

ON THE SPARROW

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EXT. WILDERNESS - CAL/RYDER CAMP - NIGHT

A couple of ROUGH NECKS sit next to a camp fire.

SUPER: *"1880's. Colorado"*

A distant HOWL slithers through the woods.

CAL(20s) clings to a bottle of liquor. He looks out past the fire, into the dark, fright on his face.

CAL
Sounded like a haunt.

RYDER(30s), a black patch over one eye, nasty scar across his cheek. He Snorts.

RYDER
Only haunt round here's gonna be
you, don't pass that bottle.

Cal swigs, hands the bottle to Ryder.

CAL
Next time you shuck an injun's
horse, maybe you oughta tie
yourself to it.

Cal laughs. Ryder downs a gulp.

CAL
Least then you won't get bucked.

Cal snickers and slaps his leg in a fit of laughter.

RYDER
Keep laughin'.

Ryder snatches out his pistol, stabs it at Cal.

RYDER
You'll be spittin' out a bad plum.

Cal laughs so hard he falls backward to the ground.

A NOOSE flies out, lassoes Ryder. He gets snatched backwards and into the dark.

Cal scrambles up, still laughing.

CAL
I ain't meant nuthin' by it, Ryder.

Cal stops.

CAL

Ryder?

Another noose flies out, snatches Cal off his feet and into the dark.

EXT. WILDERNESS - NIGHT

A DARK FIGURE gimps up to what looks like a slanted sled.

RYDER (O.S.)

What the Corncracker's goin' on?

Ryder tied to the sled, faces the ground. He tries to struggle free.

CAL

Told you it's a haunt.

Cal tied on top, faces the full moon. The sled fixed behind a horse and wagon.

RYDER

Yellow belly, ain't no such thing
as haunts.

The Dark Figure looms over Cal, eclipses the moon. A small gold sparrow pendant dangles in Cal's face. The Figure's voice a low growl.

DARK FIGURE (O.S.)

Ever seen this?

Cal shakes his head. The Dark Figure lifts his head. Cal blinks, fear rips his eyes wide open.

CAL

Aaauggghhh!

Cal's scream carries over the trees.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WILDERNESS TRAIL - DAY

SUPER: *"About A Year Earlier"*

A horse drawn cart moves past rich green foliage that squeezes the narrow path. A splendid afternoon.

REVEREND SATCHEL PAULUS(40s), and his wife, CATHERINE(30s), sit together in front. Satchel at the reins. Catherine with a wide hat tied to her head by a scarf.

A load covered by blankets in the back of the wagon.

WAGON (MOVING)

Catherine holds a hand drawn map. Her gloved finger follows a rough pencil line to a point where dashes take over with the word "Stream".

CATHERINE

Water should be nigh, Satchel.

The rough line starts again, goes up and over an upside down V-Shaped symbol, thru what looks like a mountain pass and out across a flat line to an "X" with another word scribbled in large letters "DOLOR".

A stick drawn outline of one and two story buildings at the bottom of the page.

The single horse drawn wagon moves at a steady pace.

Satchel glances down at the map Catherine holds.

SATCHEL

We could stand a bit of a respite.

Catherine points to a spot that reads "Two Days Ride" - with an arrow that points at the line of dashes.

CATHERINE

We can stop for the night and get on with the sunrise.

WILDERNESS CLEARING - DAY

The Paulus wagon sits in a small area next to the water's edge. The unhitched horse stands in the water. It drinks.

The Reverend's hat hangs on a broken tree limb.

SATCHEL

Should be right on time for the ceremony, my dear.

Catherine lies in Satchel's arms, they recline in the shade against a tree.

CATHERINE

I'm so excited to see their faces.

Satchel chuckles.

SATCHEL

We are blessed to have a very generous parish. The Apostle Paul, himself, would be pleased.

CRACK! A tree limb breaks nearby.

Catherine sits up.

CATHERINE

What was that?

Satchel and Catherine stand up, look toward where the sound came from.

WILDERNESS CLEARING - LATER

The silhouettes of Satchel and Catherine sit against the tree. The sound of metal and wooden things crash together.

CATHERINE

Please. Those are gifts from our church.

Anguish paints Satchel and Catherine's faces. They have been tied to the tree.

At their wagon, FOSTER(Late 30s), and SASSY(Late 20s) stare at the items in the back.

Foster disheveled, unshaven. Sassy dressed like a dude. Nothing lady like about her, yet seductively evil.

Foster has a blanket from the back of the wagon in hand. Sassy rips another blanket off, reveals the rest of the gifts.

She looks disappointed.

SASSY

Ain't nothin' here we can use, Foster.

Foster snaps the blanket at her, glances towards their hostages.

FOSTER

What'd I say about sayin' my name,
dumb field mouse.

Sassy looks over at the stricken couple, their eyes plead for mercy.

CATHERINE

Please. We got money.

SATCHEL

Catherine, no.

CATHERINE

We got three hundred dollars if
you'll let us go.

Sassy shoots a look at Foster and breaks into a wide grin. Slips a knife from her belt.

SASSY

Well. Well. Might have somethin'
we can use after all.

Sassy slings the knife at the couple. They squeeze their eyes shut. It sticks in the tree inches above Satchel's head.

SASSY

What's the matter, Preacher?

Sassy saunters over to them. They open their eyes.

SASSY

Thought sharing was one of them
nine commandments.

SATCHEL

There are ten commandments.

Foster watches his partner work, admiration twinkles his eyes.

SASSY

I say nine. That killin' one don't
seem likely right givin' how
everyone winds up dead one way or
another.

Sassy eases up on Satchel, sits on his legs. Reaches over his head and yanks the knife out.

SASSY

Ever wonder how you gonna go,
Preacher?

Sassy caresses his face with the deadly steel. Satchel shakes her off.

Catherine bursts into tears.

CATHERINE

Please miss, please don't hurt him.
My husband never did you any harm.

Sassy sticks the blade under Catherine's jaw.

SASSY

He's holdin' back my money.

SATCHEL

Take the money. We only want to
deliver the gifts and return home
safely.

Foster SNORTS.

He squats next to the three, presses close to Catherine. Takes a long whiff of her hair. His eyes close, a look of heaven dances over his face.

FOSTER

Mmmm. Smell like a Preacher's
wife.

Foster's eyes pop open.

FOSTER

Probably bathe in holy water.

Satchel raises up.

SATCHEL

Leave her be.

Sassy shoves him hard against the tree.

SASSY

With a penny on each eye, I
promise.

FOSTER

Breakin' ground service in Dolor,
huh?

He looks at Sassy.

FOSTER

S'pect they'd be a lot more money
to it.

Sassy gazes into Foster's face, her eyes light up.

SASSY
S'pect we oughta attend.

Foster gazes back with a smile, slides a revolver from his holster, peers over Catherine's face. He uses the barrel to clear her hair from it.

FOSTER
Would seem to be the Christian
thing to do.

Foster looks over at Satchel, shakes his head.

FOSTER
Pity God led you into such a snare.

Satchel glares back.

SATCHEL
The gifts and calling of God are
without repentance.

EXT. DOLOR MAIN STREET - DAY

A large wooden sign nailed to a post at the start of the dusty main avenue reads --

"Welcome to Dolor. Est. Year of Our Lord 1868. Population 303"

Same set of buildings match the sketch on Catherine's map. Another set face opposite them. The dirt road divides them.

The Paulus wagon pulls past the welcome sign. The horse's hooves stir up dust. The only thing moving in town.

EXT. DOLOR/INT. WAGON (MOVING)

The clapboard buildings go by slowly. The HOOF FALL of the horse and SQUEAK of a wagon wheel all that's heard.

A distant SONG drifts up on a slight breeze. The wagon draws farther down the street. The song grows louder.

"Amazing Grace"

The wagon pulls up at the end of the road to a meadow. The worship song louder than ever.

Ahead, about a HUNDRED TOWNSPEOPLE gather in front of a twelve foot wooden cross fixed to a large base.

A banner hangs above them between two large trees. "*Ground Breaking Day*"

The Paulus wagon takes its place between a couple other carts.

"*Amazing Grace*" continues.

Several horses, and dozens of other wagons are scattered about outside the celebration between the trees and bushes that circumvent the large grassy area.

SHERIFF GUNTHER TOMKINS(60s), breaks from the singers and hurries towards the wagon. He holds his hand out for the lady in the wagon to step down.

GUNTHER

Welcome to Dolor, Ma'am. Hope it was a pleasant journey getting here.

The LADY takes his hand with her gloved hand and steps down.

LADY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Thank you, sir. You are most kind.

Gunther removes his white hat and bows.

GUNTHER

Sheriff Gunther Tomkins at your service.

He smiles and gazes up at her. Her head bows towards him. A large hat with the scarf all he sees, until she raises her head and reveals her face --

SASSY

Washed and dressed in Catherine's clothes.

SASSY

Pleased to meet you, Sheriff Tomkins.

Sassy offers a smile, but her eyes drill into him to see if there is any change in his expression when he sees her face.

Nothing changes.

GUNTHER
 Call me, Gunther. No formalities,
 please.

Sassy takes a breath, assured.

SASSY
 Well, Gunther, I am Missus
 Catherine Paulus and this is my
 husband...

Gunther cuts in.

GUNTHER
 The Upright, Reverend Satchel
 Paulus.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
 You've heard of me?

Gunther spins towards the voice.

FOSTER

Clean, shaven, and dressed in Paulus' preacher clothes.

EXT. WILDERNESS STREAM - DAY

Down the stream from where they were tied to the tree, the bodies of Satchel and Catherine are covered with dirt and leaves in a hasty burial. Catherine has a penny on each eye.

GUNTHER (V.O.)
 No sir, Reverend.

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW - DAY

Gunther chuckles.

GUNTHER
 Sorry to say. Only what
 Cloversburg sent across the wire.

Foster gives him an inquisitive smile.

GUNTHER
 That the 'upright Mister and Missus
 Satchel Paulus' would be arriving
 with gifts and a generous donation
 for our church's building fund.

Foster's eyes sparkle.

FOSTER
And so we have.

GUNTHER
And the good town folk of Dolor
welcomes you with open arms.

Gunther turns, gestures towards the townsfolk.

"Amazing Grace" winds down as a MAN steps up on the base of the cross in front of the crowd to enthusiastic applause.

Gunther nods his head and smiles big towards the man.

GUNTHER
And there is the *upright*, Reverend
Matthew Sparrow.

Foster takes the measure of the handsome man in. A humble look, almost embarrassed, Reverend MATTHEW SPARROW (Late 20s), raises his hands for the crowd to quiet.

They do.

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW - LATER

All eyes hang to Sparrow's every movement, his every word.

Jet black hair, chiseled chin, and striking blue eyes destined Sparrow to be either a politician or a preacher.

Gunther, Foster, and Sassy sit in the front row.

Foster gazes at the large wooden box marked -- "*DONATIONS for Our Church Building Fund*". Filled over the top with money.

SPARROW
Zechariah asked...

Sparrow's riveting voice snaps Foster back to him.

Dressed in a black suit, white dress shirt and a black bow string tie, Sparrow cuts the swell of comely dignity.

SPARROW
For who hath despised the day of
small things? Small beginnings?

He spreads an arm across the clearing.

SPARROW

I have envisioned God's house and now cannot express my gratitude enough to you all, the faithful, who have too, and given so generously. Like the Children of Israel so joyfully gave to King Solomon to build Jehovah's Holy Temple.

Everyone applauds.

Sassy and Foster applaud vigorously, glance at each other, at the box of cash, then back at one another.

And beam.

SPARROW

Yes. Applaud yourselves.

They look back up at Sparrow.

SPARROW

But give God the glory. For it is about Him. For Him. And by Him.

The crowd applauds harder. The young Preacher grins.

The crowd breaks into another SONG as Sparrow steps down and begins to shake hands with the front row until he comes to Foster and Sassy, where Gunther makes the introductions.

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW - DAY

Sparrow and Gunther stand behind a wagon. MARJORIE SPARROW(early 20s) holds MATTY(3 Months). She stands next to Sparrow.

The sounds of picnic revelry all around them.

GUNTHER

You've done a good thing here, Sparrow. Don't know anyone who'd give up a years wages to do what you've done.

The money box empty in front of them. Gunther stuffs the stack of bills into a leather money waist belt.

SPARROW

It's been tough, Gunther.

He puts his arm around Marjorie.

SPARROW

Especially with the baby. Of course, couldn't have done it without Marjorie.

Sparrow gives Marjorie a kiss.

MARJORIE

Why, Reverend. Me thinks thou embarrasseth me.

Gunther chuckles, buttons up the money belt, nods to Marjorie with a smile.

GUNTHER

Marjorie, you deserve all the credit in the world. You're a special lady, no doubt.

SPARROW

She's a special gift. The two of them make my life all it needs to be.

Sparrow gives Matty a tickle.

SPARROW

Right, Matty boy?

Marjorie smiles as she watches Sparrow play with Matty.

GUNTHER

Sure you don't want me to ride shotgun with you?

Gunther holds the money belt towards Sparrow. Sparrow takes it.

SPARROW

Marjorie and Matty are tuckered out and I got to stay to the end.

Sparrow lifts his shirt, slips the belt around his midriff.

SPARROW

That Reverend Paulus and his wife are taking them back. Stayin' the night at our place. They've kindly agreed to carry the money with them. Just to be safe.

GUNTHER

I guess. No offense to you, but I ain't sure I'd hang on a cross next to every man of the cloth.

Sparrow chuckles, pats Gunther's back.

SPARROW

No offense taken, my friend.

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW - LATER

Foster and Sassy stand next to their wagon with Sparrow. Foster holds out three hundred dollar bills to him.

SPARROW

Three hundred?

Foster pulls it back.

FOSTER

The gifts of God are without repentance, Reverend.

Sparrow smiles.

SPARROW

Romans eleven twenty nine.

Sparrow lifts up his shirt and slides the leather pouch out from around his waist. Hands it to Foster.

Sassy licks her lips, the pouch makes her mouth water.

Foster opens it.

SPARROW

Over two thousand, not including your parish's most generous three hundred.

Foster slips the three bills in.

FOSTER

Now it's including.

Marjorie comes up with Matty. She holds the baby close to her chest.

MARJORIE

I swear he goes through more cloths than a dress maker.

Foster closes the pouch up.

She hands the baby to Sparrow. He lifts Matty above his head.

SPARROW

Sign of a healthy pup I'd say.
Right, Matty?

He pulls Matty back to him, snuggles his chin into the child's neck. Matty gurgles and giggles.

Sassy notices a gold pendant caught up in Marjorie's long brown hair. She reaches over and frees it. Lays it back in the front of her neck.

SASSY

I just adore dainty things.

Marjorie glances down and twiddles the pendant in her hand.

A small *GOLDEN SPARROW*. In flight.

MARJORIE

And I just adore the men who give
them to us.

Marjorie giggles. Sassy joins her.

Sparrow pulls Marjorie in, gives her a peck on the cheek.

Sassy reaches out for Matty.

SASSY

Please, may I hold him?

Sparrow hands him to her. Sassy takes Matty with a wild eyed enthusiasm.

SASSY

He looks fine as cream gravy.

Sassy gives Matty a big kiss and hugs him dearly like she will never let him go.

SPARROW

Best be gettin' on so you get home
before dark. I'll be along tonight.

Sparrow gazes at Marjorie, takes off his hat, bends over and holds up his hand.

SPARROW

Ma'am? May I assist you into your chariot?

Marjorie lays her hand in his, smiles a coy smile.

MARJORIE

Who says the wild west is bereft of gentlemen?

BACK TO:

EXT. WILDERNESS (PRESENT DAY) - NIGHT

Full moon. A Wagon creeps through the woods. An owl turns its head to look. HOOTS.

INT. WILDERNESS CLEARING

A camp fire burns in the center. The DANIEL'S GANG, four of them, sleep in blankets on the ground next to the fire.

EXT. WILDERNESS - WAGON

On the back of the wagon, FOUR PINE BOXES, like coffins.

A hand wrapped in tattered cloths grabs several rolled up ropes off the seat.

MONTAGE: THE DARK FIGURE CAPTURES THE DANIEL'S GANG

- He ties a rope around a tree about chest high.
- At another tree, he loops the rope around it same height, moves to the next tree.
- Every tree around the clearing has been tied.
- The Figure grabs a BOX of BULLETS off the wagon.
- He throws the bullets into the fire, ducks behind a tree.
- The bullets explode with an awful racket, casings WHISTLE out of the fire.
- The Gang wakes with a start, scatter in all directions. A couple run blindly with the blankets over their heads.

-- Each one gets yoked and taken out by the ropes strung from tree to tree.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW(A YEAR EARLIER) - DAY

A horseshoe glances off a metal stake, tumbles a couple feet away.

Gunther, Sparrow, TOM(30s) and BOYD(40s), play horseshoes. Gunther stands next to Sparrow. They wait their turn. BELDEN(60s), the town blacksmith, watches.

SPARROW

You knew I couldn't shoot that elk.

TOM

Oooh. Sorry Boyd, that don't hook the trout.

Boyd shrugs.

BOYD

See what you got.

He pushes Tom to the pitch spot.

GUNTHER

(to Sparrow)

I thought you could shoot at it. I knew you couldn't shoot *it*.

Tom throws.

The shoe flies towards the stake, hits the ground short, rolls forward and lands just to the side of the metal stick.

BOYD

Aww. Looks like the trout's still swimming, Tom.

TOM

Closer than you'll ever get.

SPARROW

(to Gunther)

Truth is, when I was a kid, I was a dead eye with a rifle and knife.

GUNTHER

Don't say?

Sparrow nods. Boyd looks over at Gunther.

BOYD
Show these *mudsills* what a ringer
looks like, Sheriff.

Gunther steps up to pitch.

SPARROW
Used to put rabbits on the table
regular just hunting with my knife.

EXT. VALLEY - DAY

The Paulus wagon makes its way across a long open area.
Majestic mountains in the background.

Marjorie SINGS -- *"It is Well with my Soul"*

MARJORIE (V.O.)
(sings)
*For me be it Christ, be it Christ
hence to live...*

INT. WAGON (MOVING)

MARJORIE
(sings)
If Jordan above me shall roll...

Foster drives. Glances over at Sassy. Rolls his eyes.

Marjorie now with Matty, cuddles him close. Sassy looks over
at them, glares jealously.

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW - DAY

The men continue their game of horseshoes. Gunther aims,
rocks his arm back and forth towards the target.

GUNTHER
So before you were a Preacher, you
were a great hunter?

Sparrow nods. Gunther laughs.

SPARROW
Wanted to be a lawman like you.

Around them the crowd enjoys the after picnic festivities.
Children run to and fro.

Gunther relaxes his grip on the shoe, his arm swings forward, he releases it with perfect form, and tosses up a beauty.

Their eyes follow the U-Shaped projectile with admiration. End over end it sails right at the stake.

THUD. It lands and kicks up a smattering of dust.

Boyd's son, LUKE(12) runs to it.

SPARROW

Guess, God had a different plan.

Gunther waits for Luke to tell him it's a "ringer".

GUNTHER

Very different.

Luke holds his hands up to indicate -- *"Not quite a ringer"*

The mouth of the shoe sits right in line with the stake. Boyd HOOTS, pats Gunther on the back.

BOYD

Reverend, you better get Belden here to hammer you out a bigger shoe.

He and Belden share a laugh.

BELDEN

Even a prayer won't answer that one.

Sparrow steps up to throw.

SPARROW

They should be doin' the praying.

EXT. SPARROW HOME - DUSK

The wagon pulls up the long drive to the ranch house.

MARJORIE (V.O.)

(sings)

*No pang shall be mine, for in death
as in life, thou wilt whisper Thy
peace to my soul.*

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW - DAY

Gunther leans into Sparrow.

GUNTHER

Good luck.

They both laugh. Gunther moves back next to Boyd and Tom.

SPARROW

My aim's not the problem, Gunther.
I can shoot a flea off a hog from
fifty paces.

Gunther rubs his chin, doubt wrings out a smile.

GUNTHER

Went to church this morning, did
you?

Boyd laughs. Sparrow rocks his arm back and forth, lining up
the shot.

SPARROW

I can still shoot 'em. Just don't
let me catch their eyes.

Sparrow shrugs, stops, looks back at Gunther. Smiles.

SPARROW

Guess I see their souls.

GUNTHER

Yeah well, the Good Book says,
'meat is for the belly, and the
belly is for meat.'

Sparrow turns back to re-aim the shot.

SPARROW

Now you know why I keep you around,
my friend.

Gunther laughs.

GUNTHER

So that's why you invited me to
come a huntin' on your spread
tomorrow.

INT. SPARROW HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marjorie puts Matty in his crib.

MARJORIE (V.O.)

(sings)
It is well, with my soul.

INT. SPARROW HOME - KITCHEN

Foster holds the money belt, turns to go out. Sassy grabs his arm. They argue in a hushed tone.

SASSY
We ain't through here.

Foster snaps back.

FOSTER
No, Sassy. That ain't the plan.

SASSY
Plans change.

Foster yanks his arm away.

FOSTER
Ain't right.

Sassy scoffs.

SASSY
Right's what we say it is.

FOSTER
Well I say it ain't.

SASSY
You ain't man enough, I'll do it.

Sassy charges by him. He snatches her.

FOSTER
Alright.

He pulls her in. They grope each other with their eyes.

FOSTER
But this one's on you.

Sassy pushes him away.

SASSY
Just do it.

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW - DAY

Sparrow narrows his eyes, focuses on the metal stake, lets the shoe fly just right.

MARJORIE (V.O.)
 (sings)
It is well, with my soul.

INT. SPARROW HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Marjorie holds a lamp up, heads towards the living room. Sassy comes up to meet her. They smile at one another.

MARJORIE (V.O.)
*It is well, it is well, with my
 soul.*

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW - DAY

The horseshoe sails in a high arc. All eyes follow its trajectory as it descends. Just before it lands, Sparrow turns away.

INT. SPARROW HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

MARJORIE (V.O.)
 (sings)
*But Lord 'tis for Thee, for Thy
 coming we wait. The sky, not the
 grave is our goal.*

From the dark of an open room Foster comes out with a belt, slings it around Marjorie's neck.

CLANK!

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW - DAY

The horseshoe rings the metal stake. Luke throws his hands up to indicate a -- *DEAD RINGER*.

INT. SPARROW HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Foster cinches the belt tight against Marjorie's neck. Sassy snatches the lamp from her.

Horror screams across Marjorie's face. The *GOLD SPARROW PENDANT* and chain break off and fall to the floor.

MARJORIE (V.O.)
 (sings)
Oh trump of the angel.

MARJORIE (V.O.)
 (sings)
*Oh voice of the Lord. Blessed
 hope, blessed rest of my soul.*

Foster yanks Marjorie back, disappears into the darkness of the hallway.

MARJORIE (V.O.)
 (sings)
*It is well, with my soul. It is
 well, it is well, with my soul.*

Sassy saunters down the hall, the lamp casts eerie shadows off the wood plank walls catching Black and White PICTURES of the young couple.

-- Their WEDDING DAY.

-- In front of their house all smiles wrapped in each others arms. Marjorie obviously pregnant.

-- Sparrow on the side of their bed, a few days old MATTY in his arms; Marjorie smiling, leaning her head against his arm, and Gunther standing next to Sparrow, grinning from ear to ear.

Sassy slinks past the black and white photos, her face fixed with an evil smile. She turns into the dark bedroom. Holds the lamp out.

The golden glow captures the back of Foster hunched over Marjorie lifeless on the bed. The belt in his hand, he leans up, slides it back into his pants.

Sassy swings the lamp towards the crib.

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW - DAY

MARJORIE (V.O.)
It is well, with my soul.

Boyd throws his hat down. Belden shakes his head. Gunther smiles with respect, bested by Sparrow.

Sparrow looks right at Gunther and smiles.

SPARROW
 No eyes on that stake.

Tom jumps around. He HOOTS, laughs in Boyd's face.

TOM
Can you say trout for supper?

Tom shakes Sparrow's hand. Sparrow grins, proud of himself.

MARJORIE (V.O.)
(sings)
*It is well, with my soul. It is
well, with my soul.*

INT. SPARROW HOME - NIGHT

Foster and Sassy stand over Matty.

MARJORIE (V.O.)
(sings)
*It is well. It is well, with my
soul.*

Sassy hands Foster the lantern, reaches down and scoops Matty up. Wrapped in his blanket, she presses him to herself, closes her eyes.

Foster holds the lamp up, watches her.

FOSTER
Sassy.

Sassy's eyes pop open. She looks down at Matty, spins and carries him out. Foster calls after her.

FOSTER
Sassy.

HALLWAY

Sassy hurries away, Foster hard on her heels.

FOSTER
We ain't got no use for no babies.

Sassy doesn't answer, she heads into the --

KITCHEN

She sets Matty down on the table.

Foster stalks in, holds the lantern out and circles around her. She scrambles around, snatches a basket from a corner, fills it with jars of food from the cupboard.

FOSTER
Plans change, huh?

Foster goes to Matty. Sassy dashes over, cuts him off. She holds her ground between Matty and Foster.

FOSTER
Just makin' up for something you
lost.

Sassy slams the basket on the table. Matty wakes and starts to cry. Sassy glares at Foster.

SASSY
You ever say that again.

She reaches for Matty. He grabs her arm.

FOSTER
What Sassy? It was six years back.
'Sides you ain't the motherin'
kind. We were better off.

Sassy whips out her knife with her other hand, holds it to his throat.

SASSY
You don't know spit.

Foster stares at her, unmoved.

He snatches her wrist, overpowers her, and bends her back over the table. He forces the knife back against her own throat.

FOSTER
Neither do you.

They glare at one another for an eternal tense moment.

FOSTER
Not for long, anyways.

Matty cries harder. Foster glances at him, back at Sassy. He stares into her angry, hurt eyes. He relents.

FOSTER
Shouldn't have said that.

Foster releases her wrist.

FOSTER
Congratulations then. You're a
mother.

He backs off. Sassy snatches up Matty.

INT. SPARROW HOME - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Sassy exits past Foster, Matty bundled in her arms.

SASSY

Burn it.

Foster holds the basket and the lantern.

He pauses, stares into the house for a brief moment. Anger flashes in his eyes, he chucks the lantern into the hallway. The lantern explodes in a fiery burst.

EXT. SPARROW HOME - NIGHT

Foster and Sassy's wagon flee away from the fiery house. Another wagon races up from the opposite direction.

SPARROW

He reaches his home, jerks the wagon to a stop, jumps down and runs to the front door, pushes it open.

SPARROW

Marjorie!

The smoke and flames shove him back. He peers in but cannot see past the consuming flames. Sparrow holds his arms over his face, bolts into the house.

SPARROW

Marjorie!

He glances around the living room, then into the kitchen. The house collapses around him.

He looks down the hallway, a tunnel of fire. He hesitates for a brief moment. Wipes his watery eyes. Coughs in the smoke.

SPARROW

Marjorie. Matty.

He dashes down the hallway to his bedroom.

MASTER BEDROOM

The flames have spread into this room. At the door Sparrow can barely see, barely breathe.

He stumbles to Matty's crib. Empty. Panicked, he spins towards the bed, spots Marjorie.

SPARROW

Marjorie!

He hacks out as the flames dance around him. Charges to her, grabs her arm.

In the heated glow of the fire Sparrow notices Marjorie's face. A hellish twisted expression and lifeless empty eyes frozen open.

He halts, swipes his burning, tearing eyes to get a better look.

SPARROW

Marjorie?

The fire eats up everything around him, no more time to waste. He snatches up Marjorie's dead body, turns back towards the door.

BLAM! An explosion separates him from Marjorie. Thrown backwards, he crashes out the window.

EXT. SPARROW HOME - NIGHT

Sparrow rolls around engulfed in flames. The house collapses in a fiery heap behind him.

MARJORIE (V.O.)

(sings)

*It is well, it is well, with my
soul. It is well, it is well, with
my soul.*

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. SPARROW HOME - DAWN

Sunlight struggles through the thick grey smoke that lays over the short valley. Sparrow's house reduced to embers that stick out of the ground.

Sparrow lies nearby, his face blackened in the dim light. His eyes pop open.

A tortured SCREAM fills the valley.

EXT. SPARROW HOME - DAY

Dark thunderous clouds threaten rain. The smoky haze almost dissipated. The house a cold black heap of ashes.

Sparrow lifeless.

Gunther on horseback presses his steed full out through the valley towards Sparrow.

The sky unleashes a torrent.

Gunther gets to Sparrow, jumps down.

Sparrow's soaked hat upside down on the ground. Gunther snatches it up. Charred on top, and tattered along the brim, but in good shape.

The sheriff scrambles to Sparrow. Both of them now soaked. On bended knee he leans down and peers at Sparrow's face.

GUNTHER

Oh, God, no.

INT. GUNTHER HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

The curtains drawn, but enough light seeps through to make things out. Sparrow on the bed, motionless.

Belden wraps Sparrow in gauze like a mummy. Gunther stands by ready to lend a hand.

GUNTHER

Need all that wrappin', Belden?

BELDEN

I know it's mostly his face, and upper body, but he'll ooze somethin' fierce. It'll help keep the rest of him clean.

GUNTHER

I got ya.

BELDEN

Gotta redress him every six hours. This sour milk and clay poultice all we can do for him. Later on some pigskin'll let his skin heal.

GUNTHER

Seen that work before?

Belden draws up his sleeve, reveals a scarred forearm.

BELDEN

The Missus came up with it.
Reckon' I'd lost my arm if not for
it.

GUNTHER

Ain't pretty.

BELDEN

Yeah but it kept me smythin'.

Belden finishes, hands Gunther the remainder of the gauze.

BELDEN

Doctor couldn't do no better.

GUNTHER

Ain't no Doctor to do better.

Gunther and Belden stare at Sparrow.

GUNTHER

It's a hard time. I ain't got no
words.

BELDEN

No sign of the baby?

Gunther shakes his head.

GUNTHER

Just Marjorie's remains.

Belden hangs his head, sighs.

GUNTHER

Already got word out to the
menfolk, start up search parties.

BELDEN

What about that preacher couple?

GUNTHER

Got a wire from Cloversburg. Their
Pastor and his wife never showed
back neither.

They stare back at Sparrow for a long quiet moment.

GUNTHER

Somethin' 'bout them two stuck in
my craw.

BELDEN

You think they had something to do with this?

GUNTHER

I don't know what to think. Rain at Sparrow's washed away any trail. I'm shootin' blind.

BELDEN

Tragic. That's all. Just tragic.

Belden shakes Gunther's hand, heads to the door. Stops.

BELDEN

Oh, almost forgot.

Belden takes out a six inch piece of leather wrapped around itself. Looks like a cigar.

GUNTHER

What's that?

BELDEN

For when he wakes.

Gunther takes it, studies it.

BELDEN

Soak it in whiskey. Gonna be in awful straights when he comes to. Put it in his mouth to bite down on.

Gunther grins.

GUNTHER

Your wife's invention?

Belden smiles.

BELDEN

That one's mine.

Belden snags his hat from a hook, heads out the door. Gunther goes to Sparrow, gazes down on his friend. Tears well up in his eyes.

GUNTHER

Lord. You say you give beauty for ashes, but...If anyone can do it, it's you.

BELDEN (O.S.)
Looks like you got guests, Sheriff.

Gunther sleeves his eyes, turns around, sees LIZA(30s) and SUE ELLEN(20s) in the doorway. They both have hankies, dab their eyes.

Belden tips his hat to them, leaves.

GUNTHER
Sorry, this ain't a time for
visitors ladies.

LIZA
I did some nursing back east,
Sheriff.

SUE ELLEN
And I just want to help.

Gunther hesitates, nods.

GUNTHER
Much obliged.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Wildflowers paint the mountain side. A palette of purples, golds, reds and oranges.

SASSY (O.S.)
Cream gravy.

Foster and Sassy drive the wagon like they're taking a relaxing day in the country. No worries. No troubles.

INT. WAGON(MOVING)

Sassy holds Matty to her chest. Matty's bright blue eyes stare up at her.

SASSY
We gotta name him.

FOSTER
So name him.

SASSY
You need to help, Papa.

Foster spits.

FOSTER
Ain't his Papa.

Sassy backhands him.

SASSY
You're his Papa and if you ever let
slip otherwise they'll be other
tales to tell.

Foster grunts, looks down at Matty. Matty gurgles at him.

FOSTER
We gotta come up with our own
names.

SASSY
What's wrong with our names?

FOSTER
We're startin' fresh.

Sassy dips a cloth in a mason jar of milk and holds it for
Matty to suck on.

SASSY
Always wanted to be, Capshaw.

FOSTER
Capshaw?

SASSY
Missus Genevieve Capshaw. Used to
bring my momma her dresses to mend.
Momma did all the rich people's
clothes. Practically, grew up with
the Uppity Ups.

Sassy closes her eyes. Exhales the memory.

SASSY
Tall and purty. Hair was always in
place, even on the windy days. And
when she came in, the whole room
lit up with the most wonderful
smell.

FOSTER
Skunk like?

Sassy opens her eyes.

SASSY
No, you old frog wart.

Sassy looks across the sea of beautiful flowers.

SASSY
Like wild flowers after a Sunday
morning rain.

Sassy gets a bitter frown on her face.

SASSY
I hated her. All of them, workin'
my momma to death.

FOSTER
Well now...

Foster pats his waist.

FOSTER
You're an Uppity Up. Promised you
to settle one day. Now we can.

Sassy looks at him, a smile breaks out. She takes a deep
sniff of the summer aromas.

SASSY
Lilac Capshaw.

FOSTER
Like the flower?

Foster lets out a laugh.

Sassy tweaks his ear with the milk cloth. Foster yanks away,
milk drips down his neck. He swipes at it, grumbles.

SASSY
And you're, Elm Capshaw.

FOSTER
Like the tree?

SASSY
You're strong as one. Mister and
Missus Elm and Lilac Capshaw, and
their young'un...

Sassy glances around the countryside, searches for a name.

FOSTER
Badger.

Foster halts the wagon.

SASSY
Badger? Badger Capshaw.

FOSTER
No.

SASSY
Yes. I like it.

Foster reaches back and eases out a rifle. He brings it up, cocks the lever, pulls back the hammer, and takes aim at something to the left of them.

Sassy looks that way.

SASSY
What?

FOSTER
Sssh.

Down the edge of the trail, a large BADGER forages for food. Foster shoots.

EXT. TOWN OF CLEMENCY - DAY

A larger town of about one thousand people. A busy and hectic downtown area.

Pedestrians cross back and forth across the main dirt road. They dodge wagons and horses, duck in and out of the various stores and shops that crush against each other for every square inch.

Foster and Sassy draw through the hustle and bustle in their wagon, taken by all the activity and stores.

FOSTER
Missus Capshaw, I give you *Civil -
I - zation.*

Foster waves his hand across the mayhem.

SASSY
And what you can't give me, Elm
Capshaw, we shall buy.

Foster wrenches the wagon to a sudden halt.

Two women in fine dresses protect themselves from the sun under ruffled parasols. They have stepped out in front of Foster and Sassy oblivious to the accident they almost caused.

Sassy holds Matty out to Foster to take.

SASSY
Why I oughta clean their plow.

Foster pushes Matty back to her.

FOSTER
You're ace high now. Need to carry
it with dignity. Refinery.

SASSY
Badger could've been hurt.

Foster peels back Matty's blanket to give him a glance.

FOSTER
He's no worse the wear.

Sassy glances at a calm Matty.

DEEP VOICE (O.S.)
Everything okay, folks?

Their heads snap towards the voice.

They stare into the kind face of SHERIFF CASTLE(40s), a large burly fellow, with a demeanor like a lazy Summer's day.

Foster glances behind him, notices they're in front of a door that reads --

"Town of Clemency. Sheriff and Jail"

INT. GUNTHER HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The figure of Sparrow lies still in the dim light. He stirs in his sleep.

SPARROW
Marjorie.

He twitches.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SPARROW HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT(DREAM SEQUENCE)

Sparrow moves over Marjorie with a lamp. Her face frozen and twisted. She turns to him and whispers --

MARJORIE

Matty.

BACK TO:

INT. SHERIFF CASTLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Matty's eyes pop open. He lies in Sassy's arms, peaceful.

The walls of the office decorated with "Wanted Posters" with one wall dedicated to Clemency town announcements and calendar events.

Foster looks them over.

FOSTER

Word back East says land can be had
out here for a postage stamp.

SHERIFF CASTLE

Cattle or Farm?

FOSTER

I'm a cattle man, myself. Cattle
and dairy.

The Sheriff rustles through papers on his desk, digs out a sheet.

SHERIFF CASTLE

Gruber Heinrich, passed couple
weeks ago. Gotta nice spread of
about five hundred acres, with
head.

The Sheriff takes it to Foster. Foster scans it.

SHERIFF CASTLE

A ways southeast of here, but a
half days ride will get you there.
God's country, that's for sure.

FOSTER

Up for auction?

Sassy gets up to see the paper.

SHERIFF CASTLE

Be honest, go in the bank with cash
on the barrel head and you could
probably pick it up for a fiddle
and a song.

SASSY

Sounds too good to be true.

Sheriff nods towards the hustle and bustle of the town.

SHERIFF CASTLE

We may look like we're the land
flowing with milk and honey, but
this town was built on silver, and
there's been a scare put into folks
that's tightened purse strings.

SASSY

A scare?

SHERIFF CASTLE

I ain't really got a handle on it.
Something to do with too many
railroads, and too much wheat.

Foster stares out the window, watches the two ladies from
earlier come out of a dress shop empty handed. He glances at
other shoppers, they too are empty handed.

FOSTER

What's that got to do with silver?

SHERIFF CASTLE

I know. One and one don't make
two, but you can bet your bottom
dollar the bank'll be all ears to
practically any offer you make.

EXT. WILDERNESS TRAIL - DAY

A bright sunny day. Luke and his father, Boyd, on horseback.

BOYD

Stream up ahead. We'll light off
there and let the horses freshen.
Then keep searching.

EXT. WILDERNESS STREAM - DAY

The horses stand in the stream, dip their heads down and
drink.

Luke, stripped to his shorts and undershirt, calmly
backstrokes up stream.

Boyd bends down by the water, dips his bandana in, wipes his
face and neck with it.

Luke hears movement on the bank. He glances over and spots a couple small BLACK BEARS. They tear into what looks like human remains.

Luke thrashes in a sudden state of panic. He goes under and comes back up, coughs and sputters.

LUKE

Pa!

He gasps for air, high tails it back towards his father.

LUKE

Pa!

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY - LATER

Gunther squats down next to the bodies. A bandana wraps his face. He's surrounded by some of the Dolor MEN. A million flies buzz around them.

More Dolor TOWNSFOLK scour the area.

Luke, surrounded by his friends, fills them in on how he found the bodies.

Boyd, and a few other men wave away the flies while they watch Gunther size up the dead. All of them have bandanas or hats over their faces.

Gunther stands.

GUNTHER

Terrible.

His eyes never leave the bodies.

GUNTHER

I'd say this here's Cloversburg's missing Preacher and his wife. Now the question is...

Gunther glances around at the faces. They hang on, wait for him to finish.

GUNTHER

Who killed *them*?

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - DAY

A beautiful two-story brick home sits at the top of a small hill.

SASSY (O.S.)
Is that it?

A wood fence lines the property along the main dirt road.

A tall wooden ARCHWAY divides the fence. A long "S" like dirt drive starts from the arch and leads to the front of the house.

A barn, a stable, a silo, and storage buildings dot the land around the house. Cattle graze on the grassy hills.

EXT./INT. FOSTER AND SASSY WAGON(MOVING)

Foster drives the wagon up to the property.

FOSTER
Now you're an Uppity Up.

Sassy stands in the wagon, a big smile on her face. She clings to Matty as she stares out across the ranch.

They watch JOSIAH(50s) ride up the long drive on a horse.

Foster and Sassy pull up to the archway. A sign across it in large carved letters reads -- "*HEINRICH CATTLE RANCH*"

Foster stops the wagon. They gaze up at the sign. Josiah reaches them, gets down and greets them.

JOSIAH
Afternoon. You must be the
Capshaws.

FOSTER
And you must be Josiah, our
Foreman.

Josiah tips his hat.

JOSIAH
Yes, sir. Just wanted to thank you
personal for retaining my services.

FOSTER
You came highly recommended.

JOSIAH
Appreciate that.

Josiah gestures back at the ranch.

JOSIAH

Welcome to your ranch. If you
don't mind my asking. What's it
gonna be called?

Foster smiles at Sassy, throws an arm around her, pulls her
in for a hug.

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - DAY

A CARPENTER puts the finishing touches on the new name on the
archway.

FOSTER (V.O.)

Capshaw Cattle Ranch.

INT. GUNTHER HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

The curtains opened more. Light spills into the once tomb
like room.

Gunther sits in a chair pulled up to a wide awake Sparrow.
Sparrow, still bandaged head to toe, but stronger, and can
move a little more.

SPARROW

Dead?

Sparrow's voice a permanent rasp.

GUNTHER

Murdered.

Sparrow looks over at him.

SPARROW

Sure it was them?

GUNTHER

They were pretty tore up, but sent
the bodies to Cloversburg. Wired
back verified.

Gunther pulls out the wire and holds it up for Sparrow to
see. Sparrow scans it, turns to the window. The sky blue,
not a cloud.

GUNTHER

Honestly, I'm at a dead end.

Gunther drops the paper down.

SPARROW

Matty?

Gunther's head sinks.

INT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A huge two-story room with vaulted ceilings. Leather furniture, and an earthen look that says a lot of money and hard work built this place.

Someone else's hard work.

A staircase at one end leads up to the second floor. A hand rail overlooks the living room on three sides.

FOSTER (O.S.)

Lilac!

Foster's voice echoes throughout the home.

INT. FOSTER'S DEN - DAY

Foster sits at a large desk, reading glasses on the top of his sunburnt head. He has paper work in his hand.

FOSTER

Lilac!

Sassy appears at the doorway, annoyed. Samples of cloth material in her hands and over her arms.

SASSY

I'm picking Badger's bedroom wall coverings.

FOSTER

How 'bout you pick out Badger?

From under the desk and between Foster's legs -- MATTY(8 months). He pokes his head up, grins. He teeters back and forth, holds on to Foster's knees.

Sassy comes in, slings the material over a chair back, goes around and plucks Matty out from the desk.

SASSY

Badger you can't be in here playing while Papa's working.

FOSTER

I don't want him in here period. My
dirty past hovering around me like
a moth.

Sassy turns back to Foster.

SASSY

Alright. No need to get nasty.

FOSTER

I'm trying to get a deal that'll
put Capshaw Cattle on the map. Is
it too much to ask for peace and
quiet?

SASSY

Excuse us, Mister Big Time
Cattleman. We'll just crawl back
to our lowly task of tending to the
whole rest of the house.

Sassy goes out with Matty. Foster yells to her.

FOSTER

Wall coverings!

INT. GUNTHER HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A couple candles fill the space around Gunther with a soft
glow. One of them on the coffee table in front of him.

A Bible opened next to him, Gunther scratches out a note.

He puts down the pencil, neatly folds the paper, and slips it
in the lining of Sparrow's hat.

LIZA (O.S.)

Gunther!

Gunther looks up where her voice comes from. At the top of
the stairs three dark figures limp forward.

LIZA

Someone wants to say, hello.

INT. GUNTHER HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gunther hands Sparrow his hat. Sparrow leans back on the
couch across from him.

GUNTHER
 Been saving it for you.

Sparrow takes it, brushes at the charred spot, sets it on his wrapped head. Only his eyes and mouth are visible.

GUNTHER
 Like an old friend.

Gunther gets up, pours two glasses of whiskey, hands one to Sparrow.

SPARROW
 Thanks.

Sparrow wears a robe over a night shirt, his bandages covered. Pajama bottoms cover his gauze wrapped legs.

Gunther grabs his glass, raises it.

GUNTHER
 Your first step forward.

SPARROW
 Hardly.

GUNTHER
 Despise not the day of small beginnings. Isn't that what you preached?

Sparrow grunts, gestures, swigs down the whole glass.

GUNTHER
 Hey, pardner, take it easy with that. Don't want the town blaming me for getting their preacher on a bender.

Sparrow holds out the glass for another fill. Gunther doesn't budge, just stares at him.

Sparrow pushes up, collapses back. He doesn't have the strength. He grunts in pain.

Gunther relents, grabs the glass and refills it.

GUNTHER
 Medicinal purposes.

He hands it back to Sparrow.

GUNTHER
 Only.

Sparrow chugs it, holds out the glass again.

GUNTHER

Sparrow!

Sparrow grunts, his voice gravelly.

SPARROW

Fill it.

GUNTHER

Don't do this.

SPARROW

Celebrating recovery. With my pal.

GUNTHER

Sparrow, I love you. You're like the kid brother I never had. But I can't in good conscience...

SPARROW

It's you that gave me the taste for it.

GUNTHER

To ease the pain. Not drunkenness. That's not the way.

One of the candles burns out. Sparrow smacks his empty glass to the table.

SPARROW

I have no way.

Sparrow falls back against the couch. His hat pushes forward to his nose. He groans a bit.

GUNTHER

If you could've seen the burned up mess you were and now. I mean...Only God.

Gunther sits, stares at Sparrow.

GUNTHER

Sparrow. Wanna ask you something that ain't gonna be easy. But it needs askin'.

Sparrow stays quiet.

GUNTHER

Guess I'll just spit it. Have you thought about givin' Marjorie a proper burial?

Sparrow doesn't answer. Gunther leans back.

GUNTHER

Forget it. Maybe now's not the time.

Sparrow struggles, pushes himself up. Knocks back the hat.

SPARROW

No. No. I think about it everyday. And everyday I say, when whoever's layin' in the pines who did this, and my boy Matty is standin' next to me, that's when my Marjorie gets her home goin'.

GUNTHER

But, Sparrow.

Sparrow grabs and slams his empty glass on the table.

SPARROW

And not before.

Sparrow falls back against the couch. His hat pushes forward again. He snatches it off. Stares at the flame of the candle that's almost burned out on the table in front of him.

Silence sits between them for a long moment.

SPARROW

I want to see me.

Gunther peers at him in the waning candle light.

GUNTHER

I can't even see you.

Gunther chortles.

SPARROW

I want to see me, now.

Sparrow starts to pull at his facial gauze. Stops. Cries out in pain. Gunther leans forward.

GUNTHER

Now's not the time to do that.

SPARROW

You've seen me. The whole town has seen me. Now I want to see me.

GUNTHER

You will see you. But now is not the time.

Sparrow gets enraged.

SPARROW

Then I'll rip them off.

Sparrow yanks at the bandages, screams out in pain.

Gunther charges over to him, grabs his hands, stops him from doing any more damage.

Sparrow tries to fight back, tries to wrench his arms from Gunther's grip, tries to throw him off.

But he can't.

SPARROW

Let me go. Leave me alone.

Sparrow groans. Gunther lays against him, his full weight on him.

SPARROW

Leave me alone.

Sparrow's voice dies out. Gunther gathers Sparrow to him.

GUNTHER

It's going to be okay. You're going to be okay. Healing takes time.

The candle goes out. The room goes black.

GUNTHER (V.O.)

Takes time.

FOSTER (V.O.)

In time.

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - REAR PORCH - DAY

Foster stands on the wood deck, a bottle of Champagne held high, dressed like he's going to church.

SUPER: *"About a Year Later"*

FOSTER

In time, with our newly acquired thousand acres and five hundred more head of cattle, Capshaw Cattle Ranch will be one of the largest producers in the west.

A CHEER and APPLAUSE go up. About fifty or so people surround him. RANCH HANDS, COWBOYS, and their WIVES and CHILDREN.

Foster pops the cork on the bottle sending foam up in the air. They CHEER again.

EXT. SECOND LEVEL BACK PORCH - DAY

Lively music drifts up from the party out in the yard.

The guests play horseshoes, kids play tag, some cowboys perform rope tricks. Some eat. Some drink.

Foster looks out over the happy festivities, a fine cigar in his hand. And a glass of whiskey on the rail he leans against.

SASSY (O.S.)

There you are.

Foster blows out a puff of smoke, turns and smiles.

SASSY

King watchin' over his Kingdom?

Sassy in a special ordered dress fit for a queen.

Foster gazes long and hard at her as she saunters up next to him on the rail. She looks out over the party and the hills that roll out across their ranch.

SASSY

Nice view.

Foster looks her up and down.

FOSTER

Surely is.

Sassy looks over at him, gives him a playful smack.

SASSY

You are quite the flannel mouth, that's for sure.

The sun starts to go down, casts a soft light through the purple clouds.

FOSTER

And you look awful grand in that special order.

Sassy smiles at him, does a turn, shows off the dress.

SASSY

Congratulations Mister Elm Capshaw, you have become what you've always wanted to be.

Foster starts to take a drag of the cigar, puts it down before he does.

FOSTER

I have become what my Daddy was supposed to be.

SASSY

Your Daddy?

Foster turns back towards the festivities.

FOSTER

My Daddy worked near forty years on a Ranch. Rancher had no kids, no kin to speak of. When he went to root, it all went to my Papa.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RANCHER'S LIVING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A tall man -- MISTER FOSTER SR.(60s) stands in the middle of the room. Hardened hands hold a yellow piece of paper. His back to LITTLE FOSTER(7).

FOSTER (V.O.)

His life long dream come true,
'til he got a notice. Seems the
Rancher stopped paying his bills
about a year before he passed.
Owed so much the creditors took it
all.

Mister Foster Sr.'s hand drops to his side. The letter slips from it. He crumbles as the note lands at Little Foster's feet.

FOSTER (V.O.)
His heart burst right then and
there.

BACK TO:

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - SECOND LEVEL BACK PORCH - DAY

Foster stares at the end of his cigar.

FOSTER
From then, had to fight and kill
for everything I got.

He watches the smoke rise off of it. Sassy turns to him.

SASSY
Well, your Papa would surely be
proud of you. Heck, I'm proud of
you. Look at you all dressed up in
your best bib and tucker.

Sassy smooths out his lapel. Foster turns red. Sassy grabs
his glass and takes a gulp.

SASSY
And Badger...

Sassy puts the glass back, takes his hand and places it on
her belly.

SASSY
...is going to be a big brother.

Foster's eyes grow wide, his smile grows bigger than all out
doors.

FOSTER
What you say?

SASSY
We're having a baby, Elm.

Foster turns to the crowd, raises his drink and shouts.

FOSTER
Drink up, folks.

He grabs Sassy's hand and raises it.

FOSTER
We're having a young'un.

A CHEER goes up, and the band strikes a celebratory number. Sassy turns him back and gives him a big kiss.

SASSY

Who else deserves good, but you?

INT. GUNTHER HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Sparrow sits in the middle on a chair, dressed in a flannel and jeans. Curtains open wider than ever, sunlight blasts the room.

The gauze wraps his hands, up his wrists, and disappears under the sleeves of his shirt. His head also wrapped, the gauze goes down around his neck under his collar.

Gunther, Liza, Belden, Sue Ellen and Maisy crowd around him.

Liza carefully cuts the wrap up the back of his neck, all the way over to the top of his forehead. She moves to the side of him and cuts the gauze from the bottom side of his neck past his ear and up to the other cut.

She does the same thing on the other side. Sparrow winces a bit, but dares not move.

Nobody says a word.

Liza hands Sue Ellen the scissors.

LIZA

Okay. You ready?

Sparrow doesn't look at her. Just nods.

Liza gets behind him, peels the gauze away from the back of his neck and up over his head. It sticks a few times, but she manages to pull it off.

His head badly scarred, bald and patchy at best. She hands the gauze to Maisy. No one speaks. They exchange nervous glances.

Liza goes around to the front of Sparrow.

LIZA

Left side first. If it hurts just say so and I'll stop.

SPARROW

Let's finish this.

Liza glances around at every one. They nod.

She breathes in, peels from the neck up the side of his face. The gauze sticks and pulls at the skin. She pries it away.

The gauze has blood marks and watery, yellowish stains. She works it all the way off his scalp.

Everyone exhales, changes their stance to prepare for the next round.

Sparrow stares straight ahead, doesn't make eye contact with anyone.

Liza hands the bloodied gauze to Maisy. She wraps it in newspaper.

Sparrow's voice permanently ragged and gravelly, sputters out.

SPARROW

Hope that's not the morning rag.
Haven't read it yet.

The joke breaks the tension, everyone laughs.

Liza goes to the other side quiet again.

Liza works the last side up Sparrow's neck, past a barely fleshed out ear, and off the top of his head.

Everyone breathes a sigh of relief.

For the first time in over a year, his head, face and neck has splotchy flesh and scar tissue instead of puss, blood, and scabs.

SPARROW

Mirror.

Everyone glances at each other again.

GUNTHER

Sparrow, remember you've only been
unwrapped.

Sparrow stares straight ahead.

Maisy passes the mirror to Sue Ellen, who passes it to Liza, who passes it to Belden, who hands it to Gunther.

Gunther looks at Belden, nods and moves in front of Sparrow.

GUNTHER

There ain't no easy way to do this,
so...

Sparrow waits.

Gunther lifts the mirror. Sparrow grabs his arm. Stops him.

SPARROW

I don't need a mirror.

His eyes lock with Gunther's.

SPARROW

I need a gun.

BLAM!

EXT. SPARROW HOMESTEAD - DAY

The end of a rifle barrel smokes. The sound of a gun cocked and a trigger pulled.

BLAM!

Fire shoots out of the rifle barrel as it jerks back.

Sparrow stands off from his burnt down house.

The early morning sun reaches over the mountains, glints through whiskey bottles propped up on charred posts.

A horse and wagon parked behind Sparrow. He wears his black cowboy hat, jeans, boots, and a white undershirt with long sleeves. His hands loosely wrapped with rags.

His badly scarred face uncovered.

Sparrow lifts the rifle, cocks it, the spent casing flies out. He peers down the barrel, squeezes the trigger.

BLAM! Dirt flies up past the bottles. He missed.

Sparrow drops the rifle, cocks it, casing flies, lifts it again, aims, fires.

More dirt. Another miss.

He cocks, casing, aims, fires. Another miss.

SPARROW

Aaauuugghhh!

He spins, tosses the rifle off into the grass.

He gimps over to the wagon, grabs another bottle of whiskey, unscrews the cap, gulps some down.

He sets it back in the wagon, snags a large hunting knife from the seat, limps about ten paces in front of the bottles and slings the knife.

The knife sails off and over the bottles. A horrible miss. Sparrow kicks at the air, yells at the sky.

SPARROW

This is my reward?

He stops, faces the whiskey bottles that torment him.

He sighs, drops his head and hobbles towards them, past them, and over to his knife. It sticks out of the ground.

Sparrow bends down, pulls it out. A shiny object catches his attention. A chain of gold barely sticks out of the black sooty dirt.

Sparrow lifts the chain up with the knife. On the end of the thin chain swings -- *Marjorie's Gold Sparrow Pendant*.

Sparrow gasps, drops the piece, staggers back.

He stumbles towards the bottles, knocks them off their posts. Trips over a collapsed burned beam.

The knife flies out of his hand. He sprawls to the ground, buries his face into the dirt and sobs.

SPARROW

Oh, God. Marjorie. My Marjorie.

He grasps at clumps of grass, yanks them from the ground. He kneels up, his head still pressed into the ground.

SPARROW

For my days are consumed like smoke.

He rocks up and back. Up and back.

SPARROW

My bones are burned like an hearth.

His guttural sobs and gasps carry across the valley.

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - DAY

The main drive now brick. Trees and bushes line it all the way to the house.

Foster rides up to the front, greeted by Josiah. He tips his hat, takes the reins. Foster alights, grabs a satchel off the side of the horse.

INT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - FOYER

Foster sets down the satchel, calls out all excited.

FOSTER
Lilac! Lilac!

Sassy comes in to the room. She carries -- TWINS(6 months), DAISY and BEAR.

MATTY(2), jet black hair, runs by her side. Matty spots Foster, gets a big grin on his face, runs for him with his arms up.

MATTY
Papa! Papa!

SASSY
Nice of you to come home. Run out
of whiskey in town?

Foster ignores the comment.

Matty bounces into Foster's leg, wraps his arms around it. Matty stares up at him.

MATTY
Papa!

Foster watches Sassy come up to him.

SASSY
Don't ignore your son.

Foster lifts his leg to get him away.

FOSTER
Let me see my babies.

Matty stands back, stares up at Foster. He watches him gather the twins in, kiss them.

FOSTER
Happy to see, Papa?

He kisses them again.

Sassy looks down at Matty. Pulls him to her. She glares at Foster, picks up Matty, turns and walks away.

FOSTER
Where you off to? Got great news.

SASSY
Tell it to your babies.

Foster follows after her, catches up. Matty reaches out for him. He doesn't acknowledge him.

FOSTER
We are now railroad barons. I
invested in the rails.

Sassy stops.

SASSY
Railroads? We already got
railroads coming here.

FOSTER
It ain't the coming here we're
invested in. It's the going
everywhere else.

Sassy rolls her eyes and walks off.

FOSTER
Don't you turn your back on me.

He catches up to her, gets in front of her.

FOSTER
Don't you never disrespect me.

The babies cry.

FOSTER
I put you in all this.

Sassy laughs. Foster gets angrier. The babies cry louder. Matty joins them.

Foster glares at Matty. Gets in his face.

FOSTER
Shut your yapper!

Sassy pulls him back, gets in Foster's face.

SASSY
Don't yell at him!

Foster holds up the two babies.

FOSTER
He's makin' the young'uns cry.

SASSY
You made them cry. Even they're
smart enough to know you don't
throw good money after bad.

FOSTER
You talking about, woman?

They holler over the hollering. Get into each other's faces.

SASSY
Sheriff Castle said they's over
building the rails.

FOSTER
He's a Lawman. He don't know squat
about squat.

SASSY
And you should stick to what you
know. Cattle.

Foster tries to comfort the babies. Shakes them up and down.
They only scream the more.

Sassy puts Matty down. He continues to sob.

SASSY
Give them to me.

She reaches for them. They reach for her. She gathers them
both.

SASSY
Do what you want, but when it goes
belly up you better figure a way to
keep me and the babies happy.

Sassy turns, then glances back.

SASSY
Now see to Badger.

Foster looks down at a tearful Matty. He pushes him on the
back of the head.

FOSTER
I'm the one who should be cryin'.

Foster grabs a bottle out of the liquor cabinet, turns back
to Matty.

FOSTER
Quit yer belly achin'.

He stomps off towards his den, leaves Matty all alone in tears.

EXT. SPARROW HOMESTEAD - DAY

Sparrow lies face down on the hard earth. Motionless. In what was his old bedroom. Exactly where the bed was. Exactly where he found Marjorie.

A SHADOW crosses over him. The butt of Sparrow's rifle taps his side.

GUNTHER (O.S.)
Sparrow.

The butt taps him a little harder.

GUNTHER
Sparrow.

Sparrow stirs.

EXT. SPARROW HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

The gold sparrow pendant swings back and forth in the light of a camp fire.

SPARROW (O.S.)
It was Marjorie's. Gave it to her
for our fifth...

His voice trails off.

The fire glow dances across Sparrow and Gunther's faces.

Gunther reaches over and hands Sparrow back the pendant. He fights to keep his eyes on Sparrow and not look away.

GUNTHER
I'm sorry, Sparrow.

Sparrow glances at the pendant, pockets it.

They both pick up plates of beans and gorge into them. Their chomping the only conversation.

Sparrow finishes and puts his plate aside. He looks up at Gunther.

Gunther scoops the last bite of beans into his mouth, glances up at Sparrow. He stops mid-chew. Plate to his face, elbow up.

GUNTHER

What?

SPARROW

Deputize me.

Gunther almost chokes on the beans. He sets his plate aside, coughs, sputters, and finally swallows.

GUNTHER

Deputize you? What for?

SPARROW

Find her killer's what for. Find
Matty. That's the thread I'm
hanging by.

Gunther wipes his mouth with his bandana.

GUNTHER

I don't want you killed.

Sparrow jumps up, throws off his hat. Yanks off his shirt.

SPARROW

Look at me. I'm a walking corpse.

Sparrow turns around, arms held out.

GUNTHER

Look like a walking miracle to me.

The fire light licks the scars on his back.

GUNTHER

Said ye'self you can't shoot
center. Couldn't even throw your
knife.

Sparrow turns back around, puts his shirt back on, shoves his hat back on.

SPARROW

Won't use a gun. Nor a knife.

GUNTHER

No gun? No knife? How you gonna
bring people in? Please and thank
you them back to jail?

Sparrow lurches up and steps away a few feet. He looks into the starry sky.

SPARROW

Fine. I'll be a Bounty Hunter.
Don't need your permission.

GUNTHER

You can barely even ride. Can't
sneak up on someone in a wagon.

SPARROW

Forget it. Just get the jail ready.

Sparrow goes back to the fire. Stares Gunther in the eyes.

SPARROW

Someone out there knows something.
Seen something. Whoever's on them
Wanted Posters.

GUNTHER

This is crazy.

SPARROW

Maybe it takes crazy to do it.

GUNTHER

I don't see how you can do it.

Sparrow snatches up a bottle of whiskey and takes a gulp.

SPARROW

Night comes when no one works.

Gunther gets up, goes to his horse.

GUNTHER

You go after them killers, you
better be sober.

Gunther comes back with a rolled up rope in his hand.

GUNTHER

If you ain't using gun or knife,
get good with a rope.

Sparrow looks at the bottle, swigs one last time, slings it as far away into the dark as he can.

Gunther tosses the lariat to him.

Sparrow catches it, works the lariat back and forth around himself like an expert. He flips the lariat out, lassoes one of the charred stumps fifteen feet away, easy as pie.

SPARROW

I was ropin' 'fore I was shootin'.

Sparrow flips the rope off the stump, reels it in and lassoes Gunther's hat. Yanks it off his head.

GUNTHER

Made your point. But that stump and hat ain't killers. And you need strength to overpower the likes of them.

SPARROW

I still got that.

Sparrow brushes Gunther's hat off, hands it back to him.

GUNTHER

Maybe you should cover your face.

Sparrow winds up the lasso.

SPARROW

I see how kids stare at me. How ladies pity me. How you can't even bear to look at me.

GUNTHER

Sparrow.

SPARROW

No! But I don't care about that. The only one I want to see me everyday is God.

Sparrow turns away and screams up to the stars.

SPARROW

So you can remember what you've done!

His voice echoes out of the valley.

EXT. GRASSY VALLEY - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

CLAP. CLAP. CLAP.

The fast gallop of a horse.

UNHH! OHHH! UNHHH!

The GRUNT of Ryder and Cal battered, dragged on the sled.

Ryder takes the brunt of the beating as his face and body get whipped by tares and sagebrush.

Cal cries out every time the sled hits a dip. After a long ride the sled comes to a halt.

Cal and Ryder catch their breaths. Boots stop in front of Ryder. He looks over at them.

RYDER

What you want from us?

Ryder flips. He now faces up, and stares into the melted face of the Dark Figure.

Sparrow.

Fear yanks Ryder's eyes wide open.

RYDER

We're being dragged to hell.

SPARROW

Ryder Crowley, and Cal Masterson.

Sparrow's voice like a death sentence.

SPARROW

I'm taking you down.

RYDER

We are goin' to hell.

SPARROW

Before I do, I want answers.

CAL

I ain't had nuthin' to do with stealin' them horses.

RYDER

Shut up you lily livered squelch.

SPARROW

Over a year back a preacher's wife in Dolor was murdered and his son taken.

RYDER

So?

Sparrow grabs Ryder by the throat.

SPARROW

So.

Sparrow leans in close enough to breathe the same air.

SPARROW

I'm the preacher.

CAL

Angel of Death. That's what he is.
Angel of Death.

Sparrow chokes Ryder. Ryder hacks and coughs.

RYDER

Don't know nuthin'.

Rage blazes Sparrow's eyes. He dangles the gold sparrow in Ryder's face. Ryder gasps one last time for air.

RYDER

What's that?

INT. GUNTHER JAIL - DAY

Gunther's hat down over his eyes, his boots up on the desk.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)

Sheriff! Sheriff!

Gunther falls back in his chair, catches himself.

YOUNG BOY

Sheriff!

The Boy stands in the doorway. Gunther pushes his hat back, sits up, squints to make the kid out.

GUNTHER

Spit it.

YOUNG BOY

Reverend Sparrow's back. And he
has two men laid out behind him.

Gunther jumps up.

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

Cal sits against a wall. His legs pulled up, his head down, cradled in his arms.

GUNTHER (O.S.)
 You got three fifty coming. Three
 hundred for Ryder. Fifty for Cal.

Cal jumps up and goes to the bars. His face scrapes and bruises.

CAL
 Hey. Why'm I only fifty?

Ryder lays across the bed. His face and arms painted with scratches and scrapes, too. He doesn't open his eyes.

RYDER
 Cause you're nothin' but a
lickspittle.

INT. GUNTHER JAIL

GUNTHER
 Pipe down in there.

Gunther at his desk, holds a pen to Sparrow.

GUNTHER
 Hancock here.

Gunther pushes a paper to him. He signs it.

SPARROW
 Do me a favor.

GUNTHER
 Anything, you know that.

Sparrow goes to the Wanted Poster board.

SPARROW
 Open me a bank account. Stick
 fifty in it for me.

GUNTHER
 What about the rest?

Sparrow looks over the posters. A poster with a picture of FOUR OUTLAWS on it -- "*DANIELS GANG. \$250.00 Each. Dead or Alive*"

Sparrow yanks it down, heads out the door.

SPARROW
Church building fund.

Gunther smiles, wags his finger towards him.

GUNTHER
You ain't dead yet.

EXT. GUNTHER JAIL - DAY

Sparrow pulls down main street in his wagon. Gunther comes out on the walk way. Shouts after Sparrow.

GUNTHER
Hear that, Sparrow. You ain't dead yet!

Gunther laughs to himself, glances around at all the people staring at him.

GUNTHER
Your preacher ain't dead yet.
Walkin' miracle.

EXT. WILDERNESS CLEARING - NIGHT

Sparrow drives his wagon away. A campfire dies down behind. Four pine boxes in the back tied up with ropes.

KNOCK! KNOCK!

VOICE FROM BOX
Hey! Let me outta' here! What the devil's red hide's goin' on?

EXT. GUNTHER JAIL - DAY

Sparrow leads Gunther out of his office over to his wagon. Gunther spots the four pine boxes.

GUNTHER
Daniels gang dead?

SPARROW
They wish.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE: SPARROW BOUNTY HUNTS

- A Wanted Poster gets snatched off the wall.
- Gunther closes the jail door on the scraped up CROOK.
- Another Poster gets yanked down.
- The CRIMINAL from the poster rides under a tree at night.
- A rope drops over him. He gets yanked up as Sparrow comes down. They meet face to face, hang in the air. Sparrow holds the gold pendant to his face. The criminal looks at it, then Sparrow, and SCREAMS like a baby.
- Poster's come off the wall one right after the other.
- Over and over, Sparrow dangles the gold pendant in front of his prisoners. Everyone, wide eyed and full of fear, shake their head 'No'.

BACK TO:

INT. GUNTHER JAIL - DAY

Gunther writes larger MONEY FIGURES on a ledger with "Church Building Fund" on top.

Sparrow yanks an "ICE PICK PETE" poster off the wall.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

Pure white snow blankets a short valley, leads to a small hill. Three men on horses ride up to it. The middle man -- *ICE PICK PETE(30s)*.

They pause when they reach the hill. At the top, a snowman with twigs for arms reaches to the sky like it's "under arrest".

Pete eyeballs the other two with him, gets down and climbs up to this strange ice figure out in the middle of nowhere. He looks it over with a curious sneer. The other two look on unsure.

Pete slides out his ice pick from his belt and whacks the snowman's carrot nose off its coal smiling face. He turns back to his cohorts.

They snicker, nervous. Pete shoots his hands up in the air just like the snowman's, mocks it.

A LASSO buried in the snow just in front of the snowman wrenches tight around Pete's ankles and yanks him. His ice pick flies out of his hand. He slams face first into the snow, gets dragged backwards over the hill, explodes the snowman as he disappears.

Pete's ice pick hurdles down, sticks in the frozen ground between his two shocked partners. They glance at the pick, each other, high tail it back the way they came.

EXT. CAMP SITE - NIGHT

Sparrow sits on a log by the camp fire. He pulls a piece of skewered rabbit off a stick. Eats it.

ICE PICK PETE (O.S.)
Hey. What the hell is this?

Sparrow doesn't respond.

ICE PICK PETE
Cut me down.

Pete suspended spread eagle between trees by ropes tied around both legs and wrists like he's laying in a hammock. Only he's the hammock.

Pete's face has dried blood from his smash to the ground when he was yanked through the snowman. He struggles against the four ropes. They go back over tree limbs and each tied to a horse.

ICE PICK PETE
I'll kill you. Hear me? I'll kill you.

Sparrow puts the rabbit down, picks up Pete's ice pick that lies next to him.

SPARROW
Why the ice pick, Pete?

Sparrow heats the tip up in the fire.

ICE PICK PETE
Cut me down coward and I'll show ya.

The tip glows orange. Sparrow gets up, heads to Pete. With Sparrow all in black and the moonless night, the glow from the tip appears to float in the darkness.

ICE PICK PETE

I like how it feels when I jam it
in someone's skull.

Pete struggles against the ropes some more. The horses snort but don't move.

Sparrow gets right up to him, the darkness shrouds him.

ICE PICK PETE

Bullet ain't nice like that.

Sparrow puts the candescent ice pick next to his face. The orange glow makes Sparrow look demon like.

Pete takes one look at him and shrieks. He flails against the ropes to no avail.

Sparrow whistles. The horses snort, pull the ropes a bit tighter.

Sparrow lets him scream. Moves the ice pick to Pete's face. Pete settles, his breath erratic. He stutters.

ICE PICK PETE

What do you want from me?

Sparrow grabs a rope tied to Pete's arm, yanks on it. Pete moans.

SPARROW

Four limbs. Four ropes. Four
horses.

Sparrow pulls on the rope again. The horse tied to it snorts again.

SPARROW

Your own personal apocalypse.

Pete moans. Strains against the ropes. Peers into Sparrows' face. His eyes go saucer like.

ICE PICK PETE

You're...you're that melted
minister I hear tell about.

Sparrow puts the ice pick next to Pete's eye.

SPARROW

What do you know of it?

Pete sputters.

ICE PICK PETE
 Somethin' 'bout a gold bird and
 your kid snatched.

Sparrow holds the ice pick for a long intense moment right up to Pete's eye. He pulls the gold pendant out, holds it up for Pete to see. It shimmers in the waning orange glow of the pick.

SPARROW
 My boy, Matty.

Pete chuckles through pain.

Sparrow whistles. The horses take a step away. The ropes cinch tighter. Pete stretched to the bone limit. He gasps.

ICE PICK PETE
 I don't know nuthin'. Tales. I
 heard tales.

Pete sputters, coughs.

SPARROW
 What tales? What've you heard of my
 son?

Sparrow grabs him by the collar, threatens him with the pick.

ICE PICK PETE
 Not your son.

Pete grimaces. Sucks in a breath.

ICE PICK PETE
 You. How you quit God.

SPARROW
 He quit me.

Laughs.

ICE PICK PETE
 Even I know God ain't never quit no
 one. Go on, Preacher. Have your
 apocalypse hoedown. Make you no
 better'n me.

Sparrow's eyes narrow. The glow of the pick fades. Darkness engulfs them.

SPARROW (V.O.)
 I'm a rope man myself.

ICE PICK PETE (V.O.)
Aaauuuugghhhh!!!

INT. GUNTHER JAIL CELL - DAY

The cell door closes on Ice Pick Pete. He lays on the floor like a collapsed marionette. Face bloodied and bruised.

ICE PICK PETE
Hope I find your boy 'fore you do,
Preacher.

INT. GUNTHER JAIL - DAY

Gunther adds more money figures on a ledger with "Sparrow" on top.

Sparrow rips another poster off the wall.

GUNTHER
Should be able to rebuild your home
in no time, Sparrow.

Gunther looks up. Sparrow already left.

EXT. SPARROW HOME - DAY

Snow blankets the valley. Charred stubs jut up here and there. A cold mockery of what was Sparrow's happy home.

CRUNCH! Sparrow's boot crushes the virgin white powder as he alights from his wagon.

He stares at the blackened remnants.

SPARROW
You've abandoned me, Lord.

He moves to one of the jagged posts.

SPARROW
I'm like this burned up...

His voice dies. He kicks the post. It doesn't give.

SPARROW
No leads.

He kicks it again. Again it remains solid.

SPARROW

No trail.

He kicks it harder.

SPARROW

No killers.

He kicks it as hard as he can. Still no give.

SPARROW

No Matty.

He kicks the post again and again and again. It barely moves.

SPARROW

Aaaarrrggggghhhh!

He growls a frustrated sigh. His breath becomes an instant cloud. He watches it vanish into the icy air.

SPARROW

What is this life?

He exhales again on purpose. Again a cloud forms then disappears.

SPARROW

A vapor that appeareth for a little time.

He exhales again. The vapor forms, evaporates.

SPARROW

Then vanisheth away.

He stares at his former homestead. Lifts his head to the heavens.

SPARROW

You're not going to help?

His jaw tightens. In his eyes resolve replaces defeat.

He spins, strides back to his wagon. Snatches the poster from it. A hate filled, pencil drawn face. Heavy beard, bushy eyebrows and a bald head. Empty black eyes stare back at him.

On the poster reads -- "*CAIN MULLINS(30s) Killed too many to count. Wanted Dead. \$1000 Dollars.*"

SPARROW

Little time.

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - BACK YARD - DAY

A NOOSE flies out and snags DAISY and BEAR(8). They laugh and giggle as they run around the house. They fall down, laugh all the more.

SUPER: "1890"

Sassy, knife in hand, winds back and slings it.

The knife sticks a burlap sack dressed to look like a person smack in the heart. The sack filled with potatoes.

Sassy lifts a bottle of liquor up, pours it in an old tin cup. She slurps it down.

She looks like she hasn't bathed in a couple of days. Her face tired, she's dressed in jeans and a wrinkled flannel.

MATTY(10) rides in on a horse and gathers in the rope cinched around the Twins. A handsome young man, spitting image of Sparrow.

Sassy smiles.

SASSY

Very good, Badger. That's my big bronco buster.

Matty looks up and grins. He flicks the rope to loosen it and let the twins get out.

MATTY

Think Pa'll let me drive them cattle this year?

Sassy loses her smile. The twins jump up and take off.

DAISY

Can't get us, Badger.

They disappear around the house.

MATTY

Can you at least ask? I'm big enough.

Sassy half steps over to the potato sack, yanks out the knife.

SASSY

We'll see.

She returns to her set spot and winds up again.

MATTY

'We'll see' always means no!

Foster bursts out the door, newspaper in hand.

FOSTER

Good money after bad, huh?

He stops when he sees Matty.

FOSTER

Get to your chores, boy.

Matty looks at Sassy with hope she'll broach the subject.

Sassy slings the knife, this times misses. It sticks into a nearby tree. She spins on Foster.

SASSY

Can't you see I'm practicing?

Foster smacks the paper.

FOSTER

What'd I tell ya? What'd I tell
ya?

Matty watches them both for a brief moment, hangs his head and rides back around the house.

Sassy looks at Foster, exasperated. Pours another drink.

SASSY

You have to be so nasty to him all
the time?

FOSTER

Just lookin' at him makes me sick.

Sassy glares at him.

SASSY

Lookin' at you makes me--

She stops herself. Foster glares.

FOSTER

Makes you what?

Sassy gulps the liquor.

SASSY

Makes me thirsty.

FOSTER
Swilling early.

SASSY
I swill early, you swill late.
What's the difference? You're
never around any more no ways.

Foster tries to snatch the cup from her hand. Sassy dodges him and steps back.

FOSTER
Difference is I can handle mine.

Sassy wanders to the tree, cup in hand.

SASSY
Well you ain't handlin' the most
important.

FOSTER
What's that supposed to mean?

Sassy jerks the knife out, spins, eyes on fire as she glares at him. Then her guard drops, a brief moment of longing.

But her face hardens again.

SASSY
Forget it.

She wanders back to get set to throw.

FOSTER
Next time you go running at the
mouth again about someone not
knowing something--

Sassy raises her arm to throw the knife. Foster cuts in front of her, holds the *CLEMENCY BULLETIN NEWSPAPER* in her face.

Large bold type -- "*Sherman Silver Purchase Act Signed into Law.*"

A Headline below reads -- "*Railroads Gearing for Expansion*"

FOSTER (O.S.)
Maybe you should check to see what
they don't know.

Sassy tries to focus, but can't. Not on his words nor on the headlines. She swings the knife down on the paper, slices it in two.

Foster holds both halves. His face turns beet red mad.

FOSTER
You could've cut me.

Sassy laughs.

SASSY
Would've been more fun than we've
had in years.

Sassy sidesteps him, slings the knife, sticks the head this time. She turns back to the porch rail, pours another drink.

FOSTER
I'm trying to make us rich. This
law says the Government has to buy
four million more ounces of silver
a month.

SASSY
So.

FOSTER
So, that means more miners, more
trains chugging in and out of
Clemency, more railroads goin'
everywhere, and more beef to sell.
Give us the life we always wanted.

Sassy spins on him.

SASSY
The life you always wanted.

FOSTER
Talkin' about Lilac? You always
wanted to be an Uppity Up.

SASSY
I always hated the Uppity Ups.
You're doin' for you. And your
loser Papa.

She puts the cup to her mouth to take a drink. Foster starts to backhand her, stops himself just short. Sassy flinches, the cup smacks against her lip, busts it.

FOSTER
Don't you never raise my Papa
again.

Sassy staggers back, puts her hand to her mouth, glances down at her bloodied hand.

Rage wells up in her eyes. She throws the cup at him, he knocks it away. She charges him. She tries to scratch his face. He grabs her two hands and stops her.

FOSTER
Calm down, woman.

She screams, tries to wrench herself from his grip.

SASSY
Money ain't nothin' if you ain't
happy.

Her blood splatters his face.

FOSTER
That's your choice.

Foster shoves her to the ground, stomps back to the house. Sassy pushes herself up, sobs.

SASSY
We was happier runnin' and free.

Foster calls back.

FOSTER
You're just too stupid to know when
you got it good.

Sassy jumps up, runs to the knife. Foster just gets to the door.

SASSY (O.S.)
I hate you!

The knife sticks in the frame right next to his head. Foster stops, looks at it. Doesn't turn.

FOSTER
You're lucky that missed.

SASSY
Didn't miss. One of your eyes
gonna get awful tired stayin' open
all the time.

Foster snatches the knife out of the frame, turns and charges Sassy. She back peddles, throws her hands up to fend him off.

The knife raised above his head, he grabs her by the throat. Murder in his eyes, he shoves her back against the sack of potatoes.

Sassy looks up at him, her face a twisted knot. Her mouth swollen. Blood drips down her chin onto his arm.

Foster squeezes her neck harder. She begins to choke out.

He looks her in the eyes for a long moment, searches for what was lost. Comes down with the knife right next to her cheek, buries it in the sack.

FOSTER

Clean up. Look like month old bread.

He releases her, takes a handkerchief out, wipes the blood off his arm, tosses it at her and stomps away.

Sassy slinks down against the sack, hacks out, cries, struggles to get her breath back. She takes his hanky, throws it back towards him.

Foster goes inside, slams the door.

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - DAY

Matty pushes his back against the corner of the house, tears run down his face.

EXT. FREE FALLING MINING CAMP - NIGHT

A moonless sky makes the dark even darker.

The CREAK of a wagon wheel as a horse draws past a SIGN --

"FREE FALLING MINING CAMP". Hastily scribbled below in red paint -- *"Enter at your own RISK!"*

The wagon continues past the sign down the narrow main dirt road that cuts between makeshift lean-to's, and various size tents.

Individual camp fires burn here and there, hard looking MINERS drink, laugh, and argue around them.

No one looks up at the PASSER-BY in the wagon, save for one GUY. He has a guitar and picks *"Down in the Valley"*. The wagon passes, he stares after it, but continues on.

Unintelligible SHOUTS breaks out over the rest of the cacophony.

TWO MEN tumble out of a tent in a fit of brawling and grunting. They topple each other in front of the wagon.

The wagon doesn't hesitate, even when it gets close to the two drunken fighters. They roll on the ground, grapple out of the way.

The wagon continues, until it stops at the largest tent in the place. Outside the closed double flap doors, a SIGN -- "POKER and LIQUOR"

More UNINTELLIGIBLE VOICES until --

GRUFF VOICE (O.S.)
Three Kings high!

INT. FREE FALLING POKER TENT - NIGHT

Five CARDS slam on a table. An eight, a ten, and three kings. In the middle of the table, an overflow of bills and coin.

FOUR MEN sit at the table. Two sit in front of hands that have been thrown in.

MEN of all sorts, and sizes sit around other tables. They play poker, no attention paid to this table.

Others drink and watch from the edges of the large tent. Lanterns hang all around.

A bar along one side. A BARTENDER fills glasses and keeps the clientele well oiled. The place smoky from cigars and cigarettes.

BACK AT:

The TABLE

Cain Mullins, looks just like his poster, sits in front of the three kings hand. A greedy glint in his eyes, and a smug look on his face, stares across at FLOYD(20s), dirty, skinny fellow with shifty eyes.

Cain waits for Floyd to lay down his losers. Floyd obliges, one at a time.

A four. A nine.

CAIN
Ha!

Cain glances at the other two at the table. They smirk back.

An ace.

Cain looks back at Floyd.

Another ace.

Cain wipes his mouth, the smile goes with it.

Floyd's eyes dart back and forth to the two other players. Slowly he lays down the last card.

The ace of spades.

Floyd snickers and begins to pull the pot towards himself.

FLOYD

You shore thought you skinned the
cat on that one.

CLICK!

Floyd looks up. Face to barrel. Cain's pistol.

CAIN

That's *my* pot.

Floyd freezes, dares not eyeball Cain. The other two players stare mutely at Cain's gun.

Floyd pushes the pot back towards Cain.

FLOYD

And it's a powerful hand you got
there, Cain. Powerful.

SPARROW (O.S.)

Cain Mullins.

Without missing a beat, Cain whips his gun towards the intruding voice.

Sparrow stands with his head down, just inside the opening flap. The top of his black hat all anyone sees.

In his right gloved hand, a torch. In his left gloved hand, what looks like a long piece of twine that disappears back behind him.

In the flame of the torch his ominous shadow dances against the tent wall behind him. Sparrow, all in black, looks like he just rose up from the Bottomless Pit.

The room goes stone cold silent.

SPARROW

Here to drag you in.

At that, everyone snatches their guns and points them at Sparrow. A chorus of CLICKING as they cock back their hammers.

Sparrow keeps his head down.

SPARROW

Uh, uh. Planted dynamite all
around this tent.

He spreads his hands out. Reveals he wears sticks of dynamite woven together like a vest. Holds up the piece of twine for all to see.

SPARROW

This snake's itchin' to crawl.

He holds it near the torch.

SPARROW

Blow a hole so deep, won't be no
need to stand in line to get to
Hades.

Sparrow raises his head for the first time. His hellish visage takes their breath away.

The SOUND of all the hammers click back into place.

SPARROW

Ten years back a preacher's wife
was killed and his baby boy taken.

Cain sneers.

CAIN

I heard 'bout you. Melted
Minister. Angel of Death.

FLOYD

Demon of the dark.

Cain lets out a belly laugh, then spits.

CAIN

How 'bout Stupid Sparrow. Cause you
wasted ten years of your life
lookin' for a ghost.

Sparrow lifts his head a little more. Fire in his eyes reflect the torch.

CAIN
Runnin' 'round showing everyone
that gold bird of yers.

Sparrow remains silent.

CAIN
Awww. Your wife got snuffed and
your baby got took. Ain't God
good, Preacher?

Everyone laughs. Sparrow glances around. All pistols still
on him.

CAIN
Think you're just gonna waltz in
here and take me past all these
guns?

More laughter.

SPARROW
Psalms thirty-seven talks about the
wicked man.

Cain sneers.

CAIN
I ain't never went to *Sundy* school.

SPARROW
Do not fret because of those who
are evil. Or be envious of those
who do wrong.

CAIN
But I robbed me a church once.

Cain guffaws. Everyone snickers.

CAIN
Preacher pissed his britches right
there in his shoutin' box.

Cain's eyes go dark, his face like death.

CAIN
Afore I sent him to be with Jesus.

Sparrow continues unfazed.

SPARROW

For like the grass they will soon
wither. Like green plants they will
soon die away.

Cain rises up. His chair tumbles back.

CAIN

I'll plant you.

Sparrow sticks the fuse into the torch.

SPARROW

I'm only here for Cain. But we can
all go together.

CAIN

You gonna piss yourself too Stupid
Sparrow?

The fuse lights. Fear grips everyone but Cain.

All guns swing towards him.

EXT. FREE FALLING POKER TENT - NIGHT

Cain, tied upside down on the sled, hollers at the top of his
lungs.

CAIN

You ninny, home spun school marms.
You'd sell your grannies for a
thimble of rot gut.

The sled gets yanked away, the wagon pulls out down the
street.

INT. FREE FALLING POKER TENT - NIGHT

Floyd, the two other poker players, and a NEW GUY sit at the
table. They play cards.

FLOYD

Didn't like him nowadays. He were a
cheat.

A MINER picks up the charred end of the twine Sparrow had.
He pulls on it. The other end comes right to him.

MINER

Hey. This wa'nt 'tached to nuthin'.

INT. GUNTHER JAIL CELL - DAY

Gunther slams the door on Cain. Bruised and bloodied, his clothes are ragged out.

Gunther goes out. Sparrow follows.

Cain shakes the bars and shouts.

CAIN

Just goin' 'round bringing in
killers and such lookin' for the
one who made you quit God.

Sparrow comes back in.

SPARROW

Didn't quit God. He quit me.

Cain chuckles through his pain.

CAIN

I love that story.

GUNTHER (O.S.)

Shut up in there.

GUNTHER JAIL

Gunther takes out a ledger from his desk with "Church Building Fund" on top.

GUNTHER

Or you won't make it to the noose.

Sparrow comes in.

SPARROW

Hundred to me. Nine to the church.

Gunther records the figure.

GUNTHER

Got enough to start building the
church.

Sparrow signs the ledger.

SPARROW

So build it.

Gunther slips the ledger back into his desk.

GUNTHER

No one never wanted to start
without you. Hoping you'd help.

Sparrow heads out the door.

SPARROW

I have been.

EXT. TOWN OF CLEMENCY - DAY

Foster pulls up the street in his wagon.

SUPER: *"Silver Panic of 1893"*

The town eerily quiet. Stores appear closed, empty. PEOPLE run past Foster towards the other end of Main Street. He calls out to a MAN who runs by.

FOSTER

Where's the fandango?

The man tosses the Clemency Bulletin at him, doesn't stop.

MAN

At the bank!

Foster halts the wagon, stands up, yells after him.

FOSTER

What for?

The man keeps on, doesn't answer. Foster glances down at the HEADLINE -- *"Grover Cleveland, Congress, Repeal Sherman Silver Purchase Act!"*

Smaller Headline under a picture of a Bank with a closed sign on it reads -- *"Banks Collapse. Railroads Go Bankrupt."*

Foster grabs his chest, drops the paper. It flies off into the street.

EXT. DOLOR MAIN STREET - DAY

A flyer carried by the wind lands against Sparrow. He peels it off himself, glances at it.

"Dolor Church Potluck, Dedication. April 21st, 1894. All Are Welcome!"

A picture of the new Dolor church underneath.

As he moves down the street in his wagon, the church can be seen at the end behind him. Wooden scaffolding boxes it in. WORKERS mount the twelve foot wooden cross on top. It reaches into the clear blue sky.

INT. GUNTHER JAIL - DAY

Sparrow pins the church flyer to the "Activities Board". Goes to the Wanted Poster wall. He peruses the once again filled up wall.

SPARROW
When did all these come in?

Gunther at his desk, fills out paperwork.

GUNTHER
Past few months.

Sparrow shakes his head.

GUNTHER
No man can keep up with the wicked
in this world.

Sparrow spots an EIGHT MAN GANG poster. *"The Ruthless Women and Children Murdering TNT GANG"*

Small pictures of each, except one. A large picture of FUSE(40s), the gang's leader. His head big as an anvil, a look that'll make a grizzly run.

Below the pictures -- *"\$5000.00 Dollars. DEAD"*

Sparrow mumbles.

SPARROW
Murderin' women and children.

Sparrow's black gloved finger stabs the poster.

SPARROW
How 'bout this one?

Gunther looks up.

GUNTHER
Couple months back, too. Seems
like hell itself broke loose once
people started losing their life
savings and homes.

He goes back to writing.

GUNTHER

Thank God we could keep people
working building the new church.

Gunther looks back up.

GUNTHER

Thanks to you, too.

Sparrow doesn't answer.

GUNTHER

Now wait a minute. You're good,
Sparrow. I'll give you that.
Better than I ever thought.

Sparrow turns to him.

GUNTHER

But that there's eight of the
meanest, no account, soulless
murderers that ever buffed a
saddle.

Sparrow has a ruby red apple in his hand. He bites into it.

SPARROW

Last known whereabouts?

Gunther grabs a paper off the top of one of his desk piles.

GUNTHER

Got a wire in yesterday. 'Tween
Dolor and Clemency.

Gunther flings it back to his desk, realizes he should have
kept his mouth shut.

GUNTHER

Heck, that Fuse feller and I have
had run ins before and he always
bested me. Get the drop on him and
somehow like water out a busted
trough. Right through.

Sparrow takes another bite of the crisp fruit. Gunther sees
he's not swaying him, gets up and grabs Sparrow by the arm.

GUNTHER

I can't let you go after them.

Sparrow wrests his arm from him, chucks the apple at the
garbage basket. Misses.

SPARROW
You can't stop me.

Gunther gets red faced.

GUNTHER
I know I can't stop you.

Gunther sighs.

GUNTHER
Sparrow, please. You've been going
over ten years now.

Sparrow takes the gold sparrow pendant out of his pocket.
Rubs it.

SPARROW
Twelve years, eight months, twenty-
one days.

Gunther steps back, realizes how much pain Sparrow is still
in. Gunther goes back to him. Puts his hand on his shoulder.

GUNTHER
And you're still no closer to
finding Marjorie's killers, or
Matty.

Sparrow glares at him.

SPARROW
You don't think I know that?!

Sparrow spins and punches the Wanted Poster wall. Presses
his head against it. Squeezes his eyes shut.

SPARROW
I relive sending them off over and
over.

GUNTHER
You didn't know.

Sparrow spins to him.

SPARROW
I should've protected them.

GUNTHER
Don't let guilt ride you to the
grave.

SPARROW

And why would whoever did this kill the Pauluses, then ride to my house with Marjorie and Matty when they had the money in the wagon?

GUNTHER

Maybe they didn't.

Sparrow shakes his head.

SPARROW

I'm like a spinning wheel with no wool.

GUNTHER

They could've been at your house, kidnapped the Pauluses and Matty, then for whatever reason, killed the preacher and his wife on the trail.

Sparrow hangs his head.

SPARROW

I should've protected them.

GUNTHER

You know the whole town went out lookin'. Even after you started hunting, we didn't stop. I wired every sheriff within a hundred mile radius. But truth is that train ran out of tracks the day we verified those bodies were the Cloversburg preacher and his wife.

Sparrow lets out a growl of frustration.

SPARROW

Matty is out there. He'll be a man soon and I'll never have the chance to be his daddy.

His face relaxes. His voice softens.

SPARROW

I'm not giving up. I'll never give up.

Sparrow turns back to the board.

GUNTHER
Sparrow. God chose you to be a
Minister. Save souls. Not collect
them.

SPARROW
God don't even look my way anymore.

Sparrow snatches the TNT Gang poster, heads out the door.

GUNTHER
You're wrong, Sparrow. His eyes
are always on you.

The sound of the wagon squeaks away.

GUNTHER
Sparrow! Blaze it all.

Gunther dashes to his gun and holster that hangs on a wall
peg.

INT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - BEDROOM - DAY

Foster lies in bed, asleep.

CRASH! A glass smashes on the wall above him, raining shards
down all over. He wakes with a start. Grabs his heart.

SASSY (O.S.)
You.

Sassy at the end of the bed, wavers. Drunk. Dressed
haphazardly in one of her fancy dresses. She holds her knife
by her side. A fist full of papers in the other hand.

FOSTER
You crazy?

Foster pushes himself up, brushes some of the glass off.

SASSY
Sunk it all into those railroad
bonds. Now we're losing
everything.

Foster eases out of the bed, shakes the glass out of his
hair.

FOSTER
Ain't losing everything. Still got
this ranch, the cattle.

Sassy holds up the papers.

SASSY
The bank is taking it all.

She throws the papers at him. He grabs one off the bed, reads it.

FOSTER
They can't do this. They got our
money still.

He looks up at her. She looks a mess. Disheveled. Unkempt. Her eyes, blood shot raving mad.

FOSTER
I'll handle this.

Sassy staggers to grab a bottle of whiskey off the dresser. She snags it up, laughs.

SASSY
Oh, like you've been handling
everything else from the beginning.

She takes a swig. Foster stalks towards her.

FOSTER
Don't start with me. Can't you see
I need peace?

Sassy holds up the knife.

SASSY
Oh, I'm gonna give you peace.

Foster lunges at her. She takes a swipe at him as she moves backwards.

FOSTER
You wanna stab me now? You wanna
kill me?

Foster moves towards her. Sassy backs up. Swings the knife at him again.

FOSTER
C'mon, Li-lac.

Sassy backs out the door, gulps the whiskey again, holds the knife at the ready.

Foster grabs his chest, bends over a moment.

Sassy laughs.

SASSY

You're pathetic. First sign of trouble, instead of being a man, you keel over like your loser Papa.

Foster looks up in a rage.

FOSTER

I told you never to raise my Papa again!

Foster lets out a guttural scream, charges her. Sassy backs up all the way to the rail.

Foster bulls right onto her, stops. His eyes grow wide. He looks down, the knife buried in his stomach.

A bloody splotch begins to grow across his under shirt.

Sassy looks down at the knife, shocked that he's been stabbed. She looks back into his face. Foster looks back up at her.

Their eyes lock. For a moment, Sassy sobers.

SASSY

What happened to us, Foster? We was better when we was killin' for what we got.

Foster's countenance drops. He winces.

FOSTER

We was wrong, Sassy. And this is our payback.

They stare at each other for a long moment, both realize what they have lost.

FOSTER

That's why I can't stand lookin' at that boy. Like my past always in front of me.

An angry cloud crosses Sassy's face once more.

SASSY

That's our son.

FOSTER

That's our *sin*.

Sassy gets irate, pushes him back. He grabs her arms to restrain her.

SASSY

You're weak. Like your dead Papa.
I'd of been better off not knowing
you.

Anger runs up Foster's neck, into his eyes. He grabs Sassy by the throat, lets out a wail, and lifts her up above the balcony rail.

The bottle jerks out of her hand, crashes to the floor below. She grips his wrists to hold herself up.

FOSTER

Look around, Sassy. It's all been
a lie.

Sassy rages.

SASSY

No!

She flails, kicks him. He loses his grip on her. Sassy's eyes grow wide, she tumbles back over the balcony.

SCREAMS!

Foster reaches over the rail for her.

THUD!

The front door opens. MATTY(14) runs in.

MATTY

Momma? Mom....

His voice cuts off when he spots Sassy's broken body. She lays twisted in the shattered glass.

DEAD.

He looks up at Foster. Their eyes meet. Tears in Foster's eyes. Terror seizes Matty's.

Foster pushes himself off the rail, staggers towards the stairs.

FOSTER

Badger!

Matty races out.

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - DAY

Matty bolts around the house towards the horse stables. He runs into Daisy(12) and Bear(12).

BEAR

Where you lighting off so fast?

Matty grabs them, hugs them real quick, releases them.

MATTY

Hurry. Run get, Josiah.

Matty scrambles past them. Looks back.

MATTY

And don't go in the house. And stay away from Pa!

Daisy and Bear stare after him dumbfounded.

MATTY

Git!

Matty rushes into the stables. They take off.

INT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - DAY

Foster struggles down the stairs. He weakens, slips, lands on his rear, and slides. Grabs the rail, stops himself.

He sits for a second, looks down at the knife in his gut and the red splotch on his shirt. His voice hoarse, he mutters.

FOSTER

Oh, Sassy. Oh God, forgive me.

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - DAY

Matty races out of the stalls on his horse, past the house, down the driveway.

Tears streak back across his face. He pushes the animal fast as it can get away.

Behind him, Josiah and the twins run towards the house.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - NIGHT

The woods thick. The moon provides little light. VOICES pierce the quiet darkness.

DUSTY (O.S.)
 I ain't gonna be the one to tell
 Fuse his plan don't add up.

A small campfire splinters the night air with a crackle. Two horses stand just outside the light of the fire.

A SHADOWY FIGURE(Matty) sneaks up to the side of one of the horses, lifts the saddlebag flap and rummages through it.

Sitting next to the fire on a log, DUSTY(20s). He swigs out of a bottle, grabs up a dead rabbit by its ears, yells out.

DUSTY
 Lorne. You gonna piss all night or
 start on this here blacktail? Or I
 got dig into my jerky?

Matty snags a cloth wrapped jerky out of the bag, turns to sneak away. Another DARK FIGURE(LORNE,50s) throws a sack over him.

LORNE
 Think your jerky just got jerked,
 Dusty.

Lorne shoves Matty into the small camp. He stumbles and sprawls to the ground with the sack over him. Dusty drops the hare, springs up and over to Matty.

DUSTY
 I'll kill 'em.

Dusty kicks Matty in the midriff. The sack doubles up. Lorne cuts in between them.

LORNE
 Hold it.

Lorne spits out a wad of tobacco.

LORNE
 Fuse finds out you snuffed this
 little thief without givin' him
 first hide, he'll be lookin' to
 take it outta yers.

DUSTY
 Yeah, I'd rather get stomped by a
 herd of buffalo.

Dusty takes another swig of the bottle, wipes his mouth.

DUSTY
How'z Fuse gonna know?

LORNE
You know I spit beans once my lips
touch the fire.

DUSTY
And someone's gonna plant you with
a bad plum because of it.

Lorne just spits and shrugs, like he'd almost welcome that.

Matty tries to roll away. Dusty brakes him with his boot.

DUSTY
Alright.
(to Matty)
Boy. You about to meet your taker.

Dusty reaches down and rips the cloth wrapped jerky out of
Matty's hand, gives him another swift kick.

EXT. SPARROW HOME - NIGHT

The site barely resembles a place that used to have a home on
it. Even the charred posts are gone but one.

Sparrow's wagon parked nearby.

SPARROW (O.S.)
Abel's blood cried from the ground.

Sparrow stands close to where Gunther found him, a grossly
dark figure lit by the sliver of the moon.

SPARROW
You answered it.

He surveys the forlorn abandoned homesite. The gold sparrow
pendant wrapped around his gloved hand.

A tear makes its way down the thick scarred tissue that
serves as his face.

He walks over to the last stump standing. The one he kicked
before. And kicks it.

It crumbles away.

SPARROW
Even the ground forgets.

Sparrow's shoulders droop. His legs can no longer stand under the weight of a life that feels wasted.

He drops to his knees, removes his hat. His scarred head with patchy long hair and melted features a lifetime removed from the handsome, hope filled young preacher.

SPARROW

Why? Why did you call me when you knew this was going to happen?

Sparrow begins to weep.

SPARROW

I don't understand.

He wipes his eyes. Raises the pendant towards the heavens. It glints in the moonlight.

SPARROW

A dozen years back, a preacher's wife in Dolor was murdered and his son taken.

Sparrow waits, listens. Nothing, not even crickets.

SPARROW

You are no respecter of persons.
Where's Marjorie's answer? Where's
Matty's answer?

He drops his arm, squeezes the pendant to his chest, all that's left of his beloved Marjorie.

He gets angry. Yells at God.

SPARROW

Where's my answer?

His voice echoes into the valley, then fades into an oppressive silence. The darkness crushes him.

He exhales a heavy sigh that carries so many lost hopes and dreams.

SPARROW

Marjorie, Matty. I've failed you.

Sparrow weeps.

SPARROW

Forgive me, Lord.

He looks to the sky.

SPARROW

Forgive me for holding all of this
against you. All these years I ran
from you to do it myself.

He struggles up. Stops.

SPARROW

Please. If he's out there. Please,
bring Matty back to me.

He brushes the last of the post across the ground with his
boot.

SPARROW

(sings)
It is well with my soul.

His gravelly voice breaks as he struggles to stir his spirit.

SPARROW

(sings)
*It is well with my soul. It is
well, it is well...*

EXT. TNT GANG CAMP - DUSK

Several wagons and horses just outside a small clearing.

SPARROW (V.O.)

(sings)
...with my soul.

LACKEY(20s) off loads one of the wagons, shoulders a tied up
sack.

INT. TNT GANG CAMP

Lackey drops the sack next to the fire pit.

DUSTY (O.S.)

Looky what cat we drugged in.

Lackey turns to see Dusty and Lorne ride into camp.

Dusty jumps off his mount, drags the sack bound Matty off the
back of his horse, yokes him up by the rope tied around his
wrists.

Matty can barely stand.

CASPER(Teens), DOVER(20s), ROSCOE(30s), JARED(50s) run in from different directions.

Dusty shoves Matty forward. Lorne guffaws.

Matty stumbles until he tumbles into the dust next to the large hooves of a horse. A fierce charcoal black horse.

Atop it, and towering over the others -- Fuse. A mountain of a man, and ugly, just like his poster.

A permanent sneer so hateful it's impossible a smile ever crawled across his face. A stub of a cigar barely survives the corner of his mouth.

He holds a sawed off double barrel coach shotgun across his lap.

LORNE

Caught him trying to lift Dusty's jerky.

DUSTY

Little thief.

Fuse points his shot gun towards Matty, flicks it upwards.

LORNE

Here, kitty kitty.

Lorne and Dusty snatch Matty off the ground like a marionette.

FUSE

See who'd dare steal from the TNT Gang.

Dusty cackles, rips off the hood.

Matty sports a bloodied lip, scrapes and bruises on his swollen face, barely stands conscious. If they didn't hold him up, he'd collapse.

FUSE

He's between hay and grass.

Matty spits out.

MATTY

Old enough to take you.

The Gang lets out a loud laugh on that one.

ROSCOE

You got you a wild kitty, Dusty.

Fuse slides down off his horse. Strides over and busts Matty in the gut with the butt of his gun. Matty doubles over. Dusty and Lorne hold him up. Everyone squawks and hollers.

DUSTY

Wanted you to have first hide,
Fuse.

Dusty laughs a nervous laugh. Fuse already focused on Matty doesn't acknowledge Dusty.

FUSE

Hope you had some of that jerky.
Your last meal runt.

Matty raises his head, peers through black eyes at Fuse.

MATTY

I'll eat after I bury you.

"Ohh's, Ahh's, and LAUGHTER" fill the night air. The Gang watches Fuse. Fuse glares at them.

FUSE

What're y'all gagging 'bout. He's
got bigger stones than all of you.

Silence.

Matty stares at Fuse. Fuse looks back at him, winds back to throw a punch.

INT. TNT GANG CAMP - NIGHT

THUD! The dull sound of a knock out.

A hooded Matty hangs upside down from a tree, hands tied behind his back. The light of the campfire casts a golden glow on him.

ROWDY VOICES as the Gang finish their dinner.

EXT. TNT GANG CAMP - NIGHT

Casper and Dover stagger away from camp.

DOVER

One day, Casper, I'm gonna have me
my own place with an outhouse in
the house.

Casper shoves him playfully.

CASPER

If the outhouse was in the house,
wouldn't be called an outhouse.

Dover pushes him back.

DOVER

Well, then, I'll have an inhouse.

They disappear into the woods.

CASPER (O.S.)

Phew. Remind me never to visit
you.

INT. TNT GANG CAMP - NIGHT

Roscoe cleans up the meal. Dusty and Jared finish, get up,
each one with a bottle of liquor, wander over to Matty. They
poke Matty and prod him. Dusty takes a swig.

DUSTY

Don't know, boss. You might've
snuffed out his lantern for good.

Fuse lays back on his gear, boots up on a log, his hat down
over his eyes. He grunts.

FUSE

If so, we'll cut him down tomorrow
and bury him.

JARED

If not?

FUSE

We'll cut him down tomorrow and
bury him.

Everyone laughs.

Dusty and Jared drink as they swing Matty back and forth
between them.

EXT. TNT GANG CAMP - NIGHT

The warm flicker of the campfire dances through the forest.

A dark FIGURE moves behind a tree. The person peeks out to spy on the gang.

SPARROW

He watches Roscoe pick up the dishes. Lackey and Lorne play cards and drink.

Sparrow moves to the other side of the tree, spots Dusty and Jared. They laugh and swing Matty back and forth.

CLICK! Sparrow freezes.

Dover stabs his pistol into Sparrow's neck.

DOVER
Move a hair. Please.

EXT. WILDERNESS - NIGHT

Gunther stands in the dark, gazes across a small valley at a campfire that burns in the close distance. He watches a DARK FIGURE(Boyd) ride full speed through the valley and up towards him.

Boyd gets down and hustles up to him.

GUNTHER
Sparrow know you were tailing him?

Boyd. Shakes his head.

BOYD
No. But, Sheriff.

Boyd stops, out of breath.

BOYD
They got Sparrow.

GUNTHER
Alright, men.

Gunther turns, faces about TWENTY eager guys. Belden, Tom, and an older LUKE(22) with them. All from Dolor. Behind them, several wagons with pine boxes on the back.

GUNTHER
Gonna do this the Sparrow way.

INT. TNT GANG CAMP - NIGHT

Sparrow sprawls to the ground. His face in the dirt, his hat still on.

CASPER

Hey, boss. Looks like our kitty got himself a friend.

DOVER

A full grown stray.

Fuse knocks his hat back, pushes up.

Jared, Lackey, Dusty, Lorne, and Roscoe join Casper and Dover. They circle their new plaything.

FUSE

Seems we're running a popular hotel. Let's check our guest in.

Casper and Lackey grab Sparrow up. Fuse busts him in the gut with his sawed-off. Sparrow keels over, drops to his knees.

Fuse motions for them to pull up his head. Casper yanks it back.

They GASP! Fuse rips Sparrow's hat off.

ROSCOE

Hell fire. Looks like he just rolled out of the flame.

Fuse peers into Sparrow's face, snorts. Sparrow glares back at him.

FUSE

Well, well. This ain't no ordinary guest we got here.

Fuse hands Roscoe his shotgun. Turns and rips away Sparrow's shirt. Dover and Casper hold onto his wrists, pull his arms straight out. They stare, repulsed, too stunned to say anything.

Sparrow forces himself to stand. Dover and Casper hold tighter.

FUSE

Wait. He wants to ask us a question.

Fuse grabs Sparrow's head, takes a good long look at him. Sparrow glares. A smile almost breaks across Fuse's face. Almost.

FUSE

No. Let me. A while ago, someone killed a Preacher's wife. Took his kid.

LACKEY

So.

Fuse backhands Lackey. Lackey stumbles back.

FUSE

So?

Fuse growls.

FUSE

Have some respect.

Fuse turns back to Sparrow. With as much admiration for another as could ever come from Fuse, he announces to them.

FUSE

This here's...*The Preacher*.

Everyone stands in awe, if for only the fact that Fuse gives this pitiful sight so much honor.

FUSE

The famous, Melted Minister.

Suddenly, a few of the guys recognize his fame.

LORNE

Angel of Death.

CASPER

Bounty Hunter.

FUSE

Come to collect us.

Fuse grabs Sparrow by the jaw, studies his scarred up head, face, body, until he lands on his eyes.

FUSE

Heard it looks like you went through the fiery pit, but never figured.

Fuse shoves his head aside.

FUSE

Anything I'd do to you be like
passing through the pearly gates.

ROSCOE

I heard he carries a gold bird on
him. Shows it to folks, see if
they know it.

Fuse nods to Roscoe.

FUSE

Search him.

Roscoe digs in Sparrow's pockets until he pulls out the Gold Sparrow.

ROSCOE

This little thing?

Roscoe hands it to Fuse. Fuse lets it dangle in Sparrow's face.

FUSE

Ain't the size of it that gives it
value. It's the meaning.

Fuse slings the gold pendant around his finger, then grips it in his fist.

FUSE

Tell you what, Preacher.

Fuse shoves the gold bird in his pocket.

FUSE

I'm going to carry this with me
from now on. Show it to folks.
And if someone recognizes it, I'll
plug 'em where they stand. Then you
and your missus can rest in peace.

Sparrow's eyes widen with wrath. He struggles to get free. Fuse grabs him, digs his thumbs into his collarbone, forces him to his knees. Sparrow stops.

FUSE

No need to thank me, Preacher. You
earned that much over the years.

Sparrow's voice rasps out.

SPARROW

Give it back, or I promise I'll
take it off your dead body.

They all laugh. Except Fuse. Fuse knees Sparrow in the head. Sparrow goes limp.

Fuse grabs him up. Sparrow struggles to raise his head. When their eyes meet, Fuse punches him square in the face. Sparrow collapses.

Fuse drops him to the ground, walks away, leaves Sparrow an unconscious lump.

FUSE

Hood 'im and hang 'im. Check out's
at dawn.

INT. TNT GANG CAMP - NIGHT

The fire continues to warm the night air. The Gang bundled and asleep next to it.

Sparrow hangs upside down next to Matty. Like a couple of giant bats. Neither one moves.

INT./EXT. TNT GANG CAMP - NIGHT

Jared leans against a tree, stands guard. Asleep. A hand reaches in, covers his mouth, his eyes snap open. He gets snatched away.

THUMP! A muffled hit.

A line of Dolor men, pass a knocked out, tied up Jared back to a wagon. His mouth gagged, they stick him in a pine box, shut it, rope it closed.

Around the camp, the men wrap the trees with rope about chest high. As the final tree gets tied, the last guy jerks the rope up and down.

The next man feels the rope get jerked and he does the same thing to signal to the next tree. This signal continues all the way around until it gets to Gunther.

Gunther takes out a box of bullets. Nods to the man next to him to get ready. He steps out from the tree, lobs the box into the fire.

The men hold their breath, in what seems like forever, they wait for the bullets to explode.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

The rounds erupt like gunfire.

The Gang staggers up scatter away from the fire and into the woods. They get clotheslined by the ropes and dragged away by the Dolor Men.

All but Fuse.

Fuse wakes, jumps up with his gun, watches his gang run off like scared little pigs. He stalks his way to Sparrow and Matty. They have come to from all the racket.

Fuse takes cover behind them, keeps them in between him and the woods.

GUNTHER

Fuse. It's Sheriff Gunther of Dolor.

Fuse laughs.

FUSE

You the one throwin' me this surprise shindy?

GUNTHER

As a present you can come along quietly.

Fuse turns himself around and around, the bodies sandwich him.

The Dolor Men aim at Fuse.

FUSE

And I got a present for you.

Both Sparrow and Matty struggle to get free.

Fuse snatches Sparrow's head.

Gunther takes a bead on Fuse, waits for him to turn for a clean shot.

Fuse growls.

FUSE

Just needs a purty red bow.

Fuse cocks his sawed off, stabs it into Sparrow's skull. Matty jolts, knocks Fuse off balance.

BLAM! A gun shot rings out.

Fuse stands upright in the open. BLAM! He fires his shotgun.
Into the ground.

Fuse topples back like a lumberjack's trophy.

DEAD.

Gunther breathes a heavy sigh, knocks his hat back.

GUNTHER

Surprise.

INT. TNT GANG CAMP - NIGHT

A few of the Dolor men cut Sparrow down. Carry him over by the fire. A few of the other men cut Matty down. Lay him right there.

Gunther removes Sparrow's hood.

GUNTHER

You alright?

Sparrow gazes at him. Nods his head. Gunther hands him a shirt. The men remove Matty's bonds. Matty begins to flail.

LESTER

Easy, fella. You're good. You're good.

They hold him down, until he relaxes. Sparrow lifts his hand to Gunther. Gunther helps him up.

The men sit Matty up.

Sparrow staggers to Fuse's dead body. Digs in his pockets, pulls out the Gold Pendant.

Sparrow holds it up. It dangles in front of him. He glances over at the men pulling off Matty's hood. His back to Sparrow.

The hood comes off, the men GASP. Boyd looks over at Sparrow. The others turn to him.

Sparrow pushes up, pockets the gold pendant, steps over to them, their eyes never leave him. Sparrow gets to them, bends down to Matty. Matty turns to look at Sparrow, peers through swollen eyes.

Matty and Sparrow rear back.

Matty hollers. Sparrow shoves backwards into a tree.

SPARROW
What is this?

EXT. VALLEY - DAWN

The Dolor men sit on their horses, rifles up. Some on the wagons with the eight pine boxes.

Gunther stands in front of Sparrow. Sparrow on a horse. Matty on his horse next to Sparrow.

GUNTHER
I'm not too keen on just the two of you going back there. Think you should wait 'til I wire the Sheriff of Clemency.

SPARROW
We already went over this.

Gunther gazes at Sparrow, hands him up his Peacemaker.

GUNTHER
You're busted up pretty good. Don't try to be a hero. If his Pa killed his Ma...

Sparrow rejects the gun.

SPARROW
You know I'm a rope man.

Gunther reholsters it.

GUNTHER
Forgot you can't shoot center.

Gunther glances at Matty. Matty hangs his head.

GUNTHER
Sure you're alright, Badger?

Matty looks back at Gunther, over at Sparrow, nods his head.

Gunther reaches up to Sparrow. Sparrow clasps his hand for a firm handshake.

SPARROW
Had Fuse right where I wanted him.

Gunther smiles.

GUNTHER

I could tell. The way you two was tied up, strung up, and hanging upside down like bats. He was fixin' to beg for mercy.

Sparrow returns the smile, looks at the rest of the men.

SPARROW

Thank you, all.

They wave back, nod their heads.

BELDEN

Just get back in time for the potluck.

SPARROW

We'll see.

Sparrow turns the horse. Matty pulls next to him.

GUNTHER

Hey! Take care of my horse.

Sparrow calls back.

SPARROW

Take care of my wagon.

Gunther chuckles. They ride off. Boyd steps up to Gunther.

BOYD

Even busted up, I'da sworn that was.

He doesn't finish.

GUNTHER

You and me, both.

EXT. WILDERNESS - DUSK

Sparrow and Matty make their way over a mountain.

EXT. SPARROW/MATTY CAMP - NIGHT

Matty and Sparrow sit across from each other by a fire. Matty tears a piece of meat off a stick.

Sparrow holds the gold sparrow pendant, watches Matty's every move. Matty shoves the strip in his mouth.

MATTY

So you're a Preacher?

SPARROW

Was.

MATTY

Didn't know Preachers could be was.

Sparrow doesn't answer. He leans up, stokes the fire. Matty stares at his face.

MATTY

What happened?

Sparrow stops, gazes intent at Matty.

SPARROW

I know I'm a monster.

MATTY

You're not the monster. The one we're going back to. Hate him.

SPARROW

Hate is a hard one to ride with. Eventually no room on the saddle 'cept for him.

Only the crackle of the fire responds. Sparrow continues to stoke it.

SPARROW

My house was on fire. I went in to save my wife and baby.

MATTY

Did you?

Sparrow sits back, shakes his head.

MATTY

That why you ain't preaching no more?

SPARROW

Best get some sleep. Gotta long ride ahead tomorrow.

MATTY

You said I remind you of somebody.

Sparrow looks at him, rubs the pendant.

SPARROW

I knew this young man about your age. He always wanted to be a lawman...But God had a different plan.

Sparrow stops, stares into the fire, lost in his own head.

MATTY

What was it?

Sparrow focuses back on Matty.

SPARROW

Doesn't matter. He's long dead now.

Matty glances at what he's rubbing.

MATTY

What's that?

Sparrow shoves it back in his pocket.

SPARROW

My thorn in the flesh.

EXT. VALLEY - MORNING

The sun rises behind them as they ride on.

EXT. OPEN PLAIN - DAY

A lonely bush gets lassoed.

MATTY (O.S.)

Told you I'm an expert.

Matty draws his horse over to the bush, gets down and pulls the rope off it. Sparrow smiles at him.

MATTY

Practice on my kid brother and sister all the time, 'til my Pa lets me drive head with...

Matty looks away, fights back tears, but can't. He breaks down.

Sparrow alights, goes over, places his hand on his shoulder. Matty turns and clasps Sparrow. Matty bawls on his shoulder.

MATTY

My ma. She's dead. She's dead.

Sparrow doesn't know how to react. His arms up in the air, after a moment, he lets them fall down on Matty in a hug.

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - DUSK

Sparrow and Matty ease up to the main driveway.

A thunderstorm threatens.

SPARROW

Let me lead.

They make their way up the snake like path. Sparrow keeps a keen eye open for any movement.

Matty keeps his eyes on Sparrow.

The house sits dark, still, tomb like.

Not a word between them as they ease up to the front porch. Lightning crawls across the dark sky behind them. They slip off the horses, tie the reins to the hitching post.

Sparrow motions for Matty to keep quiet. He eases the lasso off the horse, steps onto the porch. Matty follows.

They creep up to the door, stand to the side of it.

Sparrow tries the knob, turns it, cracks the door open. He pauses, peeks in.

On a small table next to the couch, a single lantern lights the living room. A Colt Revolver rests on the table beside the lantern. In the lantern's halo Foster lies under a blanket on the couch. Eyes closed. No movement.

JOSIAH (O.S.)

Badger?

Sparrow spins, wraps the rope around him. A flash of lightning. Josiah catches Sparrow's face, gasps.

Matty calls out in a hushed tone.

MATTY

Josiah.

Bear and Daisy run up on the porch. Sparrow gets behind Josiah, turns him towards them.

Another flash of lightning. Bear and Daisy catch Sparrow's face. It steals their breath!

Sparrow glances at Matty.

MATTY

He's okay.

Josiah, Bear and Daisy look at Matty.

Sparrow keeps Josiah bound, not sure who Matty means.

MATTY

(to Sparrow)

It's Josiah. He's good.

Sparrow hesitates, releases him. Josiah sighs. Bear and Daisy don't take their eyes off Sparrow.

Sparrow whispers to Matty.

SPARROW

Someone lying on a couch in there.

JOSIAH

(to Matty)

Had us put him there case you come home. Don't want nobody but you.

MATTY

I don't want him. Where's Ma...body.

Bear and Daisy drop their heads. Sparrow notices, looks back at Josiah.

JOSIAH

Wouldn't bury her 'til you got back.

Matty seethes, looks towards the cracked open door.

MATTY

Bury him.

JOSIAH

Won't be long.

Matty looks back at Josiah.

JOSIAH
Took a knife to the gut.

MATTY
When?

Josiah looks to Sparrow, back to Matty.

JOSIAH
Talk about that later.

FOSTER (O.S.)
Josiah? That you?

Foster's calls out weakly. Matty looks at Sparrow.

INT./EXT FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - LIVING ROOM

The front door swings open wide. Silent flashes of lightning behind Sparrow's silhouette, lasso at the ready.

Foster squints.

FOSTER
Josiah?

Foster looks drained.

FOSTER
What about, Badger?

Sparrow turns, nods to Matty. Matty gathers a breath, slips past him.

Foster lifts a hand towards him. Matty steps forward, glares. Sparrow steps behind him.

Foster drops his arm.

FOSTER
Josiah! Said I only want to see
Badger!

Outside, Josiah hurries Daisy and Bear back around the house.

THUNDER growls. It begins to RAIN.

INT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - LIVING ROOM

MATTY
He's my friend. He stays.

Through the door, the rain gets harder. Lightning continues to flash behind the ominous clouds.

FOSTER

Come closer so I can look at you.

Matty turns back to Sparrow. Sparrow nods.

Matty steps up. Sparrow right behind. Foster takes Matty's arm. Matty yanks back.

FOSTER

Yes. I didn't kill your mother.

Anger flashes in Matty's eyes. He notices Foster's Revolver on the small table, snatches it up and points it at Foster.

MATTY

Liar!

Sparrow comes around the side of Matty.

SPARROW

Badger.

Foster raises a single hand from beneath the blanket. Sparrow eyes Foster with caution.

FOSTER

No. I...Yes, we argued,
but...She...Well...you're right. I
am to blame.

Matty glowers.

FOSTER

I drained her slowly for years.
So, in that case, I killed her.

Foster starts to sob, but catches himself.

FOSTER

My Lilac. My Sassy.

Foster turns away.

FOSTER

Wanted to see you. Confess.

Matty sneers. Lowers the gun.

MATTY

Confess.

Sparrow cocks his head to the side to listen. Lightning catches his piercing eyes. THUNDER rumbles.

Foster takes a deep breath.

FOSTER

My whole life's been a lie. Your mother, me, you, everything a lie.

MATTY

Don't say that about Ma! I'll kill you!

Matty jabs the gun towards him.

Sparrow lassoes Matty's hand.

BLAM! He shoots. The bullet misses, hits the couch above Foster's head. Sparrow moves quickly to wrap Matty up with the rope.

Lightning strikes in the distance through the window.

Matty fights to free himself from Sparrow's grasp. Sparrow wrenches the gun from him, shoves it in his belt and holds on to restrain him.

SPARROW

Badger. No. This is not the way.

Matty struggles to get out of Sparrow's arms.

MATTY

He's lying! He hated all of us.

Sparrow holds tight. Matty settles, collapses in Sparrow's arms. Matty's voice cracks.

MATTY

Now he's lying.

Sparrow holds on to him.

SPARROW

Badger. Badger.

Foster eyes them.

FOSTER

His name's not Badger. It's...

Foster coughs.

FOSTER

Matty.

Lightning and thunder.

Sparrow's eyes widen. He releases Matty. Matty slumps to the floor, the rope still around him. He weeps.

MATTY

It's a lie.

Sparrow staggers back from the full force of this truth.

FOSTER

Your real Papa was a preacher.

Sparrow pitches around and around, yanks the revolver out. He doesn't know what to do. How to react.

FOSTER

His name was...

Matty looks up, stares at Foster with teary eyes.

SPARROW

Sparrow.

Sparrow's voice cuts like a sudden chill through a graveyard.

He swings the gun towards Foster. Vengeance in his eyes. Foster strains to look at him. Matty sputters.

MATTY

Sparrow?

Sparrow's hand begins to shake.

SPARROW

Oh, God.

Sparrow drops the gun, it clatters to the floor. He tears out the front door, stumbles off the porch into the storm. Thunder rolls. Lightning cuts across the sky. Rain pounds.

Sparrow breaks into a staggered run.

Matty appears on the porch behind him.

MATTY

Sparrow!

Sparrow reels, and gimps towards the arch way.

Matty chases out behind him, stops, stands in the thunderstorm.

MATTY

Sparrow!

Rain beats Sparrow's face. He can't stop. Can hardly breathe. But he presses on. Sparrow reaches the arch way, falters past it.

CRASH! A *BOLT of LIGHTNING* strikes just ahead of him. Knocks him to the ground.

Matty sees the flash, flinches from the crack of the thunderbolt.

MATTY

Sparrow?

Matty starts towards him, after a couple unsure steps, he breaks into a run.

MATTY

Sparrow!

Sparrow stays on the ground, stunned. He rolls over. The rain crashes down on his face.

He coughs and chokes, turns and pushes up on his knees, hacks out, he drives his head into the sloppy earth.

SPARROW

Oh, Jesus!

He digs his hands into the mud.

SPARROW

Oh, God!

Sparrow raises up on his knees, face and head covered in mud, yells into the apocalyptic sky.

SPARROW

What do you want from me?!

The rain punishes him. Cleanses him. Thunder peals. Sparrow doubles over, wraps his arms around himself.

MOANS.

SPARROW

I can't. I can't forgive him.

Sparrow rocks back and forth.

SPARROW

It hurts. Oh, Jesus. Help me.
Help me forgive him.

His hat falls in front of him.

Lightning flashes. Sparrow spots the corner of a small piece of paper tucked in his hat. He pulls at it. It slips out.

He unfolds it.

In the flashes he reads the scribbled note Gunther slipped in years earlier.

"They that sow in tears, reap in joy. Psalms 126:5"

And just that quick, the rain washes it away, the paper dissolves in his hands.

SPARROW

You didn't quit me. I quit you.

Matty reaches the archway, out of breath. He halts.

Sparrow's dark figure rises, puts his hat back on. The rain continues to batter them.

Sparrow limps towards Matty. Stoic. Steel look in his eye.

MATTY

Sparrow. You okay?

Sparrow pauses, looks at him, nods, continues down the driveway. Matty looks after him, starts back behind him.

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - PORCH

Sparrow pitches onto the porch. Matty follows him. Sparrow gets to the door, grabs the knob. Matty grabs his arm.

MATTY

Whatever you do.

Matty stops.

Sparrow doesn't look back, opens the door, goes inside, closes it.

Matty runs around the house.

INT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - LIVING ROOM

Foster lies on the couch in the spot of the lantern. Sparrow stands, faces him, sopping wet. Lightning lights up the room.

Sparrow's eyes flash.

SPARROW
You. Stole my life.

Foster looks over at him.

FOSTER
Preacher.

SPARROW
Not anymore.

Sparrow snatches up the gun.

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - FRONT PORCH

The rain stops. The sky clears. The full moon white washes the earth.

Matty runs back around the house. Daisy and Bear follow. Josiah behind them.

INT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - LIVING ROOM

Foster coughs. Turns his head away.

FOSTER
The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

SPARROW
Don't you dare.

Sparrow steps towards him.

FOSTER
I am a wicked man. Did wicked things. I deserve hell.

SPARROW
I have *lived* hell.

Sparrow looms over him. Dangles the golden sparrow pendant in his face. Foster turns back. Focuses on the pendant. His eyes well up.

FOSTER
 Forgive me. Forgive me, Sparrow.

Sparrow's shadow eclipses Foster's face.

FOSTER
 I am that thief. That thief on the
 cross with Jesus.

Foster stares into Sparrow's scarred and melted features. He gasps. The gun trembles in Sparrow's hand. He shoves it under Foster's jaw.

Foster turns to him. Water drips off Sparrow onto Foster's face. Foster revels in the droplets like a baptism. An expression of calm caresses his countenance.

He opens his eyes and stares at Sparrow. Tears well up. His voice rasps as he tries to sing.

FOSTER
 (sings)
 It...is well...with my soul.

Sparrow's lip quivers, his eyes narrow.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOLOR MEADOW - HORSESHOE GAME - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Sparrow, warm blue eyes and youthful handsome face recalls the time before the fire.

Sparrow rocks his arm back and forth, lines up the horseshoe shot.

SPARROW
 I can still shoot 'em. Just don't
 let me catch their eyes.

Sparrow shrugs, stops, looks back at Gunther. Smiles.

SPARROW
 Guess I see their souls.

BACK TO:

EXT. FOSTER/SASSY RANCH - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Daisy, Bear and Josiah huddle together on the porch. Matty presses his ear to the door. It opens. Sparrow wavers in front of him, complete exhaustion.

Dead silence. All breaths held. Finally, Sparrow rasps.

SPARROW

I.

He stops. Exhales a lifetime of pain.

SPARROW

Forgive him.

Sparrow raises his head. His eyes meet Matty's. Daisy, Bear, and Josiah watch.

Sparrow falls forward. Matty catches him. They clasp in a hug of a million lost years.

SPARROW

Matty. My son. My son. Matty.

Sparrow sobs.

MATTY

Papa. You're my Papa.

Matty wails.

Behind them, the living room dark, save for the glow of the lantern around Foster. The gun glints on the floor next to the rope.

Foster watches them embrace, turns his head, closes his eyes. Peace drifts over his face, exhales his last breath.

Josiah ushers the twins off the porch. Sparrow and Matty can't let go of one another.

From Sparrow's balled up fist dangles Marjorie's gold pendant. It shimmers like a kept promise.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.