

SIXKILLER.

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FADE IN:

EXT. SALOON - BOGGY DEPOT - DAY

The sun bakes the warped, weathered saloon. Tinny piano music drifts from inside, thin against the heat.

INT. SALOON - BOGGY DEPOT - DAY

Dust, smoke, and stale whiskey choke the air. A BARTENDER wipes a cloudy glass with a filthier rag.

At the piano, a stooped player taps out a slow tune, cheroot clinging to his lip.

At a corner table, GUS THORPE (40s) leans back, mean-eyed, unshaven, teeth stained from whiskey and cigars.

With him -- RIGGS (40s) and ZEKE (40s), all grime, muscle, and bad intent.

Between them, two whiskey bottles, one nearly dry.

RIGGS

I say we split the money up now.

ZEKE

Not a bad idea, Riggs.

GUS

I tell ya, Riggs, if dumb was dynamite, you wouldn't have enough to blow your hat off.

ZEKE

I gotta get home, Gus.

GUS

We got dusty bills we gotta let cool down.

RIGGS

What are you sayin'?

GUS

I'm sayin' we gotta head south into Mexico and lay low a spell.

ZEKE

You never said shit about Mexico!

GUS

I didn't think someone would get suspicious, but they did! They can finger us.

EXT. MAIN STREET - BOGGY DEPOT - DAY

A slow, steady CLIP-CLOP of hooves on packed dirt.

The townsfolk pause, watching.

Two dark figures on horseback emerge through the shimmer of heat. They rein up at the saloon.

INT. SALOON - BOGGY DEPOT - DAY

Gus pours another drink. Riggs throws back a shot, then slams the glass down, pissed off.

GUS

Don't get all huffed up, Riggs.

The batwing doors swing open.

A dark figure blocks the sun.

SAM SIXKILLER (30s). Black duster. Wide-brimmed Boss of the Plains hat. Narrow eyes scan the room, landing on Gus.

A knowing smile. But no warmth.

He steps forward.

BARTENDER

You just turn around and head on out. I don't serve injuns in here!

Sam stops, eyes locked on Gus. Then, his gaze shifts -- slow and measured -- to the bartender.

SAM

You're assuming I want a drink.

Through the doors, DEPUTY HOBBS BUCKNER (20s) enters, holding near the entrance, hand on his belt.

BARTENDER

Your kind ain't welcome in here.

Sam pulls back his coat.

A Colt Peacemaker. A badge -- UNITED STATES MARSHAL.

The room falls silent.

A beat. He turns to Gus.

SAM

You boys ready?

Gus smiles.

GUS

For what?

SAM

I'm arrestin' you for rustlin' 500
head of horses in Doaksville.

GUS

Ain't never been there.

SAM

Sold 'em in Caldwell. Someone
there knew ya. Knew they weren't
yours. Time to go.

A long, deadly pause.

Suddenly -- Gus, Zeke, and Riggs scatter as they DRAW!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Sam draws as he fires -- faster than thought.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Three shots. Three bodies.

Gus crumples, forehead split.

Riggs and Zeke drop, chests torn open.

The smoke settles.

Hobbs steps in, surveying the dead.

HOBBS

Shit, Marshal. The judge wanted
one of 'em alive.

SAM

Damn. I forgot.

EXT. ON THE ROAD TO MUSKOGEE - DAY

Sam and Hobbs lead three horses with the bodies of Gus, Zeke, and Riggs slumped and tied over the saddles.

Sam stares ahead, stoic. Hobbs throws a nervous glance over his shoulders.

SAM

They're not going to reach out and grab ya.

HOBBS

Hell, I know that. Don't ya think I know that?

SAM

Why do you keep looking back?

HOBBS

'Cause... they might slip off.

SAM

They won't feel a thing. Now tell me what's really on your mind.

HOBBS

You are. You and the Judge. He told you he wanted one of these men alive -- and now look at 'em. They's all dead!

SAM

I didn't have much of a choice. You were witness.

HOBBS

But the judge... I don't think he'll be as accommodatin' to ya.

SAM

It was a fair fight.

HOBBS

But you're...

Sam turns to him.

SAM

Cherokee.

Hobbs shrugs.

HOBBS

Well... yeah. You gotta admit --
it ain't normal.

SAM

I'm not the only marshal who
brings them in more dead than
alive.

HOBBS

I just don't understand. You got
enough to put up with just bein'
an injun --

SAM

Cherokee.

HOBBS

-- Cherokee. Why cause more
trouble bein' a marshal?

SAM

Badge don't care where I come
from. It's the man wearin' it they
answer to.

HOBBS

In a perfect world, but this ain't
a perfect world, Sam! You know
Judge Endicott's pissin' his pants
lookin' for a reason to get rid of
you.

SAM

Name one marshal who's a better
tracker than me.

HOBBS

Ain't none.

SAM

A better shot?

HOBBS

Ain't none, and you know it!

THUMP!

Hobbs and Sam rein in and turn around.

A body has fallen on the ground.

HOBBS (CONT'D)

I think that was Gus.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Neat, orderly, a step up from Boggy Depot. The buildings are freshly painted, the CLANG-CLANG of a blacksmith fills the air as men and women go about their business.

SUPER: MUSKOGEE, OKLAHOMA TERRITORY, 1880.

EXT. MARSHAL'S OFFICE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Sam and Hobbs's horses are tethered at the post as MARSHAL ROY DEVLIN (50s), tense with anger, lifts Riggs' head by the hair.

DEVLIN

I want to know who you were
working for. Can you answer me?

Beat. Nothing.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

Didn't think so.

Drops Riggs, moves to Gus, lifts his head up.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

How about you? Feel like talkin'?
No?

He lets go of Gus and heads toward the office door.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

Hobbs, get these bodies over
Morton's. Tell him cheap coffins.
(turns to Sam)
The town is payin' for 'em. Get in
here.

Devlin enters the building. Sam follows.

INT. MARSHAL'S OFFICE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Sparse with a cell, a desk, and wanted posters tacked on the wall.

DEVLIN

Damnit, Sam. I told you I needed
one of 'em alive! The territory
office is convinced they was part
of a bigger operation.

Devlin plops into his chair as Sam pours a cup of coffee from the stove.

SAM

No, they weren't.

DEVLIN

You think you know better than the territory office?

SAM

I know they rustled the horses in Eagletown, sold them in Tullahassee, and I found them in Boggy Depot. That shows an attempt to evade detection. There ain't no "bigger operation" near Boggy Depot.

DEVLIN

That ain't your call to make.

SAM

All three drew on me at once. I didn't have a chance to ask one of 'em to hold back so I could take him alive.

DEVLIN

Why can't you just follow orders?

SAM

I was followin' orders! My order was to bring in the men who rustled 500 head in Eagletown. I tracked 'em to Boggy Depot. Paper on 'em said "dead or alive," and they come back dead!

DEVLIN

All right, all right. Just givin' you a warning that the territory office ain't gonna like this.

SAM

The territory office wouldn't give a damn if Hobbs killed 'em.

DEVLIN

I ain't gonna argue. You bein' native complicates everything. They'll think you killed those men for revenge.

SAM

Revenge for what? I ain't never seen any of 'em before.

DEVLIN

You know what I'm sayin'. Why wasn't bein' Sheriff of the Cherokee Nation enough?

SAM

I wanted to be a territorial marshal. Improve my horizons.

DEVLIN

You just keep it in your pocket that the world we live in ain't ready for that.

He pulls a paper from his desk.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

I got somethin' for ya. Need to act on it right away.

SAM

I just got back from three months trackin' those corpses out there. I'd like a little time with my wife. Let Hobbs take this one.

DEVLIN

This needs your... particular talents. It crosses over into Injun territory.

Hands Sam the paper.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

This ain't just some outlaw runnin' whiskey. This one's different.

He raises his worried eyes from the page to Devlin.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

Yeah. Jackson's Trading Post. Ride up there and see if there's really anything to this, and get back to me.

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

FLORA SIXKILLER (30s), beats the dust from a rug slung over the railing. A pretty woman with quiet resilience, she carries an effortless warmth -- gentle in presence, yet rooted in strength.

She turns to see Sam approach and runs to him as he dismounts. They kiss... and when she steps back...

FLORA
You said only two months.

SAM
I underestimated.

Another kiss. He puts his arm around her as they head for the front door.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - NIGHT

Sam sits at the table with a cup of coffee, as Flora stirs a pot of stew at the stove.

FLORA
After two months I tried to cook something special each day, thinking you'd be home. After a week I stopped. That's why you have a plain stew tonight.

SAM
It's a feast.

She stops and turns to him -- her face hardened.

SAM (CONT'D)
What?

FLORA
You tell me.

Sam is puzzled.

FLORA (CONT'D)
You hate stew. You never liked stew. Tell me.

Sam gives in.

SAM
I'm headed out in the morning.

FLORA

Sam Sixkiller! No! You just got home!

SAM

Flora, someone is sellin' bad whiskey... not just in Indian Territory, but in settlements as well.

FLORA

Bad whiskey? So what?

SAM

It might be killin' people. I'm going to have a look. Might be nothing.

This takes the wind out of Flora's sail.

FLORA

(quietly)

And you're going to stop it.

SAM

I have to find out what's going on.

FLORA

Sam. No one is looking out for you.

SAM

I've got a deputy.

HOBBS

You know what I mean. One side sees you as a traitor. The other wants you dead. That badge won't stop a bullet, Sam.

He stands and puts his arms around her.

SAM

Maybe not. But it's the only thing standin' between them and the law.

She lays her head against his chest and hugs him close.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL - DAY

Sam and Hobbs ride in silence. After a moment --

HOBBS

I coulda done this alone.

Sam doesn't respond.

HOBBS (CONT'D)

Devlin' doesn't think I'm good
enough. That's the real reason.

Still nothing. And they ride.

EXT. TRADING POST - DAY

A lonely outpost along the trail -- weathered wood, a sagging front porch, and a few wagons hitched out front.

Sam and Hobbs rein up their horses. Nearby, Cherokee men sit near a fire, speaking in hushed tones.

A trader, GEORGE KANE (50s), squints as he watches Sam approach from the porch.

INT. TRADING POST - DAY

Dim light. Sacks of grain, barrels, shelves lined with goods. Sam steps inside, grabs coffee and tobacco, sets them on the counter.

GEORGE

You're outta luck on sugar.
Wagon's late.

Sam nods, counting out coins.

The door creaks open -- a CHEROKEE ELDER (60s) enters, wrapped in a faded blanket, his eyes heavy with worry.

He walks straight to Sam.

ELDER

You wear a badge. You are
Sixkiller.

Sam turns, respectful but cautious.

SAM

That's right.

The Elder gestures outside.

ELDER

Come.

Sam and Hobbs exchange a glance. Sam follows.

EXT. TRADING POST - BEHIND THE BUILDING - DAY

The fire burns low. A few Cherokee men kneel beside a wrapped body.

The Elder motions toward it.

ELDER
Poisoned whiskey.

Sam squats, pulling back the cloth -- the face of a young Cherokee man, lips blackened.

ELDER (CONT'D)
Not the first. Won't be the last.

SAM
Where did he get it? Here?

ELDER
At the settlement. Now others are sick. Dying.

HOBBS
Who sold it?

ELDER
A white man. New trader. Never seen before. Took the money and disappeared. Said he'd be back.

SAM
Where?

The Elder nods south.

ELDER
Outside Bramble Creek. They trusted him. They drank. Now they die.

HOBBS
Bad whiskey ain't new, Sam. Maybe they just didn't cut it right.

The Elder fixes him with a cold stare.

ELDER
Not bad. Poisoned.

Sam studies the Elder's face.

ELDER (CONT'D)
It was meant to kill.

SAM
Where's the rest of it?

The elder gestures toward a wagon. Sam walks over, lifts a small keg -- gives it a shake. Still liquid inside.

He pries it open, sniffs. His face hardens.

SAM (CONT'D)
That ain't whiskey.

INT. MARSHAL'S OFFICE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Marshal Devlin is at the small woodstove pouring a coffee. Hobbs rests a foot on a chair, checking the chamber of his pistol.

Sam waits near the desk.

DEVLIN
Given what you've told me... I
would say drop it.

SAM
Drop it?

DEVLIN
You yourself said maybe it wasn't
cut right.

HOBBS
I said that.

DEVLIN
Who cares? The bottom line is, we
don't have time for it.

SAM
Bad whiskey that kills people is
something we don't have time for?

DEVLIN
You saw a dead Injun. Right?

Sam doesn't respond.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)
Did you see any others?
(to Hobbs)
See any other dead Injuns?

HOBBS

No. But they said there was.

DEVLIN

So it's hearsay.

SAM

If the whiskey killed every white man at the Trading Post, you'd send a posse.

DEVLIN

Sam, I'm warning you.

HOBBS

It weren't whiskey in that keg, Marshal.

DEVLIN

Stow it, Hobbs. When I want the opinion of a greenhorn, I'll ask for one.

SAM

Then I'll say it. It wasn't whiskey. It was poison. And it killed one of my people.

A beat. Devlin exhales, shifts tactics.

DEVLIN

Look, Sam. I know. And I'm sorry. But we cover a hell of a lot of ground. We don't have the men to chase down every batch of bad hooch.

SAM

I understand.

DEVLIN

Do you?

SAM

I understand you don't give a damn.

Devlin's face goes red.

SAM (CONT'D)

Before you say something we both regret, let me tell you -- I'm riding into Indian Territory.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
I'll find who's poisoning my
people. And likely yours too.

A beat.

SAM (CONT'D)
Death for profit don't recognize
race.

He exits.

Hobbs lingers, then gives Devlin a small, uneasy shrug,
and follows Sam out.

EXT. MARSHAL'S OFFICE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Sam and Hobbs exit and mount their horses.

SAM
How about comin' over for supper
tonight?

HOBBS
You sure? I mean -- wouldn't you
want to be alone with Flora?

SAM
When she learns I am leaving in
the morning, she will not be
speaking to me. With you there, I
can speak.

Hobbs furrows his brow.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - NIGHT

Sam, Flora, and Hobbs are at the table eating dinner.

In silence.

Tension in the air.

HOBBS
Sure was a nice supper, Ma'am.

No reaction.

HOBBS (CONT'D)
Yes'm, when we're on the trail,
all the marshal can talk about is
your cookin'.

Flora raises dubious eyes to Sam, then back to her plate.

A long, awkward silence.

FLORA

What time will you be headed out
tomorrow?

SAM

'Fore dawn.

FLORA

Where to?

SAM

We'll start at Deep Fork River.

FLORA

Ah. They're very fond of you
there, aren't they?

EXT. CREEK CAMP - DEEP FORK RIVER - DAY

Sam and Hobbs are surrounded by angry looking villagers,
both men and women -- hands near axes, bows, and knives.
A silent warning. Hobbs is uneasy.

A cluster of lodges and lean-tos along the river's edge.
Smoke coils from distant fires.

Sam speaks in the Creek language to a tall, silver-haired
CHIEF (70s), who stares at Sam with wise, narrow eyes.

SAM

Ehetkē ētvwenvyēst. Ēskē. Cuko
hute. Ēstē ētvwv vliketv.

SUBTITLE: I ask again. Whiskey. In small barrel. Causes
sickness and death.

CHIEF

Nake enheretv-Tvstvnvke enhonvnkv
estuceckv?

SUBTITLE: Why should we trust you -- warrior who rides
with enemy?

A figure emerges from the crowd.

TASCOWA

None of our people trust you.

TASCOWA (40s), a warrior of great poise and physical strength. His gaze cuts through Sam like a blade.

Hobbs shifts uncomfortably, leans to Sam.

HOBBS
(quietly)
Who's that?

TASCOWA
I am Tascowa. The Heniha to our chief. You are not welcome here, Sixkiller.

Sam doesn't flinch.

SAM
I am here for answers. Our people are getting sick, and some are dying --

TASCOWA
"Our people?" You mean the white people?

A few warriors nod, shifting uneasily. Sam doesn't react.

SAM
I am Cherokee.

Tascowa studies him, unimpressed.

TASCOWA
No, Sixkiller. You were Cherokee. Now you wear the white man's badge.

SAM
And by doing so I can bring justice to our people.

Tascowa snorts, unimpressed.

TASCOWA
(mocking)
"Justice to our people."

SAM
This badge is the white man's law. Do you think a white man with such a badge would give a damn about you?

The question hangs.

For the first time, Tascowa studies Sam -- truly.

A tense silence.

TASCOWA

Speak.

SAM

Whiskey. It's been poisoned and
can kill. Do you know of what I
speak?

A long pause as Tascowa studies him.

EXT. BEHIND THE CAMP - DAY

A secluded clearing, far from the campfires. Flies buzz
thick in the air.

Four blanket-wrapped bodies lay side by side in the dirt.

Tascowa motions toward them.

TASCOWA

They died yesterday after drinking
whiskey. Their deaths were long
and painful.

Sam kneels. Pulls back a blanket.

The face of a Creek man -- eyes glazed, lips blackened.
His jaw is locked in agony.

Sam stares at the body, then tosses the blanket back.

TASCOWA (CONT'D)

(watching him
closely)

You think it was the whiskey that
killed them?

Sam rises as he glares at Hobbs.

SAM

Yes. This confirms it. Where's the
whiskey?

Tascowa pulls back another blanket.

A glass bottle, a quarter full, rests beside the corpse.
Its label peeled, its contents dark.

Sam takes it, pops the cork, sniffs. His face hardens.

SAM (CONT'D)
Not whiskey. Where did they get
it?

TASCOWA
Two Bears traveled to the
settlement town wanting to trade
pelts.

HOBBS
Pelts for poisoned whiskey.

TASCOWA
If white man's whiskey killed
them, they will be revenged.

Sam meets his gaze -- calm, but firm.

SAM
They will be... in a way that is
fair to both your people and the
white people.

TASCOWA
White people will die.

SAM
The guilty ones. Not all.

A charged pause.

Tascowa stares deep into Sam, searching for deceit.

TASCOWA
You have four days. One for each
death. Then... we ride.

A pause. He looks hard at Sam.

TASCOWA (CONT'D)
This is more than we should give.

Sam nods -- subtle, accepting.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL - DAY

Sam and Hobbs ride in silence.

Hobbs adjusts in his saddle, uneasy.

HOBBS
Four days ain't much time,
Marshal.

(MORE)

HOBBS (CONT'D)
Hell, we don't even know if they's
makin' this stuff 'round here.

Sam keeps his gaze ahead.

SAM
Then we find who is selling it.

HOBBS
Where we headed?

SAM
Dustin is the closest. Must be
where Two Bears did his tradin'.

HOBBS
I've been there. Sheriff...
Madden. I think it's Madden.

EXT. ON THE PLAINS - NIGHT

The flicker of firelight barely holds back the deep black
of the plains.

Two bedrolls with saddles for pillows, laid beside a
small, crackling fire.

A distant COYOTE HOWLS.

Hobbs steps into camp, carrying a bundle of brittle
branches. He drops them next to the fire.

HOBBS
Ain't much out there to pick from.
Gonna be mighty cold here in two
hours.

He sinks onto his bedroll, exhales.

HOBBS (CONT'D)
I've been thinkin'.

Sam shifts his eyes to him.

HOBBS (CONT'D)
You think whoever's makin' this
hooch is targetin' Injuns?

SAM
At the moment, that's what it
looks like.

HOBBS
It's gotta be made in these parts.

SAM
Why?

HOBBS
If it was everywhere, somethin'
would have come in over the wire.
Deaths in Kansas, Wyoming,
Texas... don't you think?

Sam mulls that over.

SAM
Devlin got a wire.

HOBBS
Yeah. True.
(beat)
Two hour ride to Dustin. When you
wanna head out?

SAM
Sunrise.

Hobbs pulls a blanket over himself.

Sam stares into the flames. Lost in thought.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DUSTIN - DAY

The population is small. Townspeople go about their day.

JARMAN (V.O.)
Who's askin'?

SAM (V.O.)
I am.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DUSTIN - DAY

An average store stocked with dry goods and coated in dust. Behind the counter stands JARMAN (40s), all slicked hair and narrowed eyes -- a man who sweats suspicion and doesn't hide it.

He glares at Sam, who calmly pulls his coat back to reveal the badge.

JARMAN
A marshal? You!?

Sam stares at him.

JARMAN (CONT'D)
Where did you get that?

SAM
Answer my question.

JARMAN
I don't keep track of every
customer.

SAM
You would remember four Creek's.

JARMAN
Who said I would?

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DUSTIN - DAY

Hobbs sits astride his horse. Sam's horse is hitched to the rail. SPURRED FOOTSTEPS approach.

He turns to see SHERIFF JEFF MADDEN (30s), imposing, tall, face darkened by the sun, and piercing eyes that land on Hobbs.

They stay on him until he opens the door and enters.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DUSTIN - DAY

Madden enters and instantly eyes Sam.

JARMAN
Sheriff, am I glad to see you.

MADDEN
That ammo I order come in yet?

JARMAN
Yes, sir, got it here. Sheriff,
this Injun is askin' questions. I
ain't answerin' to no Injun.

Madden sees the badge.

MADDEN
You... must be Marshal Sixkiller.

JARMAN
Wha-- wait! He really is a
marshal!?

SAM

And you are?

MADDEN

Jeff Madden.

They shake hands. Madden turns to Jarman.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

What's the trouble, Jarman?

JARMAN

He wants to know if four Injuns
come in here the other day to
trade.

A pause.

MADDEN

Did they?

Another pause.

JARMAN

Well... yeah.

SAM

What did they trade?

JARMAN

Four pelts.

SAM

What did you give them in return?

Another pause as Jarman's eyes dart to Madden.

Sam turns to Madden.

SAM (CONT'D)

Do you know?

MADDEN

Hell, I don't know.

Sam turns back to Jarman.

SAM

So why are you looking at him?

The door OPENS. Hobbs enters and takes a couple of steps
into the room.

JARMAN
Penny candy.

SAM
What?

JARMAN
Half a dozen peppermint sticks,
some Arabian Gumdrops... a bag of
rock candy all the way from Maine.

MADDEN
Sounds like you bamboozled them,
Jarman.

SAM
Sounds like you're lyin' Jarman.

JARMAN
Sheriff, I don't have to take that
from him!

MADDEN
Marshal Sixkiller, what say we
head on down to my office. We can
talk there.

Sam keeps a withering look on Jarman for a moment as
Madden turns to Hobbs.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
We've met, haven't we?

HOBBS
Hobbs. I was here about two years
ago on a prisoner transfer.

Madden nods, half remembering. He makes for the door and
opens it, gesturing to the outside with his free arm.

MADDEN
Gentlemen?

Sam turns and makes his way to the door.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DUSTIN - DAY

Sam and Hobbs' horses are tethered at the post.

MADDEN (V.O.)
Jarman is a good man. He's just...

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DUSTIN - DAY

Sam sits facing Madden, who is behind his desk.

MADDEN

...well... folks here don't take
to outsiders askin' questions.

Madden opens a drawer and pulls out a small whiskey
bottle. He holds it up.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Cut the trail outta your throat?

Sam shakes his head no. Madden turns the bottle to Hobbs,
who holds up a hand and nods "no."

Madden takes a gulp.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Now, about Jarman -- he answered
your questions.

SAM

The men who traded with him are
dead. They had no penny candy.
Only a bottle of bootleg whiskey.

MADDEN

What are you getting at, Marshal?

SAM

The whiskey killed them and this
town is where the bottle came
from. There's nothing between
Dustin and Deep Fork but prairie.

MADDEN

There's no illegal bootleggin'
goin' on in my town, Marshal.

HOBBS

If it was sent here, Jarman should
have the delivery in his records.

MADDEN

Assumin' he keeps good records.

SAM

Then you won't mind me having a
look around. I'll camp outside of
town.

He turns to exit.

MADDEN
We have a fine hotel.

Sam stops and turns back to him.

SAM
Just the same.

Sam and Hobbs exit. Madden takes another swig and tosses the bottle back into the drawer.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF DUSTIN - DAY

A golden sky fades to deep blue.

Sam and Hobbs ride at an easy pace, leaving town behind.

HOBBS
That hotel back there had real
beds. Soft ones.

SAM
A soft bed makes you sleep deep.
You need hard ground -- always on
the verge of awake.

HOBBS
Not very comfortable.

SAM
No, but it keeps you alive.

They continue to ride in silence.

Hobbs glances around, checks the trail.

HOBBS
You plannin' on ridin' all the way
to Texas?

They ride several more moments.

Sam reins in and stays mounted. His gaze is locked on the town behind them.

Hobbs reins in and dismounts --

HOBBS (CONT'D)
I'll get a fire started.

SAM
No.

HOBBS

No?

SAM

No fire.

HOBBS

Corn dodgers and jerky. And a hotel and restaurant less'n a mile away.

He follows Sam's line of sight -- back toward Dustin.

HOBBS (CONT'D)

What d'you see?

SAM

I want to find out if I've lost my instincts.

A puzzled Hobbs continues to watch the town.

HOBBS

We got plenty of time before sunset. We could take a look 'round the town or the hills....

SAM

I don't think we'll need to.

HOBBS

If we ain't movin' out, I'll unsaddle my horse and --

SAM

No. We must be ready.

HOBBS

All right. Just wish I knew what we need to be ready for.

Sam continues to stare at the town.

SAM

Ready for anything.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DUSTIN - SUNSET

A lantern flickers, casting long shadows. Madden sits behind his desk, casually cleaning a revolver.

Jarman storms in, shutting the door hard behind him.

JARMAN

Damnit, Sheriff! Why'd you let that Injun treat me like I was some kinda criminal!?

MADDEN

He only had a few questions, Jarman... and you answered them.

JARMAN

Easy for you to say, sitting there... behind your desk.

MADDEN

Where else should I sit? In a cell?

JARMAN

Is he gone for good? What do I tell him if he comes back?

MADDEN

Same thing you told him this afternoon. You got nothing to worry about.

JARMAN

I got plenty to worry about! What if he comes back and finds somethin'?

Madden leans back in his chair.

MADDEN

What exactly is he gonna find, Jarman?

Jarman swallows, nervous.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

He can search the entire town and turn it inside-out. He won't find anything.

A silence.

JARMAN

(quietly)

There was somethin' about that Injun. Like... like he could read my mind... like he knew somethin' weren't right.

MADDEN

I think you're givin' him too much credit. He's just doin' his job. Hell, the fact that he wants to camp out of town should tell ya that he ain't that civilized... not when we got the Palace Hotel.

An uneasy pause.

Jarman thinks... and smirks.

JARMAN

Damn... yeah... yeah, that's probably right, Sheriff.

MADDEN

Just get back to your store and don't worry about anything. He'll ride on soon.

Jarman takes hesitant steps to the door.

JARMAN

Yeah... yeah...

He exits, CLOSING the door behind him.

Madden listens as Jarman's footsteps fade away... then returns to cleaning his pistol.

EXT. TOWN OF DUSTIN - NIGHT

The town lies a distance away under a full moon - the prairie lit by blue moonlight.

EXT. SAM'S OVERLOOK - NIGHT

Sam watches the town, just as before. Behind him, Hobbs dozes, his blanket rolled into a pillow.

Sam squints -- something has caught his eye. He watches.

EXT. TOWN OF DUSTIN - NIGHT

The small speck of a loan rider gallops out of town headed toward the hills.

SAM

Wake up.

Hobbs sits up.

He stands and joins Sam. They watch the rider.

HOBBS

What's that?

SAM

Proof that my instincts are still good. Mount up.

They head for their horses, mount, and spur them into gallops... the blanket pillow left behind.

EXT. ON THE PRAIRIE - NIGHT

The lone rider, his identity hidden by shadow, gallops over the prairie at top speed.

EXT. ROUGH TERRAIN - NIGHT

Sam and Hobbs slowly maneuver down a rocky incline. When they reach bottom they kick into a gallop.

EXT. FOOT OF THE HILLS - NIGHT

The lone rider slows to a trot as he approaches the bottom of the hills. He rides forward with caution.

Another rider meets him. The lone rider points. The second rider gallops off in another direction.

EXT. PRAIRIE OUTSIDE DUSTIN - NIGHT

Sam and Hobbs rein in as Sam studies the ground. Hobbs looks over his shoulder to the town.

HOBBS

This is about where he was.

Sam continues to search for tracks -- his eyes dart forward. He kicks his horse forward and they depart.

EXT. FOOT OF THE HILLS - NIGHT

The two riders have long gone. The GALLOPING HOOVES of Sam and Hobbs fade in. They rein-in and stop at the hills.

Sam studies the tracks.

They spur onward... in the direction of the second rider.
As the POUNDING HOOVES of their horses fade... the trail
where the lone rider departed remains... in silence.

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - NIGHT

The house's windows glow with the flickering warmth of
candlelight and kerosene lamps. Open panes reveal the
modest interior, while delicate curtains sway in the
whispering breeze.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - NIGHT

Flora, in a rocker, busies herself with sewing. She
becomes frustrated with worry, stands, tosses the
material onto the rocker.

She makes her way to the stove and checks the coffee pot
by laying her hand on it. She opens the stove, stokes the
embers, and tosses another log in.

FOOTSTEPS approach from outside.

A light KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK on the door.

Flora steps toward the door.

FLORA

Yes?

DEVLIN (O.S.)

Mrs. Sixkiller? It's Marshal
Devlin.

FLORA

Oh!

She unlocks the door, and it opens to reveal a smiling
Marshal Devlin in the frame.

DEVLIN

I hope it's not too late?

FLORA

No, not at all. Won't you come in?

He smiles.

DEVLIN

Thank you.

EXT. ON THE PRAIRIE - NIGHT

Sam and Hobbs now ride slow, in the direction from which they came.

HOBBS
I mean... it happens, Marshal.

SAM
Not to me.

Sam gestures.

SAM (CONT'D)
We'll camp up there and start fresh in the morning.

HOBBS
Ain't we goin' back to where was before?

SAM
Too far. No need.

HOBBS
(mutters)
Damn.

Sam turns to him. Hobbs meets his stare.

HOBBS (CONT'D)
I left my blanket at the other camp!

Sam turns forward.

SAM
That's too bad.

They continue to ride.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - NIGHT

A kerosene lamp casts flickering shadows. The air is thick with unspoken concern.

Devlin sits at the table, easy but watchful. Flora pours two cups of coffee at the stove.

DEVLIN
How are you finding things here in Muskogee, Mrs. Sixkiller?

FLORA

I'm used to the side-eyed glances
and the whispers. I think they
expect me to wear buckskins and
moccasins.

DEVLIN

You'll have to excuse their
ignorance. Sam knew what you both
were getting into when he took the
Marshal's job.

Flora sets the coffee cups down, a measured pause before
she takes her seat.

FLORA

We did. It didn't enter my mind
that he would be gone months at a
time.

DEVLIN

Big territory.

FLORA

I just wish he had more time at
home before riding out again.

DEVLIN

Oh, that was entirely his choice.

Flora's hand pauses over her cup. A flicker of unease.

FLORA

What do you mean, Marshal?

DEVLIN

After he came back with his report
on this new case, I told him to
leave it go. Wasn't worth
pursuin'.

She studies him.

FLORA

He... didn't have to go?

DEVLIN

I told him not to.. but he was
persistent.

Devlin sips his coffee, his gaze steady.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

Did he say anything to you?

FLORA

No.

DEVLIN

Didn't let on... anything useful?

FLORA

He never does.

A slight curl of Devlin's mouth. He leans forward, as if confiding something.

DEVLIN

Sam's got his way of doin' things.
Can't say I always approve.

FLORA

He has to find new paths. Work his way around the white man's prejudice and our people's hatred.

DEVLIN

Yes. Yes, that's unfortunate. Has he ever spoken about giving up the badge?

FLORA

No. He doesn't believe in quitting.

DEVLIN

Shame. He's a helluva lawman... but I don't think he sees what he's up against.

A beat.

FLORA

Oh, I think he knows exactly what he's up against, Marshal Devlin.

A flicker of a smile from Devlin.

DEVLIN

Well! I've taken enough of your evening.

He moves toward the door. Flora joins him, opening it with a quiet, wary grace.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

If you hear from Sam, let know.
Just want to keep him safe.

He tips his hat, his eyes lingering on her just a moment too long.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

Mrs. Sixkiller.

He steps out. Flora closes the door, leaning against it. Worry deepens on her face.

EXT. A SMALL CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

The prairie stretches into darkness, moonlight casting long shadows.

Hobbs sits cross-legged by the fire, cradling a tin cup of coffee. Sam stands apart, staring toward the distant glow of Dustin.

HOBBS

Coffee?

Sam doesn't respond. His focus locked on the town.

SAM

(to himself)

I don't know how it happened.

HOBBS

We followed the wrong fella out of Dustin. Easy mistake.

Sam finally turns, steps toward the fire, his expression is unreadable.

SAM

I am not so sure.

HOBBS

Marshal, I know it's a rare thing... but you can be wrong once in a while.

Sam levels a steady look at him.

SAM

When?

A beat.

Hobbs lets out a sharp laugh. Sam smirks -- then both dissolve into genuine laughter. The laughter fades, but the weight of the moment lingers.

SAM (CONT'D)

We'll pick up the tracks again in the morning.

HOBBS

I don't get it. We followed the tracks outta town, ended up at a ranch house. Nothin' there but a tired horse and a spooked old man.

SAM

Tomorrow.

Sam stretches out, using his saddle for a pillow. Hobbs watches him for a beat, then stares into the fire.

EXT. FOOT OF THE HILLS - DAY

The land and sky are yellow from the early morning sun. Sam, reins in hand, leads his horse at a slow walk -- his eyes glued to the trail. Hobbs rides behind him.

HOBBS

Between the riders tracks and ours, I don't see how you can tell which is which.

SAM

He was riding faster. The hoof prints are deeper....

He stops and kneels.

SAM (CONT'D)

Except for here. Here they are not as deep. He slows down.

Sam lifts his eyes to the hills ahead. He stands and leads his horse forward with cautious steps as he studies the ground.

They reach the location where the lone rider met the second rider. Sam kneels again, eyes on the ground.

His head turns with a slow, methodical turn.

A pause.

He stands.

SAM (CONT'D)

Two riders.
(turns to Hobbs)
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

The rider from the town met
another rider here... the one we
followed to the ranch who knew
nothing.

HOBBS

Who "claimed" he knew nothing.
Let's go grab him.

SAM

No. What we want is in these
hills.

He mounts.

SAM (CONT'D)

Let's find out what it is.

They follow the tracks, headed into the hills.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

- ROCKY HILLS - EARLY MORNING. Sam and Hobbs ride single file along a narrow, winding trail. Loose gravel shifts under their horses' hooves as they navigate over the uneven terrain.

- CREST OF A RIDGE - MID-MORNING. Silhouetted against the rising sun, Sam pulls up his horse, scanning the landscape below. Hobbs shields his eyes, searching. Nothing but endless rolling hills and scattered scrub.

- DRY CREEK BED - LATER. The creek is long dry, its cracked earth revealing a tangle of old hoofprints. Sam dismounts, crouching to study the tracks. He brushes a layer of dust aside -- some prints are fresh.

- DENSE BRUSH - MIDDAY. Sunlight pierces through tangled branches as Sam and Hobbs push their way through a narrow trail, ducking down to avoid being slapped by low, overhanging limbs.

- OPEN RIDGE - SUN HIGH IN THE SKY. The horses move at a slow, tired gait, sweat glistening on their coats. Hobbs removes his hat, wipes his brow, peering up at the relentless sun.

- DESCENDING INTO A HOLLOW - AFTERNOON. Sam taps his heels into his horse, leading the way down a gentle slope. Something catches his eye--a patch of flattened grass, trampled underfoot.

- A SMALL CLEARING - AFTERNOON. The horses come to a stop in a wide, matted-down section of ground.

A pile of smoldering ashes, several broken bottles, boot prints. Hoof marks.

Sam dismounts, crouching to run his hand over the dirt.

A beat.

SAM (CONT'D)
A lot of activity here. At least
five men.

Hobbs steps down, glances around.

HOBBS
Ground is trampled.

Sam continues to study the ground.

SAM
Nothing is wet. They didn't spill
a drop.

HOBBS
You think this is where the still
was?

Sam gives a slight nod.

HOBBS (CONT'D)
You were asking questions so they
broke it down.

Sam turns to Hobbs - a long glare.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DUSTIN - DAY

As Hobbs waits by the door, Sam faces Jarman, all nerves behind the counter.

JARMAN
I've told ya all I know.

SAM
Take a little moonlight ride last
night?

JARMAN
I don' know what you're talkin'
about.

SAM
Don't make me have to refresh your
memory.

JARMAN

Why the hell would I be out ridin'
last night!?

SAM

To get the still moved. The still
you used to make that poison
whiskey.

JARMAN

You're loco! What the hell!?

SAM

You seem to be a real Injun lover.
The kind that would like to wipe
every last one off the face of the
earth.

JARMAN

Yeah, I don't like Injuns,
Sixkiller -- and I don't like you.
But I don't know anythin' about a
still.

HOBBS

He's lyin'.

JARMAN

I ain't lyin'! I'm gettin' a
lawyer! I have rights! 'Sides, I
don't even own a horse!

This takes Sam by surprise, shown only by his silence.

HOBBS

What do you mean you don't own a
horse?

JARMAN

Why would I? Ain't never go
anywhere -- like the hills!

HOBBS

Nearest train to here is over in
Antlers. How do you get your
supplies?

JARMAN

I rent a horse and wagon from Jim
Clements over at the livery. Takes
me seven days round trip. Go and
check with him. He'll tell ya.

Sam holds a stare. He turns and heads for the door.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DUSTIN - DAY

Sam and Hobbs exit onto the street where MRS. LANCASTER (35), dressed all in black, waits for them.

MRS. LANCASTER
You are Marshal Sixkiller?

SAM
I am. This is Deputy Marshal Hobbs Buckner.

Hobbs tips his hat.

MRS. LANCASTER
My husband was murdered in this town. Can you help me?

SAM
Did you go to Sheriff Madden?

MRS. LANCASTER
He told me I was crazy.

SAM
Why would he think that?

MRS. LANCASTER
My husband wasn't much of a drinker, but once in a while he would pop a cork and take a pull.

SAM
What happened?

MRS. LANCASTER
Last week he only had three quick pulls and buckled over in pain. I run for Doc Murphy. By the time we got home, Jim was dead. It was the whiskey. It was poisoned.

SAM
You told this to Madden?

MRS. LANCASTER
Powerful men are behind this bootleggin', Marshal.

SAM
Who?

MRS. LANCASTER
Can't say outright.

SAM

Why?

MRS. LANCASTER

As much I loved my late husband, I
ain't ready to join him in heaven.
I got young'uns that need raisin'.

She hurries on her way.

HOBBS

So... looks like townspeople are
starting to drop, too.

A pause.

Sam turns to Hobbs.

SAM

Let's go get a drink.

Hobbs furrows his brow.

INT. SALOON - DUSTIN - DAY

A lone drunk is at the bar. Several men play a card game
at a table.

Sam and Hobbs enter. The Bartender is on the verge of
telling Sam he's not welcome, but Sam pulls his duster
aside and the Bartenders eyes shift to the badge.

His eyes widen at the sight.

BARTENDER

Son of a bitch. I heard tell about
you... but I didn't believe it...
a marshal?

Sam studies the bottles on the shelves.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Tarantula juice?

SAM

Gin.

HOBBS

Same.

The Bartender gets to work.

CHARLIE CLEM (70s), the drunk, turns to Sam. His clothing was once elegant... time and constant wear has faded the color, torn the fabric, and crushed the hat. His face shows even more wear and tear.

CHARLIE

Gin. That's good. Whiskey'll kill ya.

SAM

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

You're dead. That's what. Kill means dead... or haven't ya heard?

Hobbs looks at Charlie's drink.

HOBBS

Ain't that whiskey?

CHARLIE

Bite your tongue! No... this is bourbon. Nectar of the bar flies. Whiskey's too hard goin' down. Burns... and kills ya. You know I knows four men who died from it?

SAM

From whiskey?

The Bartender SLAMS the glasses onto the table and the bottle in front of Sam as he gives Charlie the evil eye.

BARTENDER

Charlie you're giving me a bad name here. There ain't nothin' wrong with my whiskey.

The Bartender walks away, and exits through a back door.

CHARLIE

Nothin' wrong he says.
(spots Sam's bottle)
You gonna drink that?

Charlie watches with great interest as Sam pours two glasses of gin.

SAM

Why do you think people are dying from the whiskey?

CHARLIE

I dunno -- you'll have to ask
them. Ain't real whiskey, ya know.
Bootleg. I don't think they know
what they're doin.

Sam pushes the glass in front of Charlie, who tips his
hat to him and gulps down the gin.

SAM

Who's making the bootleg whiskey,
Charlie?

CHARLIE

I have my sus.... Shush...
suuchh...

HOBBS

Suspicious.

CHARLIE

Mm-hm.

SAM

A name, Charlie.

It suddenly dawns on Charlie he's being pumped for
information. A look of horror washes over his face.

CHARLIE

Now hooold on. Listen to me... I
don't drink the stuff because I
don't want to die... not that my
life's worth anything... or all
that excitin'... just look forward
to my brain feeling like a wet
sponge every waking miment...
moment. Telling ya who makes it
makes me just as dead. So, no
sir... not from my lips.

Sam shoves the second glass in front of him.

He drinks it.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I could live on this stuff, ya
know?

Sam shoves the bottle in front of him, but keeps it in
his firm grasp. Charlie turns to him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That gin... sure do look good.

SAM

Tell me who. And where.

Charlie fixes his eyes on Sam as best he can.

CHARLIE

I ain't sayin' who... but I can
take ya to the where.

SAM

In the hills?

CHARLIE

No. A shack.

Sam and Hobbs exchange a glance.

SAM

Tell me where.

CHARLIE

Hell, I can tell what's what. I'll
ride with ya and show the way.

HOBBS

I don't think you're in any
condition to ride anywhere. Just
tell us.

CHARLIE

I can't tell because I don't know!
I have go there and eventually
something comes back to me and --
there we are.

Sam grabs the bottle.

SAM

I'll give it to you after you take
us to the barn.

He shoves the bottle into his coat pocket, and he helps
Charlie off the chair and steadies him.

They advance toward the bar door.

Peering through a narrowly opened door, the Bartender
watches them exit.

HOBBS

He won't be able to sit in a
saddle.

SAM

Probably not.

They step out through the doors and into the sun.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

My God, the moon is bright!

EXT. A BURNED-DOWN BARN IN A CLEARING - DAY

Sam, Hobbs, and a vacant-eyed Charlie enter a clearing surrounded by trees.

They rein in as they see a small, burned-out shack.

A pause.

SAM

Untie Charlie.

Hobbs dismounts and unties a rope that's looped under the horse to hold him in the saddle. Charlie slides off the saddle as Hobbs does his best to prevent a fall.

CHARLIE

This is the pla... oh, no. What happened?

SAM

It burned down. When was the last time you were here, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Marshal, my mind is a fog of alleged reality. I could tell you it was yesterday when it was actually a year ago.

He holds out his hand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Do I get my reward?

Sam takes the gin bottle from his coat pocket and hands it to Charlie, who wastes no time taking a drink.

Sam and Hobbs step closer to the ruins. Sam touches a charred piece of wood.

HOBBS

Ice cold. This was burned at least two weeks ago.

Hobbs kneels and picks up a piece of copper piping.

HOBBS (CONT'D)
Looks like bootleggin' to me.

SAM
They must have moved from here to
the hills. But who?

BANG!

A rifle cracks -- sharp, deadly.

Sam and Hobbs drop to a knee -- hands flashing to their
guns. They turn as --

Charlie staggers, eyes wide. He looks down at his chest --
sees the blood bloom.

CHARLIE
Ah, hell...

The bottle slips from his fingers -- shatters in the
dirt. He crumples to his knees.

Sam's jaw tightens as he watches.

Charlie Clem dies in the dust.

RUSTLING IN THE TREES

They spring forward -- guns up -- FIRING.

BANG! BANG!

The gunfire rips through the clearing, kicking up dirt
and splintering bark.

The trees close in.

A SHOT explodes from the woods.

BANG!

A bullet HISSES past Sam's head.

They charge in -- splitting up.

Hobbs veers right, vanishing into the underbrush.

Sam cuts left, ducking low as he pushes through tangled
limbs and heavy underbrush.

BANG! Another shot -- closer.

Sam dives behind a tree, breath heavy. He eases his head around the trunk -- eyes scanning.

A flash of movement. A sliver of fabric.

Sam fires. BANG!

A distant AHH!--a sharp cry of pain.

He bolts forward. Branches snap underfoot.

Sam crashes through the undergrowth -- gun ready -- until he sees him.

The Bartender.

Collapsed against a tree. Blood seeps through his sleeve, right arm hit.

The Bartender grits his teeth, glaring up at Sam.

BARTENDER

Damn you! You blew my arm off!

Sam holsters his gun.

SAM

(flatly)

It's still there.

BARTENDER

It's broken!

SAM

That's too bad.

Hobbs arrives -- a look of surprise on his face as he sees who the killer is.

HOBBS

I'll be damned.

Hobbs turns to Sam -- astonished.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DUSTIN - NIGHT.

The Bartender sits on a cot as the door of iron bars closes shut and is locked by Hobbs.

His arm has been bandaged. He is weak from loss of blood.

Sam turns to Hobbs.

SAM
Find the sheriff.

Hobbs gives a nod and exits. Sam settles on a small stool outside the cell.

BARTENDER
Why you sittin' down? I need a doctor -- get this bullet out.

SAM
There's a doctor in this town?

BARTENDER
(through the pain)
Yes... south end of Main Street...

SAM
I'll keep it in mind.

BARTENDER
Please... get the doctor... I could bleed out...

SAM
Who are you working for?

BARTENDER
What do you mean?

SAM
I got all night if you want to play guessing games.

He stands and heads for the stove.

SAM (CONT'D)
I hope there's some coffee.

BARTENDER
Coffee!?

Sam pours a coffee.

SAM
Gotta say... your sheriff makes the worst coffee.

BARTENDER
Who gives a damn!? I'm dyin' over here.

Sam takes a sip.

SAM
You're not dyin'.

Makes his way back to the stool.

SAM (CONT'D)
Maybe in an hour or so... But not
this minute.

He sits.

A pause.

SAM (CONT'D)
That name went right by me.

BARTENDER
What name!?

SAM
The name of the man runnin' the
bootleg operation. The one who's
killin' people.

BARTENDER
Damn, I told ya, I don't know.

Sam takes another leisurely sip.

SAM
Mm-hm.

He stares into the Bartender's eyes.

SAM (CONT'D)
Let's talk turkey. Your arm is
irrelevant.

BARTENDER
Huh!?

SAM
You're gonna bleed out here and
die, or you're gonna die by
hangin' for the murder of Charlie
Clem.

The Bartender's face is filled with worry.

SAM (CONT'D)
Were you told to kill him?

Silence.

SAM (CONT'D)
Would be a shame for you to hang
and let the man behind all this go
about his day like nothin'
happened.

The Bartender is lost in horrible thought -- calculating.

Sam shoves the knife in deeper.

SAM (CONT'D)
He might be in the crowd eating a
bag of peanuts when they spring
the trap and your neck snaps.

A pause.

SAM (CONT'D)
(a slow sip...
then...)
Someone always sells bags of
peanuts at a hangin'.

He watches the Bartender start to tremble.

SAM (CONT'D)
I might even stick around for it
myself... just to see how you die.
I take you as the panicky kind.

The Bartenders eyes - wide with fear - stare into Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)
And with luck you get a good
hangman. Saw a hangin' in Laramie
once. It was bad. Hangman didn't
know what he was doin' and botched
the drop. Rope was too tight. Poor
bastard's head popped clean off.

Another sip.

SAM (CONT'D)
Head rolled right up in front of
an old lady... eyes starin' up at
her... it was worse than seein' a
scalpin'.

A long pause. The Bartender is catatonic with fear.

SAM (CONT'D)
You tell me who ordered you to
kill Charlie, and who's behind the
bootleggin'...

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
and he'll be up there right next
to ya come judgement day.

The Bartender licks his lips -- about to talk...

The office door SWINGS OPEN.

The Bartenders head snaps to the door where he sees --
Sheriff Madden enter with Hobbs.

MADDEN
What's going on here?

He sees the Bartender, and turns, puzzled, to Sam.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
What the hell? He pour you a bad
drink?

SAM
He poured Charlie Clem one.

Madden is confused.

SAM (CONT'D)
He killed him.

Madden turns to the Bartender.

MADDEN
You killed Charlie Clem? The town
drunk!?
(to Sam)
You saw it happen?

Sam nods.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
All right.

Madden, disappointed, heads to his desk.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
Ya think you know someone...

He sits in his chair, noticeably upset.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
Sixkiller... I owe ya on this one.
We'll see he gets a fair trial.
You can ride back here to testify?

Sam stares at Madden a moment.

Then nods.

MADDEN (CONT'D)
Good. Well... thank you. I can
take it from here.

SAM
What about the whiskey?

MADDEN
What about it?

SAM
Charlie knew who was making it. He
was taking us there. That's when
he was shot.

MADDEN
Sounds cut and dry doesn't it?

Sam points to the cell.

SAM
Someone put him up to it. That's
the man we want to find.

MADDEN
You keep looking for him. I know
you will find him.

SAM
I would like to ask him some more
questions.

MADDEN
In the morning. Meet me here and
we'll get the information out of
him.

SAM
Why not now?

MADDEN
It's getting late and it's been a
long day. Especially for you. I
need to go see about Charlie's
burial. Reckon the town will have
to pay for it.

A pause. Sam studies him.

SAM
We'll be here at seven.

MADDEN

Seven.

Sam and Hobbs exit, closing the door behind them.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DUSTIN - NIGHT

They untie their horses from the post.

SAM

Where did you find Madden?

HOBBS

In the saloon.

SAM

Thought so.

Hobbs lowers his voice.

HOBBS

You know something.

SAM

If the Bartender were under arrest
for murder, don't you think
everyone in the saloon would be
talking about it?

HOBBS

They were.

SAM

Yet Madden was surprised when he
saw the bartender in jail.

Hobbs is puzzled.

They mount.

HOBBS

Wait. You sayin'...

SAM

I'm not saying anything.

A kick to his horse and departs at a slow walk.

SAM (CONT'D)

But I'm thinkin' up a whirlwind.

Hobbs follows -- they head down Main Street.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DUSTIN - NIGHT

The cell door is open -- as Madden slaps the Bartender across the face, hard enough to rattle his teeth.

MADDEN

Can't you follow orders!? What did I tell you!?

BARTENDER

Kill them!

MADDEN

The marshal first, then the deputy, then Charlie! I told you - hit the Injun first!

BARTENDER

Charlie ain't gonna talk. Charlie ain't gonna talk to no one no more. The Injun will leave soon.

MADDEN

Don't you count on it.

Madden exits the cell, closes and locks the door.

BARTENDER

I gotta stay in here all night?

MADDEN

If the Injun makes a surprise visit in the middle of the night, I want you in there.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DUSTIN - NIGHT

The moon hangs low over the sleepy town. Dead of night. Not a sound.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DUSTIN - NIGHT

Darkness smothers the small office. The only sound--a slow, rhythmic SNORE from the back room. The faintest glimmer of moonlight seeps through the window, barely touching the iron bars of the single jail cell.

Inside, the Bartender shifts on his cot, his breath shallow, restless.

His bandaged arm lies limp across his chest.

A CREAK as the office door opens.

A slow, deliberate footstep on the wooden floor.

The snoring continues. Uninterrupted.

Another CREAK. Closer this time.

The Bartender stirs, eyes fluttering open. The room is dark, but something feels off.

A key slides into the cell lock.

A CLICK - the cell door eases open... slow, very slow... its hinges barely whispering.

A SHADOW moves.

A towering figure, face unseen, steps inside.

Silent. Methodical.

The Bartender barely gets out a breath --

A REVOLVER presses hard against his temple --

BANG!

The Bartender's body jerks, his final breath escaping in a wet gasp.

The Shadowed Figure steps back. No hesitation. No second shot.

The cell door clicks shut.

Boots SCUFF the wooden floor--hurried now.

The back door of the office swings open --

SLAM!

The night swallows the figure whole.

Silence. The snoring has stopped.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DUSTIN - DAY

Sam and Hobbs ride toward the Sherriff's office only to see a small crowd gathered in the front peering through the window.

They rein in at the hitching post and dismount.

WOMAN 1

He went to church, every Sunday!

WOMAN 2

All them Sundays, and now he's
goin' to hell.

WOMAN 1

Right. A man doesn't throw away
the Lord's gift without answering
for it.

MAN 2

Why would he do a thing like that?

The crowd watches as Sam and Hobbs enter the office.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DUSTIN - DAY

A man in a dark suit and top hat stands near the wall
with the wanted posters. Sam pays him no mind but Hobbs
gives him an uneasy glance.

They join Madden at the cell. The cell door is now open
but the Bartender has not been moved. The blood, on his
face and splatters on the wall, has dried.

Madden stands at the cell door, arms crossed.

MADDEN

Damn fool. Offed himself in the
night.

Sam steps to the cell. The Bartender's body lies on the
cot, the pistol on his chest.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

Nothin's been touched. This is
just how I found him.

SAM

Good.

MADDEN

Guilt's a funny thing. Guess he
figured you boys had him dead to
rights.

SAM

Who slipped him the gun?

Madden glares at Sam. No answer.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'll take a guess. Either you're
runnin' a piss-poor jail, or
someone walked in here last night
and handed it to him. Which is it?

MADDEN

I did my walk-around from one till
about one-thirty. Must have
happened then.

SAM

And you didn't hear the shot?

MADDEN

Heard a few... from the saloon.
That ain't unusual at closin'
time.

Sam studies him -- Madden seems uneasy.

A beat.

Sam kneels next to the body -- his eyes scan the scene.

SAM

When I was in the saloon... I saw
this man pour a drink.

MADDEN

So? He poured thousands.

SAM

With his right hand. And that
don't track.

Madden turns to Sam. Tension.

MADDEN

What don't?

SAM

He's right-handed.

Sam gestures to the pistol.

SAM (CONT'D)

If he did himself in... the shot
should be in the right temple...
and the pistol near his right
hand. He was shot on the left side
of the head.

A slow beat. Madden shifts, trying to play it cool.

MADDEN

Desperate men ain't rational.

SAM

Desperate men don't blow their
brains out, then take the time to
set the pistol on their chest.

Sam stares at Madden.

MADDEN

Somebody must've come in when I
was gone. I took the keys with me
so they couldn't spring' em...
probably didn't wanna hang... so
whoever it was left him the
pistol.

Sam holds his stare, and nods slowly.

SAM

That could be it.

Madden exhales, tension dissipating -- just a little.

Sam turns to Hobbs.

SAM (CONT'D)

Let's get some breakfast.

MADDEN

I can release the body to the
undertaker?

On the way out the door.

SAM

Bury him.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - HITCHING POST - DUSTIN - DAY

Sam cinches his saddle. His voice is low.

SAM

Madden's guilty as hell.

HOBBS

You think he did it?

SAM

I know he did.

HOBBS

Why leave? Let's arrest him.

SAM

Because now I know where he's
goin'.

He swings into the saddle.

SAM (CONT'D)

We'll be followin' him all the way
to the still.

HOBBS

The sti--- Madden!?

SAM

Open your eyes, son.

They ride onto the street.

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - DAY

The land stretches wide and empty. Heat waves ripple off
the earth.

A LONE RIDER tears across the plains -- Sherriff Madden.
His horse pounds the dry earth, hooves kick up dust as he
rides hard and fast, urgency in every movement.

The wind whips his coat, his eyes fixed ahead.

EXT. FROM A DISTANT RIDGE - DAY

Two dark silhouettes sit motionless on horseback.

Sam and Hobbs.

They watch from the crest of a ridge, silent, still.

Sam tilts his hat forward, his gaze locked on Madden.

Hobbs shifts in the saddle.

They don't move.

They just watch. Silent. Still.

The dust trail behind Madden grows longer, stretching
across the plains.

Sam nudges his reins.

Their horses turn.

They follow.

EXT. WOODED CLEARING - STILL SITE - DAY

A weathered shack sits nestled among the trees, smoke curling from a chimney. Nearby, a makeshift still -- a tangle of pipes and barrels.

A BOOTLEGGER steps from the shack, muscles straining as he rolls a whiskey barrel onto a wagon.

Madden rides in hard, jerking the reins as his horse skids to a stop.

The Bootlegger looks up, surprised. BOOTLEGGER 2 appears from the shack, wiping sweat from his brow.

MADDEN

The bartender's dead.

A beat. The men exchange uneasy glances.

BOOTLEGGER

And what about that Injun Marshal?

Madden swings down, dusting himself off.

MADDEN

He's on a cold rail. By the time
he figures anything, this place'll
be --

SAM (O.S.)

(booming)

Drop your irons! Hands in the air!

The bootleggers freeze.

HOBBS (O.S.)

(from a different
area)

You're surrounded!

A tense beat. Madden reaches for his gun.

BANG!

A shot rips through the air. Chaos erupts --

GUNFIRE EXPLODES. The BOOTLEGGER fires wildly before he's cut down. Another takes a bullet and crumples.

Madden lunges for cover, but --

BANG!

A bullet tears through him, blood suddenly blooming across his shirt. He stumbles and crashes against the wagon wheel.

A THIRD BOOTLEGGER bolts into the woods, disappearing. Hobbs fires several shots but the Bootlegger gets away.

Sam steps forward, gun trained on Madden, who staggers, dropping to his knees.

Hobbs takes a few steps toward the trees.

HOBBS (CONT'D)

I'll get him --

SAM

Let him go. We got what we want.
Take a look inside.

Hobbs enters the shack.

Blood drips from Madden's mouth. He coughs, smirks.

MADDEN

How... did you know...

SAM

Instinct.

Madden gives a weak chuckle, but more blood spills from his mouth.

MADDEN

(rasping)
You think this is just about
whiskey?

Sam is puzzled.

MADDEN (CONT'D)

You're in the wrong town, Marshal.

His eyes glaze and he drops over dead.

Hobbs approaches.

HOBBS

What the hell did he mean by that?
Wrong town?

SAM

I think he meant it wasn't just
about the poison whiskey.

Sam holsters his pistol.

SAM (CONT'D)

A dyin' man can't always be
expected to make sense when his
spirit is bleeding out of him.
What did you find?

HOBBS

Lots of bottles waitin' to get
filled. No labels, like the one in
the Creek camp. Must have been
getting ready to make a new batch.

SAM

We'll destroy it and get back to
the Creek camp before they go ride
out for revenge.

They head for the shack.

EXT. MARSHAL'S OFFICE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Sam and Hobbs' horses are hitched to the post.

DEVLIN (V.O.)

You're sure the Creeks won't take
revenge?

SAM

I'm sure.

INT. MARSHAL'S OFFICE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Sam stands in front of the desk where Devlin is seated.
Hobbs, next to the gun rack, rolls a cigarette.

SAM

I told them the stills were
destroyed. I also warned them that
there may still be some bottles
around... to be careful.

DEVLIN

Sure you got them all?

Sam reaches into his coat pocket, and tosses a crumpled
paper onto the desk.

SAM

Ripped that from Madden's notebook
in his desk. Shows the locations
of the stills. We burned the last
one.

Devlin takes it with an anxious hand and studies it.

DEVLIN

This all you found on it?

SAM

That's all there was.

He reaches into his coat, pulls out folded piece of
paper, hands it to Devlin.

SAM (CONT'D)

Here's my report.

DEVLIN

I can't believe Sheriff Madden was
behind this. A traitor to the
badge.

SAM

His last words were interesting.

DEVLIN

What were they?

SAM

"You think this is just about
whiskey? You got the wrong town,
marshal."

DEVLIN

What the hell does that mean?

SAM

I don't know.

DEVLIN

Well, the saloon got a shipment of
whiskey in from Chicago
yesterday... so people in this
town are safe.

SAM

That's good.

DEVLIN

We'll consider this case closed.

Sam gives a slow nod in agreement as Devlin looks over his report.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)
Federal judge in Eufaula wants
this whiskey issue cleaned up.
He'll be happy to see this.

Devlin puts Sam's report into an envelope.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)
Hobbs, I'll need you to ride over
to Eufaula in the morning and
deliver this.

HOBBS
Right.

EXT. DOC WILLIAMS OFFICE - DAY

Sam rides up, reins in, dismounts, and searches in one of his saddlebags.

INT. DOC WILLIAMS OFFICE - DAY

DOC WILLIAMS (60s), bespectacled, thinning hair, searches through a thick medical book. He raises his eyes and peers over his glasses as --

Sam enters.

DOC WILLIAMS
Ah! Sam. How are you?

SAM
I am well.

DOC WILLIAMS
Most people don't visit me when
they're well.
(a smile)
Least of all you.

Sam carries a medium size glass jar with a clear liquid.

SAM
Can you tell me what this is?

He hands the bottle to Doc, who opens the lid and takes a gentle sniff.

DOC WILLIAMS
Slightly sweet... sharp...
acrid...

Puts the lid back on.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Wood Alcohol.

SAM
You're sure?

DOC WILLIAMS
No doubt about it. Don't drink any
of that.

SAM
What would happen?

DOC WILLIAMS
Your vision would blur... you
might go blind... severe stomach
pain, convulsions... and you
eventually suffocate. Not a nice
way to go... if you gotta go.

SAM
What if this was mixed in with
whiskey?

DOC WILLIAMS
Same effects. You couldn't tell
from looking at the glass, and the
average person wouldn't notice the
slight change of smell. A doctor
might... but not the average bar
fly.

He indicates the bottle.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Is... that what's been poisoning
the whiskey?

SAM
Yes. Do me a favor, Doc. Don't
mention this to anyone.

DOC WILLIAMS
I won't.

Sam heads for the door, grabs the knob, and turns.

SAM
Not a soul. No one.

Doc's expression changes with the seriousness of Sam's tone and glare.

DOC WILLIAMS
Your secret is safe with me, Sam.

EXT. THE PRAIRIE - MUSKOGEE - SUNSET

A golden prairie wind ripples through tall grass. The setting sun bleeds red across the horizon, casting long shadows as Sam and Flora walk hand in hand.

FLORA
You returned to the Creek camp?

SAM
Yes. Tascowa will not lead a revenge attack.

FLORA
Was the whiskey poisoned on purpose?

SAM
Yes.

FLORA
Why?

SAM
I don't know.

A breeze moves between them, but Flora suddenly stops

FLORA
But it's all over now?

A long beat. Sam watches the prairie sway in the wind.

SAM
Yes.

She gently grips his arm, turning him toward her. Searches his face.

FLORA
You don't believe what you say.

Sam doesn't respond.

FLORA (CONT'D)
I can see it in your eyes.

SAM
I have doubts.

Flora studies him.

FLORA
Why? You said yourself you solved
the case.

SAM
I know I did. But something's not
right.

Silence. The last streaks of light fade into dusk.

SAM (CONT'D)
It's a feeling.

FLORA
Sam... Marshal Devlin is
satisfied. Hobbs is satisfied.
Tascowa and the Creeks are
satisfied, and tomorrow the judge
in Eufaula will be satisfied.
(softly)
Why can't you be?

A wind stirs the prairie. Sam meets her gaze -- his eyes
still searching.

SAM
Instinct.

Flora shakes her head.

FLORA
Sam Sixshooter, that "instinct" of
yours is going to get you killed.

A smirk just touches Sam's lips -- wry, knowing.

SAM
Only when it no longer guides me.

A long pause. Sam takes her hand, squeezes it gently. She
leans into his arm, and together, they continue walking
as the last light fades into the night.

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - NIGHT

The windows glow dimly in the darkened prairie. In the distance, coyotes HOWL -- a lonely, echoing cry.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - NIGHT

A kerosene lamp flickers, casting warm shadows. Sam sits at the table, disassembling his Colt revolver, cleaning each piece with quiet focus.

Flora sets a steaming mug of coffee in front of him. She takes her own seat.

FLORA

What would you do if you weren't a marshal?

Sam pauses, then looks at her.

FLORA (CONT'D)

I'm just curious.

He returns to his meticulous cleaning.

SAM

I never thought about it.

FLORA

Never?

SAM

I don't like wasteful thinking.

She furrows her brow.

FLORA

What does that mean?

SAM

There are not many opportunities for our people outside the reservation.

A beat.

FLORA

Farming?

SAM

No.

FLORA
We could run a small ranch --

SAM
Flora.

She falls silent.

Sam sets the gun down, his voice softer.

SAM (CONT'D)
We both knew, from the start, it
would always be uphill. Always.

A long pause. Flora wraps her hands around the coffee mug, lost in thought.

FLORA
(quietly)
Until the world changes.

Sam watches her for a long beat.

SAM
Gonna fetch some water.

He stands, stretches slightly, and moves toward the door.

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - NIGHT

Sam steps into the night, a breeze carrying the faint rustle of grass.

He takes a few slow steps toward the water barrel. The prairie stretches out in front of him -- silent.

BANG!

A rifle cracks -- the sharp echo splitting the night!

A BULLET SLAMS into the wooden wall of the house -- inches from Sam's head.

Sam DUCKS LOW -- spins -- hand FLASHING to his revolver.

BANG! -- Another shot!

A chunk of wood EXPLODES beside him!

Sam SPRINTS fast for the door, crouched low, boots KICKING UP dust.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - NIGHT

Sam BARRELS IN, slamming the door behind him.

Flora JOLTS UP, her face taut with fear.

FLORA
Sam -- what is it!?

SAM
Kill the lights!

Flora lunges for the nearest lamp, twisting the wick down -- darkness SWALLOWS the room. She turns and blows out the candles -- one, two -- shadows rush in.

Sam grabs the rifle from above the mantle.

SAM (CONT'D)
Stay low.

She drops to her knees behind the table.

FLORA
Where are you going?

SAM
Back door. Stay here!

Flora's eyes widen, fear breaking through.

FLORA
Sam --

SAM
I'll be back.

And he's gone.

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - NIGHT

Sam presses against the wooden wall, his breath slow, controlled, eyes focused.

The prairie is dead quiet. No movement. No moonlight to betray the shooter.

He skims his eyes over the darkness.

Sam tightens his grip on the rifle.

He sprints for cover.

A shadow shifts in the distance -- Sam's hawk-like gaze locks onto it.

He drops low, rifle raised. Listening. Watching.

Nothing.

A long, deadly pause.

And wind kicks up.

He lowers his rifle.

SAM

Son of a bitch.

INT. MARSHAL'S OFFICE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

A heated conversation. Devlin behind his desk, Sam in front, fists clenched at his sides.

DEVLIN

Sam, we don't know if the attack was about the whiskey poisoning. We can't prove that!

SAM

What the hell else could it be?

DEVLIN

I don't know! Look -- you've put a lot of men away. Dangerous men. Killers. One could have escaped... or did his time and wants revenge.

SAM

And they happen to show up the same night that I burned the last still. Do you believe in coincidences? I don't.

DEVLIN

I am just saying --

SAM

One of them got away! How do we know he didn't follow us here?

A tense beat. Devlin leans forward.

DEVLIN

Pick up the trail and go after him.

SAM

And leave Flora? Someone just shot
up our house.

DEVLIN

Move her into the hotel. She'll be
safer there.

Sam shakes his head.

SAM

The trail's cold.

Devlin stiffens slightly.

DEVLIN

How cold?

SAM

I picked up tracks... but they
lead into town. And there's a lot
of tracks on Main Street.

Devlin mulls this over.

DEVLIN

This bootlegger that got away --
you get a good look at him?

SAM

Only saw him running away.

DEVLIN

Maybe he's still in town.

SAM

I'll get Hobbs. We'll start
looking after I move Flora.

Devlin leans back, watching Sam closely.

DEVLIN

Hobbs left town for Eufaula, 'bout
an hour ago.

Sam doesn't react. Doesn't blink. But something shifts
behind his eyes.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

Takin' that report to the judge.

A slow pause.

SAM

Right.

Devlin pushes away from the desk, softens his voice.

DEVLIN

How's Flora?

SAM

Shaken.

DEVLIN

Listen... you stay with her today.
I'll go through town. Keep an eye
out for strangers. Bring 'em in
for questioning.

A beat.

Sam nods slowly.

INT. SALOON - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Cigarette smoke coils through the air. The murmur of card games, clinking glasses, boots scuffing wood.

BOB FLYNN (50s), a rancher, leans against the bar. Doc Williams enters, his face lined with exhaustion. MAX (40s), the new Bartender, wipes the counter.

DOC WILLIAMS

Max, my good man! I hope the bar
is well-stocked because I plan on
spending most of my day here.

FLYNN

Be careful, Doc. You get drunk and
someone needs an appendix out,
you're liable to take something
else out instead!

DOC WILLIAMS

Let's hope it's someone I don't
particularly care for.

Flynn chuckles.

FLYNN

Not like you to drink in the
afternoon, Doc.

Doc leans in slightly -- lowers his voice.

DOC WILLIAMS

(quietly)

I lost a patient today, Flynn. I
always get drunk when I lose a
patient.

(forces a feeble
smile)

It's a tradition of mine.

FLYNN

Damn. Sorry, Doc.

MAX

What'll it be, gents?

DOC WILLIAMS

I would like a whiskey, but not if
it comes in a clear bottle.

Max pulls a bottle from the shelf -- it has a label.

MAX

Genuine coffin varnish. Right off
the train from Chicago. Arrived by
wagon last night.

DOC WILLIAMS

Count me in.

FLYNN

Same.

Max pours two shots. Leaves the bottle.

Doc and Flynn lift their glasses. Tilt them back.

Suddenly -- Doc moves like a snake, snapping out and
grabbing Flynn's wrist.

DOC WILLIAMS

Don't drink that!

Flynn's whiskey spills onto the counter.

Max jerks back, startled.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Max, has anyone else had this
whiskey?

MAX

Not yet.

Doc brings his glass to his nose. Sniffs.

His face changes.

He grabs the bottle. Stares at it.

EXT. HOTEL - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Sam and Flora approach the hotel with slow steps. Sam leads his horse. Flora carries a grip.

FLORA

I want to stay at the house, Sam.

SAM

You want me to have peace of mind?

Flora exhales. She knows he's right.

FLORA

I understand.

She takes his hand.

FLORA (CONT'D)

Promise me you'll be careful.

Sam nods. Kisses her forehead.

DOC WILLIAMS (O.S.)

Marshal Sixkiller! Marshal!

Sam and Flora turn.

Doc Williams rushes toward them, bottle in hand.

SAM

Doc?

Doc arrives, slightly out of breath. Slaps the bottle into Sam's hands.

DOC WILLIAMS

This came in yesterday. Arrived by train from Chicago.

SAM

Whiskey...

DOC WILLIAMS

With wood alcohol.

Sam's jaw tightens. A slow realization creeping in.

SAM
(to himself)
So it's not local?

DOC WILLIAMS
Eufaula's got a train depot.
Shipment came in yesterday. But
the bottles could've been tainted
after they left the depot -- on
the wagon ride back here.

SAM
Flora. You check in and stay here
till I get back.

Sam hands Flora the grip.

SAM (CONT'D)
Stay here.

Another kiss. He turns, heading for his horse.

SAM (CONT'D)
Doc, show Marshal Devlin that
bottle. You and him better go
through that shipment... That
might not be the only one.

He swings into his saddle.

SAM (CONT'D)
Tell him I'll be back.

DOC WILLIAMS
Back from where?

Sam spurs his horse and gallops off.

He shouts over his shoulder --

SAM
Eufaula!

DOC WILLIAMS
Why is he going to Eufaula?

Flora watches as Sam disappears down the road.

A quiet beat.

FLORA
(softly)
Instinct.

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - DAY

A vast sea of golden grass ripples under the late afternoon sun. The sky stretches wide, endless, painted with wisps of white clouds.

A FIGURE ON HORSEBACK -- a lone rider against the land.

Sam Sixkiller.

His horse moves at a steady walk, hooves crunching over dry earth. Sam sits tall in the saddle, his eyes scanning the horizon.

A herd of wild mustangs grazes in the distance, tails flicking, muscles shifting under sleek coats. A few lift their heads, watching Sam as he passes.

He rides on.

The land rises gently -- rolling hills dusted with sagebrush. Sam urges his horse forward, cresting a ridge.

From the top -- a breathtaking vista. The land unfolds before him: rivers winding like silver veins, distant mesas glowing red under the sinking sun, clouds casting long shadows over the plains.

Sam pulls his horse to a stop.

A moment of stillness.

The wind whispers.

He breathes it in, deep. His eyes narrow, sharpening.

His boots nudge his horse.

The moment passes.

Sam rides on, disappearing into the grandeur of the land.

INT. MARSHAL'S OFFICE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Devlin grips the whiskey bottle as Doc Williams stands across from him, arms crossed, clearly frustrated.

DEVLIN

What did you call it again?

DOC WILLIAMS

Wood alcohol and what it's called
doesn't matter. One drink outta
that bottle and you're dead.

Devlin exhales, turning the bottle in his hands, eyeing
the label. His face is unreadable, but something flickers
behind his eyes.

DEVLIN

Hell of a thing.

DOC WILLIAMS

Yeah, hell of a thing. Now let's
go. We need to check the rest of
that shipment.

Devlin doesn't move right away. He sets the bottle down
carefully, dusts his hands off on his pants.

DEVLIN

Doc, we just put this damn case to
bed.

DOC WILLIAMS

That's what you thought. But I
just stopped a man from dropping
dead at the saloon. You wanna
stand here, or you wanna make sure
there ain't more bottles floating
around town?

A pause. Devlin clenches his jaw, grabs his gun belt.

DEVLIN

Yeah, fine. Let's go.

DOC WILLIAMS

You sure you're all right,
Marshal?

Devlin forces a thin smile as he heads for the door.

DEVLIN

Just tired of this mess, Doc.
Thought we were done with it,
that's all.

Doc isn't convinced, but he follows Devlin out.

EXT. LAKE CARLTON AT ROBBERS CAVE - DAY

Sam rides along the shore of Lake Carlton.

EXT. THE WOODS AT ROBBERS CAVE - DAY

Sam rides slow due to the thick rows of trees. Something catches his eyes as he reins in.

Ahead, in the distance, he sees a horse -- saddled with no rider.

Hobbs Buckner's horse.

Sam pulls his pistol and proceeds slowly -- his eyes in a constant scan of the surroundings.

He arrives next to Hobbs' horse, takes the reins, CLICKS his teeth and advances... then stops. And listens.

A pause.

SAM

HOBBS!?

No response. He dismounts, tethers the horses to a low branch, and proceeds with cautious steps.

He sees a body partially hidden behind trees. Sam rushes forward and finds Hobbs, face down, unconscious.

With care, he turns him over. A small spot of blood stains the side of his head. He puts his hand at the bottom of Hobbs' neck... and waits.

After a moment, he quickly takes his canteen, spills water on his hand, and splashes it on Hobbs' face.

Hobbs comes to... confused, disoriented.

HOBBS

Hey...

SAM

Easy. Easy.

HOBBS

Sam?

Shakes his head to get his bearings.

HOBBS (CONT'D)

Sam... what are you doing here?

SAM

Tell me what happened.

HOBBS

I was ridin'... someone took a shot, horse bucked... I fell... then you showed up.

Sam notices a large, thick branch with a small dab of blood on it.

SAM

Looks like you hit your head on a fallen branch.

HOBBS

I ain't shot?

SAM

No.

Hobbs is more with it. He sits up.

HOBBS

I'm happy to hear that. I'm glad he didn't come over to finish me off.

SAM

Someone took a shot at you, and someone took a shot at me last night.

Hobbs stands - Sam helps him.

HOBBS

Same shooter?

SAM

You can put money on it.

HOBBS

Who do you think it is?

They make their way toward the horses.

SAM

All right?

HOBBS

Every step helps... So, who?

SAM

Where's the letter you were taking?

Hobbs rummages through his saddle bag and produces the sealed letter.

Sam opens it. He reads with no expression. He hands it over to Hobbs.

A pause.

HOBBS
(quietly)
I'll be damned.

A beat. They lock eyes.

SAM
Can you ride?

HOBBS
Yeah.

They swing onto their horses.

INT. MARSHAL'S OFFICE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

The room sits still. Silent -- except for the TICK-TOCK of the wall clock.

A thin layer of dust settles in the sunlight slicing through the window. The wooden floor creaks softly.

The door swings open.

Sam stands in the doorway, rifle loose in his grip, but his eyes -- sharp.

A slow scan of the room. The desk -- empty. The chair -- slightly turned, like someone left in a hurry.

SAM
(flat, commanding)
Devlin?

No answer.

Sam steps inside. Hobbs follows, hand near his holster.

The clock keeps ticking.

SAM (CONT'D)
Check the back room.

Hobbs hurries toward the back room. Sam approaches the cell and scans the area.

Running FOOTSTEPS fade in. Flora bolts onto the boardwalk, grabs the door frame, gasping for breath.

FLORA
Marshal Devlin! Marshal!?

Sam turns and hurries toward her, followed by Hobbs.

SAM
Flora!?

Her face lights up with surprise.

FLORA
Sam!? I thought you went to --

SAM
Flora, what's wrong?

FLORA
Gunshots -- in the saloon!

Sam and Hobbs race from the office, jump onto their horses, and gallop at top speed to the far end of Main Street and the saloon. Flora watches as they disappear into the dust cloud.

EXT. SALOON - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Sam swings off his horse in one smooth motion--rifle in hand, eyes locked on the saloon. He doesn't bother reining in. Hobbs reins in hard, dismounts fast but leaves his horse untethered.

They move in tandem, taking positions on either side of the swinging doors.

BANG!

A shot shatters the silence -- inside, a body drops.

Sam and Hobbs exchange a nod -- then CRASH through the doors, weapons raised.

INSIDE:

CHAOS.

Tables and chairs overturned. Bodies scattered. Cards and whiskey glasses left mid-play.

Sam's eyes sweep the room -- searching.

Then he sees him.

Doc Williams.

Lying still. Blood.

Sam rushes forward, low.

SAM

Doc?

DOC WILLIAMS

They're gone.

SAM

What was that last shot?

DOC WILLIAMS

Me... got a touchy trigger.

Sam examines the blood pooling beneath Doc.

SAM

You're hit. Where?

DOC WILLIAMS

No where.

(gestures to a body
next to him)

The blood is from this oaf who
fell on me.

Across the room -- Hobbs sweeps behind the bar, checks
the back. All clear.

Sam helps Doc up, steadying him as he winces in pain.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Oh! That smarts...

SAM

Sure you're not shot?

DOC WILLIAMS

That bastard Devlin -- him and his
new Bartender. Jumped me.

Sam nods--not surprised.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

You don't even look shocked.

SAM
I've got a letter -- basically a
confession.

Hobbs returns, eyes sharp.

HOBBS
No sign of 'em. How many men, Doc?

DOC WILLIAMS
I'm not sure. Hard to say. We came
here to inspect the whiskey...
found another poisoned bottle.

A pause.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Devlin laughed... then pistol-
whipped me.

Sam's jaw tightens.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Card player opened fire --
Devlin's boys shot back. Place
turned into a damned war. I caught
a few boots to the ribs... then I
blacked out for a spell.

He exhales.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Sam... Devlin's been selling the
poisoned whiskey.

Doc groans, lowers himself into a chair.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
We're running out of bartenders in
this town.
(turns to Hobbs)
Would you mind pouring me a tiny
pint of rum... settle my nerves.

Hobbs grunts, moves behind the bar.

The saloon doors SWING OPEN --

Flora rushes in -- eyes wide, breath quick.

She finds Sam instantly, throws her arms around him.

FLORA
I heard another shot...

Doc raises a weak hand.

DOC WILLIAMS
That was me, my dear lady.

Flora spots the dead men, her relief turning to unease.

SAM
Flora, you can't keep running
toward danger.

FLORA
I thought you'd want to know...

She hesitates.

FLORA (CONT'D)
I saw riders. Five of them.
Cutting across the prairie --
headed west. Fast.

Hobbs sets down Doc's drink with a clink.

HOBBS
West. Toward the hills.

Sam absorbs this.

SAM
Thought they might head for
Eufaula... but west?

Doc takes a large swig.

DOC WILLIAMS
AH! All right. Enough rest. Let's
get after them.

SAM
You?

Doc grins, shaking out his shoulders.

DOC WILLIAMS
You might need an extra gun --
considering one of your own just
turned against you.

Doc reaches into his coat, checks his revolver's chamber.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
On second thought... I'll be five
minutes behind.

Hobbs and Sam exchange glances.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
I need to stop at my office and
get my gun belt and ammo.

Clicks the chamber shut.

Sam grabs his hat, and with his arm around Flora --

They head for the door.

EXT. STORAGE SHACK NEAR THE HILLS - DAY

A rough, weathered shack. The land stretches wide, a few scraggly trees breaking the horizon.

Devlin, Max, and four men -- HENRY, DAVE, CORD, and JUAN -
- sweat under the sun, hauling crates from inside onto a flat wagon.

JUAN
Should I put the horses out back,
Señor Devlin?

DEVLIN
We ain't stayin' long. Keep
movin'.

MAX
How much time we got?

DEVLIN
Sixshooter rode out of town, most
likely after his deputy. He'll
find him dead... come back to
town...

(yells)
Damn it, Henry! I told you to get
the letter after you killed him!

Henry, mid-lift, flinches. Stammers --

HENRY
Sorry, Mister Devlin... I thought -
- there mighta been two of 'em...
I wasn't sure...

DEVLIN
You weren't sure!? If I had more
men, I'd shoot ya.

Henry swallows hard, hurries back to loading. The men work faster, the tension thick.

Max wipes sweat from his brow, uneasy.

MAX

So how long we got?

Devlin's eyes scan the distance, nerves eating at him.

DEVLIN

Less than an hour before he finds
that letter... figures it out...
and tracks us here.

Max curses under his breath and joins the others.

Devlin turns back to the horizon-scanning. Sweating.

EXT. A DISTANT SMALL HILL - DAY

Perched above, dismounted, Sam watches. Still. Silent. His rifle rests across his saddle as he peers through a pair of binoculars.

Behind him, holding the reins to both horses, Hobbs squints, trying to make out what Sam sees.

CLOP-CLOP-CLOP-the sound of hooves grows near.

Hobbs glances back as Doc Williams rides up, a shorter jacket, a gun belt now strapped across his waist... armed and ready.

Doc reins in, swings down, and joins them.

HOBBS

Doc.

DOC WILLIAMS

What do we have here?

Sam keeps watching.

SAM

Devlin... and... five men...

He lowers the binoculars.

HOBBS

Three against six. I don't like
those odds.

DOC WILLIAMS

Two for each of us.

(to Hobbs)

Unless you're greedy and want
three. I'll let you have one of
mine.

Hobbs smirks.

Sam raises the binoculars again. His jaw tightens.

SAM

Looks like they're leaving one
guard outside.

HOBBS

What's the plan?

Sam lowers the glasses. His face unreadable.

A long, quiet beat.

SAM

Kill 'em.

Hobbs exhales, shakes his head.

HOBBS

Come on, Sam. We can't just ride
in there --

Sam turns to him. Expressionless.

Hobbs sees the look.

EXT. STORAGE SHACK NEAR THE HILLS - DAY

Max stands outside the door, rifle resting in the crook
of his arm. He shifts his stance--glances up the trail.

He squints.

A lone rider approaches. Slow. Deliberate.

SAM

The butt of his rifle rests lazily against his leg. His
hat low, his posture easy -- like a man without a care in
the world.

MAX

Boss?

Devlin turns and follows Max's gaze.

Then he sees it.

Sam.

Riding in alone.

A shadow that won't stop coming.

A long, dreadful beat.

Devlin swallows.

His face pales.

DEVLIN

Oh... hell.

Sam reins in at a distance from the shack. He slides his rifle into the saddle holster and waits.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

What's he up to?

Sam dismounts... and calls out.

SAM

A truce!

Devlin smiles.

DEVLIN

That bodes well for us.

MAX

How?

DEVLIN

If he had enough men he's ride in
and kill the lot of us. Get me my
horse.

Max hurries, brings Devlin's horse over. Devlin mounts,
rides out slow.

Sam stands, motionless. His face unreadable.

Devlin dismounts. Two men in an empty field.

A long pause.

Devlin reaches into his coat. Slowly. Produces a flask.

He unscrews the lid. Holds it out.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)
Whiskey?

Sam doesn't flinch.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)
This is the good stuff. Honest.

He holds up the flask.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)
Here's to Hobbs Buckner. He was a
good man in the wrong place.

He takes a long drink. Smirks.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)
Ahh. That hits just right.

He offers the flask again.

Nothing from Sam.

Devlin sighs. Lowers the flask.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)
Marshal, you don't look like a man
who wants to talk.

SAM
You don't look like a man who
wants to listen.

SAM (CONT'D)
When you're done drinkin', we'll
talk.

DEVLIN
You want to live Sam... you best
get on out of here.

SAM
I'd like some answers first.

DEVLIN
I'm sure you would, Sam.

Sam steps forward. Just a fraction.

SAM

Before he died... Madden said "you think this is about the whiskey? You're in the wrong town."

Devlin watches him. Still. Silent.

SAM (CONT'D)

I get the "wrong town" part. He meant you.

A beat.

SAM (CONT'D)

But how is it not about the bootleggin'?

A flicker of a smirk from Devlin.

DEVLIN

It was never about the money, Marshal.

(beat)

We were doin' the work the Army's too soft to finish.

A sharp, dark silence.

SAM

What are you talkin' about?

DEVLIN

Extermination.

A long beat.

Sam's jaw tightens.

SAM

You're killin' your own people too, Devlin.

DEVLIN

Collateral damage. Can't be helped.

SAM

Wipin' out entire tribes? Poisonin' 'em like rats?

DEVLIN

History's a river. Some folks are just driftwood.

SAM
Right under my nose.

DEVLIN
Wasn't hard. You were gone a lot.

SAM
Not enough.

Devlin chuckles. Something amused.

DEVLIN
You were bound to catch on. I knew that. Just had to make sure it was too late by the time you did.

SAM
You can't kill an entire race with tainted whiskey, Devlin.

DEVLIN
No, but I can make a serious dent. And you know it.

Sam's eyes darken.

SAM
Why?

A beat.

DEVLIN
Money.

Sam stares.

SAM
There's more than that.

Devlin hesitates. Just for a second.

DEVLIN
All right. You're about to die. You deserve the truth.

A beat.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)
The head of this operation -- Judge Bishop over in Eufaula. Lost his whole family in a Comanche raid. Mother. Father. Sisters. Kid brother.

SAM

How'd they have the misfortune to miss him?

DEVLIN

He was fishin'. Couple miles off. Came home to nothin' but smoke and bones.

A long beat.

Devlin shrugs.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

Man never forgot. Never forgave. Built himself a life, climbed the ladder. Now he's got the means to make sure it don't happen again... And if he's gotta poison a few bottles of whiskey to do it... well.

SAM

Madden lose his family, too?

DEVLIN

Madden didn't give a damn. He just liked the payday.

SAM

And you?

DEVLIN

I like the power.

A heavy silence.

Devlin watches Sam. Measuring him.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

You and me, Sam -- we're not that different. We both know the law don't mean a damn thing out here.

Sam meets his eyes.

SAM

That hasn't been my experience, Devlin. The law means something.

(a beat)

I bring killers in for hangin'... or shoot 'em on the spot.

A pause.

SAM (CONT'D)
You got your druthers?

A long, still moment.

SAM (CONT'D)
Think hard. This is your one
chance to lay down your irons and
come along peacefully.

Devlin nods, slow.

DEVLIN
I'll give you three minutes to get
outta range. I see you after that,
you'll have more holes in ya than
a six-foot stretch of chicken
wire.

A pause.

Sam swings onto his horse.

A kick of his boot -- and his horse turns. Gallops toward
the trees.

Devlin watches him go. His hands shaking.

A moment.

Then he spins, mounts up. Gallops back toward the shack.

EXT. A DISTANT SMALL HILL - DAY

Hobbs and Doc are a ways back from the overlook so not to
be seen. Sam GALLOPS up, reins in, and dismounts.

HOBBS
How did it go?

SAM
They think I'm alone.

HOBBS
Yeah?

SAM
Devlin thinks you're dead and he
doesn't know we've got Doc.

DOC WILLIAMS
What are you thinking? Hit them
after sundown?

SAM

I think they'll move out after
sundown.

DOC WILLIAMS

You know... I'm not a bettin'
man...

Hobbs and Sam turn to Doc.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

But if I were... I would wager
that their main still is inside
that shack.

SAM

You're probably right, Doc.

HOBBS

It's an hour till sundown.

SAM

And they'll be expecting us.
That's why we'll hit 'em now. Let
me fire the first shots. Look for
their smoke and hit 'em back.

EXT. STORAGE SHACK NEAR THE HILLS - DAY

The sun dips lower.

Shadows stretch long over the clearing.

Max and the others work fast, heaving barrels onto the
wagon. Their movements are sharp, hurried. Hands shake.
Eyes dart to the tree line.

Henry pauses, wipes sweat from his brow, scans the hills.

HENRY

Boss... you sure we shouldn't have
someone near the woodline?

Devlin tightens the cinch on his saddle, doesn't even
look up.

DEVLIN

You scared of one man?

HENRY

He's Sixkiller

DEVLIN

He's one man.

A beat.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

And an Injun to boot.

HENRY

I hear how he once killed four men
in a stand-off... right up in the
open. He killed 'em all before
they got their thumbs on the
triggers.

DEVLIN

That's not true, Henry.

HENRY

It ain't?

Devlin finally looks up. His eyes are cold, calm.

DEVLIN

It was seven men.

Devlin heads toward the shack door.

CORD

We keep loadin' or we ride out
now?

DEVLIN

We leave when the wagon is loaded.

The men go back to work. The nervous glances don't stop.

IN THE TREE LINE

A dark silhouette shifts ever so slightly.

The long barrel of a rifle lowers into position.

The hammer cocks back.

The men keep moving.

Devlin steps up onto the wagon, reaches for a barrel --

BANG!

A shot shatters the barrel just as his fingers brush it --
liquid spills out, wood splinters--

The air erupts with chaos.

Devlin whirls -- eyes wide.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

Ambush!

Another shot --

HELL ERUPTS!

GUNFIRE ROARS!

The men scatter -- some for cover, some for their rifles.

Max dives behind the wagon, cocking his rifle as Henry scrambles for his gun belt.

Sam fires again from the tree line -- BANG!

A bullet punches through Cord's shoulder. He spins and crashes into the dirt, groaning in pain.

Devlin drops low, eyes searching for the shooter.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

Find him! Find him!

Another shot rings out -- BANG!

Henry staggers backward, blood blossoming from his chest. He gasps, drops his rifle -- drops dead.

Devlin curses, pulls his pistol, fires blindly into the distant trees.

IN THE TREE LINE

Sam reloads with practiced speed. He glances over --

Hobbs shifts position, crouching low, moving through the brush -- BLAM! He fires.

His shot slams into the wagon's wooden wheel, shattering it. The wagon tilts violently, knocking over barrels.

BACK AT THE SHACK

Max whirls -- spotting movement in the trees --

MAX

There's more guns out there than
just Sam!

BANG!

IN THE TREE LINE

A bullet rips through Doc's coat.

DOC WILLIAMS

(low growl)

Well, hell. That was my favorite jacket.

He crouches low and returns fire -- BANG!

AT THE SHACK

The bullet rips through Max's leg!

MAX

AAGH!

He stumbles onto his back, clutching his thigh. Blood seeps through his fingers.

Juan ducks behind the door, breathing hard. He peeks out and spies Hobbs shifting cover.

Juan grins. Raises his revolver.

Hobbs doesn't see him.

BANG!

A bullet SLAMS into Juan's gun hand!

He SCREAMS -- his revolver spinning away into the dust.

He clutches his hand, eyes wild with pain.

IN THE WOOD LINE

REVEAL DOC -- calmly lowering his smoking pistol.

DOC WILLIAMS

That's called "surgical precision," son.

BACK AT THE WAGON

Devlin crouches behind the tilted wagon, reloading. His hands are steady -- his eyes, calculating.

DEVLIN
(to himself)
Come on, Sixkiller... show
yourself...

He spots Sam moving behind cover --

Devlin aims -- FIRES!

The bullet barely misses Sam's head, slamming into the tree behind him.

Sam darts left -- rolling into the brush.

Hobbs fires at Devlin - BANG!

The shot rips through Devlin's coat, grazing his arm -- a flash of torn fabric and flesh as he staggers back, clenching his teeth in pain.

He fires back -- BANG!

Hobbs drops low, bullets whizzing over his head.

NEAR THE SHACK

Cord, still wounded, crawls toward his rifle.

He grabs the barrel.

BANG!

A bullet rips through his back.

Cord goes still.

REVEAL SAM -- smoke curls from his rifle barrel.

Sam rises from the brush -- eyes locked on the shack.

His boots crunch over the dirt as he moves forward.

BEHIND THE WAGON

Devlin sees it happening.

Sam is coming.

Walking toward him through the smoke and gunfire.

Unstoppable.

Devlin grits his teeth.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

You son of a --

BANG!

A bullet SLAMS into Devlin's shoulder.

His gun tumbles from his fingers.

He stumbles against the wagon -- sliding to the ground.

Sam flip-cock's his rifle... and steps forward.

Devlin's breath comes in ragged gasps as blood spills from his mouth, and a chest wound soaks his coat.

Smoke drifts over the battleground. The last echoes of gunfire fade into the hills.

Devlin grimaces, struggling to keep upright.

Sam stands over him--calm, unshaken.

DEVLIN (CONT'D)

You think it ends with me?

SAM

I know it doesn't.

Devlin coughs, a streak of red trailing from the corner of his mouth.

DEVLIN

The Judge... he'll bury you

Sam kneels, eyes locked on Devlin's fading strength.

SAM

The Judge will hang, same as you would've. Difference is... he'll get a trial.

DEVLIN

The word of an Injun...

Sam shakes his head.

SAM

The word of a U.S. Marshal.

Devlin's eyes glaze over. His breathing falters.

Stillness.

A beat.

Behind them -- Doc emerges from the shack, clutching a stack of papers. His face is tense, scanning the pages.

DOC WILLIAMS
Sam, you're going to want to see
this.

Sam stands, takes the papers. Flips through them.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Judge Ephraim Bishop... his
signature on requisitions for the
bootlegging supplies, payroll...

Sam stares at the papers.

DOC WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Looks like the law ain't as clean
as we thought.

Hobbs approaches.

HOBBS
Another still inside... big one.

SAM
And I think the last one.

HOBBS
Burn it?

Sam turns to him, and slowly nods yes.

EXT. NEAR THE HILLS - NIGHT

Sam, Hobbs, and Doc ride at a walk, and in silence.
Behind them, in the far distance, the flames and orange
glow of the burning shack.

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - MORNING

The sky is a bright orange from the sunrise.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Sam is at the stove making coffee. Flora enters in her
nightgown and robe, eyes full of sleep.

FLORA

Sam? Why are you up so early? I thought you would sleep late after yesterday.

SAM

I slept enough for me.

He gestures to the table. Flora sees a breakfast plate -- scrambled eggs, bacon, and sliced bread.

FLORA

You made breakfast! Oh, Sam!

He brings her coffee cup to the table and pulls out her chair. She sits, he pushes the chair forward.

FLORA (CONT'D)

How wonderful! I forgot how nice it can be when you're home.

A moment...

FLORA (CONT'D)

Why is there only one plate?

A HORSE WHICKERS from outside.

HOBBS (O.S.)

Sam? You ready?

Flora's brow furrows, suspicious.

SAM

Flora, honey...

She stands, butter knife in hand.

SAM (CONT'D)

Now.. just sit and eat your breakfast...

Sam opens the door.

Flora cuts in and stands firm in the doorway, arms crossed.

FLORA

Where do you think you're going?

Sam sighs, throwing on his coat and gun belt.

SAM

Flora...

She doesn't budge.

FLORA
Samuel. Sixkiller.

Sam tries a boyish smile -- it doesn't work.

HOBBS
Sam?

Sam looks past her -- Hobbs and Doc are already mounted.
Hobbs holds the reins to Sam's horse.

FLORA
I thought you were done with this?

SAM
I am. After today.

DOC WILLIAMS
'Morning, Mrs. Sixkiller.

Sam sneaks by her.

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Sam jumps into the saddle. Flora storms outside.

SAM
I'll be back this afternoon... but
right now I have to arrest a Judge
in Eufaula.

FLORA
Well -- why's Doc going!?

DOC WILLIAMS
Because I think the Judge might
have a heart attack when Sam walks
through the door. 'Mornin', Mrs.
Sixkiller.

HOBBS
(tips his hat)
Ma'am.

Hobbs rides off with Doc.

Sam leans in, plants a quick kiss on Flora's cheek --
then swings into the saddle before she can protest.

Sam smiles at Flora... who returns the smile with a glare
as cold as ice.

He grimaces, smiles, kicks his horse into a gallop, and follows after the others.

From the corner of the house, Flora watches as they ride onto the prairie and into the sunrise.

FADE OUT.