

The Shadow of the Deadman's Daughter

written by

David Williamson

David Williamson
100 Laurel Drive
Sharpsville, PA 16150
724-866-0035
david_b_williamson@yahoo.com

April 25, 2025
Second Draft

EXT. BOONE HOMESTEAD - SUNSET - 1869

Golden light crawls across the dirt like a dying animal. MERCY BOONE (22) is elbow-deep in the garden soil, fingers raw, face streaked with sweat. Her MOTHER (40s), hardened by years of bullshit frontier life, pins laundry like she's stabbing ghosts.

The wind shifts. Off in the distance, a LONE RIDER cuts across the horizon. A black fucking blot against the fire-colored sky.

Mercy stills. Her breath catches. Something primal in her posture—like a hound catching scent.

MOTHER

Mercy. Inside. Now.

MERCY

It's about Daddy, ain't it?

Their eyes lock. The air grows heavier. The MOTHER touches the silver bird brooch at her throat—less an heirloom, more a talisman against what's coming.

MOTHER

Whatever's comin', you
remember: You're not just his.
You're mine too.

The RIDER draws closer. Dust kicks up behind him like ash from Hell. Mercy doesn't blink. Her jaw clenches.

The MOTHER drops the laundry basket. Her hands shake just a little.

MOTHER

Don't let that man's ghost wear
your skin, Mercy. Promise me.

Mercy doesn't answer. Her fingers curl into the dirt. Tight. Like she wants to bury herself or someone else.

The RIDER reaches the fence line. Hooves stomp the earth like war drums.

RIDER (O.S.)

Caleb Boone's been judged.
Hung 'fore sundown. Said he didn't
kick. Just smiled.

The MOTHER lets out a sound like a breath and a scream wrapped into one. She covers her mouth. Staggers.

Mercy doesn't move. Her eyes burn holes through the horizon.

MERCY (V.O.)
 That was the last goddamn sunset
 before the world turned red. Before
 his voice sunk into my skin like a
 fuckin' splinter.

It never left. Not through the gallows. Not through the grave.

And I never cried. I just listened.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE TWO - FINAL FUSED VERSION: CAMPFIRE MYTHOS (1895)

EXT. PRAIRIE NIGHT - 1895 - CAMPFIRE

Flames lick the night sky. A half-moon stares cold above the plains. Coyotes howl in the distance — hungry, distant, close.

A ragged group of TRAVELERS circles the fire — sun-scorched, whiskey-soaked, boots cracked and silent. Among them: a YOUNG COWBOY with a twitchy knee, a BEARDED TRADER gnawing jerky like regret, and a QUIET DRIFTER who hasn't blinked once.

At the edge of the firelight, a FEMALE LISTENER — late 20s — sits with her hat low, twirling a silver chain between her fingers. Her face is mostly shadow. Her eyes are not.

YOUNG COWBOY
 Been three days of saddle sores
 and snake trails.
 Give us somethin' that bites,
 preacher.

BEARDED TRADER
 Yeah. No Sunday fables. I want a
 tale with rot in its teeth.

The flames hiss. Someone stirs the coals. The mood turns.

FEMALE LISTENER
 Teeth and justice rarely come from
 the same mouth.

The group quiets. A spark pops. The smoke shifts.

JEBEDIAH TELLER (60s) leans into the fire — all brittle grace and whiskey bones. His coat's patched with old scripture, pages yellowed by time and sin. His fingers are scarred, tremble slightly from the weight of what they've written... or what they've done.

JEBEDIAH
Some are born of blood.
Some are born of silence.
But the cursed ones...?

(beat)
They're born of memory.

YOUNG COWBOY
Memory don't shoot a man.

JEBEDIAH
No, son. But it loads the goddamn
gun.
And if it's loud enough — it pulls
the trigger, too.

He lifts a tin cup. Takes a long, slow sip.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)
They called her Mercy Boone.
The deadman's daughter.

The wind shifts. The coyotes fall quiet.

BEARDED TRADER
Never heard of her.

JEBEDIAH
That's 'cause the ones who did
ain't got mouths left to say it.
(beat)
She didn't ride for justice.
Didn't ride for peace.
She rode so the land wouldn't
forget her name.

A hush settles like dust. Even the flames seem to lean toward
his voice.

The FEMALE LISTENER looks up. Her eyes shimmer beneath the brim
— too clear, too knowing.

FEMALE LISTENER
You talk about her like you knew
her.

Jebediah stares at her. Long. Firelight dances in his pupils
like a funeral pyre.

JEBEDIAH
Every shadow knows its caster,
ma'am.

FEMALE LISTENER
And whose shadow was she?

Jebediah hesitates — then smiles, barely.

JEBEDIAH
That's the heart of it, ain't it?
(beat)
Some say she rode out of grief.
Others say she rode straight outta
Hell.
Me? I say grief is Hell — and she
was its goddamn horseman.

He settles deeper into his coat, the wind tugging at the frayed
scripture stitched across his chest.

JEBEDIAH (CONT'D)
Now pour another drink.
This tale don't rush for no man.

DISSOLVE TO:

The fire crackles, but something colder now clings to the
night.

MERCY (V.O.)
I didn't ride to save the land.
I rode to make sure it remembered
what it fucking did.

EXT. DESERT OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT - 1874

A lone cabin sits in the barren landscape, one oil lamp
burning. A MAN (50s) sits on his porch, cleaning a rifle. He's
weathered, hard, with eyes that have seen too much and cared
too little.

MERCY approaches from the darkness, still unsteady with her
vengeance. Her hands shake. She's thinner, rawer, her coat not
yet bloodstained.
The Man looks up, squints.

MAN
You lost, girl?

Mercy stands at the edge of the light. Her voice cracks from
disuse.

MERCY
You Benjamin Cole?

The Man's face shifts slightly. Recognition. Fear.

MAN
Who's askin'?

MERCY
You were there. When they took the
land.
When they said my mama was crazy.
When my daddy hung.

The Man slowly sets down the rifle.

MAN
That was years ago. Just business.
I was just doin' my job.

Mercy steps closer. Moonlight catches the silver brooch.

MERCY
Your job was tellin' lies in a
courthouse.
Sayin' my mama spoke to ghosts.
Sayin' she couldn't keep her own
child.

MAN
(defensive)
I just repeated what I heard!
That's all!

MERCY
You didn't just hear it.
You wrote it down.
Made it real.

Mercy's hand touches the knife at her hip.

MAN
Listen. I got money. Inside.
Whatever Deeks paid, I'll double
it.

MERCY
You think this is about money?

CALEB'S VOICE (V.O.)
Don't hesitate. Not with this one.
He's the first domino. Make it
count.

Mercy flinches at the voice. Her resolve falters.

MERCY

I don't know if I can.

MAN

What's that?

Mercy's eyes harden. Her hand steadies.

MERCY

I said, my mama used to sing to
me.
Even when they said she was
broken.
You ever have someone sing to you
like that?

The Man reaches slowly for the rifle.

MAN

Listen, girl—

Mercy draws her knife and steps forward in one fluid motion.

The lamp falls.

Glass shatters.

Darkness.

We hear struggling. A gurgle. Silence.

When the moon emerges from behind clouds, Mercy stands over the
body. Her hands are bloody. Her face is wet with tears.

She opens a small ledger. The first in her collection. With
shaking hands, she scratches out the first name.

MERCY (V.O.)

I threw up after.
Cried 'til morning.
By the second one, I stopped
cryin'.
By the third, I stopped throwin'
up.
By the fourth...
I started hummin' while I worked.

SCENE THREE - EXT. SCORCHED TREE - SUNSET - 1875

The sky's on fire — blood-orange leaking into ash-purple. The
wind carries the dry scent of old rot and fresh panic.

A charred, skeletal tree stands alone. Its bark split and blistered from a long-ago lightning strike. A noose dangles from its branch, worn smooth from use. The tree doesn't creak – it groans.

Below it, SHERIFF WARDEN (50s), cheeks purple, sweat carving paths through the dirt on his face, kneels with his hands tied. His mouth is gagged. His boots are unlaced. The pride is gone – just piss, blood, and begging eyes.

Footsteps crunch dry soil.

MERCY BOONE (28) steps into frame – not like an outlaw. Not like a ghost. Like an inevitability. Her coat drags behind her like a body bag. Her rifle slung low, her knife gleaming at her hip.

Blood's already drying on her hands. She doesn't try to hide it.

She hums. It's a lullaby. Or maybe a death march wearing a lullaby's face.

The Sheriff looks up – recognition crackling in his eyes like dry leaves catching fire.

MERCY

You remember my daddy?

His body twitches – not a nod, not a denial. Just the shame of remembering too late.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Caleb Boone. Said he was a thief.
Hung him from a branch not ten
yards from where you're kneelin'.
But you knew, didn't you? That
land was ours.

She circles him like she's walking the perimeter of a grave. Her boots scuff the dirt deliberately. Her eyes never leave his.

MERCY (CONT'D)

You knew the deed was forged.
You held it. You filed it.
You watched my mother beg on
courthouse steps while you counted
silver.

The sheriff tries to speak. The gag makes it sound like a man choking on guilt – which, to be fair, he is.

Mercy crouches in front of him. Face to face. Close enough that he can see the veins in her eyes.

MERCY (CONT'D)

My mama sang hymns while she
cried.
She made me believe forgiveness
was strength.
(beat)
But you...
You taught me it's just a lie we
feed girls to keep 'em soft before
we feed 'em to the fire.

She pulls the noose taut and lifts it over his head. Her hands
are steady. Almost clinical.

MERCY (CONT'D)

I could shoot you.
Quick.
But that ain't how this ends.

She takes her time tying the knot — muscle memory. Maybe she's
done this before. Maybe she's dreamed it so many times it
became real.

MERCY (V.O.)

Mama said grief takes time.
She didn't say it'd take people
with it.

She sets a rotted stump beneath his knees. His breathing's
ragged now — full-blown panic. His eyes plead.

Mercy looks at them. Studies them.

MERCY (CONT'D)

You want mercy?

She lets that word hang like the noose.

Then she smiles. But it's not cruel.

It's true.

MERCY (CONT'D)

You already got her.
She died cryin'.

Her hand shoots out — kicks the stump.

THUD. SNAP.

His legs dance — desperate, twitching. Like a puppet fighting
its own strings.

His boots scrape air. The noose creaks — louder than his
breath.

Mercy steps back. Still. Watching. Not flinching. Not blinking.

MERCY (V.O.)
He didn't cry for forgiveness.
He cried because it wasn't quick.
Because he thought men like him
deserved quicker ends.

The body shudders one last time... then stills. The creak fades. The tree groans.

Mercy approaches. Pulls her knife.

On the bark — she carves her mark: a bird, simple, sharp-beaked, wings raised mid-fury.

MERCY (V.O.)
One down.
Five more songs to sing.

She wipes the blade on his shirt. The blood smears.

She walks into the sunset — the wind pulling at her coat like it's trying to stop her.

The noose swings gently. The last sunlight catches the carved bird, turning it gold for a moment... before the dark swallows it.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE FOUR - EXT. SAGEBRUSH CROSSING - DAY

The sun hangs too high, like it's trying to burn this godforsaken town off the map.

A wooden sign sways at the edge of the road.
Welcome to SAGEBRUSH CROSSING
Population: crossed out
Underneath, someone's carved:
"We Deserve the Silence."

The town is half asleep, half hiding. Shutters creak closed like eyes refusing to witness. Doors lock behind curtains. Dogs don't bark — they whimper.

MERCY BOONE rides in slow — not as a visitor.

As a consequence.

Her horse is caked in trail dust. Mercy's coat is stained with blood and dirt, her eyes unreadable — but they read the town just fine.

She passes the old schoolhouse.

FLASH - A child's hand on a slate. A lullaby hummed by a mother washing her hands in a basin.

Then - SMASH - a bottle shattering against a chalkboard. Screaming.

MERCY flinches. Her jaw tightens.

She touches the silver bird brooch at her collar - not for comfort, but like she's checking a wound.

CALEB'S VOICE (V.O.)
They let her bleed in that church.
Called it justice.
Then came out here and built a
bakery on her bones.

She passes the general store.

Inside, the SHOPKEEPER watches her through the dirty pane. Hands shaking. He reaches for the "OPEN" sign and flips it to "CLOSED" like he's trying to put a lid on a grave.

SHOPKEEPER (through the glass)
Your mama used to bring you by.
You'd sing hymns for peppermint
sticks.

MERCY pauses - just a second. Her throat tightens like something clawed its way up from her past and is trying to escape her mouth.

Her fingers graze her throat. Then clench.

MERCY (V.O.)
I don't remember singin'.
I remember screamin'.
And the sound of nobody comin'.

She keeps walking. Boots heavy. Gait slow. Like the ground itself is dragging on her.

A porch groans.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
Mercy?
Mercy goddamn Boone?

Mercy doesn't turn her head.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)
 You were such a gentle little
 thing.
 Always hummin'.
 What happened to you?

Mercy stops.

MERCY (quietly, to herself)
 I lived.

She keeps walking. Her shadow stretches down the street like
 it's hunting someone.

A church bell rings – loud, off-beat, cracked.

FLASH – Her father yanking her mother out the church doors by
 the wrist. Her mother screaming – hands reaching for something
 she couldn't hold.

People watching.

No one moving.

Mercy flinches again. Her vision blurs. The dust glows gold –
 then red – then black.

She shakes it off.

CALEB'S VOICE (V.O.)
 They watched.
 Every last one of 'em.
 And they turned their fuckin'
 heads.

She walks past the church.

The front door is splintered but still locked.

The cross above it hangs crooked – nailed up with rust and
 cowardice.

MERCY
 (under her breath)
 Sanctuary's just another word for
 silence.

She walks further. Her steps echo. Too loud. Like the town's
 trying to pretend it's still alive.

A CHILD (O.S.) peeks from behind a curtain.

Their eyes meet.

Mercy's eyes soften – just for a moment.

Then the child disappears.

MERCY (V.O.)

They teach 'em early to look away.

She stops in the middle of the street. Lets the wind hit her full on. The silence of Sagebrush Crossing is deafening.

MERCY (V.O.)

What is this place doin' to me?

CALEB'S VOICE (V.O.)

It's remindin' you.

Who carved your name into the dirt.

And who buried it.

Her hand brushes the knife at her belt. Not a threat – a memory.

She looks toward the saloon. Toward the church. Toward the ghosts.

The brooch at her collar catches the sun. Gleams.

The wind dies.

And the town holds its breath.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE FIVE - INT. ABANDONED CHURCH - DAY

The church door SCREAMS on rusted hinges.

MERCY BOONE steps in, shadow long behind her like it's trying to pull her back.

The air is thick. Dust hangs like smoke. Every pew is cracked. The altar is splintered. Sunlight pierces stained-glass windows – red light spills like blood, blue like a bruise.

The once-white crucifix over the pulpit is burnt black, headless.

MERCY (V.O.)

She said prayers sang better in here.

Said God listened more when you gave Him melody.

Her boots echo off broken tile. Each step stirs ghosts.

On the floor: torn hymnals, shattered candles, scraps of old sermon notes. The pulpit's been scorched – maybe by fire, maybe by neglect.

She stops halfway down the aisle. Looks around.

Everything is wrong.

FLASH:

– SARAH BOONE (Mercy's mother), laying herbs on the altar.
 – Her hands gentle. Her voice, humming that lullaby.
 – A shadow crosses the stained glass. A door slams.
 – CALEB storms in, belt in one hand, Bible in the other.

CALEB (PAST)
 You sing like sin's somethin' sweet.
 This ain't no goddamn place for witches and weeds.

SARAH (PAST)
 Then you better burn it down, Caleb.
 'Cause I ain't done prayin'.

BACK TO PRESENT

Mercy staggers forward – breath shaky. She wipes her brow and it comes back with grime and dried blood. She doesn't know whose.

She reaches the altar, kneels where her mother once knelt.

She pulls out the ledger.

It thuds down like judgment. The sound is final.

MERCY (V.O.)
 Some names in here...
 they made decisions that buried us.
 Others just didn't look up while we burned.

She opens the book. The pages hiss like they're alive.

The names blur. One shifts before her eyes.

"Sarah Boone — insane, exiled, unfit."
Signed by Caleb Boone.

Mercy's eyes snap wide. She slams the book shut. Her hands tremble violently.

CALEB'S VOICE (V.O.)
You don't need her memory.
You need justice.

MERCY
(sharply)
You don't get to speak in here.

She stands. Her face cracks — not from anger. From disbelief.

Her voice shakes:

MERCY (CONT'D)
You signed her away.
You lied. You let them take her.

A footstep echoes.

Mercy WHIPS around, knife drawn.

SARAH MILLER (40s) stands in the broken doorway. Wiry. Eyes like scorched earth. She carries a faded cloth bundle.

SARAH
Put the blade down, child. I
didn't come to bleed.

MERCY
You know my name?

SARAH
Your mama said it'd shake the
ground one day.
Looks like she was right.

Mercy doesn't drop the knife — but she doesn't lunge either.

SARAH (CONT'D)
She was more than what he made
her.
More than the way she died.

Mercy's face goes cold.

MERCY
You talk like you knew her.
But no one helped her.

SARAH

I tried.
But your father made sure help
cost too much.

She unwraps the cloth. Inside: a small, clothbound journal.
Faded. Floral stitched edges. Pressed herbs still intact.

SARAH (CONT'D)

She left this with me. Said if you
ever came back,
if you were walkin' with the
shadow of him –
you'd need somethin' that smelled
like her.

Mercy takes it.

Her fingers hesitate – then flip it open.

Her mother's handwriting fills the pages. Soft. Curved. Kind.

A page reads:

"For Mercy. When the night is too heavy to hum through."

Mercy's jaw clenches. Tears rush to her eyes – but she won't
let them fall. Not yet.

MERCY

I've been hearin' him in my head
for ten years.
His voice. His guilt.
Never hers.

SARAH

That's grief, child.
It silences the ones who saved us
and amplifies the ones who
destroyed us.

MERCY

I don't know how to forget him.

SARAH

Then don't.
Outlive him.

Mercy holds the journal to her chest. Her breathing evens.

MERCY (V.O.)

All this time I thought I was
carryin' Mama's pain.
Turns out I was carryin' his
permission.

CALEB'S VOICE (V.O.)
This ain't over. There's still
names in that book.

MERCY (V.O.)
I know.
(beat)
And I'll make sure they remember
mine, too.

She sets the journal down gently on the altar. Like a gift. Or
a promise.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE SIX - INT. LEDGER ROOM - SAGEBRUSH CROSSING - NIGHT

INT. CELLAR HALLWAY - NIGHT

The hallway is narrow and damp. Walls drip with moisture like
the town's rotting from the inside out. The flame of Mercy's
oil lantern flickers wildly - like it wants to run back
upstairs.

Every step she takes creaks. The stairwell sinks under her
weight like it remembers who she is.

She reaches the final door. The wood is warped, swollen with
humidity and time. Scratched. Like someone tried to claw their
way out.

She pushes it open.

The hinges WAIL.

INT. LEDGER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

It smells like old smoke, mold, and lies.

Shelves lean like drunk sentinels, buckling under the weight of
ledgers, contracts, deeds, falsified affidavits. Every corner
breathes dust and betrayal.

The walls close in.

A dim oil lamp spits light over a desk buried in paper. At its
center, slumped like a forgotten relic, is AMOS BELL (70s) -
hunched, burned, and barely breathing. One hand shakes as it
scratches something on yellowed paper. The other is burn-
scarred, blackened up to the elbow.

He mumbles constantly. To himself. To the ink. To ghosts.

AMOS

Names. Lies. Swapped like
currency.
Ashes don't forget — they just
wait to stick to someone new...

Mercy doesn't announce herself. She just steps forward. Her
presence sucks the warmth out of the room.

MERCY

You the one that keeps the dead
speakin'?

Amos freezes. His pen stops scratching.

AMOS

Ain't no dead here.
Only what's been erased and what's
waitin' its turn.

He looks up. His eyes are milky but see more than they should.

AMOS (CONT'D)

Goddamn.
You're her.
You got her mouth, but your eyes?
Those belong to the fire that took
this place.

MERCY

You know my name?

AMOS

Name don't need speakin'.
I remember you before you were
born.
Watched your mother carry you
'round this town like you were the
last good thing it'd ever see.

He coughs. The sound is wet. He reaches beneath the desk —
slowly — and pulls out a ledger wrapped in twine and scorched
at the spine.

AMOS (CONT'D)

This one don't lie.
It just don't apologize.

He sets it on the desk like it might burn through.

Mercy steps forward. Hands steady.

She cuts the twine. Opens the ledger.

The pages wheeze.

CLOSE ON: LEDGER ENTRIES

Sarah Boone - Unfit, unstable. Signature forged.
 Land seized for "public trust."
 Caleb Boone - Witnessed.
 Sheriff Deeks - Authorized.
 Banker Hayworth - Beneficiary.
 Deputy Warden - Executor.

MERCY (V.O.)
 A whole system, signed in blood,
 dressed in law.

She flips to another page.

A name: AMOS BELL - recorded as "record-keeper, instructed to
 destroy ledger post-trial."

She looks at him. Dead in the eyes.

MERCY
 You were supposed to burn it.

AMOS
 I tried.
 It burned me instead.

He lifts his left arm - the blackened stump, shriveled like a
 warning.

AMOS (CONT'D)
 That book don't want to die.

MERCY
 Good.

She pulls a knife and draws a thick, deliberate line through
 the name DEPUTY WARDEN.

MERCY (CONT'D)
 One down.

She turns another page. Her eyes stop on Banker Hayworth.
 Then Sheriff Deeks.

Her lips part. No sound comes out - just breath sharpened into
 rage.

AMOS
 Hayworth's in Dryridge.
 (MORE)

AMOS (CONT'D)

Still playin' the innocent banker
in a gilded coffin of a saloon.
Deeks? He don't hide.
Men like him forget they should.

MERCY

Not for long.

AMOS

You really gonna kill 'em all?

She shuts the ledger. The thud echoes like a gunshot.

MERCY

They made a list.
Now I'm crossin' names.

AMOS

You think that makes you different
than him?

MERCY

No.
I just finish what he started... but
I make sure the right ones bleed.

AMOS

Your daddy came down here, too.
Same walk. Same fire.
Said he had no choice. Said
survival makes whores of us all.

Mercy's expression doesn't flinch. But her fingers twitch at the mention.

AMOS (CONT'D)

He told me to erase her.
Said it was the only way to save
you.

MERCY

He sold her.
And the town gave him change.

AMOS

He left with clean hands.
Mine never got the chance.

A silence sits between them.

Mercy pockets the ledger. Tight to her chest.

AMOS (CONT'D)
You're gonna bring the town down
with you.

MERCY
Good.

She turns to go.

AMOS
Just make sure when you burn it...
you ain't still inside.

Mercy pauses.

MERCY
Don't worry.
I already walked out of the fire.

She leaves. The door creaks closed behind her.

Amos is left staring at the flickering flame. His lips move.
Barely.

AMOS
God help whoever's still in that
book.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE SEVEN - INT. DRYRIDGE HOTEL - NIGHT

EXT. DRYRIDGE - NIGHT

Dryridge is a parasite dressed in pearls. Every storefront
glows like sin with a fresh coat of paint. Drunks stagger under
awnings. Prostitutes smoke cigarettes behind lace fans. Lawmen
drink with outlaws, laughing at the same goddamn punchline.

MERCY BOONE rides slow through it all, unnoticed at first -
until she dismounts outside the Dryridge Hotel.

The windows are lit with chandelier flame. A cello plays
upstairs.

She ties off her horse like she's tying off a vein.

INT. DRYRIDGE HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

The lobby is velvet rot. Gold trim peels from wallpaper. A chandelier sways slightly — not from wind, but tension. The music upstairs stutters and continues.

Behind the bar, a flustered concierge polishes the same glass over and over.

BANKER HAYWORTH (60s) lounges in the parlor, still dressed like money's a god. Cigar in one hand, bourbon in the other. He speaks too loud for how little anyone cares.

BANKER HAYWORTH

(tipsy)

Back in '69, I bought a riverbed
for three dollars and a promise.
Now it floods every spring — like
the land's tryin' to spit me out.

The girl beside him — young, barely old enough to lie about being old enough — nods. Her face is caked in powder, but her eyes are raw.

GIRL

You're so clever, Mr. Hayworth.

He slaps her thigh.

BANKER HAYWORTH

Don't I know it.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Both freeze.

GIRL

You expectin' someone?

BANKER HAYWORTH

Not unless God's comin' to ask for
a loan.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Again. Louder. Less polite.

Hayworth stiffens. The girl stands, uncertain.

BANKER HAYWORTH (CONT'D)

Don't open that door.

She does.

The wind howls in.

MERCY BOONE stands in the doorway. Coat soaked in dusk, face unreadable. The silver brooch glints beneath her collar — like a badge from a darker justice.

Her boots leave dirt on the pristine carpet.

The girl looks at Mercy — then at Hayworth — and bolts.

BANKER HAYWORTH

Wait—!

But she's gone.

Silence now. Only the faint scraping of the cello upstairs.

Hayworth rises slowly.

BANKER HAYWORTH (CONT'D)

I... I know you.

You're her. Caleb's girl. Mercy.

MERCY

You remember my father's name.

Let's see if you remember mine.

She doesn't draw a weapon. Just walks forward. Calm. Dead calm.

BANKER HAYWORTH

Whatever you think I did — it was legal. All of it.

MERCY

Legal's just what rich men write down after they steal something.

BANKER HAYWORTH

I was doing my job!

MERCY

Your job was signing over the only thing my mama had left.
Land. Dignity. Me.

He backs toward the desk, hand inching toward a drawer.

BANKER HAYWORTH

Caleb said it was mutual. Said she was... unstable.

Mercy freezes. A beat.

Then, she laughs — one short, sharp, joyless sound.

MERCY

That's the word men use when a woman doesn't cry pretty enough while they're takin' everything from her.

She opens her coat. The handle of her knife gleams.

Hayworth panics.

BANKER HAYWORTH

Wait, wait — I have money. I can fix this. I'll buy it back. The land, the—

MERCY

You ever see a woman beg, Mr. Hayworth?

He falters.

MERCY (CONT'D)

My mother begged.
You know what you did?
(beat)
You signed. And ordered lunch.

He lunges.

She meets him halfway.

Mercy slams him to the floor, knife to his throat. Her face inches from his.

MERCY (CONT'D)

You're not dyin' because you signed.
You're dyin' because you never looked back.

BANKER HAYWORTH

Please... please don't... don't do this.

MERCY

Why not?

BANKER HAYWORTH

I didn't know. I didn't know what they'd do.

MERCY

Then you're not just a thief.
You're a coward.

She drives the knife in. Quick. Clean. Just below the ribs. He spasms – gasping.

She holds his hand as he bleeds.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Hush now.

This is the part where you pray to
the God you sold out.

His eyes roll back. He jerks once, then goes still.

Mercy breathes deep. Eyes closed.

Then she opens the ledger, blood soaking into the edge of the page.

She crosses out his name.

MERCY (V.O.)

Two down.

She pockets the knife. Wipes her hands on his vest. Takes a sip from his untouched bourbon.

Walks to the door.

Before she leaves, she looks back.

MERCY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Three more names.

And one I saved for last.

She disappears into the dark.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. DRYRIDGE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Mercy stands before a cracked mirror in a rented room. The walls are thin. Someone coughs in the next room.

She examines her face. Touches the scars. Her eyes look hollow. She washes blood from her hands in a basin. The water turns pink.

CALEB'S VOICE (V.O.)

They're startin' to remember you
now.

Startin' to whisper your name.
Just like they whispered mine.

Mercy grips the basin edge.

MERCY

Shut up.

CALEB'S VOICE (V.O.)

You're gettin' so good at this.
Like you were born for it.
Like you're me after all.

Mercy looks up at the mirror — and for just a moment, CALEB'S FACE stares back. Bearded. Twisted. Smiling.

She gasps. Stumbles back.

When she looks again, it's her face. Just her face.
She reaches into her pocket. Pulls out her mother's journal.
Flips to a page with pressed wildflowers. Runs her fingers over her mother's handwriting.

MERCY

This is for her. Not for you.
Never for you.

She pins the brooch higher on her collar. A talisman against his ghost.

Her fingers trace the ledger. She opens it. Stares at the remaining names.

MERCY

Two more before Deeks.
(beat)
Then what?

She has no answer.

SCENE EIGHT - EXT. AGNES WYLER'S WELL HOUSE - NIGHT

The moon hangs like a slit throat. No stars. Just bruised sky and wind that smells like wet rust.

Mercy's horse limps into the clearing, hooves kicking up dry dirt like ash from a dying fire.

The well house looks worse than before — the roof sags heavier, vines strangling the porch posts like they're trying to repossess the place.

The sign still dangles above the well:

PRAY FOR RAIN.

Someone's scratched into the wood beneath it:

"She ain't listenin'."

MERCY BOONE dismounts. Her coat hangs soaked in blood. One side of her face is streaked with dried sweat and dirt. The ledger bulges beneath her arm like a second heart — one made of paper and rot.

She walks up the creaking steps without knocking.

AGNES WYLER (60s) is already there. Sitting on her rocker. Whittling a dead branch down to nothing. Pipe clenched in the corner of her mouth.

AGNES
Thought I smelled something sour
blowin' in.

MERCY
That your welcome?

AGNES
It's my warning.

Mercy sits without asking. Her whole body moves like a weapon that hasn't been holstered in days.

AGNES (CONT'D)
You didn't come back for biscuits
and bedtime stories.
Who'd you bury this time?

Mercy doesn't answer.

She places the ledger on the table between them. Opens it. Two names slashed. Red ink, but we know it's blood.

MERCY
Warden. Hayworth.

AGNES
Hayworth?
(low whistle)
You cut deep for that one.

MERCY
Didn't scream.
Cried though.
Begged like he was the one
wronged.

Agnes spits into the dirt.

AGNES
He always did think God owed him
change.

She pulls a tin basin from behind her chair. Places it at Mercy's feet. Fills it with water from a cracked jug.

AGNES (CONT'D)

Clean your hands.
Your mama would've wanted that.

Mercy stares at her hands. Caked with dried blood, flecks of skin under her nails.

MERCY

I already know what's under it.

AGNES

Don't matter.
You clean 'em anyway. That's how
you tell yourself you still got a
line you ain't crossed.

Mercy finally dips her hands into the water.

The water turns pink immediately.

Then red.

Then still.

She scrubs. Hard. Like she's flaying off memory.

MERCY (V.O.)

They say vengeance cleans you.
But all it does is move the dirt
around until you forget what skin
looked like before the blood.

AGNES

You keep hummin' that tune your
mama sang?

MERCY

Sometimes.
But I think it's his voice hummin'
it now.

Agnes leans back. Her eyes glint in the dark.

AGNES

You feed a ghost long enough, it
starts wearin' your face.

Mercy goes still.

MERCY

You ever kill someone?

AGNES
(sips her pipe)
Only once.

MERCY
Why?

AGNES
Because I loved the wrong man and
the right woman got in the way.

A silence.

Then:

MERCY
Did it help?

AGNES
Help what?

MERCY
Whatever was broken inside you.

AGNES
(child-soft)
No.
But it gave me somethin' else to
hold.
Somethin' heavier than grief.
Somethin' louder than guilt.

She gestures to the knife on Mercy's hip.

AGNES (CONT'D)
That blade's gonna start speakin'
soon.
And when it does, it ain't your
mama you'll hear.
It'll be your daddy.

Mercy stands suddenly. The chair screeches back.

MERCY
I ain't him.

AGNES
Then stop talkin' like him.

MERCY
You don't know me.

AGNES
I knew your mother.
That's close enough.

Mercy backs up. Heart hammering in her chest. The ledger tucked back under her arm.

AGNES (CONT'D)
You kill Deeks, that ledger
closes.

MERCY
That's the idea.

AGNES
Then what?

MERCY
I burn it.

AGNES
And what if he's in there, too?
Not Deeks.
Your daddy.

MERCY (quiet)
Then I burn him last.

She turns. Descends the steps.

AGNES
You got one hand on justice, girl.
But the other's reachin' for hell.

Mercy doesn't turn back.

MERCY
Then I'll take 'em both with me.

She mounts up.

The horse snorts. Wind kicks up dust like ash again.

AGNES (V.O.)
The devil don't always knock.
Sometimes he comes home wearin'
your mother's brooch.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE NINE - INT. SHERIFF DEEKS' COMPOUND - NIGHT

EXT. SHERIFF'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

Oil lamps spit weak halos into the dark.
The fences loom like skeleton ribs around the compound.
Beyond them: only blackness and the thing moving through it.

The hounds at the gate — mean sons of bitches bred for blood —
whimper and paw at the dirt, trying to dig anywhere but here.

The wind howls low.

The ground tastes what's coming before the men inside do.

INT. SHERIFF'S COMPOUND - STUDY - NIGHT

The clock ticks too loud.

SHERIFF HARLAN DEEKS paces a rut into the floorboards.

His shirt is sweat-stuck to his back. His face — once carved
from iron — now looks thin. Brittle.

Every time he glances at the window, his eyes flicker with a
child's fear.

Like maybe if he looks away too long, she'll be standing there.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

The door creaks open.

DEPUTY MORROW (30s) steps inside, hat twisting in his hands.

Morrow's young but already wearing fear like a second skin.

DEPUTY MORROW
Sir... it's bad.

Deeks freezes, chest heaving.
Turns slow.

SHERIFF DEEKS
(snarling)
Spit it.

DEPUTY MORROW
Amos Bell's dead.
Throat crushed.
Found him sittin' at his desk like
he was waitin' for the noose.

(beat)
And Hayworth's dead, too.
Stabbed. Ledger stolen.

Deeks closes his eyes. His pulse hammers behind his ears.

DEPUTY MORROW (CONT'D)
Witnesses in Dryridge...
They say it was a woman.
Tall. Wore a black duster. Hat
low.
Said she was hummin' somethin'...
while Hayworth bled out.

The room contracts. Like the walls are moving closer.

Deeks' hands clench into fists so tight his knuckles crack.

SHERIFF DEEKS
(voice thin)
She wore anythin'?

Morrow hesitates. Doesn't want to say it.

DEPUTY MORROW
Bird brooch.
Silver.
Worn over her heart.

The bottle on Deeks' desk shatters in his hand.

Glass rains to the floor. Blood drips from his palm.

But he doesn't notice.

SHERIFF DEEKS
Mercy Boone.

He says it like confessing to a murder he got away with once...
but not anymore.

DEPUTY MORROW
Could be a mistake.
A lookalike. Some drifter with a
grudge—

SHERIFF DEEKS
(cutting)
No.
(beat)
I know what I built.
And I know what I buried.

He stalks to the locked cabinet, fumbling the key with bloody fingers.

Opens it.

Inside: a double-barrel shotgun, polished to a shine. A relic of another life. A weapon for putting down threats that don't stay dead.

Deeks loads it with shaking hands.

SHERIFF DEEKS (CONT'D)
She ain't hummin' for peace.
She's singin' the whole goddamn
ledger closed.

DEPUTY MORROW
(quiet)
Sir... you want me to rouse the
men?

Deeks turns - eyes wild, teeth bared like an old, tired wolf.

SHERIFF DEEKS
Wake 'em.
Arm 'em.
Tell 'em if they see a shadow
bigger than a man, they shoot
first and bury second.

DEPUTY MORROW
And if it's her?

Deeks doesn't blink.

SHERIFF DEEKS
Then they best pray they're faster
than she hums.

Morrow nods. Turns to leave.

Deeks stops him.

SHERIFF DEEKS (CONT'D)
And Morrow...
(beat)
Dig two holes.

DEPUTY MORROW
Two, sir?

SHERIFF DEEKS
One for her.
(grim smile)
One for whoever the hell tries to
tell me it's over.

Morrow bolts.

Deeks stands alone in the study.

The fire in the hearth spits once – sending up a spray of embers.

Above the mantle hangs an old photograph:
Caleb Boone, Sheriff Deeks, Banker Hayworth, others.
Proud. Grinning. Drunk on stolen futures.

Deeks tears it down.

Hurls it into the flames.

The glass pops.

The edges blacken.

The faces warp and curl inward.

Deeks watches.

Drinks from the bottle.

Sets the glass down without tasting it.

SHERIFF DEEKS (V.O.)
I shoulda snapped her goddamn neck
when she was still small enough to
fit in my hand.

He moves to the window. Stares out.

The night stares back.

Wind pushes at the shutters.

Makes them creak like old bones.

On the breeze...
A sound.

Faint.

Broken.

Familiar.

A lullaby.

Mercy's song.

Off-key.

But getting closer.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. RIVER CROSSING - DUSK

Mercy waters her horse at a shallow river. Her shoulders slump with exhaustion. Blood cakes her coat.

Across the river, a small cabin sits nestled among cottonwoods. Smoke rises from the chimney.

A WOMAN (40s) emerges with a bucket. She stops when she sees Mercy. Recognition flashes across her face.

This is ELIZA TANNER — once beautiful, now hardened. A scar runs from her temple to her jaw.

ELIZA

Mercy? Mercy Boone?
Mercy's hand moves to her knife.

MERCY

How do you know my name?

Eliza sets down her bucket. Approaches cautiously.

ELIZA

I knew your mama. We were friends.
Before it all went wrong.

Mercy's eyes narrow.

MERCY

Everyone claims they knew my mama.
No one helped her.

ELIZA

I tried. Your daddy made sure I
paid for it.

She touches the scar on her face.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

This was his goodbye gift.

Mercy stiffens. This doesn't fit the story she's been telling herself.

MERCY

You lyin'?

ELIZA
Got no reason to. The dead don't
care about lies.
And I know you're killin' them
off, one by one.

Eliza gestures to her cabin.

ELIZA (CONT'D)
Come inside. You look half-dead
yourself.
I won't tell anyone you passed
through.
Not that anyone would believe me
anyway.

INT. ELIZA'S CABIN - NIGHT

The cabin is simple but clean. A fire crackles. Mercy sits
warily at the table, refusing food.

Eliza pushes a tin cup of whiskey toward her.

ELIZA
Your mama tried to run. Three
times.
Your daddy found her each time.
Brought her back. Made examples.

MERCY
Examples?
ELIZA
People who helped her. Me. Others.
Some died. Some just...
disappeared.

Mercy's hands tremble around the cup.

MERCY
The town said he was wronged.
That they hung an innocent man.

Eliza's laugh is bitter.

ELIZA
Your daddy was many things.
Innocent wasn't one of them.

MERCY
Then why do I hear him?
Every night. In my head.
(MORE)

MERCY (CONT'D)
Tellin' me to finish what he
started.

Eliza leans forward. Her eyes are kind but unflinching.

ELIZA
Because he broke you, child.
Same as he broke your mama.
Same as he broke everyone who
loved him.

Mercy stands abruptly. The chair scrapes back.

MERCY
I don't love him.

ELIZA
Then why you doin' his work?
Killin' in his name?

Mercy's breathing quickens.

CALEB'S VOICE (V.O.)
She's tryin' to confuse you.
Tryin' to stop what needs doin'.

MERCY
I'm killin' for her. For Mama.

ELIZA
You sure about that?
'Cause your mama never wanted
blood.
Not even his
.
Mercy backs toward the door.

MERCY
I need to go.

ELIZA
Wait.

Eliza goes to a trunk. Opens it. Pulls out a faded daguerreotype.

ELIZA (CONT'D)
Take this. It's your mama.

Before. When she still smiled.

Mercy takes it with trembling hands. In the image: SARAH BOONE, young, beautiful, holding wildflowers. A different woman than the broken one in Mercy's memories.

ELIZA (CONT'D)
When you're done with all this
killin'...
If you survive it...
Come back. I'll tell you who she
really was.
Not who he made her.

Mercy tucks the photo into her coat, next to the ledger.

MERCY
I might not make it back.

ELIZA
Then at least you'll die knowin'
she was more than her scars.

SCENE TEN - EXT. HIGH RIDGE OVERLOOKING DEEKS' COMPOUND - PRE-DAWN

EXT. HIGH RIDGE - PRE-DAWN

The night gasps its last breath.

The sky is a rotted bruise, stitched with the faintest line of
red along the horizon.
Sunrise won't save anyone today.

Below, Sheriff Deeks' compound huddles behind fences and
spotlights. Oil lamps gutter. The hounds at the perimeter don't
bark - they whine low, heads low to the dirt.

Everything feels wrong.

Everything feels ready.

EXT. RIDGE - MERCY'S CAMP - CONTINUOUS

MERCY BOONE kneels in the dirt.

No campfire. No warmth.
Only tools.

Laid out on a blanket before her:

Winchester rifle - bolt cleaned, polished like a priest
polishing a tombstone.

Double-edged knife – sharpened until the steel sings against the leather strap.

The ledger – pages ruffling under the breath of the coming storm.

Mercy's coat is draped over a rock. Her arms are bare.

Bruises bloom across her skin like bruised flowers.

Cuts. Burns. Scrapes.

History written without permission.

She binds her hands in strips of old cloth – slow, deliberate.

MERCY (V.O.)
Mama stitched with prayer.
Daddy stitched with wire.
Me... I stitch with blood.

Each knot she ties across her knuckles pulls her tighter to herself.

She finishes the wraps. Flexes her fingers.
The joints pop.
The scars shift.

A baptism made in pain and patience.

EXT. RIDGE - FINAL PREPARATION - CONTINUOUS

Mercy stands.

She rolls her shoulders.
Tightens the leather belt slung across her waist.

Pulls the knife from the blanket. Slides it home against her thigh.
A silent promise.

She lifts the Winchester. Checks the sights. Loads each bullet by hand.
Click. Click. Click.
Like rosary beads clacking between bloody fingers.

When the rifle is loaded, she slings it across her back.

Only the ledger remains.

She kneels before it – one knee in the dirt.

The pages flap wildly, but she presses them down with a steady palm.

CLOSE ON: LEDGER PAGE.

Deputy Morrow.

Sheriff Harlan Deeks.

Elder Price.

Each name shivers as if trying to crawl off the paper.

Mercy traces her finger across Deeks' name.

MERCY (V.O.)
You thought buryin' me buried your
sins.
(beat)
You should've poured salt.

She pulls a piece of charcoal from her pocket.

Under Deeks' name, she writes:

"To be sung."

EXT. RIDGE EDGE - CONTINUOUS

The wind kicks harder now – tugging at Mercy's hair, her coat, the blanket behind her.

She pins the silver brooch high over her heart.

The bird is tarnished, cracked – but defiant.
Just like her.

Mercy stares down at the compound.

Tiny figures move between the buildings below – half-awake, half-scared.

They don't know yet.
They don't understand what's about to land on them.

But they will.

EXT. RIDGE - THE LAST HUM - CONTINUOUS

Mercy hums under her breath.

The broken lullaby.

The one her mother sang to chase the nightmares away.
The one Caleb twisted in her ear.
Now it's hers again.
She hums as she lifts the rifle to her shoulder.
Scans the grounds through the iron sights.
Men scramble to mount defenses. Hounds snarl on short chains.
Deeks' men bark orders in the dark.
They think they're ready.
They think they're safe behind their walls.

MERCY (V.O.)
You can build your fences.
You can dig your trenches.
You can light every goddamn lamp
in this cursed place.
(beat)
I still see you.

She slings the rifle back onto her shoulder.
Bends down. Folds the ledger carefully. Tucks it against her ribs.

EXT. RIDGE - MERCY DESCENDS - CONTINUOUS

One last breath.
Then Mercy steps forward.
Down the slope.
Boots whispering over the gravel.
Each step a drumbeat leading toward judgment.
The sun threatens to rise - but it's too late.
The past is already here.
The wind carries the smell of cordite and blood before the first shot is ever fired.
Mercy hums louder as she vanishes into the dark.

FADE OUT.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - NIGHT

Mercy rides through dense pine forest. The wind howls. Her horse is nervous, ears flicking.

A twig snaps.

She reins in. Hand on her rifle.

Silence.

Then — GUNFIRE erupts from the trees.

Mercy's horse rears. She rolls from the saddle as bullets tear through the air.

VOICE (O.S.)

Got her!

FIVE BOUNTY HUNTERS emerge from the trees. Rough men. Merciless. They approach the fallen horse cautiously.

BOUNTY HUNTER #1

Deeks is payin' good money for her head.
Dead or alive.

BOUNTY HUNTER #2

Preferably dead. After what she did to Warden?

Man's scared shitless.

They circle the horse. No Mercy in sight.

BOUNTY HUNTER #3

Where'd she go?

A knife whistles through the air — buries itself in Bounty Hunter #3's throat. He drops.

The others spin, firing wildly into the darkness.

Mercy moves through the trees like a shadow. Another shot.

Another man falls.

BOUNTY HUNTER #1

Spread out! Flush her out!

The three remaining men fan out. Fear making them clumsy.

Mercy drops from a tree branch — lands on Bounty Hunter #4. His neck snaps.

Bounty Hunter #2 fires, misses. Reloads frantically.
A bullet catches him in the leg. He falls, crawling backward.

BOUNTY HUNTER #2
Wait! Wait! I got information!
About Deeks! About the ledger!

Mercy steps into moonlight. Blood streaks her face. Her eyes are cold.

MERCY
Talk.

BOUNTY HUNTER #2
Deeks knows you're comin'. He's
fortified the compound.

Twenty men. Maybe more.

And he's got something of yours.

MERCY
What?

BOUNTY HUNTER #2
Don't know. Something he says will
make you hesitate.

Something he's savin' for when you get close.

Mercy considers this. Nods once.

The man relaxes slightly.

BOUNTY HUNTER #2
So we got a deal? I can go?

MERCY
No.

She raises her rifle.

BOUNTY HUNTER #2
Wait—

BANG.

Mercy walks to Bounty Hunter #1, who's hiding behind a tree. Trembling. Praying.

He turns. Pistol raised.

BOUNTY HUNTER #1
Stay back, you devil bitch!

MERCY
What else is Deeks planning?

BOUNTY HUNTER #1
I don't know! I swear! Please!

MERCY
Then you're no use to me.

She raises her rifle.

BOUNTY HUNTER #1
WAIT! Wait! There's a boy!

Mercy pauses.

BOUNTY HUNTER #1 (CONT'D)
A boy at the compound. Don't know
who.
But Deeks is keeping him close.
Says you won't shoot if the boy's
in the way.

Mercy's face shows the first genuine surprise we've seen.

MERCY
A boy?

BOUNTY HUNTER #1
That's all I know! I swear it!

Mercy lowers her rifle slightly.

MERCY
Go. Tell Deeks I'm coming.
Tell him no boy, no trick, no army
will stop me.

The man scrambles away. Mercy watches him go.

Then raises her rifle again.

BANG.

MERCY (V.O.)
He was wrong about one thing.
Deeks isn't scared.
He's desperate.
And desperate men are the most
dangerous kind.

SCENE ELEVEN - EXT. SHERIFF DEEKS' COMPOUND - DAWN

EXT. PERIMETER - JUST BEFORE SUNRISE

The world still holds its breath.

The compound squats like a wounded animal. Lanterns flicker weakly against the growing dawn.

GUARDS yawn, spit, piss against the fence posts. Rifles hang lazy over shoulders.
They know someone's coming –
they just forgot how fast Death rides when it knows your name.

EXT. TREE LINE - CONTINUOUS

Hidden among the skeletal pines:

MERCY BOONE watches.

Body tense, breath shallow, rifle cradled like a mother would cradle a child she knows she'll have to bury.

Her eyes – sharp.
Deadly.

MERCY (V.O.)
They built this place on stolen
blood.
I'm just here to call in the debt.

EXT. FENCE LINE - CONTINUOUS

One guard lights a cigarette with trembling hands.

A shot cracks the morning open.

BANG.

His throat disappears in a mist of red.

He slumps sideways without even a grunt.

Another guard stumbles backward, fumbling with his rifle.

BANG.

A bullet caves in his knee. He falls, screaming, scrabbling at the dirt.

The others panic.

Shots ring out wild — into the trees, into the sky.

No target.

No Mercy.

Just fear pulling the triggers.

EXT. WOODLINE - CONTINUOUS

Mercy reloads. Calm. Methodical.

Slide. Chamber. Lift.

BANG.

A third man drops, chest torn open like paper.

Smoke from the burning perimeter fence drifts toward the compound,
turning Mercy into a phantom in the haze.

MERCY (V.O.)
Walls don't save men from the
truth.
They just make the lies easier to
decorate.

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

DEPUTY MORROW stumbles from the bunkhouse, still half-dressed,
boots unlaced, shotgun clutched in trembling hands.

He sees the chaos —
the fire chewing at the fence posts,
the bodies collapsing into the dust —
and his face goes white.

DEPUTY MORROW
(voice cracking)
She's here!
Move your asses!

Men scramble like rats on a sinking ship.

Some fire blindly into the smoke.
Others drop their weapons and run for the bunkhouses.

Mercy watches from the treeline.

Smiling.

Not cruelly.
Not gleefully.

Inevitably.

EXT. FENCE LINE - BREACH - CONTINUOUS

Mercy moves.

Fast.

She slips through the broken fence like smoke —
rifle lowered now, knife gleaming at her thigh.

One guard charges.

She lets him come.

He's screaming, wild-eyed.

She steps inside his swing, drives the knife up under his ribs —
twists —
yanks it free.

He collapses against her, already dead.

She doesn't even flinch as he hits the dirt.

EXT. INNER COMPOUND - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

The smoke thickens now.

Lanterns explode.
Wood creaks.
Horses scream from their paddocks.

Sheriff Deeks' fortress is crumbling before the fight even starts.

EXT. BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

SHERIFF DEEKS stands on the upper balcony, shotgun in one hand, whiskey bottle in the other.

He watches Mercy stalk through the smoke and blood like a goddamn revenant.

SHERIFF DEEKS (V.O.)

Not her.

Can't be her.

Buried her when she was still too little to lift a gun.

He wipes sweat from his brow with the back of his hand.

Turns to Morrow.

SHERIFF DEEKS

You see her, you shoot 'til your hands break.

Morrow nods, terrified.

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

A guard lurches out of the smoke, firing blindly.

Mercy side-steps the wild shot.

She lunges forward –
knife flashing – slicing the artery under his arm.

He spins, clutching at the geyser of blood spurting from his bicep.

She steps past him without looking back.

EXT. SALOON FRONT - CONTINUOUS

The saloon doors sway in the choking smoke.

Through the windows, gun barrels glint.
Men hunker low, praying to gods they stopped believing in years ago.

Mercy approaches.

Calm.

Bootsteps heavy in the dust.

MERCY (V.O.)
They always pray last.
When there's nothing left worth
savin'.

A shot snaps past her ear.

She doesn't flinch.

She draws the knife again.

EXT. SALOON DOORWAY - FINAL MOMENTS - CONTINUOUS

Mercy kicks the doors open with one brutal boot.

The gunfire erupts — loud, panicked, stupid.

Mercy dives low.

The bullets crack over her head —
shattering glass, tearing wood, missing life.

She rises into the storm.

Eyes cold.

Knife raised.

The screams inside aren't from her.

FADE OUT.

SCENE TWELVE - INT. SALOON - DAWN

INT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS

The doors explode inward on a blast of smoke and heat.

MERCY BOONE storms in low — a black wraith cut from rage and dust.

Gunfire roars instantly.

Three of Deeks' men — cornered, desperate — firing into the haze.

Mercy vanishes into the smoke.

INT. SALOON FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

A bullet clips her coat as she dives behind a table.

The men scream orders at each other – panicked, stupid.

GUNMAN #1
She's in the smoke! Fan out! Fan
out!

They don't fan out.

They cluster together like scared livestock.

Mercy watches them.

Breathing steady.

Knife flashing silver as she switches grip – blade downward.

INT. BEHIND THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

She moves like vapor.

Slides behind the bar as bullets smash liquor bottles above her head – glass raining down in sharp, stinging kisses.

The air fills with the stink of blood, sweat, smoke, and cheap whiskey.

Mercy doesn't flinch.

She crawls low – boots scraping sticky floorboards.

INT. SALOON - MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

GUNMAN #2 (young, panicking) breaks from the pack.

He rushes the bar – shotgun raised.

MERCY rises just as he rounds the counter.

Before he can fire, she grabs the barrel – yanks it down – and slashes her knife across his thigh.

Artery.
 Blood pumps in thick spurts.
 He howls - falls - tries to crawl.
 She kicks him square in the teeth.
 Teeth break.
 He gurgles, spitting red foam.
 She leaves him to bleed out.

INT. SALOON FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

GUNMAN #1 fires wildly into the bar.
 Mercy pops up.
 BANG.
 Her rifle punches him straight through the eye socket -
 head jerking back like a marionette getting its strings cut.
 He collapses mid-scream.

INT. SALOON - UNDER THE STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

One last man huddles behind a crate.
 A BOY.
 No older than sixteen.
 Gun trembling in both hands.
 Eyes huge. Terrified.
 Mercy sees him.
 Sees his fear.
 Sees the childhood the others already killed inside him.
 She steps closer.
 He raises the gun.
 Tears spill down his face.

BOY
(whimpering)
Please. I don't even know you.

Mercy
No.
But you would've learned.

She grabs the barrel, twists it from his hands – snaps his wrist with a sharp crack – and shoves him down.

Not a kill.
A warning.

He scrambles backward, sobbing.

She lets him go.

MERCY (V.O.)
Some sins you stop before they
become ravenous prairie dogs.

INT. SALOON CENTER - AFTERMATH - CONTINUOUS

The saloon is wrecked.

Blood pooling into the warped floorboards.
Smoke thick enough to taste.
Broken bodies twitching and groaning.
Mercy stands in the center – alone.

Not untouched.

There's blood on her face.
Her lip split.
Her hands raw.

But her eyes burn cold.

INT. SALOON BAR - CONTINUOUS

She steps to the bar.
Grabs a half-broken bottle of whiskey.
Pours it over her hands – washing blood away in rivers.

It burns like fire.
She grits her teeth against the sting.

The pain is good.
The pain says she's still real.

INT. SALOON BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

At the rear — a thick, reinforced door.

Locked.

Bolted.

Behind it: Sheriff Harlan Deeks.

Mercy approaches.

Draws her knife across her palm — shallow but sharp.

Smears the blood across the door handle.

A mark.

A curse.

She plants one boot against the door.

KICKS.

CRACK.

Wood splinters.

Bolts strain.

Another kick.

Another.

The door bursts inward — exploding like a cannon blast.

EXT. BACK ROOM THRESHOLD - CONTINUOUS

Mercy steps into the blackness.

Carrying every ghost the town ever tried to forget.

The smoke trails her like a funeral shroud.

Her knife glints once in the dying light.

Her voice cuts the silence:

MERCY
(cold, lethal)
Come out, Deeks.
Let's finish what you started.

FADE OUT:

SCENE THIRTEEN - INT. SHERIFF DEEKS' COMPOUND BACK ROOM - DAWN

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The back room smells like old rot and spilled liquor.

A desk overturned.
Papers scattered like snow.

Sunlight claws through the busted shutters - slicing gold
knives across the floor.

Smoke coils around the beams.
The air tastes like iron.

MERCY BOONE steps into the room.

Every muscle taut.
Every breath slow, controlled.

Ahead of her: SHERIFF HARLAN DEEKS.

Slumped in a chair.
Shotgun across his lap.

A bottle of bourbon sweats onto the table beside him.

His eyes are wrong.

Flat.
Glassy.

Like he's already halfway a corpse.

STANDOFF

Mercy walks forward.

Boots heavy on the warped floorboards.

She doesn't raise her weapon.

She doesn't need to.

Deeks stares at her.

An old man.
An old wound.
A king choking on his stolen crown.

SHERIFF DEEKS
You took your time.

Mercy stops a few feet away.

MERCY
You had years.
I gave you seconds.

Deeks chuckles – a dry rasp like sandpaper on a grave.

SHERIFF DEEKS
You came all this way just to
bleed with me?

He lifts the shotgun.
Casual.
But the barrel droops.

He's tired.

Or he's ready.

Or both.

MERCY
You're gonna die screaming.

SHERIFF DEEKS
I already did.
The night we hanged your daddy.

Mercy flinches – not from fear.
From rage.

GUNSHOT

BOOM.

Deeks fires first.

The blast shatters the desk.

Mercy dives sideways, glass slicing into her shoulder as she
hits the ground.

She rolls behind the wreckage.

Breath heaving.

MERCY (V.O.)
He taught them to kill with paper.
To bury with words.

Now he wants to do it with bullets.

NOT TODAY.

THE FIGHT

Deeks pumps the shotgun.

Clicks empty.

He growls – tosses it aside – and pulls a rusted hunting knife from his belt.

SHERIFF DEEKS
Come on, you little bitch.
Come see what kind of Boone you really are.

Mercy rises.

Knife in hand.

Blood dripping down her arm.

They circle.

Predators.
Both wounded.
Both furious.

IMPACT

Deeks lunges first – old man strength, fueled by spite.

Mercy sidesteps.

His blade slices her coat.
Tears fabric, grazes skin.

She grunts – drives her boot into his gut.

He stumbles – but he's fast.
Grabs her wrist – twists.

Mercy yelps – knife clatters to the floor.

They grapple.

Two bodies crashing into broken furniture.

Deeks headbutts her – splitting her lip.

Mercy bites down on his shoulder – hard – tears flesh.

He roars.

Punches her – once, twice.

Mercy's vision swims.
Blood fills her mouth.

CLOSE-QUARTERS

They slam against the wall.

Deeks tries to strangle her –
big hands crushing her throat.

Mercy's hands scrabble at his face – finds his burn scar across
his jaw.

She digs her thumb in.

Deeks screams.

Loosens his grip.

Mercy drops – grabs a broken chair leg from the floor –
SWINGS IT into Deeks' knee.

CRUNCH.

He collapses to one side – howling.

ENDGAME

Mercy scrambles for her knife.

Deeks reaches for his – fingers scrabbling through splinters
and blood.

She gets there first.

She grabs him by the hair – yanks his head back.

Their faces inches apart.

Both breathing like beasts.

SHERIFF DEEKS
(spitting blood)
You think you're justice?

MERCY

No.

I'm the song you buried her with.

She drives the knife into his side - low, just above the hip.

Twists.

Twists again.

Deeks howls - a raw, animal sound.

Blood floods from the wound, pooling fast.

His legs kick weakly.

Hands claw at the air.

Mercy holds his gaze.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Feel it.

Remember it.

She twists the knife once more - then pulls it free.

Deeks crumples backward.

His last breath leaves him in a wet, ragged shudder.

SHERIFF DEEKS

(broken)

Mercy...

Then silence.

INT. BACK ROOM - AFTERMATH

Mercy stands over his body.

Trembling.

Bleeding.

Victorious.

And empty.

She stumbles to the desk.

Pulls the ledger from her coat.

Hands shaking, she flips to the last page.

Deeks' name waits.

She draws a thick, black, shaking line through it.

The ink bleeds across the page – like it's soaking into the bones of the room itself.

FINAL IMAGE

Mercy stands alone.

Sunlight slashes across her body.

Her shadow – huge, cracked, stitched with blood – stretches over Deeks' corpse.

She hums.

Off-key.

Off-tempo.

Just like her mother.

Her voice cracks.

But she hums anyway.

And she walks out.

Into the burning morning.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BACK ROOM - AFTERMATH - DAWN

Mercy stands over Deeks' body. Breathing hard. Blood everywhere.

She searches his pockets. Finds a key.

She moves to a locked cabinet in the corner. Opens it.

Inside: documents. Land deeds. Letters. And a small wooden box.

She takes the box. Opens it.

Inside: a child's drawing. Crude. Stick figures. A woman, a girl, and a man with a black scribble where his face should be. Written in a child's hand: "Mama, Me, and Daddy."

Mercy's hands shake.

Next to it: a folded letter. She opens it. Sarah's handwriting.

MERCY (reads)
 "...he promised to change. I
 believed him. The drinking
 stopped. The hitting stopped. He
 held you gently. For a while, I
 thought he could be saved. But
 some men don't want saving. They
 want control. And when he realized
 I was planning to leave again, he
 went to the sheriff. Told them I
 was insane. That I heard voices.
 That I was unfit to mother you.
 The irony. He was the voice in my
 head all along..."

Mercy sinks to her knees. The letter flutters from her fingers.

CALEB'S VOICE (V.O.)
 She was weak. Always was.
 You're stronger. You finish
 things.

Mercy clutches her head.

MERCY
 Get out! GET OUT!

She slams her fist into the wall. Again. Again. Until her
 knuckles bleed.

MERCY
 You lied to me! All these years!
 You were never wronged!
 You were the wrong!

She tears at the brooch at her collar. Holds it up.

MERCY
 This was never yours! She was
 never yours!
 (breaking)
 I was never yours...

She collapses. Weeping. The first real tears we've seen from
 her.

The ledger falls open beside her. The last page. Her name
 staring back at her.

She reaches for it. For her knife.

Tears streaming, she raises the blade – as if to slash through her own name.

Then stops.

MERCY

No.

She lowers the knife.

MERCY

That's what you want.
For me to finish what you started.
To die like you died.
Bleedin' someone else's blood.

She stands. Gathers the letters. The drawing. The ledger.

She looks at Deeks' body one last time.

MERCY

You were right about one thing,
Daddy.
(beat)
Some debts do get paid.
She walks out into the burning
dawn.

SCENE FOURTEEN - EXT. SAGEBRUSH CROSSING - DAWN

EXT. SHERIFF'S COMPOUND - DAWN

Ash drifts down like black snow.

The compound's skeleton burns quietly – charred beams collapsing inward with tired groans.

MERCY BOONE stumbles through the wreckage.

Her coat torn open at the shoulder.
Blood gluing her shirt to her skin.
Hands trembling.
Knife dangling loose from fingers that forgot how to unclench.
She moves like a broken clock – one click away from stopping.

Smoke trails her like a funeral shroud.

EXT. INNER COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Dead men lie scattered.

Some she remembers killing.
Others she doesn't.

She steps over them without a second glance.

Not because she's heartless.
Because she's empty.

Each bootstep sticks in the blood-soaked dust.

Each breath rattles like it has to be earned.

She coughs – deep, raw – spitting blood into the dirt.

The sun creeps higher.

The light's too clean for what it's shining on.

EXT. PERIMETER FENCE - CONTINUOUS

The hounds chained at the gate don't bark.

They don't whine.

They lower their heads as she passes, tails limp, ears pressed
back against their skulls.

As if they can see it:

The blood baked into her bones.
The names stitched into her scars.
The price she paid to carry the dead out of the ledger and into
memory.
Mercy spares them a glance.

Soft. Almost sorry.

Then she limps forward.

EXT. BROKEN TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Her horse is gone.

Fled when the shooting started.

Smart animal.

Mercy doesn't call for it.

She just sets her eyes on the open land and keeps walking.

Every step leaves a red mark behind her.

A breadcrumb trail for ghosts.

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE SAGEBRUSH CROSSING - CONTINUOUS

She crests the ridge.

Wind tears at her coat.

The town sprawls below –
small, crooked, pretending to sleep through its own nightmares.

Smoke drifts from distant chimneys.

Life keeps going.

Even when it shouldn't.

Mercy watches it.

Face blank.
Eyes hollow.

Like she's trying to decide whether to burn it, too.

EXT. RIDGE - LEDGER MOMENT - CONTINUOUS

She sinks to her knees – finally – the adrenaline burning out
like a dying star.

The ledger slips from her coat.

Falls into the dust.

She picks it up – slow, shaky hands.

Opens it.

CLOSE ON: LEDGER PAGES.

Bloodstains smearing ink.
Names crossed out in black.
Every last ghost accounted for.
Except one.

MERCY BOONE.

Her name, small and lonely, scrawled in her mother's soft hand.

FLASHBACK - MERCY AS A CHILD (V.O.)

A warm hand on her hair.

A soft lullaby, hummed off-key.

A whisper:

SARAH BOONE (V.O.)
You ain't just a name, baby.
You're a story yet to be sung.

BACK TO PRESENT

Mercy stares at the empty page beneath her name.

Breathing ragged.

Her fingers twitch — reaching for the charcoal nub tucked into the ledger's spine.

She hesitates.

The page is blank.
The future is blank.

MERCY (V.O.)
I could write the ending.
I could bury myself with them.

She lifts the charcoal.

Hovers.

Then lets it fall back.

No mark.
No name.
No grave.

She closes the ledger.

Not because the story's over.

Because it doesn't belong to them anymore.

EXT. RIDGE - STANDING ALONE - CONTINUOUS

Mercy pushes herself upright.

Her legs scream.

Her ribs grind against each other.

Her skin leaks blood from half a dozen open wounds.

But she stands.

She fucking stands.

She pins the silver brooch higher on her chest – over the worst of the blood, like a shield.

She hums – low, broken.

Off-key.

But this time, the lullaby isn't a dirge.

It's a promise.

A defiant whisper against the world's silence.

EXT. HIGHWAY TRAIL - FINAL MOMENTS

Mercy turns her back on Sagebrush Crossing.

On Deeks.

On Caleb Boone.

On the ashes of the past.

She steps forward.

Limping.

Bloody.

Alive.

Each footfall kicks up dust.

Each breath carries memory.

But she keeps walking.

The rising sun silhouettes her against the world.

A crooked, blood-soaked saint without a church.

A curse in human shape.

A beginning where the town thought they left only endings.

WIDE SHOT:

The land stretches out before her – barren, burning, beautiful.

Mercy Boone walks into it without looking back.

No applause.

No salvation.

Just the dirt under her boots and the song still humming in her cracked throat.

FADE OUT.

EPILOGUE – EXT. CAMPFIRE – YEARS LATER – NIGHT

EXT. PRAIRIE – NIGHT

The world is silent.

Dead fields stretch for miles – nothing but brittle grass, shattered fences, and graves no one bothers to visit anymore.

At the center of it all:

A small, desperate campfire sputters against the dark.

A handful of TRAVELERS – faces cracked by dust and regret – huddle close.

The firelight paints them half-alive:

A woman with a dead man's rifle strapped across her back.

A boy too young to carry the gun slung across his chest.

An old man with eyes clouded white but seeing too much anyway.

The wind stirs.

It carries dust.

It carries secrets.

CLOSE ON: FIRE CRACKLING

Ash drifts up like ghostly moths.

The men and women say nothing at first – sharing the kind of silence only survivors understand.

Then the OLD STORYTELLER leans forward.
A leathered face.
Hands twisted by arthritis and old sins.

His voice is low.
Rough as sand dragged over a tombstone.

OLD STORYTELLER
(quiet)
You boys ever hear 'bout Mercy
Boone?

The fire hisses like it knows the name.

ANGLE ON: YOUNG COWBOY

Barely more than sixteen.

Too much fear in his hands.
Too much mouth in his eyes.

He spits into the dirt.
Puts bravado on like a jacket that don't fit.

YOUNG COWBOY
Sounds like a bedtime story.

The others chuckle – but it dies quick.

Because the old man's not smiling.

OLD STORYTELLER
Bedtime story, huh?

(leans closer)

Tell me, boy...
you ever seen a whole town forget its own name?

The boy shrinks back.
A small shiver crawling his spine.

The woman stares into the fire.
Silent.
Hard.
Like she's seen it. Maybe lived it.

THE STORY BUILDS

OLD STORYTELLER (CONT'D)

Mercy Boone was born on cursed
land.
Her daddy sold lies and got strung
up for it.
Her mama bled prayers into the
dirt until the town forgot she
ever sang.

(beat)

They thought killin' the Boone name would kill the Boone blood.

(leans closer)

They were wrong.

The fire crackles.

The horses tethered nearby stamp nervously.

The wind picks up – whispering through the grass like old
ghosts dragging broken chains.

FLASHES - MERCY'S LEGEND (OVERLAPPING)

As the storyteller speaks, we see flashes –
hazy, dreamlike fragments painted by the fire:

Mercy Boone standing over a burning compound.
Mercy wiping blood from her knife on the ledger.
Mercy alone on a shattered trail, silhouette framed by a
bleeding sun.
Mercy vanishing into the horizon like a storm nobody survived.
BACK TO CAMPFIRE

YOUNG COWBOY

(small)

She kill 'em all?

The old man shrugs – but it's a slow, reverent shrug.

OLD STORYTELLER

She didn't just kill 'em.
She erased 'em.
Name by name.
Blood for blood.

(beat)

'Til Sagebrush Crossing ain't even
on the maps no more.
'Til folks pretend it was just a
bad dream that never woke up.

The boy stares into the flames – lost in whatever nightmare
Mercy left behind.

The woman grips her rifle tighter.
A tear rolls down her face — but she wipes it away with the
back of her hand, rough and angry.

THE FINAL QUESTION

The boy swallows hard.

YOUNG COWBOY

She dead?

The fire snaps.

The horses whinny.

The old man leans so close the boy can smell the bourbon and
earth on his breath.

OLD STORYTELLER

No grave marked Boone.

No cross.

No stone.

(smirks)

Some say she kept walkin'.

Kept hummin' that off-key song her
mama taught her.

Kept lookin' for a place where
dirt didn't taste like blood and
names didn't hang you before you
could breathe.

(beat)

Some say she still hums.

You catch the right wind at night

—

the one that smells like smoke and
sorrow?

You can hear it.

(whispering)

Real soft.

The way a storm whispers before it
breaks your back.

EXT. PRAIRIE - WIDER SHOT

The fire flickers.

The travelers huddle closer.

Beyond them, the darkness seems to lean in.

In the distance — just under the howl of the rising wind —

the faintest ghost of a hum rides the night.

Off-key.

Persistent.

Alive.

EXT. PRAIRIE - FINAL IMAGE

Wide, endless plains.

A battered silver brooch half-buried in the dust.

Wind lifts it once –
spins it in a lazy circle –
then drops it again.

Waiting.

Listening.

FADE OUT.

THE END