wanted that for you.

(in Cantonese)

You are my little brother. And I will always protect you. Even from yourself.

Bao slaps the back of his hand into his palm, then makes a cryptic jumping off gesture with both. Long looks away, and both men stare across the bar at the bric-a-brac lining the back wall. There are old photos. One of them is of a TRAIN.

LONG (CONT'D)

(pause)

That was a long time ago. It was an accident. A mistake. It wasn't your fault.

Bao gulps his drink and sets it down. The glass falls over.

LONG (CONT'D)

Once this job is done, we can go back home rich men. All of this will be behind us.

Long grabs Bao by the scruff and shakes him in a brotherly, cajoling way.

LONG (CONT'D)

(in Cantonese)

You've come this far without the stain of murder on your soul. Come with me a little longer.

Bao sighs and nods. Long grins and laughs and rights Bao's glass that tipped over. Long turns to find Zeke in the room--

LONG (CONT'D)
 Zeke! Is there anything else we
 need to know?

Zeke approaches.

ZEKE
 (to Bao)
 Just need to know if you brung the
 dynamite?

Bao looks around first before lifting his poncho to reveal
 two sticks of TNT tucked in his belt.

LONG
 (surprised)
 What the hell do we need that for?

ZEKE
 That'll come in handy if we can't
 persuade Booney to open the vault.

LONG
 Booney?

ZEKE
 Bank manager. George Boone. Lives
 above the bank. Likes to be close
 to the money.

LONG
 You're playing it fast and loose,
 Zeke. Is the dynamite necessary or
 not?

ZEKE
 If we had more time, I'd say plan
 every little detail, Long. But we
 don't have time. I just want to
 make sure that we have a backup in
 case whatever you come up with
 doesn't work out. That's all.

Long looks at Zeke long and hard before finally grinning.

LONG
 Alright. We're with you.

Sally approaches with expensive liquor and pours shots.

ZEKE
 (toasting)
 To our good fortune!

SALLY

Hear, hear.

They drink and slam the shot glasses down on the bar.

LONG

When do we see the bank?

ZEKE

Tomorrow. After the posse's gone.
Tonight, just lay low. I'll get
those girls to help pass the time.

He begins to walk toward the front exit.

LONG

Oh, no you don't.

ZEKE

I thought you wanted--

LONG

I do. But your taste in women makes
me question your eyesight.
(beat)
I'll pick the girls.

ZEKE

Suit yourself. But hold on.

He cracks open the saloon door and signals to a man leaning against the wall across the street. The man looks around nonchalantly before nodding back to Zeke.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Looks clear. Just be quick.

LONG

Mother hen.

Bao knocks on the bar and Long turns to face him. Bao signals that he's going to use the outhouse. Long waves and exits.

EXT. SALLY'S SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Long walks out into the bright afternoon. Across from him is the 9 Lives cat house where men practically jog toward and other men stumble out. Sultry women stand on a veranda above the entrance posing for passing men.

Long grins eagerly as he begins crossing toward the bustling activity.

He pauses to let a horse-drawn cart ride past him, but as it does so, his attention is drawn to a figure standing in the street further down the road.

Everett stops in his tracks as Long is revealed by the horse-drawn cart riding past. His EYES squint, unsure of what he's seeing. Then a whisper spills over his lips--

EVERETT

I don't...

Long finishes his sentence--

LONG

...believe it.

An alien silence falls over the once busy street.

Townfolk quickly understand the situation and begin disappearing into buildings but peek out of windows and doorways. Ms. Stapleton approaches with supplies in a basket, but ducks behind a corner when understands the situation.

Mortimer comes out of shop to see the Long and Everett squaring off. He's dumbfounded at first, but then pulls out his measuring rope to estimate the men's heights and widths. He compares his measurements to nearby caskets.

Long and Everett just stare at each other. The men stand roughly 50 feet apart and speak loudly, but not shouting.

LONG (CONT'D)

Marshal Everett James. Fancy meeting you here. How long has it been? Five years? We must do this more often.

EVERETT

Fang Long. You are under arrest for the crimes of--

LONG

I know my crimes, Marshal. Your last deputy read them to me right before I shot him in the face. What was his name?

EVERETT

(quieter)
Charlie Wright. From Missouri.

LONG

And the one before that? Outside of Benson.

EVERETT
 (to himself)
 Preston Hughes. From Kansas.

LONG
 (pauses)
 How many more men have to die for
 your cause?
 (beat)
 None. No one else has to die. Turn
 around and go home.

For a moment, Everett looks like he might consider it.

LONG (CONT'D)
 Don't you miss your wife? Your
 children? How many years have you
 wasted chasing me? How long have I
 separated you from your family?

Everett's eyes flash, and he hooks the length of his duster
 around his holster to make access to his gun easier.

LONG (CONT'D)
 Shit.

Simultaneously, Long hooks his coat around his holster.

EVERETT
 My cause is the law, and those
 deputies died in service to it.
 And, God willing, their families
 will see justice is done.

INT. PORTER'S GENERAL GOODS - CONTINUOUS

The men of the posse are spread out, resupplying. Stan eats
 an apple as he casually stands by a window. He sees Everett
 just down the street, and it takes him a moment to process
 the scene. He drops his apple and scrambles.

STAN
 (to posse)
 Get your guns. Get in position!

The posse is stunned but jump into action when they see Stan
 running up stairs to the roof. Maggie, Ray, and Tommy rush to
 the window to see what's happening.

EXT. SALLY'S SALOON - CONTINUOUS

EVERETT

Fang Long! You are under arrest for the crimes of robbery and murder, including Deputy Marshals Wright and Hughes. Surrender or I will kill you.

INT. SALLY'S SALOON - FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bao enters from the back, adjusting his clothes. Zeke follows, carrying a keg of beer. He laughs at the tail end of a joke he just told Bao. They stop in their tracks at the strange silence in the room. Sally stares at them pointedly.

LONG

(shouting from outside)
Touch that gun and I will send you to hell!

Bao instinctively grabs his rifle and rushes to the door. Zeke drops the keg and scuffles with Bao to hold him back.

EXT. SALLY'S SALOON - CONTINUOUS

EVERETT

I'll see you there.

The air turns electric as the eyes of both men scan each other for movement. Hands slowly inch toward grips. Heels dig into the dirt. Weight shifts.

EXT. PORTER'S GENERAL GOODS - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Stan reaches the roof and shoulders a rifle. He kneels down behind a low wall and aims at Long. Suddenly, Bao explodes out of Sally's, rifle on shoulder. Zeke chases after--

ZEKE

Bao, wait!

Bao lets out a muted cry as he aims blindly down the street.

LONG

No!

EXT. PORTER'S GENERAL GOODS - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

INSERT STAN'S RIFLE SIGHT

At the last moment, Stan changes targets and aims at Bao.

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. SALLY'S SALOON - CONTINUOUS

A rifle shot hits Bao in the chest as he squeezes his trigger. Bao's bullet grazes Everett across his temple, sending him to the ground. Long is stunned momentarily as he watches his brother fall, but regains his awareness quickly.

He senses attackers moving into position around him. Stan on the roof of Porter's. A man with a rifle hiding around a corner. Two men with pistols behind stacked barrels. Another man with a shotgun behind a low fence.

The anguish drains from Long's face as his instincts and reflexes take over. He draws both pistols.

The inexperience of the posse in a gunfight is apparent as the men are slow to fire and don't take time to aim. Nevertheless, the errant bullets force Long back into the street every time he moves for cover.

Similarly, Long suppresses his attackers with well aimed and timed shots, especially at Stan whose hat is shot off the first time he rises out of cover. Every time he tries to take a shot, Long sends a bullet his way.

A bullet grazes Long's bicep. Almost without looking, Long returns fire instantaneously along the same trajectory, killing the shooter.

Another bullet nicks Long's ear. Again, without looking, he returns fire along that trajectory, killing another man. Another exchange sends another man down, but Long is grazed in the thigh.

The man with the shotgun seizes the opportunity and fires buckshot that clips Long, spinning him to the ground. But even while on his back, Long is deadly accurate and finishes off the man with the shotgun.

Without any bullets left to suppress Stan, Long reloads frantically, flicking chambers of his revolvers into place just as Stan rises. Long unloads all of his bullets.

EXT. PORTER'S GENERAL GOODS - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

The bullets splinter the wood of Stan's cover, sending smoldering splinters and bits of metal into Stan's face. He falls backwards, grabbing at his eyes.

STAN
(screaming)
My eyes!

EXT. SALLY'S SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Long keeps firing until the hammers on his pistols slam against empty cartridges. They make tinny sounds. Finally, Long lowers his guns, exhausted. Blood runs down his left arm. He holsters his guns and limps over to Bao.

During the firefight, Sally had come out to tend to Bao. She looks at Long wide-eyed as she cradles Bao's head in her lap. Zeke presses a dirty bar rag against Bao's chest. The blood is profuse and spills from the hole in Bao's back as well.

Long falls to his knees next to Bao. Tears well up in Long's eyes. Bao looks back with an inscrutable expression that is a mixture of panic, anger, and compassion. Panic takes over when blood fills Bao's throat. He flails like a drowning man.

LONG
(in Cantonese)
I'm here! I'm here!

He holds Bao's hands tightly in his own as Bao thrashes in his last throes. And then he's still. Long gasps before letting out a mournful wail. He hunches over and shuts his eyes tight, but they only force tears to drip from them.

EXT. PORTER'S GENERAL GOODS - CONTINUOUS

Stan calms down and pulls his hands away from his face. The area around his eyes are bloody, but his eyes look relatively fine. He blinks several times in wide-eyed surprise. He scrambles for his rifle that had skidded away.

EXT. SALLY'S SALOON - CONTINUOUS

A dark shadow falls across Long as a figure approaches the grisly scene. A cocking gun draws Long's attention.

Everett, bloody from the gash on the side of his head, points his pistol at Long.

Everett's face is tight with emotion and anticipation. It's hard to tell if he's more excited at capturing Long or witnessing Long's loss.

EVERETT

Now you know how it feels.

Long slowly turns to face Everett. He looks up at him, completely defeated.

LONG

Do it.

Everett tightens his grip on his pistol.

LONG (CONT'D)

Do it!

EXT. PORTER'S GENERAL GOODS - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Stan shoulders his rifle and aims.

INSERT STAN'S RIFLE SIGHT

He would normally have a clear shot, but Everett spoils the angle by standing in front of Long.

STAN

(to himself)

Get out of the way!

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. SALLY'S SALOON - CONTINUOUS

LONG

DO IT!

Everett grits his teeth and steels himself to execute Long, but his hand begins to tremble. Seeing this, Long flies into a rage, diving for Everett's legs. Everett stumbles back, but Long keeps grabbing for him while on his knees.

LONG (CONT'D)

(in Cantonese)

KILL ME! KILL ME! KILL ME!

Finally, Everett pistol whips Long hard across the temple, knocking him out cold. Trembling, he holsters his weapon.

EVERETT

No. You'll face justice.

Slowly, townsfolk emerge to inspect the carnage. Stan approaches and is disgusted to see Long is still alive.

STAN

You gotta be kidding me. He just killed four men!

EVERETT

And he'll face a jury for that.

STAN

Jury? Let's just string him up right now!

Everett grabs Stan by the collar.

EVERETT

No. That's not justice.

Stan struggles for a moment then relaxes.

STAN

Tell that to them.

He motions to the women who come running to the sides of the men Long just killed. Their wails fill the air as faces begin turning toward the Marshal and fingers point at Long.

EVERETT

Let's get him off the street.

Stan and Everett each grab an arm and begin dragging Long away. Maggie, Tommy, and Ray watch from a few feet away. Everett doesn't look at them as he passes.

EXT. DOC MURPHY'S - LATE AFTERNOON

The small clinic has a large sign above the door that reads: Doctor's Office.

INT. DOC MURPHY'S - CONTINUOUS

DOC MURPHY (60), a slight man with a kind face, finishes stitching Everett's scalp while Everett sits on a chair.

DOC MURPHY

I'd tell you to keep a bandage on this, but I know you'll just take it off. Just try to keep your hat over it as much as you can.

EVERETT

Thanks, Doc.

(beat)

Can we move him?

Everett motions over Doc's shoulder and Doc turns to look at Long's unconscious body on a table. He's been bandaged.

DOC MURPHY

Well, I wouldn't advise it.

He walks over to the table and lifts a small metal pot. A handful of ball bearings rattle around inside.

DOC MURPHY (CONT'D)

I've dug out all of the pellets and sutured his wounds, but he needs time to heal.

(beat)

Never seen a man survive buckshot.

He sets the metal pot down and wipes his hands on a bloody rag draped over his shoulder.

Stan, hunched over a washing basin to clean the wounds around his eyes, lifts his head to check his work in the mirror.

STAN

If it were up to me, he wouldn't survive.

EVERETT

Well, it's not up to you.

Stan and Everett stare pointedly at each other in the mirror.

DOC MURPHY

Well, the ether won't keep him under forever. As long as he's laying down, I don't see why he couldn't rest in a cell.

EVERETT

We'll take care of it.

CLAUDETTE MURPHY (50) enters from the hallway.

CLAUDETTE
Darling, the soldiers are leaving.

INT. DOC MURPHY'S - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Doc follows her into the hallway where three Union soldiers stand in uniform by the entrance. One of them is obviously sick as he shivers in the Arizona heat, hunched and pale.

DOC MURPHY
I'm sorry I couldn't do more for
your friend. He's got symptoms I've
never seen before.

For a moment, the ill soldier flicks his gaze hungrily on Doc Murphy. His lips curl back into a mirthless grin, revealing unnaturally red and black gums. Taken aback by the evil visage, Doc Murphy swallows hard.

A terrible shiver overtakes the ill soldier, and the aggression drains from his body.

SOLDIER #1
That's alright, Doc. We appreciate
what you done. Maybe the doctors at
Fort Bliss can fix him.

The soldiers all "ma'am" to Claudette before exiting and climbing onto a horse-drawn cart. The ill soldier lies down on the cart, pulling a blanket over himself. They ride off.

Everett and Stan enter carrying Long on a stretcher. As they pass--

STAN
Thanks, Doc.
(to Claudette)
Ma'am.

EVERETT
Ma'am.

They exit.

EXT. DOC MURPHY'S - CONTINUOUS

Doc Murphy comes out with Stan and Everett. He stops when he sees PETROV (40), the snake oil salesman, ride in with his horse-drawn carriage. The side reads: Petrov's Potent Potables. Glassware rattles inside as it passes.

Stan and Everett cross the wide street to the town jail. Close by, the bodies of the posse are being carted to the undertaker. When the townsfolk see Long, they jeer Everett and Stan. The men move quickly into the jail.

INT. JAIL - CONTINUOUS

The small building has only the basics, like a desk, table and chairs, a gun rack, and a large cell dominating the back of the room. A small solitary barred window allows some light into the cell. Stan and Everett carry Long into the cell.

Stan drops Long unceremoniously. Long doesn't wake.

EVERETT

That's no way to treat a prisoner.

STAN

Whatever you say, Marshal.

After they exit the cell, Stan locks it. Everett drops Long's gun belt and coat onto the desk. Stan eyes the guns.

STAN (CONT'D)

What are you gonna do with his pistols?

EVERETT

(noticing Stan's gaze)
They're coming back with me as evidence.

Stan sighs and begins to leave. Everett sits.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

STAN

Anywhere but here.

EVERETT

You have a prisoner to watch.

STAN

No, you have a prisoner to watch. I have a town to patrol.

Everett watches him go then looks at Long.

EXT. JAIL - CONTINUOUS

Stan emerges and walks slowly down the street. He doesn't make eye contact with the townsfolk. A man driving a horse-drawn cart rides slowly past. The man is beaten and bloody. Stan squints, recognizing him.

STAN

Carl?

Carl sees Stan and stops the horses. He looks at Stan with tears of rage brimming in his eyes. There are corpses in the cart, and the cart is partially burned.

STAN (CONT'D)

What happened?

CARL

Them goddamn Indians! Came out of nowhere. Killed my kin. Burned the wagons. They killed Molly, Sheriff.

(beat)

We gotta have some law out there...

A look of determination falls across his face, and he rides off. Stan looks after him for a moment before chasing him. He passes Petrov who has opened his cart to reveal his wares. He stands on a stool, waving his cloak and tipping his top hat.

PETROV

(Russian accent)

Yes! Ladies and gentlemen! Come!
Come! Feast your eyes on wares that
I bring to you from the remote
parts of the world!

(grabs green bottle)

Here, water gathered from the
Ganges River. Blessed by a high
priest, one sip of this holy water
can extend your life for years!

The crowd has grown around him, and an old man stands near the front next to Petrov. Petrov holds the bottle out to the old man, but pulls it back at the last moment. Petrov grabs a lavender bottle and sees a homely woman near Doc Murphy.

PETROV (CONT'D)

Ah, but that's nothing compared to
the power of this love potion.

The homely woman perks up.

PETROV (CONT'D)

Drink this before bed, and when you
wake up, your heart's desire will
find you irresistible!

The homely woman reaches for her coin purse.

DOC MURPHY

Don't give this man a penny! He's
selling you snake oil!

PETROV

Lies! I offer only the very best
tonics and cordials from around the
world. I've seen crippled men walk
again after just one sip of my
libations. Can you say the same,
Doctor?

DOC MURPHY

Charlatan!

PETROV

(to crowd)

I look at all of you, and I see so
much suffering. Let me ease your
pain. If you have the coin, then I
have the cure.

He grabs bottles in both hands and gestures ostentatiously.
The crowd rushes him with money in hand. Doc Murphy protests,
but Claudette pulls him away. Petrov watches them go with
glee. The old man from earlier tugs at Petrov.

PETROV (CONT'D)

Ah, you must want the Waters of
Life.

Petrov takes his money and hands over the bottle, but before
he lets go--

PETROV (CONT'D)

Careful old man. Drink too much,
you might never die.

He winks and the old man walks off, clutching the bottle.

INT. DOC MURPHY'S - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

DOC MURPHY

Someone needs to do something about
that man!

CLAUDETTE

Yes, darling. I know, but you have more pressing issues.

The two Prospectors from earlier, Bill and Bud, stand when Doc Murphy sees them. Bud has a bite wound on his forearm.

INT. DOC MURPHY'S - MINUTES LATER

Doc Murphy wraps the sutured wound. Bill pulls out some tobacco chew and puts it in his mouth.

DOC MURPHY

How did you say this happened?

BILL

We were walking back to our stake by Old Man Profitt's mine when we saw a dead dog in the road.

BUD

Well, we thought it was dead, until it got up and bit me.

BILL

Took all I had to get it off him. I even broke its back with a stick.

(beat)

Funny, it couldn't move its legs no more, but it kept looking at us...growling. Finally bashed its brains out. That did it.

DOC MURPHY

You get a good look at it? Was it foaming at the mouth?

BUD

Not that I could tell.

Doc Murphy finishes with the bandage, and Bud stands to go.

DOC MURPHY

Alright, well, you should be fine.

(beat)

And let me know if your jaw tightens up or it gets hard to move over the next few days.

BUD

Why?

DOC MURPHY

You never know what these animals get into. A wound could still be dangerous long after the bite.

BILL

Can he work?

DOC MURPHY

(washing up)

I wouldn't risk it, but I can't stop you.

The Prospectors nod and exit.

DOC MURPHY (CONT'D)

Claudette. I need you to send a telegram to my cousin in Abilene. Tell him to send my equipment. We may need to do a transfusion.

Claudette nods and exits.

EXT. UNDERTAKER'S - MOMENTS LATER

Claudette walks down the street and passes the undertaker's. The sign above the door reads: Coins for Charon. Professional Undertaker.

Carl and Stan are here unloading bodies from Carl's cart to bring them inside the building. Claudette winces when she sees a little girl's body in the cart.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - MINUTES LATER

Claudette enters the train station office, and through a window she can be seen talking to the Platform Manager who writes down what she tells him. Outside, the train that Long robbed has arrived, and the bodies are being carried off.

Sarah, from the train, cries as she watches while clinging to her husband, Jimmy. FATHER ESPINOZA (50), the town priest, performs last rites on the bodies as they're laid out on the station platform.

INT. DIRTY SHACK - GUANGDONG PROVINCE - 30 YEARS EARLIER

A 15-year-old Long sleeps on a pile of straw face up. He's dressed in rags. Near him is 5-year-old Bao playing with a small wooden boat. He sails it through imaginary choppy waters. The journey takes him outside.

EXT. DIRTY SHACK - GUANGDONG PROVINCE - CONTINUOUS

Outside is crippling poverty, but Bao is oblivious to it all, lost in his imagination. He walks a few shacks down the road and stops at a puddle of dirty water. He places the boat in it and guides it around in circles.

He doesn't notice wild dogs approaching until they're within striking distance. Surprised and panicked, Bao tries running back to his shack, but doesn't get very far before he's surrounded with his back to the wall. He cries out in terror.

INT. DIRTY SHACK - GUANGDONG PROVINCE - CONTINUOUS

Bao's cries penetrate Long's sleep and he grows restless. Suddenly--

INT. JAIL - SUNSET

Long wakes, and his eyes shoot open. He screams--

LONG
(in Cantonese)
Bao! I'm here!

He sits up quickly, but pain reminds him to move slowly. Realizing, Long looks up at the cell walls and bars. He checks his wounds and inspects the bandages. He sighs.

After a moment, he looks through the bars and into the dark jail. The setting sun has made the shadows impenetrable. Long hugs his knees before speaking to the room.

LONG (CONT'D)
When my brother, Bao, was born, our mother wept, but not tears of joy. She could barely feed *me* after my father had died months before. Five years later, she followed my father, leaving Bao with me.

He shuts his eyes for a moment and breathes in deeply, steeling himself for painful memories.

LONG (CONT'D)
She said...
(in Cantonese then English)
Look after your little brother. He is your only family now.
(beat)
I was fifteen.
(MORE)

LONG (CONT'D)

(beat)

For years we lived like beggars, working odd jobs where we could find them. We slept little and ate even less. So, when we had the opportunity to come to America for work, I knew we had to take it.

(pause)

I brought him here for a better life. I was wrong.

INT. JAIL - SUNSET

The impenetrable darkness is silent for a few moments, and then a match is struck, and the flame dips into a smoking pipe, revealing Everett's face. Then he lights a lantern on the desk where he's sitting. His eyes are cold and hard.

EVERETT

Yeah. We've all lost people. Just ask the four women whose husbands you killed today. I'm sure they have sad stories to tell, too.

Long shakes his head, frustrated at letting himself be vulnerable. He picks himself up and sits on the cell bench.

LONG

What now?

EVERETT

(puffs)

Now we wait. Tomorrow, assuming you'll survive the journey, I'll take you back up north to face a judge and jury.

(he puffs his pipe)

And then I will watch you die.

LONG

(scoffs weakly)

Is my death all you have to live for?

Everett doesn't answer for a long time.

EVERETT

I live for the law. And the law says you need to pay for what you've done.

LONG

The law. Your laws never protected me or my brother. Or my countrymen who died building your railroads. Where was the law when we were paid two-thirds of what a White man was paid? Where was the law when we were whipped by overseers and shackled when we tried to leave? Where was the law when we went on strike to protest our treatment, and the railroad companies stopped feeding us?

(beat)

Finally, after eight days of starvation, the law came. But not to save us. The Sheriff came with his deputies to threaten us if we did not return to work. Your laws never applied to me.

Everett puffs on his pipe for a few moments.

EVERETT

Whatever injustices you've suffered, that's no excuse for killing men, women, and children.

(beat)

Life isn't fair. And you can't make it fair by taking life. Only the law makes life fair. Or as close to it as we can get.

(beat)

And that's why you have to die. To bring some fairness to this life.

The two men stare at each other in silence.

EXT. DOC MURPHY'S - MINUTES LATER

Petrov finishes closing up his cart as he concludes some last minute business with a townsman. He climbs onto the driver's seat and is about to ride off when Doc Murphy comes out of his office.

DOC MURPHY

Go on! Get out of here!

PETROV

You should spend less time worrying about me, and pay more attention to your wife.

(MORE)

PETROV (CONT'D)

(beat)

Ma'am.

He tips his hat at someone behind Doc Murphy. Doc Murphy turns around to see his wife in the door way staring wide-eyed at Petrov. Petrov rides off before Doc Murphy can reply.

DOC MURPHY

(to Claudette)

Just what did he mean by that?

CLAUDETTE

I...I...

Claudette is at a loss for words until she sees something over Doc Murphy's shoulder.

CLAUDETTE (CONT'D)

Oh my! A shooting star! Look!

DOC MURPHY

Ain't no such thing...

He turns to see a streak across the sky. Then another. And another. One streak leaves a long green tail that grows as it travels. It passes low overhead, whistling softly.

CLAUDETTE

Kiss me, darling. For good luck.

DOC MURPHY

Are you crazy, woman? I'm too old for all that school boy nonsense.

He goes inside. Claudette follows, frowning in frustration. Meanwhile, the green streak has left a wake of green dust that slowly drifts down over the town. Some people reach out to touch it while others dance in it amazed.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Bill and Bud trek back to their stake. Bill pushes a wheelbarrow while Bill lights the way with a lantern. The wound on his arm somehow looks worse. A stagecoach approaches and the prospectors step aside. The stagecoach stops. It's--

OLD MAN PROFITT

Well...Bud and Bill. Or is it Bill and Bud? I can never remember.

BUD

What do you want Profitt?

OLD MAN PROFITT

You know what I want. That stake of yours is worthless in your hands. You don't have the manpower or the gumption to make profitable. Sell it to me and live your lives!

BILL

Your offer's no good. Not when it's a fraction of what we paid. Not when we're about to strike it rich!

OLD MAN PROFITT

Listen boy. The only one getting rich around here is me. You don't want to sell? Fine. Work yourself to death.

He rides away. Bill watches him go and spits while Bud mutters something under his breath and spits. When Old Man Profitt is out of sight, the prospectors pick up to leave. They stop when they hear a whistling sound.

They look around and then slowly look up as the environment around them lights up green. A meteorite hurtles overhead and slams into their stake in the distance. Bill and Bud look at each other and then make a dash for the mine.

INT. PROSPECTORS' STAKE - MINUTES LATER

The meteorite has punched a hole in the mine ceiling and broken into a million shards that punctuate the walls and floor. They catch the light from Bud's lantern mysteriously, almost as if they're emitting light and glowing.

BILL

What is it, Bud?

BUD

I don't know, Bill. They look like...gems.

Bill reaches out and touches one. Its sharp edge cuts his hand. He tries again, gingerly, and snaps off the shard.

BILL

Emeralds. These are emeralds.

(beat)

We're gonna be rich!

They hug each other vigorously and begin snapping shards and tossing them in the wheelbarrow. They repeatedly get cut, but it doesn't faze them.

EXT. ARIZONA PLAINS - STREAM - CONTINUOUS

The sun has just dipped over the horizon, casting heavy shadows on the uneven desert. Petrov counts his money as he absentmindedly drives his horses. He chuckles to himself. Suddenly, the horses halt. There's a log in the road.

Petrov looks at it with puzzlement. He hears movement, but before he can react, Indian bandits leap from their hiding spots and spring their ambush. Riders appear from nowhere and whoop and shout as they surround Petrov. He's trapped.

PETROV

(no accent)

Now...whoa! Wait just a minute.
There's no reason to be violent.

The BANDIT LEADER separates himself from the others. He steps forward and grabs the petrified Petrov from his seat. The Bandit Leader draws a mean knife from its sheath.

PETROV (CONT'D)

Take whatever you want! I have
money! I have liquor!
(to all)
You know, fire water! You like!

He begins pantomiming drinking exaggeratedly. The Bandit Leader sneers and drives the knife up through Petrov's throat and into his skull. Petrov goes limp instantly and dies. The Bandit Leader lets him fall and mutters to a fellow bandit.

That man springs into action, unhooking the horses and commanding others to help him push the cart off the road. The cart rolls down an embankment and topples over into the stream. Petrov's bottles spill, crashing open into the water.

The stream turns into a pastiche of bright colors that mix into a ruddy brown that's swept away by the current. Following it, the water disappears underground.

EXT. EPITAPH - WATER PUMP - CONTINUOUS

The water comes out of a town water pump and into the bucket of Mortimer, the undertaker. He finishes and takes his bucket to leave. He turns and is surprised to see Ms. Stapleton.

MS. STAPLETON

Mr. Charon! How's the undertaking
business?

MORTIMER

Please, call me Mortimer. Business has been too good lately. If you know what I mean.

They both look down at the ground for a moment.

MS. STAPLETON

(RE: bucket)

Washing up before supper?

MORTIMER

Oh, this? No, I need to clean the corpses before service tomorrow.

(beat)

Well, I best get to it. You have a pleasant evening.

Mortimer leaves, and Ms. Stapleton begins pumping water into her own bucket.

EXT. SALLY'S SALOON - SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Bill and Bud speak in excited, hushed tones as they cart they wheelbarrow full of crystals. They've draped some discarded fabric over the pile, but the shards still somehow glow green beneath. Bill spits tobacco just as Zeke comes out.

ZEKE

Whoa. Watch where you're spitting!
You almost got me.

Bud and Bill are startled, and they're immediately protective of their crystals.

BILL

Sorry Zeke.

BUD

Yeah, sorry Zeke.

ZEKE

When are you gonna give up that nasty habit?

Bill smiles knowingly.

BILL

Maybe tomorrow. Maybe I'll buy me a 10 dollar cigar! How 'bout you Bud?

BUD

Me? I'm gonna spend a week at the 9
Lives!

ZEKE

Whatever you say boys.

Zeke heads over to his kegs as the prospectors walk off. Zeke bends down to pick up a fresh keg when he notices that some of Bill's spit landed on it. It glows a faint sickly green.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Disgusting.

He picks it up and brings into the saloon.

INT. SALLY'S SALOON - FRONT ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Sally taps the keg and pours beers for patrons. They roar and cheer in approval. Bill's spit, however, appears to seep into the wood of the keg.

EXT. SALLY'S SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Stan looks in through a window and sees the raucous crowd. Not seeing anything wrong, he turns around and crosses the street to the 9 Lives.

INT. 9 LIVES - CONTINUOUS

The vibe inside is more subdued and refined. The men here are quieter, opting to listen to the women's whispers instead. A small band plays a whimsical tune as a burlesque show takes place on stage. The girls are all dressed the same.

The girls all place their giant feather fans in the center, then pull them away dramatically, revealing Rebecca sporting a scintillating short dress. She's obviously the star. She spots Stan at the bar and winks. He smiles back.

EXT. FORT BLISS - NIGHT

The soldiers from Epitaph ride up to the watch by the gate. Torches on the walls cast pools of light in the unending darkness of the desert. The Watch Commander approaches.

WATCH COMMANDER

State your business.

SOLDIER #1

Yes, sir. We come from Epitaph.
Half a day's ride from here.

WATCH COMMANDER

I know it. Go on.

SOLDIER #1

Well, sir. We got a soldier that
came down with something awful. The
local doctor couldn't fix him, so
we thought we'd bring him here.

(beat)

But he passed a few hours ago. The
fort was closer than town, so we
came here.

One of the men on watch walks to the back of the cart and
flips the blanket back. The sick soldier is dead. The
watchman nods at the watch commander.

WATCH COMMANDER

Bring him in. Put him in the
infirmary for now, then get some
chow. We'll let the Lieutenant
Major decide what to do next when
he arrives in the morning.

INT. FORT BLISS - INFIRMARY - MINUTES LATER

The soldiers from Epitaph carry the body in still wrapped in
a blanket and lay it on table. They exit. The corpse lies
there in silence, completely motionless.

INT. UNDERTAKER'S - CONTINUOUS

Mortimer submerges his rag into his bucket of water that he
fetched from the water pump. He uses the rag to wipe the
blood off a naked body splayed out on a table. Other naked
bodies show they have been recently cleaned. They don't move.

INT. OLD SHACK - CONTINUOUS

The old man who bought the Waters of Life from Petrov dangles
the bottle in front of his roommate, another old man. The
first old man laughs malevolently as he snatches the bottle
away and downs it. He lies down on a cot to sleep.

The other old man makes a face and goes to his cot to sleep.

INT. MODEST BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The homely woman who bought the Love Potion holds it to her chest, shuts her eyes, and breathes deeply before drinking it. She sets the bottle down next to a small framed portrait on her nightstand and smiles. She blows out a candle.

INT. NEAT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A match is struck and it lights a small lantern, revealing Ms. Stapleton in her bedroom. She opens a book and begins reading it in bed. She reaches over to a wooden cup and drinks some water. She frowns at the taste, but finishes it.