

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 of 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.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

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. It's been twenty minutes. I'm going to see what's wrong.

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 black gentleman's outfit and gambler hat and sports two nickle-plated pistols with ivory grips. His face below the eyes is hidden by a red bandana with a black stripe on the side that looks like a fang.

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
(Chinese accent)
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.

Outside, a MASKED MAN #3 rides up on a cart drawn by two horses. He pulls up alongside the passenger car and points a rifle 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.
(MORE)

MASKED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

(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, but Masked Man #2 pulls a knife. 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.

Masked Man #2 exits. Masked Man #1 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 lock 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 quick 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.

The men scowl at each other then chuckle. 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, I'm fine. Bring the horses.

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

SAM
C'mon. We better git.

Curious faces peek out of passenger car windows. Long draws his pistol on them without even looking, 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)
Just some white man's blood.
(beat)
Did you know my bounty is at \$2000?

Bao grunts and motions to himself.

LONG (CONT'D)
Nothing about you. Sorry.

Bao frowns. 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. You know, this ain't much
to split three ways. Heck, this
ain't even enough for one of us.

LONG
Don't get any ideas. 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 the next job is worth my
time. I ain't no purse snatcher.

Sam whips the horses and speeds away as Long and Bao watch him go. They head off in a different direction.

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 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.

The men grin and Zeke 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
Sally here?

ZEKE
You can't hear her?
(he laughs)
Glad you remembered the back door.
Marshal's in town with 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
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 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

(hoarse)

Well, lookee here! Who's got a kiss for Sally Stretch?

She offers her cheek to Long, revealing the rope burn scar around her neck. Long leans over 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. You'll make Zeke jealous.

ZEKE

(lighting cigar, scoffs)

He can kiss that old prune anytime.

SALLY

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

(to Long)

Now, what'll it be, darlin'?

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 looks somberly up above the bar. Zeke follows his gaze to two identical tomahawks displayed above the bar, crossed.

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.

Bill and Bud look on enviously from their stake nearby as 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 his silver ore 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 days 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 Profitt approaches the clerk, PATRICK (25), and drops a giant silver ore at his station. Patrick's jaw falls open.

ZEKE (V.O.)

Meantime, all that ore is being
stored in the vault at the bank.

END MONTAGE

INT. SALLY'S SALOON - FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Long waits for Zeke to finish his story. When he 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

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 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 men look away, frustrated at the impasse.

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.

(MORE)

ZEKE (CONT'D)

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, this is a real chance for us to 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. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Stan crosses away from the train station and is accosted by the bank clerk, Patrick.

PATRICK

Sheriff, you have to help me!

STAN

Patrick, what is it this time?

PATRICK

She won't leave me alone. Isn't there anything you can do?

STAN

There's no law against being in
love. Sorry, son.

Stan walks away and Patrick's shoulder's slump. When he turns to go, PLAIN JANE (20), a homely girl, is there next to him, smiling innocently. She plucks a petal from a flower.

PLAIN JANE

He loves me.

PATRICK

Uh...I have to go to work.

Patrick runs off, and Plain Jane plucks another petal.

PLAIN JANE

He loves me not.

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

You're the school mistress.
(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. 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.

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.

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 and the liquor's watered down, but the girls put on a little stage show.

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 a little unsavory. 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. 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, 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'd stay longer this time.
 (Everett looks away)
 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.

EVERETT

Hell. Where's that drink?

He begins walking down the street.

INT. PORTER'S GENERAL GOODS - CONTINUOUS

Various townsfolk are shopping. Tommy helps Ray load produce.

MAGGIE

Thank you, Tommy. You're such a big help. I'll take over now. You play.

Tommy pulls out his wooden pistol and pretends to shoot.

MCBULLY (O.S.)

Give me that!

A child's meaty hand swipes the wood from Tommy. The rest of the kid, a fat red head born to be a BULLY, is just as meaty.

TOMMY

That's mine! Give it back!

McBully pushes Tommy to the ground when he tries to grab his toy. Tommy rises to try again. The two boys struggle. Maggie tries to intervene, but isn't strong enough to separate them.

MAGGIE

Get away from my son!

Finally, Ray pulls McBully away and pins him to the ground.

BEARDY (O.S.)

Turn him loose, boy.

Ray looks up to see an old man with a thick BEARD.

BEARDY (CONT'D)

Just cuz we lost the war don't make you equal. Hell, we'd hang you for touching one of us.

Ray lets McBully up who runs out crying. Then Ray squares off with Beardy. Stan steps in before any violence occurs.

STAN

Get out of here, old man. Before I
turn a blind eye.

Beardy scoffs at Stan before stumbling out. Maggie rubs Ray's shoulder and they go back to shopping.

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. and 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, but only four of
us are shooting.

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)
Big brother 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)

That was a long time ago. It was an
accident. 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
 (approaching)
 Did you bring dynamite?

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

LONG
 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. 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 Plan B 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.
(begins to leave)

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 across the street. The man looks around before nodding back to Zeke.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
Looks clear. Just be quick.

LONG
Mother hen.

Bao signals to Long 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 "yoohoo-ing" at 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. Townsfolk quickly disappear into buildings but peek out of windows. Ms. Stapleton approaches with supplies in a basket, but ducks behind a corner when she understands the situation.

Mortimer comes out of his shop to see 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. 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. Your deputy read them to me 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
 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 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 him. 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. Still, 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. He returns fire instantaneously along the same trajectory, killing the shooter.

A bullet nicks Long's ear. 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 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 the 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 wood and bits of metal into Stan's face. He falls backwards, grabbing at his eyes and screaming.

STAN

My eyes!

EXT. SALLY'S SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Long keeps firing until he's empty. Finally, Long lowers his guns, exhausted. Blood runs down his left arm. He holsters his pistols 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 and looks up, 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!

Everett grabs Stan by the collar.

EVERETT
No. That's not justice.

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 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 shiver overtakes the Ill Soldier, and the aggression drains from his body. A Soldier with a SCARRED FACE speaks up.

SCARFACE

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 and curls up. They ride off. Everett and Stan enter carrying Long on a stretcher. 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 that?

EVERETT

(RE: Stan's gaze)

They're 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 an angry town to deal with.

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 grows around Petrov, and an old man with BUSHY eyebrows stands near him. Petrov holds the bottle out to Bushy, but pulls it back at the last moment. Petrov grabs a lavender bottle and sees Plain Jane near Doc Murphy.

PETROV (CONT'D)

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

Plain Jane perks up, and her eyes brighten in anticipation.

PETROV (CONT'D)

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

Plain Jane reaches for her coin purse.

DOC MURPHY

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

PETROV

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. Bushy tugs at Petrov.

PETROV (CONT'D)

You must want the Waters of Life.

Petrov takes his money and hands over the bottle.

PETROV (CONT'D)

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

He winks and Bushy 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)

(MORE)

DOC MURPHY (CONT'D)

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

(beat)

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

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 passes the undertaker's. The sign above the door
reads: Coins for Charon. Professional Undertaker. Carl and
Stan unload bodies from Carl's cart to bring them inside the
building. Claudette winces at seeing a little girl's body.

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.

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.

INT. JAIL - PRESENT DAY - 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. For years we lived like beggars, finding work where we could. 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

(checks pocket watch)

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

(puts watch away)

And then I will watch you die.

LONG

(scoffs weakly)

Do you live only for my death?

Everett doesn't answer for a long time.

EVERETT

I live for the law. And your death is required by the law.

LONG

The law. Your laws never protected me, my brother, or my countrymen who built 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 and shackled when we tried to leave? Where was the law when we protested, and the railroad companies stopped feeding us?

(beat)

After eight days of starvation, the law came. But not to save us. No, the law threatened us with death if we did not return to work.

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 towns person. 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

Perhaps you should pay more
attention to your wife. Doctor.

(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

Just what did he mean by that?

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

CLAUDETTE

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--

PROFITTT

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

BUD

What do you want Profitt?

PROFITTT

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!

PROFITTT

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 spits while Bud mutters something under his breath. When 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 pantomimes 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

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 not seeing Zeke in the shadows.

ZEKE

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

Bud and Bill are startled, and they're immediately protective of their crystals. Zeke is sitting on a keg, morose.

BILL

Sorry Zeke. Didn't see you.

ZEKE

When you gonna give that up?

BILL

(smiles knowingly)

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

BUD

I'll buy every girl at the 9 Lives!

ZEKE

Whatever you say boys. You have a nice night.

He wipes his eyes as the Prospectors leave. Sally comes out.

SALLY

Hon, the boys inside are waiting.

(bends over, hugs Zeke)

I miss him, too, but have to go on.

Zeke nods and Sally goes back inside. Zeke heads over to the kegs and bends down to pick up a fresh keg. He notices some of Bill's spit on it. It glows sickly green. He grimaces in disgust, but picks up the keg and brings it inside.

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. Sally turns to Zeke and they both acknowledge the sadness in their eyes before working again.

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

EXT. FORT BLISS - NIGHT

The soldiers from Epitaph ride up to the gate. Torches on the walls cast pools of light in the darkness of the desert. The commanding officer Lieutenant JONES (30) approaches.

JONES

State your business.

SCARFACE

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

JONES

I know it. Go on.

SCARFACE

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. The fort was closer than town, so we came here.

One of the watch walks to the back of the cart and flips the blanket. The ill soldier is dead. The watchman nods at Jones.

JONES

Bring him in. Put him in the infirmary, then get some chow. We'll let the Captain decide what to do when he returns in the morn.

INT. FORT BLISS - INFIRMARY - MINUTES LATER

Scarface and the other soldier from Epitaph carry the body in still wrapped in a blanket and lay it on a table. They exit. As they leave, an arm escapes from under the blanket and dangles over the side of the table.

INT. UNDERTAKER'S - CONTINUOUS

An arm dangles from a body lying on a table. Mortimer approaches and puts the arm back at the side of the body. It's Bao, still dressed in his bloody clothes. The bodies of the posse lie near him. Mortimer goes to a different table.

He dips his rag into his bucket of water that he fetched from the water pump and uses the rag to wipe the blood off a naked body lying on a table. Other naked bodies show they have been recently cleaned. Mortimer takes a step and stubs his toe.

He howls in pain.

INT. OLD SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Bushy howls in delight, dangling the Waters of Life he bought from Petrov in front of his roommate, the racist Beardy. Bushy laughs as he snatches the bottle away from Beardy and downs it. He lies down on a cot to sleep.

Beardy makes a face and goes to his own cot to sleep. He turns on his side. Then he turns to lie on his back.

INT. MODEST BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Plain Jane lies on her back holding the Love Potion she bought from Petrov to her chest and sighs before drinking it. She sets it down next to a small framed portrait of Patrick, the bank clerk, on her nightstand. 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.

INT. PROSPECTORS' SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Bud gulps hard in his sleep. He turns on his side toward a faint green glow in the center of the room. It's the wheelbarrow full of green crystals. It pulsates in the dark. Bud shudders, coated in sweat. His dog bite bleeds.

On the other side of the room in his own cot is Bill, facing away from the crystals. He is also sweating profusely, trying to sleep. He clenches his fists tight and then relaxes them, revealing green glowing specks in his palm.

EXT. 9 LIVES - VERANDA - CONTINUOUS

A courtesan marvels at the green particles glowing in her palm from the passing meteorite. People are still gathered outside in the street, getting coated by the green dust. The courtesan goes inside.

INT. 9 LIVES - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

In the dim hallway the courtesan lights up like she's covered in glitter. A patron sees her and grins. When she looks at him, her eyes flash and lock on him with a predator's gaze. She charges at the man, and he's taken aback for a moment.

The courtesan kisses him deeply and he relaxes as he kisses her back. They run together to a vacant bedroom, passing Rebecca and Stan who run toward a different room.

INT. 9 LIVES - REBECCA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rebecca shuts the door and locks it, then turns around and pushes Stan onto the bed. She climbs on top of him and begins playfully unbuttoning his shirt. He takes her hands and caresses them. She looks at him, concerned.

REBECCA

What's the matter?

Stan is quiet for a long moment, eyes closed. He kisses her fingers and holds her hands to his chest. When he opens his eyes, they're filled with sincerity.

STAN

I think I love you.

He caresses her cheek and pulls her close to kiss her.

EXT. 9 LIVES - THE NEXT MORNING

Stan comes out looking like a new man. Men who pass by give him knowing smiles. Suddenly, a voice from above--

REBECCA

Yoohoo! Sheriff! Don't forget this.

Rebecca, wearing nothing but a bed sheet to hide her modesty, dangles Stan's Sheriff's star over the railing. She lets it go and Stan catches it with chagrin. She blows him a kiss before scurrying inside. Stan begins his day.

INT. UNDERTAKER'S - MINUTES LATER

Stan saunters into the shop. Mortimer is asleep with his head down on a desk. Most of the bodies are cleaned and dressed except Bao. Stan coughs loudly, and Mortimer jumps up.

STAN
Morning Mortimer!

Mortimer stretches, back cracking. Stan inspects the bodies.

STAN (CONT'D)
You been at it all night?

MORTIMER
Yes, sir. Least I could do for the families. They want a burial today. Last one to do is the outlaw.

He moves to the bodies. fisheing coins from his apron pocket and placing a couple over the eyes of a corpse.

STAN
(RE: Bao)
Yeah, I don't care if you clean him up. No amount of scrubbing will ever get the dirt off.

Mortimer moves to the body of a little girl. Her mouth is open, and Mortimer tries closing it. It opens again. Mortimer shrugs and puts a coin over one of her eyes. Outside, riders can be heard approaching, whooping and hollering.

The commotion draws Stan's attention, and he hurries past Mortimer, bumping him. Mortimer drops a coin in the little girl's mouth by accident. He sighs, and goes to the window.

EXT. UNDERTAKER'S - CONTINUOUS

Stan looks down the road to see a handful of men on horses dragging something behind them. As they pass townsfolk, they cheer and jeer. Stan runs up to meet the riders.

EXT. JAIL - CONTINUOUS

STAN
Carl, what's all this about?

CARL
We got him, Sheriff! We got that Indian bastard been killing our people. We aim to make him pay!

Behind Carl, Stan can see the Bandit Leader on the ground. His hands are bound by rope that is held by Carl who has obviously dragged the Bandit Leader for some distance.

STAN

What about the rest of his gang?

CARL

They didn't make it.

(dismounts)

I would have killed this one too, but I wanted the town to see that there's still some law in these parts. Let's string him up!

Everett emerges from the jail. Stan gives him a glance.

STAN

(beat)

Get some wood and nails! We need a hanging post right here!

Men immediately jump into action to construct the makeshift gallows. Everett strides up to Stan.

EVERETT

That's it? No judge? No jury?

STAN

This is a town matter, Marshall. You've got your justice; so do we.

As the gallows is assembled in short order, Stan undoes the rope around the Bandit Leader's hands then ties the man's hands behind his back. Stan motions to some men to carry the Bandit Leader to the gallows. The men do so.

Once there, the Bandit Leader's head is placed in a noose, and men help lift him onto a horse. The noose is pulled tight and the rope is tied to the gallows post. The Bandit Leader rouses to see the gathering crowd. Stan approaches.

STAN (CONT'D)

You got any last words, outlaw?

The Bandit Leader turns his head to Stan, but it's unclear if he understands. He sees Chief in the crowd motion with his hand, telling him to speak. The Bandit Leader acknowledges and begins speaking in his native tongue.

TOWNSFOLK #1

What's he saying?

TOWNSFOLK #2
I don't understand!

TOWNSFOLK #3
Yeah, what's he saying, Sheriff?

STAN
Christ Almighty.
(beat)
Chief! Get over here!

After a moment, Chief makes his way forward.

STAN (CONT'D)
Do you know what he's saying?
(Chief nods)
Good. Translate.

Chief motions to the Bandit Leader to keep speaking.

CHIEF RED FEATHER
(translating)
I am...Hides in Shadow. My tribe
are great hunters. We hunt the
buffalo. Then we hunt you, the
White Man. We hunt you because you
steal our lands and poison our
people with your sickness. And you
tempt us with your fire water, but
never sharing. Instead, you make us
work for you. Clean. Clean always!

The Bandit Leader looks at Chief, suspicious of the
translation until Chief nods to continue.

CHIEF RED FEATHER (CONT'D)
(translating)
Now, the great hunt is over. You
have killed my people. Now, I am
the last. But I am not alone. When
I pass to the spirit world, my
ancestors will avenge me. The
spirits of the dead will punish
you. You will know fear.

The Bandit Leader falls silent. Stan rolls his eyes and
raises his pistol, about to fire in the air--

FATHER ESPINOZA
Wait! Wait!

He pushes his way through the crowd. Stan sighs.

STAN

What is it, Padre?

FATHER ESPINOZA

Let me give him his last rites.

STAN

I don't think this man is a Christian, Father.

FATHER ESPINOZA

That does not matter in the eyes of God. Everyone deserves His love.

Stan waves halfheartedly, and Father Espinoza prays quietly for a few moments. When he finally crosses himself and genuflects, the crowd cheers.

TOWNSFOLK #2

Get on with it!

The crowd roars in approval. Stan raises his pistol and fires into the air. The horse beneath the Bandit Leader rides away in fear, but the Bandit Leader is pulled off by the noose. He dangles helplessly from the gallows, choking and swinging.

The crowd watches in macabre amazement as the last bits of life finally slip from the Bandit Leader, and he's just a swinging corpse at the end of a rope. The crowd disperses.

MAGGIE

Oh, that was so awful. Ray, have you ever seen anything like that?

RAY

Yes, ma'am. Many times. Too many.

He walks off, upset. Maggie lets him go. She sees Everett across the way look up at the body. He shakes his head.

INT. UNDERTAKER'S - CONTINUOUS

Mortimer goes back to work. He approaches the body of the little girl and is about to fish out the coin from her mouth when he hears people outside talking in passing.

TOWNSFOLK #5

You believe any of that hogwash about the dead rising?

TOWNSFOLK #5 (CONT'D)

Of course not. Only Jesus can bring back the dead.

Mortimer looks at the corpses for any signs of life. Then he remembers the coin in the mouth. He brings his fingers closer. Closer. He leans his face in. Closer. Closer.

He darts his fingers inside! He fishes out the coin without any issue and laughs at his own fear. He places the coin over the other eye of the little girl and walks away. After a moment, the little girl's mouth snaps shut.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Like other kids in the room, Tommy sits at a desk, but he's admiring his wooden pistol. Over his shoulder, he hears McBully punching his fist into his palm. Tommy turns and McBully frowns at him. Tommy puts his toy away.

Ms. Stapleton is slumped on her desk at the front of the class. The kids sitting at their desks watch her silently.

TOMMY

Ms. Stapleton, are you OK?

Ms. Stapleton lifts her head. She is pale and sweaty.

MS. STAPLETON

I'm fine, Tommy.

She stands and courageously walks to the chalkboard.

MS. STAPLETON (CONT'D)

Today, we'll work on penmanship.

The first letter is 'A'.

(she writes)

'A' is for...

She collapses. Students rise in concern, but all they see are Ms. Stapleton's legs from behind the desk convulsing. A SMALL GIRL approaches to help. Ms. Stapleton rises suddenly.

MS. STAPLETON (CONT'D)

'A' is for 'apple'.

She lunges at Small Girl who screams as Ms. Stapleton takes her to the floor and bites her face, taking a chunk of cheek. Then again, a piece of ear. Then again. And again. The other children flee, screaming in terror.

INT. OLD SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Beardy rouses from his sleep to the sound of rhythmic thumping. He wakes to look for the source. Standing at the foot of his cot is Bushy, smashing his face into the wall.

A bloody smear has formed at the point of impact. When a new spurt of blood escapes Bushy's face, Beardy can't stifle a gasp. Bushy stops moving. He turns, revealing his face.

It's a mangled mess of broken bone and flat features. Then with unexpected speed, Bushy leaps at Beardy who cries out.

EXT. JAIL - CONTINUOUS

A woman comes running down the street, crying out--

SARAH
Help! Help!

Stan runs to Sarah.

STAN
What's the matter?

SARAH
There's a crazed man chasing us!

Jimmy comes running down the street, yelling. Behind him is Bud, foaming at the mouth and chasing almost on all fours at times. He claws at Jimmy who just barely escapes reach.

STAN
Marshal! I might need your help.

Everett strides over and the two men draw pistols. Jimmy runs up, out of breath. He stands with Sarah behind the lawmen. Bud stops just short. He looks and acts like a wild animal.

STAN (CONT'D)
Easy there, Bud. Just calm down.

Bud's arm is a dark red and black. The bandage has come loose, revealing a festering wound.

EVERETT
Hell. If he's got rabies, we gotta put him down.

STAN
I ain't ever seen rabies like this.

Curious onlookers have gathered in the vicinity. Bud swipes at them if they're close enough.

EVERETT
It's your call. It's a town matter.

Stan grimaces and aims his pistol. He shoots a round into Bud's chest through his heart. He falls to the ground, dead. People step forward for a better look at the body.

STAN

Stay back! This man is sick.

Maggie runs up to Everett and grabs his arm.

MAGGIE

I knew him. He worked for me a bit.

EVERETT

I'm sorry you had to see that.

Tiny screams interrupt them, and they see school children running towards them from the opposite direction.

MAGGIE

Tommy?

Kids run to parents or any safe place, out of their minds with fear. Tommy runs to Maggie and grabs her waist.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Tommy, tell me what's wrong?!

Tommy just sobs. Maggie shakes him, and he points. Everyone looks to see Ms. Stapleton approaching slowly, occasionally biting another chunk out of Small Girl in her arms.

Ms. Stapleton's face is bloody, and chunks of child flesh dot her chin. Everett's face twists in horror. Stan gasps. The Small Girl in Ms. Stapleton's arms struggles and moans.

EVERETT

Good Lord, she's alive!

(draws pistol)

You put her down this instant!

Stan approaches from a different angle, pistol drawn as well. Ms. Stapleton stops, acknowledging them for the first time. She drops Small Girl and stands frozen. Stan and Everett approach slowly. Ms. Stapleton flicks her eyes on Everett.

MS. STAPLETON

'B' is for 'boy'.

She runs full speed at Everett with her jaw hanging wide. At the last moment, Everett fires, and Ms. Stapleton drops dead. Everett runs to Small Girl. He turns her over to see half her face and parts of her arm and shoulder missing. She stirs.

SMALL GIRL
'C' is for 'cat'.

She claws at Everett's face like a wild animal, oblivious to her wounds. Everett does everything he can to hold her away from him. Suddenly, she's pulled away. It's Ray. He holds the girl on the ground, face down but still thrashing.

RAY
I gotcha Marshal! This girl done
lost her mind!

Everett collects himself. Stan examines Ms. Stapleton. In the distance, Mortimer stumbles backward outside of his shop.

MORTIMER
Uh...Sheriff! Sheriff!

He falls in the dirt, but gets up quickly. Following him are the corpses he was cleaning. They shuffle forward, moaning.

STAN
Everett. What the hell is going on?

Bud's dead body begins to convulse, causing some townsfolk to jump. Ms. Stapleton begins to writhe, and Stan steps away. Everett and Stan slowly look up to see the Bandit Leader hanging from the noose, struggling against his restraints.

EXT. UNDERTAKER'S - CONTINUOUS

As people back away from the newly risen posse and others, the last corpse to emerge is the little girl. She catches Carl's attention. He falls to his knees, tearing up.

CARL
Molly? Oh my God.

Molly moves in Carl's direction. Carl opens his arms to her. She opens her mouth when she's close, bearing teeth.

INT. FORT BLISS - BARRACKS - CONTINUOUS

Scarface rouses his fellow soldier from Epitaph.

SCARFACE
C'mon. Get up. We're missing chow.

The other soldier gets up to get dressed while Scarface steps into the hallway. In one direction, he can see the mess hall and hears the din of breakfast. He glances in the other direction toward the infirmary. He does a double take.

SCARFACE (CONT'D)
(to someone O.S.)
What in blazes? You died!

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Captain JEBEDIAH HAYES (45) rides his horse as he leads his company of men up a trail towards Fort Bliss. The report of rifle fire draws his attention, and he pauses to focus. He hears more rifle fire from the fort.

JEBEDIAH
Men! We need to march, double quick
time! The fort is under attack.

The company picks up speed as they cross ground quickly. Drummers maintain the ranks. They come over a bluff and hear more gunfire. Concern twists Jebediah's voice--

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)
Charge!

The company roars as Jebediah leads the charge, riding ahead.

EXT. FORT BLISS - CONTINUOUS

He's confused when he finds the gates open and no attackers in sight. Instead, he sees a score of soldiers firing into the barracks frantically. He rides to them.

JEBEDIAH
Lieutenant Jones! Report!

Jones doesn't respond. He and the handful of Fort Soldiers keep firing. Jebediah dismounts and grabs Jones' collar.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)
Jones! Report, dammit!

It takes Jones a moment to realize who's talking to him.

JONES
The men, sir. They won't die.

JEBEDIAH
Why are you shooting the men?

Jones sputters, unable to speak until Jebediah shakes him.

JONES
They're eating each other! Then
they came for us. Like animals.
(MORE)

JONES (CONT'D)

We had to defend ourselves. But
they got back up. We kept shooting.
We kept shooting!

Jebediah looks back incredulously. Then he hears chilling screams echo from inside the barracks. There's a streak of excitement in the screams as they get closer.

JONES (CONT'D)

Oh God! They're coming. They're
coming! Reload and fire!

The Fort Soldiers attack. Jebediah's company arrives, and he directs them into the courtyard and on the fort wall.

JEBEDIAH

(to officers)

I want a firing line here and
another on the wall. Be ready to
fire on whatever comes out of the
barracks!

The drummers and officers marshal the forces into formation. Jones and his small force retreat to the front firing line. Jebediah mounts his horse and positions himself behind the firing line as well. The screams from the barracks approach.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

Ready!
(the screams increase)
Aim!
(they get louder)

Suddenly, half a dozen soldiers burst from the barracks. Some are missing facial features, like eyes and noses. Others have flesh hanging in strips from their bodies. They charge madly.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

Fire!

The firing lines unleash a volley, and the infected soldiers fall dead. Jones and his small group of survivors reload.

JONES

Reload! Reload, damn you!

The dead infected soldiers writhe and stand. Incredulous--

JEBEDIAH

Reload!

His company reloads. The undead soldiers shuffle forward.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

Aim!

Before he can give his next order, Jones and his men open fire. The undead stagger back, but are undeterred. More undead emerge from the barracks -- enough to unnerve the front firing line, which instinctively recoils.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

Fire!

Another volley of bullets. Undead are knocked back and to the ground, but they get up -- impossibly.

JONES

I told you -- they don't die!

Jebediah's men look to him for guidance.

JEBEDIAH

Fire at will!

The gun fire is sporadic now, with Jebediah joining in with his pistol. Nevertheless, the undead close the distance.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

Fix bayonets!

His men barely have time to do so before the undead are upon them. Some infected soldiers from the barracks join the pitched battle making it difficult for the firing line on the wall to know who's an enemy. Some living soldiers get shot.

Through the fray, Jebediah observes that the attackers shrug off any wound. He carefully aims at an undead's temple and fires. It falls and doesn't rise. To his men on the wall--

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

Aim high!

Another volley takes heads off shoulders. Recognizing the weakness in their enemies, Jebediah's company quickly dispatches the undead with bayonet stabs through eye sockets. The skirmish ends but with the company decimated.

Jebediah dismounts and approaches Lieutenant Jones.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

Jones. What happened here?

JONES

Sir. I'm not sure. Soldiers arrived last night from Epitaph.

(MORE)

JONES (CONT'D)

One of them had passed from sickness on the way here. We put the body in the infirmary.

(pause)

I swear, Captain, that man was dead. I checked myself. But this morning, during mess, there he was in the doorway. Just staring at us with those dead eyes. Then the two soldiers who brought him here must have been sick too, because they came running like wild boars and started biting the men. Not just biting but...eating the men.

(beat)

I know it sounds crazy, but the men that got bit must have picked up the disease, because they started acting just like the ones that bit them. By the time we mounted a defense, half the men were infected, screaming nonsense.

He wants to say more, but movement in the barracks catches his eye. Slowly, the ill soldier from Epitaph emerges. Jones backs away reflexively. Jebediah draws his pistol and fires a round into the undead's leg. Hobbled, it keeps approaching.

Jebediah fires another round, this time through the heart. No effect. When the undead is within arm's length, Jebediah fires into its skull. It drops dead.

JEBEDIAH

Jones. Have the men police these bodies, then separate the wounded.

Jones nods and barks orders to soldiers who go about stacking bodies and helping wounded to move to a wall. Meanwhile, Jebediah examines the undead he just shot as well as the carnage around him. Around him, soldiers mutter--

SOLDIER #1

That one over there is McHenry. I grew up with him. My God.

SOLDIER #2

I knew all of these men. I served with them during the war.

SOLDIER #3

They were my friends. I killed my friends. God forgive me...

Finally--

JONES

Sir, the men have done as you asked. What are your orders?

Jebediah shoots him a grim look, then whispers something to him before calling the men to attention.

JEBEDIAH

Men, when you enlisted, you affirmed to be true to the United States of America, did you not?

The company gives a muted "yessir".

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

And you swore to serve this country honestly and faithfully against all enemies opposers whatsoever?

The company gives a louder "yessir".

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

Men, we have a new enemy. Not man, nor savage or beast. This enemy is 'sickness'. A plague unlike anything we've ever seen. This disease turned our comrades, good men to the last, into monsters. And as difficult as it was, you men fulfilled your duty to protect this land. The impossible decision you made today will save countless lives well into the future.

The company stands a little taller. Jebediah looks at the wounded men gathered by the wall. They stand with pride.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

For your actions here today, you are all already heroes. And your names will be spoken of with pride by generations to come so that your sacrifices will not be forgotten.

The company cheers.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

Lieutenant Jones. You may proceed.

JONES

Firing squad! Ready!

A portion of the front line of men aim their rifles at the wounded. The men are confused at first, but then realize.

PRIVATE

WAIT!

The man has a bite on his hand. He breaks ranks.

JONES

Aim!

PRIVATE

For pity's sake! Captain! Please!

JONES

F--

JEBEDIAH

HOLD!

(pause)

What's your name, soldier?

PRIVATE

Dodson, sir.

JEBEDIAH

Private Dodson. You are already dead. Execution is a small mercy compared to the monstrous fate awaiting you.

PRIVATE/DODSON

I feel fine, sir!

JONES

You're infected! You'll change!
You'll kill us all!

DODSON

Then...cut off my arm! Just like it
gangrene!

JONES

You don't know that will protect
you. You don't know we'll be safe!

DODSON

Please! I don't want to die!
PLEASE! SPARE ME! PLEASE!

Jebediah pulls his revolver and fires a bullet through
Dodson's heart. He looks shocked, then falls over.

JEBEDIAH

No.

He nods at Jones.

JONES

Fire!

The firing squad opens fire, killing all wounded. An eerie silence falls on the courtyard as the smoke clears. Then Dodson and the wounded all slowly rise as undead.

JONES (CONT'D)

How many times do we have to kill them?!

Jebediah puts a round through Dodson's skull.

JEBEDIAH

Twice.

The company instinctively opens fire on the undead, learning to aim for the skull. The undead are finished in short order.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

Men, this terrible and awful responsibility falls on us, and our resolve in this endeavor must be unwavering. Are you with me?

The company roars, and Jebediah mounts his steed.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)

Lieutenant Jones. Where did you say these soldiers came from?

EXT. ABANDONED STOREFRONT - CONTINUOUS

The townsfolk of Epitaph have done a good job of rounding up the infected and undead and corralling them into an abandoned building. Outpost soldiers and men of all backgrounds work under the guidance of Father Espinoza.

FATHER ESPINOZA

Be gentle! Remember they are all God's creatures! They're just ill.

Some of the wilder infected are lassoed and dragged by men on horseback. However they get here, the infected and undead are pushed into the abandoned storefront where men have boarded up the windows from the outside.

EXT. SALLY'S SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Zeke and Sally watch from afar. Townsfolk scurry indoors. Zeke and Sally go inside, locking the door to the saloon. Sally shrieks. Bill stares at her through a window.

He has a greenish tint to his skin, and green bile spills from his lips.

He looks at her through green eyes, but he doesn't appear to see her. Instead, he touches the window with his hand. It thumps. He moves along and touches again. Thump. He continues thumping across the front until he starts moving out of view.

Nevertheless, the soft thumps can be heard as he moves around the perimeter. It fades, but then turns into loud banging.

SALLY

What the hell is that?

The banging comes from the secret entrance in the rear. Zeke grabs his shotgun and approaches cautiously with Sally behind him, pistol drawn. They nod to each other, and Sally quickly unbars the doors while Zeke throws them open, revealing--

SAM

Whoa! Whoa!

INT. DOC MURPHY'S - CONTINUOUS

Carl sits on a chair while Doc Murphy finishes bandaging the bite on his hand. Carl looks over at Molly, who is strapped down on a table. She writhes. On the other table, Small Girl is strapped down. She's bandaged, but wild as ever.

Stan, Everett, and Ray watch her with morbid curiosity.

CARL

Doc, I don't know what got into her. She never harmed nobody.

DOC MURPHY

Don't worry about that now. Let's just get you fixed up.

CARL

It's a miracle, right, Doc? God brought my Molly back to me.

DOC MURPHY

(sighs)

Something certainly special happened. Now, you're good to go.

Carl doesn't leave. Doc Murphy looks over at Stan.

STAN

Carl, why don't you wait outside? We got to talk to Doc.

CARL

No. I failed her once. I ain't
leaving her side no more.

Stan puts his hand on Carl's shoulder.

STAN

Take it easy. We just want to--

Carl moves into a defensive position between Molly and the men. He looks for a weapon and finds a scalpel.

CARL

Take it easy nothin'! You stay away
from her!

EVERETT

Put the scalpel down. She's sick.
We want to help.

CARL

Like you helped Bud? Like you
helped that school mistress? God
gave my girl back to me. I ain't
letting you take her away.

Ray moves forward, and Carl points the scalpel at him threateningly. Instinctively, Carl puts his hand on Molly, but his fingers are too close to her mouth, and she bites at him. Distracted, Everett pounces, knocking Carl out.

STAN

Dammit. Let's put him in the cell.

He motions for Ray to help him. The two men carry Carl out.

EVERETT

OK, Doc, what is this?

Doc Murphy walks over to a medicine cabinet and reaches deep inside behind bottles of medicine to produce a whiskey flask. He drinks deeply. Pointing to the Small Girl--

DOC MURPHY

I don't understand it. She's
missing so much skin and muscle, I
don't know why she's not screaming
in agony. And her fever is
impossibly high.

EVERETT

I can feel the heat from here.

DOC MURPHY

I've only seen a fever that high
once before. There was a soldier in
here yesterday. Very sick man.

He walks over to Molly.

DOC MURPHY (CONT'D)

And this one...I can't explain. No
heartbeat. No breath. No dilation
of the pupils. She's dead in all
ways but one. I don't know how this
is happening.

(he drinks)

EVERETT

Some kind of disease?

DOC MURPHY

Diseases affect the living. I've
never seen it affect a corpse.

Suddenly, Small Girl begins breathing rapidly and sounds
labored. She expires, exhaling a death rattle. Doc Murphy
presses his stethoscope to her chest. Nothing.

DOC MURPHY (CONT'D)

She's gone.

There's silence as the men stare. Then Doc Murphy puts his
hand across Small Girl's eyes to shut them. As he pulls his
hand away, Small Girl's eyes flash open and she bites at him.

Doc Murphy manages to snap his hand back in time. Everett
rushes to his side. Now Small Girl behaves just like Molly,
slowly writhing. The men look at each other in consternation.

EXT. DOC MURPHY'S - MINUTES LATER

The men emerge, shaking off what they just saw. Everett pulls
Doc Murphy aside.

EVERETT

Doc, no offense, but this seems
bigger than any of us can handle.

DOC MURPHY

None taken. And agreed.

EVERETT

You mind sending your wife to
telegraph for some help?

DOC MURPHY

Uh, I'll do it. Claudette's a little under the weather.
(off Everett's look)
It's nothing. Touch of exhaustion.

Doc hurries off. Everett sees Maggie near the jail, holding Tommy. Everett approaches them.

MAGGIE

Everett, what's happening? Tommy is terrified.

The look on her face says she is, too.

EVERETT

We're still trying to figure it out. Just the same, I hope you'll stay in town. That farm of yours is a little out of the way if anything happens. I've got a room at the Grand. I want you to take it.

Maggie can't help but feel flattered. Reassured, she smiles.

MAGGIE

Alright. We'll get a room tonight. Promise you'll stop by?
(beat)
For Tommy's sake.

Everett nods. Ray and Stan return from the jail. Ray joins Maggie while Stan addresses the growing crowd.

STAN

Folk, folks! This is all real confusing. We working hard to figure it out. But right now, it's under control, and you shouldn't let it interfere with your lives. We'll have a town meeting once we have some answers.

INT. JAIL - MOMENTS LATER

Everett walks in and immediately heads to the gun rack. He reloads his gun and stocks his gun belt. Long is busy looking over Carl who is unconscious in the cell. Finally--

LONG

Thought was getting lonely?

Everett doesn't miss a beat with what he's doing.

EVERETT

He was interfering with our investigation.

Long steps to the bars and leans on them.

LONG

I thought we were leaving so I could pay for my crimes.

EVERETT

It isn't safe to travel.

Loaded for bear, Everett heads to the door.

LONG

From what I've seen, it isn't safe to stay, either.

Everett exits, slamming the door behind him. Long looks down suspiciously at Carl.