

CRAWFORD 'S WAR

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FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH PLAINS. DUSK.

A vulture circles a corpse that hangs from a telegraph pole -- mouth sewn shut.

CLOP - CLOP - CLOP...

The leisurely cadence of a horse fades in. The horse and rider approach the pole.

MARSHAL RANCE CRAWFORD (50s) rides slow, steady. His black duster hides a badge.

His face -- trail worn. Watchful.

He reins in near the pole, stares at the vulture who is now perched on top of the pole. He reaches for his canteen, unscrews the top, drinks.

He screws the cover back on, eyes on the vulture... who stares back at him.

RANCE

Eat hardy.

A FLICK of his spurs and his tired horse steps forward.

EXT. FOOTHILLS - WYOMING - QUINN GANG CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

A dying fire. Only faint embers remain, casting a flickering glow across three men, bundled in blankets, sleeping under the open sky.

Beyond them, darkness.

From the shadows, three figures emerge.

Silent. Methodical.

LAFE COLEMAN (30s) raises a gloved hand. The others halt.

Lafe doesn't rush. He studies the sleeping men. Watches their slow, steady breaths.

A small, almost imperceptible nod.

CLICK.

A pistol hammer.

CLICK-CLICK.

The pistols level.

A moment lingers.

BANG!

BANG! BAN! BANG!

Flashes light the night. The bodies beneath the blankets spasm as the bullets rip through.

A second later -- silence.

Lafe nods again.

WICK (40s) steps forward, lifting a blanket.

A dead man. Face down, blood pooling.

He lifts another -- same.

A third. He freezes.

Tom (17), younger than expected. Blood spreads and pools beneath him.

WICK

(quiet)

Quinn ain't here.

Lafe barely reacts.

LAFE

We've been trailin' him three days. Has to be here.

Red (30s) kneels beside Tom, rolling him slightly. His boyish face, still, lifeless.

RED

Hey... remember him?

Lafe doesn't answer.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

A hellstorm of gunfire. Smoke chokes the air. Silhouettes of men--firing, running, mounting horses.

Red swings his horse, scanning --

Through the haze, he spots Tom. Gun drawn, firing wildly.

Red WHISTLES SHARPLY.

Tom turns -- too late.

A shadow grabs him -- QUINN (40s), mean, weathered, ruthless, deadly.

QUINN

On the horse, Tom. I want a
younger brother, not a dead one.

Red FIRES. Quinn yanks Tom back, fires in return.

A bullet slams into Red's shoulder. He grits his teeth, clutching the wound.

Tom scrambles onto a horse --

Gallops into the smoke.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. FOOTHILLS CAMP - NIGHT

Red stares at Tom's lifeless body.

RED

This is Quinn's brother.

Wick wipes a hand across his mouth, uneasy.

WICK

Must have split off. we didn't see
it.

Lafe's eyes scan the darkness beyond the camp.

Listening.

LAFE

Take their money. Their whiskey.
(long beat)
Let's go.

The men loot the camp.

Beneath heavy eyelids, Tom's eye twitches.

Just a slit. But watching.

EXT. BORDER OF BUFFALO, WYOMING - DAY

The sky is the color of old parchment—pale, washed-out.

A wagon creaks along a dusty trail.

A sign swings with each bump:

"DR. WHITNEY'S PANACEA OF LIFE."

Seated at the reins, DOCTOR WHITNEY (70s), cigar clenched between yellowed teeth, eyes hidden beneath the brim of a battered beaver top hat.

A showman.

The CLOP of hooves approaching.

Whitney sighs. Flicks his cigar.

Behind him, four riders close in.

Their leader, DEPUTY HALE (30s), signals a stop.

HALE

Hold up there!

Whitney reins in. Watches as Hale rides up and tosses him a heavy Colt Dragoon.

Whitney catches it, barely.

HALE (CONT'D)

Here you are, Doctor. If you are a doctor.

Whitney examines the revolver.

WHITNEY

I most certainly am, sir! And I shall be filing a complaint against your sheriff for the unwarranted treatment -- rousing me before the crack of dawn is detrimental to my well-being.

Hale pulls a bottle from his pocket -- Whitney's elixir.

DEPUTY

Take a few swigs. You'll be good as new.

He tosses it. Whitney snatches it midair.

WHITNEY

I have never been so insulted in
my life!

DEPUTY

The Mayor has been airin' his
paunch for three days.

(pause)

The Pastor can't get outta bed.

(longer pause)

And the Sheriff? Can't leave the
outhouse more'n ten minutes at a
time.

Whiney grips the bottle.

WHITNEY

And for this, I'm run out of town?

DEPUTY

Did you hear what I just said!?

Whitney holds up the bottle, opens his mouth to argue...

Stops.

He gestures to the bottle.

WHITNEY

They obviously took the wrong
dosage!

HALE

Save it for the next town, Doctor.
And stay outta Buffalo.

(beat)

Next time I see you, you get
ninety days.

Hale turns his horse. The posse follows.

Whitney watches them ride away.

Slowly, he uncorks the bottle. Sniffs.

Takes a long swig. Flicks the reins.

WHITNEY

Onward, Minnie!

The wagon rolls forward.

EXT. FOOTHILLS - WYOMING - QUINN GANG CAMPFIRE - DAY

Smoke rises in lazy tendrils. The fire has burned down to a pile of cooling embers.

QUINN (40s) rides in slow. His men fan out, wary.

AXEL (50s), his second-in-command, is grizzled, sharp-eyed. The others -- MILLER (30s), FULTON (30s), GIL (50s), and HAL (40s) -- are worn men, dust-covered, saddle-worn, and mean.

Each one draws their pistol.

AXEL

They been rattlesnaked, boss!

Quinn swings down from his saddle. His boots crunch over dry earth as he moves to the bodies.

He sees him. A blanket, soaked in blood.

Quinn rips is back and reveals Tom, barely breathing.

Quinn kneels. He places a steady hand on Tom's chest.

QUINN

Tom...

A whisper -- weak.

TOM

Quinn...

QUINN

Who did this?

TOM

We was sleepin'...

Quinn's grip tightens.

QUINN

Who?

Tom, blinks slow. Each word an effort.

TOM

Lafe Coleman... I was hopin' you'd...

His breath leaves him.

Quinn's face doesn't move.

A long, quiet moment.

Then, with care, he lowers Tom's head to the ground.

His back to his men.

He stays there, shoulders still.

AXEL

Lafe Coleman. Damned bushwhacker.
Hits 'em when they're sleepin'.

HAL

We goin' after 'em?

Quinn stands. Faces them now. His voice is measured.

QUINN

We bury Tom first.

AXEL

Miller, Fulton, start diggin'.

QUINN

We bury Johnny and Ted here. I'm
takin' Tom home.

AXEL

Quinn, that's more 'n a day's
ride.

QUINN

The I best get started.

AXEL

What about Lafe? He ain't got much
of a lead. We can catch 'im today.

QUINN

We'll catch him after I bury my
brother.

He steps to his horse.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Gives Lafe more time to worry.

(beat)

'Cause he knows I'm comin' for
him.

EXT. ON THE PLAINS - DAY

A long, shimmering stretch of golden grassland. Heat blurs the horizon.

Dr. Whitney's wagon trundles forward -- one wheel warped, CREAKING beneath stacked crates marked:

THE PANACEA OF LIFE.

Whitney swats flies, grumbling. Glances back -- squints.

A lone rider approaches through the haze.

Black duster. Wide hat. A glint of metal at his chest.

The marshal is back.

WHITNEY

Ah! Thank the good Lord, it's you!

RANCE

I don't figure the Lord sent me, mister.

Whitney exhales.

WHITNEY

I was sure you were one of them Cossacks of the plains ridin' up to put an arrow in my back.

RANCE

That'd be the Comanche. They ain't in these parts.

Whitney breathes relief.

WHITNEY

Wagon's ridin' low. What you got in them crates?

Whitney sits up straight.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

Sir, you are lookin' at the most celebrated miracle tonic this side of the Mississippi. A cure for exhaustion, weakness, poor digestion, melancholia --

RANCE

Snake oil.

Whitney gasps, hand to chest.

WHITNEY
I resent that, sir.

RANCE
Mmm.

WHITNEY
Let me tell you something,
Mister...

RANCE
Crawford.

WHITNEY
Mister Crawford, The Panacea of
Life has given thousands of women
health, beauty, and freedom.

RANCE
That right?

WHITNEY
New York City, Boston, Bayonne --
people know my name. Doctor
Whitney.

RANCE
Famous, huh?

WHITNEY
The most famous man you ever met.

RANCE
Could be.

Whitney grins. Pleased with himself.

WHITNEY
Loss for words is normal in my
presence.

RANCE
Where you headed?

WHITNEY
Same direction as you, if you
don't mind the company.

Rance studies him.

RANCE

I'll be ridin' close to hostile territory.

WHITNEY

Perhaps I can sell the hostiles some of my elixir!

Rance chuckles.

RANCE

They'll kill you before you tell 'em you're a household name.

WHITNEY

If it's that dangerous, why are you goin' there?

RANCE

Lookin' for someone.

WHITNEY

A friend?

RANCE

No. An outlaw.

Whitney's eyes light up in fear.

WHITNEY

You!? You mean, you're a...

RANCE

A United States Marshal.

Whitney is flustered.

WHITNEY

A Mar... In what state!? I mean, umm, YES! Of course! I could tell! the focused eyes, the trigger finger... umm, yes. Marshal, huh?

RANCE

That's right. Wyoming Territory.

Dr. Whitney pulls a bottle of The Panacea of Life from his pocket.

WHITNEY

Would you like a complimentary bottle?

RANCE
I'll take my chances with the
fever.

They Ride onward.

EXT. THE TRAIL TO CHEYENNE - DAY

The sun shines bright in the sky as Rance sees a distant rider on the hills.

The rider turns toward Rance and Whitney as he breaks into a gallop.

WHITNEY
Friend of yours?

Rance reins in his horse, as does Whitney. Rance pushes his coat away from his pistol.

The rider gets closer and yells out!

TRAVIS
Marshal Crawford!?

Deputy Marshal TRAVIS CLARK (20), dusty and tired, reins in next to Rance. He's been up for days which hides his usual confidence and energy.

RANCE
Travis, isn't it?

TRAVIS
Yes, sir. I've been searchin' two weeks for ya... all the way from Laramie...

RANCE
What's the message?

Travis reaches into a vest pocket and hands Rance a wrinkled telegraph message.

Rance reads it in silence.

TRAVIS
The Coleman gang.

WHITNEY
Who might they be?

RANCE

Robbed a stage near Riverton. This says they were riding west.

Rance puts the message in his pocket.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Owl Creek Mountains. Good place to hold out.

WHITNEY

And the Sioux?

Rance gives a slight nod in agreement.

RANCE

Travis, you can return to Laramie, tell them you found me, and I'll go after them.

TRAVIS

I thought I might ride with you for a while... if you don't mind.

Rance thinks a moment.

RANCE

All right.

WHITNEY

So... we are no longer headed toward Cheyenne?

RANCE

Sorry, Doctor. You're welcome to keep traveling north.

WHITNEY

Well... with a murderous outlaw gang in the vicinity, I think I should like to stay with you fine gentlemen for a spell.

Rance and Travis spur their horses into a walk.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

Onward, Minnie.

A flick of the reins and the wagon creaks forward.

RANCE

This here is Doctor Whitney.

TRAVIS

I know.

WHITNEY

Ah! You've heard of me!

TRAVIS

No, sir. I was just reading the sign on your wagon.

WHITNEY

Oh.

RANCE

Doctor Whitney's a household name.

TRAVIS

Is that a fact?

EXT. A CREEK - NIGHT

The fire crackles low. Shadows stretch across the camp as Rance, Whitney, and Travis sit in uneasy silence.

Whitney stares into the flames, brooding.

RANCE

You're going to have to leave the wagon.

WHITNEY

I know. How shall I transport my supplies?

RANCE

You don't.

WHITNEY

I can't just leave valuable cargo out here for any passerby to plunder!

TRAVIS

What exactly is "The Panacea of Life?"

WHITNEY

My boy! It is a miracle cure -- guaranteed to relieve ailments of all kinds!

TRAVIS

Like what?

WHITNEY

Bloating! Weakness! A sense of emptiness in the stomach at sunrise! Is your flesh soft?

TRAVIS

No.

WHITNEY

Do you suffer from headaches, blurred vision, or specks floating before your eyes?

RANCE

Travis, it's snake oil.

Whitney gasps, wounded. He produces a small bottle and thrusts it at Travis.

WHITNEY

Sir! I take offense!

Travis uncorks it. Takes a sniff. Winces.

TRAVIS

Smells like "Who hit John."

Whitney grabs the bottle.

WHITNEY

I never discuss the secret ingredients.

Rance and Travis exchange a look.

EXT. WOODED AREA - COLEMAN CAMP - NIGHT

A lonely fire flickers. Lafe, Wick, and Red sit in the glow. Wick swigs whiskey, Red pours coffee.

Lafe stares into the dark.

LAFE

Didn't mean to kill no kid. Damn.

WICK

Quinn'll be comin' for you now.
Tracks'll be easy to follow.

Lafe nods, thoughtful.

LAFE

Good. This is my territory, and he damn well knows it.

RED

We took him on once and lost six men. Maybe we should pick up a few more guns first.

LAFE

We hole up in the Owl Creek Mountains, we won't need 'em.

Wick drags from the bottle.

WICK

We'll still be outnumbered.

LAFE

We'll pick 'em off before they know what hit 'em.

A beat.

RED

Damn it, Lafe. You said no killin'.

LAFE

I wasn't countin' on Quinn mowin' us down, Red. I didn't start this. We just robbed a couple of banks, that's all! No one got hurt!

WICK

We killed outlaws. Law don't give a damn about that.

Lafe nods.

LAFE

That's right.

RED

You find comfort in that, Wick? Think a judge is gonna keep us from swingin' just 'cause we only killed outlaws?

WICK

Hell, maybe they'll owe us a reward. Quinn's got a thousand dollars on his head.

Lafe grins.

LAFE

Dead or alive.

Red shifts uncomfortably.

RED

We better pray his brother had a price on him. If not... that's murder.

Wick eyes him.

WICK

You better pray, Red. You was the one that shot him.

Lafe settles his head back onto his saddle, pulls his blanket over himself, and turns away.

LAFE

You take first watch, Red. Wake me in two hours.

Red nods, but his hands are tense.

The fire pops. Wick takes another drink.

EXT. A CREEK - DAY

The sun rises, pale and washed out.

Whitney hammers the lid onto a crate.

RANCE

Sorry about the wagon.

WHITNEY

No fear. I have saved a small supply.

He pats his coat pockets -- CLINK CLINK.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

And I carry the secret recipe. I shall rise again!

Rance watches him, unimpressed.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

Though I do hope it's still here when I return with a new wheel.

He hammers another nail.

Travis tightens his saddle girth. Rance joins him.

RANCE

Travis, I think it's best you head
back to Laramie.

Travis stops.

TRAVIS

I want to learn from you.

RANCE

Finding Lafe Coleman could take
time.

TRAVIS

Ain't nobody waitin' on me.

RANCE

No one?

TRAVIS

Maybe my girl... but we ain't
hitched yet.

RANCE

You gonna be?

TRAVIS

Yeah... soon as she stops turnin'
me down.

Rance smiles... just a little.

EXT. ON THE PLAINS - DAY

The land stretches out -- empty, rolling, endless.

Rance, Whitney, and Travis ride in silence.

After a moment --

TRAVIS

So, Doctor Whitney -- if I got bit
by a snake, your Panacea would
cure me?

Whitney brightens.

WHITNEY

It would cure the snake bite—and every other ailment festering in your body!

RANCE

Sixty-nine cents a bottle, and you'll never be sick again.

WHITNEY

That's right, Marshal!

RANCE

You'll have a helluva headache, though.

WHITNEY

It cures headaches, too!

Travis laughs.

A moment passes.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

So who's Lafe Coleman?

RANCE

Outlaw.

WHITNEY

A killer?

RANCE

Wanted for robbin' a stage near Riverton.

WHITNEY

He ride alone?

RANCE

Got a gang.

WHITNEY

Think he'll come quiet?

RANCE

They seldom do.

Whitney nods, chewing on his thoughts.

EXT. QUINN GANG CAMPFIRE - DAY

Two fresh graves -- marked only by wooden crosses -- sit at the edge of a burned-out campfire.

Rance, Whitney, and Travis ride in slow, wary.

Rance reins in first, scanning the site with a practiced eye. Travis follows, but keeps his hand near his holster.

Whitney, perched high in his saddle, takes in the scene with a look of mild discomfort.

Rance dismounts. The dirt crunches under his boots as he moves toward the fire. Whitney hesitates, but finally climbs down as well.

Rance crouches, running his fingers over a ring of scattered stones—a fire, long gone cold.

RANCE

At least a day old. Maybe two.

He scans the ground. The churn of hoofprints and boot tracks tell their own story.

RANCE (CONT'D)

A lot of riders.

He rises, walks to the edge of the camp, and squints at the landscape.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Some approached on foot... but the horses went east.

Whitney, adjusting his coat, glances around.

WHITNEY

People do walk around in a camp,
Marshal.

Travis dismounts, eyes searching the dirt.

TRAVIS

Think this was Lafe Coleman?

RANCE

Could have been.

Travis steps forward, eyes narrowing at three dark stains on the dirt.

Whitney, peering over, tilts his head.

WHITNEY

Looks like someone spilled coffee.

Travis kneels, drags a gloved finger through the stain.
Dark. Sticky.

TRAVIS

It's blood.

WHITNEY

I'll be damned.

Rance glances down at the stains, studying their spacing.

RANCE

The way they're spread out...

(a beat)

One could guess they were shot in
their sleep.

Travis looks to the two graves, and turns back to the
third stain.

TRAVIS

Wouldn't there be three graves?

RANCE

Not if one of them survived.

TRAVIS

Do we follow the horse tracks?

Rance doesn't answer immediately. His gaze is locked on a
different direction -- away from the horse tracks. West.

RANCE

I'm inclined to go this way.

Travis frowns.

TRAVIS

But... the horses go in the other
direction.

RANCE

I know.

Rance swings onto his horse. Travis hesitates.

TRAVIS

Does that make sense?

Rance meets his eyes.

RANCE

You said you wanted to learn,
Deputy.

(beat)

Or would you rather debate?

Travis chews on that. Mounts up.

Rance kicks his horse into a trot and departs the camp.

Whitney, bemused, sighs and turns to Travis.

WHITNEY

You know... there's something
about that man.

TRAVIS

What?

WHITNEY

It's like his brain is running
circles around mine.

He spurs his horse into a trot -- then tosses a look over
his shoulder.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

And yours.

Travis glares. Kicks his horse forward.

They follow Rance into the vast, open country.

EXT. IN THE FOOTHILLS - DAY

A high ridge overlooking the rolling Wyoming landscape.
Lafe, Wick, and Red rein in their horses.

They scan the distance.

Wick glances over his shoulder--nervous.

WICK

How long we waitin' for Quinn?

LAFE

Truth is... I thought he'd be on
us by now.

WICK

So did I.

Lafe sees the nerves in Wick's face.

LAFE
That why you keep lookin' back?

WICK
Yeah.

Lafe smirks, turns back to the horizon.

LAFE
Better get used to it.
(beat)
We'll all be lookin' over our
shoulders from now on.

Wick turns to Lafe, who stares ahead and WHISTLES a carefree tune.

EXT. UNDER A LARGE TREE - DAY

A fresh grave. Two weathered headstones:

RACHEL QUINN - 1827-1857

HENRY QUINN - 1818-1868

Quinn, Axel, and the gang stand, hats in hand.

The REVEREND reads.

REVEREND
Let your Spirit guide our days on
earth in the ways of holiness and
justice... And when our earthly
journey is ended, lead us
rejoicing into your Kingdom, where
you live forever and ever. Amen.

ALL
Amen.

The wind stirs in the trees.

Quinn replaces his hat.

QUINN
Let's get those bastards.

He turns. The others follow.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL - DAY

The dusty trail winds through rugged terrain. Rance leads. Travis trails. Whitney lags, puffing a cigar.

WHITNEY

Imported from Connecticut. A man in Kansas City supplies me.

(puffs)

When I was visiting with Mark Twain -- fine fellow -- he said, "Doctor Whitney, this is the best cigar I've ever had."

Travis stares straight ahead.

TRAVIS

That so.

WHITNEY

Asked me some for literary advice on a story. Something about a jumping frog.

TRAVIS

I read that one.

WHITNEY

Yes, well... I don't like to take credit --

RANCE

Doctor Whitney. I'm used to riding alone.

WHITNEY

Then I'm sure you appreciate the company.

RANCE

I'm tracking an outlaw.

WHITNEY

Exciting.

RANCE

It's dangerous. Distractions don't help.

Whitney turns to Travis.

WHITNEY

May I suggest you cut down on your chatter?

Travis stares, shocked. Rides up beside Rance.

TRAVIS
(hushed)
Did you hear that!?

RANCE
I'm just trying to follow the
trail.

Travis studies the hoofprints.

TRAVIS
Think it's Lafe?

RANCE
Maybe. Looks like three riders.

TRAVIS
He's got more than that.

RANCE
Maybe he did.

TRAVIS
What if we're on the wrong trail?

RANCE
You said that earlier.

TRAVIS
So... was I right?

RANCE
No.

TRAVIS
I don't follow.

RANCE
Neither do I.

A beat.

TRAVIS
Then why follow it?

A beat.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
Instinct.

Rance smirks. Rides on.

EXT. HILL TERRAIN - DAY

Lafe, Red, and Wick ride through endless land.

WICK

We can still head south. Mexico.

LAFE

Then we meet Apache.

(beat)

I'd rather fight the Sioux.

RED

I been thinkin' 'bout them cattle
we was hired to move.

WICK

Where'd that come from?

RED

Just thinkin'.

LAFE

The ones Quinn rustled from us?
The ones we got blamed?

RED

Yeah. We didn't steal 'em.

LAFE

Didn't matter. No one believed us.

WICK

Damn lucky we escaped.
Nearly swung for it.

Red stares ahead.

RED

If we get Quinn to confess...
maybe we stand a chance.

LAFE

Chance of what?

RED

Goin' clean.

Lafe shakes his head.

LAFE

We're long past that.

They ride on.

EXT. FLATLANDS - DAY

A vast. Quiet. Distant mountains loom.

Rance and Travis ride. Whitney snoozes in the saddle.

TRAVIS

You ain't watchin' the trail.

RANCE

No need. Tracks are clear.

(nods ahead)

They're headed for those hills.

TRAVIS

Think they'll hole up?

RANCE

No.

(beat)

My guess is Owl Creek Mountains
beyond.

A quiet moment.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Where you out of?

TRAVIS

Cheyenne.

RANCE

That your territory?

TRAVIS

Yeah.

A beat.

RANCE

Tell me about this girl.

Travis stiffens.

TRAVIS

We've known each other since
school.

RANCE

Why'd she turn you down?

Travis hesitates -- the question lands heavy.

He doesn't answer. Just stares straight ahead.

A ghost of a memory creeps into his eyes.

Voices echo in his memory --

TRAVIS (V.O.)
I thought you would be happy for
me.

EMILY (V.O.)
I am, Travis.

FLASHBACK

EXT. GREEN GRASS UNDER A TREE - DAY

A picnic blanket. Bread, cheese. Travis rolls and apple.

EMILY (19) -- Sunday best, watches him.

TRAVIS
(small smile)
Don't seem like it.

EMILY
I... I just can't marry you if
you're going to be a marshal.

TRAVIS
Why not?

EMILY
You'll be gone. Weeks. Months.

TRAVIS
Deputy Marshal. It's different.

EMILY
Not by much. And one day you'll be
promoted. If you live that long.

TRAVIS
What kind of talk is that?

EMILY
Marshals don't chase pickpockets.
They go after gangs.

TRAVIS
I'll be makin' fifty dollars a
month.

EMILY
What happened to law school?

TRAVIS

I don't want an office life.

She pauses. A long, careful look.

EMILY

And you don't want a marriage,
either.

TRAVIS

Hell, I asked ya to marry me,
didn't I!?

EMILY

A marriage where you're gone more
than you're home... isn't a
marriage.

A long silence.

TRAVIS

So I gotta live my life the way
you want?

EMILY

I could say the same to you,
Travis Clark.

That hits.

TRAVIS

What am I supposed to do?

EMILY

Be a lawyer. Be home at night.

TRAVIS

That ain't fair.

EMILY

I'd be the one left behind. How
fair is that?

She leans in, voice softer.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I love you, Travis. But I won't be
the wife of a lawman.

END FLASHBACK

Travis is miles away.

RANCE

Travis?

He snaps back.

TRAVIS

You married, Marshal?

RANCE

I was.

TRAVIS

Did she mind you being a lawman?

Silence.

Whitney, half-asleep:

WHITNEY

Ah, the fairer sex. Always good
talk while roam'n the desolate
wilderness.

Rance and Travis glance back.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

(not opening his
eyes)

Not the Bard of Avon, but it'll
do.

EXT. FLATLANDS - DAY

Quinn leads his gang. Fulton hums low on a harmonica.

EXT. CREEKSIDE - DAY

A slow trickle of water. Rance and Travis crouch, filling canteens. Whitney slouches nearby, tipping back a bottle of The Panacea of Life, tipsy.

TRAVIS

Doctor, at this rate, you'll be
the healthiest man in Wyoming
Territory.

RANCE

Or the deadest.

Whitney lifts the bottle in a toast.

WHITNEY

Then I shall die a happy man!

Another swig.

TRAVIS

(mock concern)

Need help with your canteen?

Whitney waves him off.

WHITNEY

Who needs water when you've got
life in a bottle?

Rance approaches his saddlebag. A soft CLINK.

His brow furrows. Another tap -- CLINK! CLINK!

RANCE

What the hell?

He pulls out -- a bottle of the Panacea of Life. Tosses
it. Reaches in -- more bottles.

Whitney notices.

WHITNEY

I have plenty.

Rance reaches for his saddlebag.

CLINK!

His brow furrows as he taps the saddlebag again.

CLINK! CLINK!

Whitney staggers over.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

(alarmed)

Careful! Be careful!

Travis checks his own bags -- more bottles.

TRAVIS

Mine too!?

WHITNEY

I didn't think you'd mind.

TRAVIS

You dumped 'em in the creek!

WHITNEY

Only the empty ones.

RANCE

What happened to what was in my saddlebags?

WHITNEY

Stored. Securely. In boxes.

TRAVIS

Where?

WHITNEY

My wagon.

RANCE

Thirty miles back?

Whitney smiles weakly.

WHITNEY

Yes.

TRAVIS

(to Rance)

What was in yours?

RANCE

Food. Coffee.

WHITNEY

Well now, losing food ain't so bad! We can always hunt!

Rance steps closer. Whitney instinctively backs up.

RANCE

Game's scarce in these parts, you dunderwhelp.

WHITNEY

I have never been so insulted!

RANCE

Doubt that.

Whitney huffs, mounts up.

WHITNEY

I shall not ride with such company!

(beat)

Not without an apology.

Rance glares.

Silence.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

Very well. Onward, Minnie!

He trots off. Travis watches.

TRAVIS

You wanna let him go?

RANCE

Hell, I'd be more worried for the Sioux. What were you carryin'?

TRAVIS

Ammo.

RANCE

Damn.

Rance grows silent.

TRAVIS

You're stewin' over more than lost supplies.

Rance doesn't answer right away as he tosses out the rest of the bottles.

RANCE

You ever been in a shootout, Travis?

TRAVIS

Once.

RANCE

You good?

TRAVIS

Good enough.

Beat.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

They say you're the fastest gun in the territory.

RANCE

You're only as fast as the man in front of you.

TRAVIS
What's the secret?

RANCE
Never get cocky.

TRAVIS
Right.

RANCE
(firmer)
I mean it. Get cocky, you die.

Travis nods. They watch Whitney vanish over a ridge.

RANCE (CONT'D)
I've seen it happen.

He swings into the saddle.

RANCE (CONT'D)
Let's cover ground. Camp in an
hour.

Travis swings up, follows.

EXT. THE TRAIL WEST - DAY

Quinn and his gang ride.

A white tent. Smoke. A camp up ahead.

Quinn squints, raises a hand.

They slow. He signals forward.

EXT. THE SIMS CAMP - DAY

Simple. Worn. Laundry sways. A kettle bubbles.

A wagon, a single tethered horse.

MRS. SIMS (30s) stirs the pot, her once-beautiful face
now hard-edged, weary.

MR. SIMS (40s), strong-jawed, panning for gold in the
creek. BILLY SIMS (14), thin, quiet, mimics his father.

Distant hoofbeats.

Mrs. Sims stiffens. Turns.

The riders approach.

MRS. SIMS

George.

Mr. Sims and Billy climb out of the creek.

BILLY

Who are they, Pa?

MR. SIMS

Damned if I know.

A beat.

MR. SIMS (CONT'D)

Billy, get my rifle.

Billy runs.

Mr. Sims stands ready. Mrs. Sims steps beside him.

MRS. SIMS

They don't look friendly.

Billy returns, hands over the rifle.

Quinn and riders REIN IN. He removes his hat.

QUINN

Ma'am. Sir.

MR. SIMS

Howdy.

QUINN

No need for that rifle.

Mr. Sims doesn't lower it.

MR. SIMS

Who are ya?

QUINN

Jasper Davis. Headed for
California. Land and homes
waitin'.

Mrs. Sims softens slightly.

MRS. SIMS

Well... that's mighty noble of
you.

Quinn dismounts, looks around.

QUINN

My name is Jasper Davis. And you are?

MR. SIMS

George Sims. My wife, Judith. This is my son, Billy.

Quinn surveys the surroundings.

QUINN

Fine setup you got. Your land?

MR. SIMS

No. Don't know as it belongs to anybody.

QUINN

(smiles)
Might.

Mr. Sims grips the rifle a little tighter.

MR. SIMS

Figure they'd say so if it did.

QUINN

Maybe.

He squats by the creek, dips his hand.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Found any gold?

MR. SIMS

No.

QUINN

Nothin'?

MR. SIMS

If not here, we'll find it upstream.

QUINN

That's the spirit.

Quinn eyes Mrs. Sims wringing her hands.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Why so jittery?

MRS. SIMS
We ain't seen folk in months.

A beat.

QUINN
(to Axel, casual)
What you reckon's cookin', Axel?

Axel leans forward in his saddle.

AXEL
Smells like stew.

Mrs. Sims tenses.

MRS. SIMS
We don't have much. I'd ask you to
stay, but --

QUINN
And we accept.

Axel chuckles.

QUINN (CONT'D)
Got a bottle of rotgut we could
pass around?

MRS. SIMS
We don't drink spirits.

QUINN
Bit of whiskey never hurt anyone.

MRS. SIMS
Just the same.

QUINN
That ain't very hospitable.

Tension.

MR. SIMS
Maybe you ride on.

Quinn looks to the kettle.

He flexes his fingers. Peels his gloves.

QUINN
But I'm so lookin' forward to that
stew.

The Sims realize they are not leaving.

EXT. CAMP AT OWL CREEK MOUNTAINS - DAY

Lafe, Red, and Wick arrive. Rocky, good vantage. Wide views.

Wick scans.

WICK
Not even a prairie dog.

RED
Best place to ambush. No one can
sneak up on us here.

Lafe says nothing.

WICK
How long we wait?

LAFE
He's late. I'll give 'em that.

WICK
(nods)
Ain't like him.

LAFE
No. Ain't.

Lafe dismounts. Watches the valley below.

RED
Maybe he's lettin' us sweat.

LAFE
Quinn don't wait.

Silence.

LAFE (CONT'D)
We'll stay the night. Move out at
dawn.

WICK
To where?

LAFE
Across the border. Gather more
guns. Hit back hard.

He tightens his saddle.

LAFE (CONT'D)
Wipe Quinn off the map.

RED
If he don't get to us first.

Lafe looks out.

The valley's empty.

EXT. THE SIMS CAMP - DUSK

Fire flickers. Plates scraped clean.

Mrs. Sims gathers dishes, tense.

Mr. Sims sits stiiffly. Billy fidgets.

Quinn stretches by the fire. His men linger.

QUINN
How old are you, boy?

BILLY
Fourteen.

QUINN
Fourteen.

He glances at Axel.

QUINN (CONT'D)
I remember when I was fourteen.
Long time ago.

Mrs. Sims busies herself, trying to stay polite.

MRS. SIMS
Where did you say you were from?

QUINN
I don't believe I did. Dodge City,
ma'am.

MRS. SIMS
I hear it's a sinful place.

QUINN
It ain't too bad. Long as you're
tougher than the toughest.

MRS. SIMS
Doesn't sound very friendly.

Quinn stares into the fire.

QUINN
It's far from friendly. Downright
hostile.

MR. SIMS
You left your wives in such a
place?

Quinn turns slowly. His eyes cold.

QUINN
We did.

Silence.

Quinn turns back to Billy.

QUINN (CONT'D)
What's your name again?

BILLY
Billy.

QUINN
Easy name to remember. Like...
Billy the Kid. Right?

Billy shifts, uneasy.

BILLY
Yes, sir.

QUINN
Outlaw, right?

BILLY
Yes, sir.

QUINN
That's right.

QUINN (CONT'D)
Bright boy you got, Mister Sims.

AXEL
I got a boy.

QUINN
Axel's got a boy.

AXEL
Dumb as a log.

QUINN
Stupidest kid you ever saw.

Mrs. Sims tightens.

MRS. SIMS
Children grow as they are allowed.
Has he had any schooling?

AXEL
Hell, no. I need him workin'.

Mrs. Sims lowers her gaze.

QUINN
Any more of that stew?

MRS. SIMS
I'm afraid it's all gone.

Axel swigs whiskey.

AXEL
That's too bad. You want a drink,
kid?

Billy hesitates. Mr. Sims tenses.

MRS. SIMS
No, he does not. Mister Davis, I
would be obliged if your friend
put that bottle away.

Quinn raises a calming hand. Axel tucks it away.

QUINN
Billy... how much gold you and
your daddy pulled outta that
creek?

A heavy silence.

BILLY
None.

QUINN
Now tell the truth, boy.

MR. SIMS
He don't lie, mister.

QUINN

(polite)
Now, I'm talkin' to the boy,
mister. Not you.

BILLY

We ain't found any gold.

MRS. SIMS

He's telling the truth.

Quinn holds Billy's eyes.

QUINN

Is he now?

The fire POPS. Shadows flicker across Quinn's face.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Are ya, boy? You tellin' the
truth?

EXT. FLATLANDS - DUSK

A moonlit hush. Grass stirs under a cool breeze.

Rance and Travis lie on bedrolls. No fire.

Travis sits up, restless.

TRAVIS

I wonder where Doctor Whitney is?

A beat.

RANCE

Hmmm?

TRAVIS

Think he's still alive.

Rance barely stirs.

RANCE

Mmm.

TRAVIS

Why did we make camp so early?

RANCE

Told you. You need sleep.

TRAVIS
I can't sleep in the day.

RANCE
Shame. You'll be up all night.

TRAVIS
What!?

RANCE
Maybe one day you'll listen to me.

TRAVIS
You never said why we stopped!

RANCE
Was hopin' you'd figure that out.

He walks to his horse, calm, deliberate. Opens a saddlebag, pulls out a haversack. It CLANGS.

RANCE (CONT'D)
Owl Creek Mountains are less than a mile.

TRAVIS
We could have reached Coleman by now.

RANCE
Sure.
(beat)
And you'd be dead.

He tosses Travis the haversack. CLANG!

RANCE (CONT'D)
In daylight you'd be picked off before you saw their powder flash.

Travis opens the sack. Metal irons glint in the moonlight. His expression darkens.

TRAVIS
You think Lafe is up there?

RANCE
You can bet the farm on it.

EXT. CAMP AT OWL CREEK MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Lafe, Red, and Wick share a bottle.

WICK

Damn cold without a fire.

LAFE

Gets even colder with no scalp.

RED

You think the Injuns know we're here?

LAFE

Pretty sure they do.

RED

I'm sleepin' with my knife tonight, I'll tell ya that.

Suddenly -- hush.

LAFE

Quiet.

The clop of an approaching horse.

LAFE (CONT'D)

Don't shoot. Be ready.

Rance approaches. No badge. No weapons. Slumped, weary.

RANCE

Hello, in camp.

LAFE

What do you want?

RANCE

Heard talkin'. Thought you might have coffee.

LAFE

Runnin' a cold camp. This is Injun country.

RANCE

It is?

He starts to dismount. Red and Wick draw.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Whoa -- I'm unarmed.

Lafe gestures. They lower their weapons.

Rance dismounts.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Much obliged. Been in that saddle all day. Got anything to eat?

LAFE

Give him some jerky.

Wick hands it over. Rance bites in.

RANCE

That's good! Thanks, mister!

LAFE

What kind of a fool rides out here with no iron?

RANCE

Had one. A gambler mucked me out.

LAFE

Tough luck.

RANCE

Ain't playin' cards again, that's for sure.

LAFE

I'm surprised you're still alive.

RANCE

Every day's a gift.

LAFE

Name?

RANCE

John Jefferson Smith.

LAFE

I'm Lafe Coleman. That's Wick. That's Red.

RANCE

Pleased.

LAFE

Those names mean anything to you?

RANCE

Should they?

LAFE

They might.

RANCE
I'd remember a name like "Lafe."

LAFE
You know how to shoot, mister?

RANCE
Told ya -- ain't got a gun.

LAFE
If you had one?

RANCE
Yeah.

Takes another bite.

RANCE (CONT'D)
Why?

LAFE
Small talk.

RANCE
Ah.

LAFE
Where you from?

RANCE
Fort Laramie.

LAFE
Where you headed?

RANCE
Fort Laramie.

LAFE
That don't make much sense,
mister.

RANCE
Makes perfect sense.

Rance slowly reaches into his pocket.

They tense.

He pulls -- a badge.

Pins it to his chest.

LAFE
Son of a bitch!

They reach for their pistols.

TRAVIS (O.S.)
I wouldn't try that.

Travis steps from the shadows, pistol raised.

RANCE
Drop 'em. Easy.

They do.

LAFE
So your name ain't Smith?

RANCE
Rance Crawford. United States
Marshal.

LAFE
You're makin' a mistake.

RANCE
I don't see it that way. Travis?

Travis shackles Wick.

RANCE (CONT'D)
Lafe Coleman, I'm arresting you
and your men for the Riverton
stage robbery... and probably a
dozen more.

LAFE
I ain't done that much, Marshal.

Travis irons Red.

RANCE
My job is to bring you in. That's
it. Where's the rest of your men?

LAFE
You're lookin' at 'em.

RANCE
You've been seen with six.

LAFE
Dead.

RANCE
Dead? Or scoutin'?

LAFE
Quinn killed 'em. These three are
all I got left.

Travis steps toward him with shackles.

LAFE (CONT'D)
Now hold on! I don't want those --

RANCE
Should have thought about that
before you robbed the stage.

LAFE
Dammit, Marshal, I can't ride with
these things on me!

RANCE
Better start learnin'. It's a long
walk to Laramie.

Travis secures the irons.

LAFE
We'll never get there.

RANCE
We'll get there.

LAFE
The Quinn gang is after me. Now
they're gonna be after you.

RANCE
Quinn, huh?

Rance hides his concern.

EXT. THE SIMS CAMP - NIGHT

Quinn wipes his mouth with his sleeve.

QUINN
Yes, sir. Can't remember when I
had a better stew. I thank you.

He looks up—Mrs. Sims stares back.

Unblinking.

Quinn studies her a beat, as if expecting her to respond.

She doesn't.

Then, the firelight flickers, revealing the dark hole centered in her forehead.

He exhales. Pushes to his feet.

His men finish readying their horses.

Mr. Sims and Billy -- tied to the wagon wheels, each with a bullet in the head.

The tent is struck, trunks overturned, clothing and belongings scattered in the dirt.

Quinn steps into the saddle.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Shame you didn't tell us where the gold was.

He glances once more at the family, then chuckles

QUINN (CONT'D)

Then again, maybe you was tellin' the truth.

He nudges his horse forward, leading his men into the quiet night.

Behind them, the campfire gutters, shrinking into the dark... as distant coyotes HOWL.

EXT. WHITNEY'S CAMP - DAY

Nestled in the hills, Whitney hunches over a small fire, stirring a small piece of bacon in a tin cup.

Minnie WHICKERS.

Whitney looks up. Quinn and his gang ride in.

WHITNEY

Good morning, gentlemen. To what do I owe the honor?

Quinn glances at Axel.

QUINN

Honor?

WHITNEY

Merely a figure of speech. I wish I could offer you breakfast, but as you can see, I only have a rasher of bacon.

QUINN

That'll suit me just fine.

Quinn and Axel dismount.

WHITNEY

I meant -- one piece for myself.

QUINN

Didn't your momma ever learn you about sharin', mister?

Whitney pulls a bottle from his pocket, a salesman again.

WHITNEY

Perhaps I could interest you in "The Panacea of Life!" Cures any and all at sixty-nine cents a bottle.

Quinn takes the bottle, bites out the cork, takes a swig, spits it out.

QUINN

Snake oil.

WHITNEY

I beg your pardon! That's medicine!

QUINN

Water. Coffin varnish. And somethin' else. What's in it?

WHITNEY

I can't tell you the secret, sir! It harkens back to the days of the Roman Empire and my great-grandfather times twelve, who was the personal physician to Julius Caesar --

QUINN

Now, ain't that a load of hogwash.

He pulls his pistol and aims it at Doctor Whitney.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Reconsider.

WHITNEY

Water, a tablespoon of bourbon,
chili peppers, turpentine, and a
pinch of camphor.

Quinn reads the label.

QUINN

Cures any ailment?

AXEL

Cures ya by killin' ya!

They laugh.

WHITNEY

Sir! I stand by my product!

Quinn COCKS the pistol.

QUINN

You willin' to die by it?

Whitney chomps down on his cigar.

WHITNEY

Not today.

A long moment.

Quinn smirks. Holsters his pistol.

QUINN

I like you, mister.

WHITNEY

Doctor. Doctor Whitney.

QUINN

Like it says on the bottle.

WHITNEY

Correct.

QUINN

Name's Quinn.

WHITNEY

How do you do, Mister Quinn?

QUINN
This here is Axel.

Whitney nods to Axel.

QUINN (CONT'D)
And these fine gentlemen are my
gang.

Whitney eyes the gang -- stoic, unblinking.
His smile wavers.

WHITNEY
Ah ha...

QUINN
Where you come from, Whitney?

WHITNEY
Twenty miles west -- a range of
majestic mountains were on the
horizon.

QUINN
That right?

WHITNEY
That's right.

QUINN
Where you headed?

WHITNEY
I believe... back east.
Civilization calls.

QUINN
I think you should ride with us.

WHITNEY
Oh, no. I couldn't. I have
business --

Pistols COCK. Whitney freezes.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
Then again, what the hell!

QUINN
Saddle your horse.

Quinn snatches Whitney's tin cup. As Whitney fetches his saddle, Quinn eats the rasher of bacon and casually tosses the cup into the dirt.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL - DAY

They ride single file, Rance in the lead, followed by the shackled Lafe, Wick, Red, and Travis.

RANCE

Something about your story bothers me, Lafe.

LAFE

What?

RANCE

There hasn't been a single report of Quinn being in the territory.

LAFE

I can't help your lack of knowledge, Marshal.

TRAVIS

His family lived near Greybull.

RANCE

But he hasn't lived there in years. None of the family has. His Ma and Pa are long gone.

LAFE

I didn't say nothin' about Greybull -- but he killed my men and he's in the territory, and that ain't no lie.

TRAVIS

Truth from an outlaw.

LAFE

Bein' an outlaw don't mean you lie, kid.

TRAVIS

I'm not a kid. I'm a Deputy Marshal.

LAFE

Is the law pullin' recruits from schools, Crawford?

RANCE

He might be young, but he isn't a liar.

LAFE

Neither am I!

TRAVIS

We're supposed to believe that?

LAFE

My word's all I got left. Hell, I robbed the stagecoach and admit it.

He turns in his saddle to Travis.

LAFE (CONT'D)

There's many who wouldn't admit their wrongdoings. Maybe you're one of 'em, which would make me more honest than you!

TRAVIS

Marshal, you listenin' to this!?

RANCE

Yep. Makes sense in a twisted kinda way.

TRAVIS

What the hell does that mean?

Rance slows his horse. Scans the land.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Something wrong?

Rance doesn't answer. Just watches the ridgeline for a long beat.

LAFE

What's the matter, Marshal?

EXT. A DISTANT HILL - DAY

Unseen, high on a ridgeline -- SEVERAL SIOUX WARRIORS watch in silence as Rance, Travis, Lafe, and the gang ride across the expanse.

EXT. ON THE TRAIL - DAY

The group continues in silence. Rance keeps his eyes on the ridgeline.

LAFE

I heard about you, Crawford. You got quite a reputation.

RANCE

I do?

LAFE

I guess me and my boys should consider ourselves lucky... on account you usually bring 'em in dead. Not alive.

Rance doesn't respond.

LAFE (CONT'D)

Why is that, Marshal?

RANCE

Could be because they talk too much. Nothing worse than a long ride with a jackass who can't keep his pie hole shut.

Lafe smiles and glances at the iron shackles.

LAFE

Sure are uncomfortable. Yes, sir.

Lafe SINGS.

LAFE (CONT'D)

OH SHENANDOAH,
I LOVE YOUR DAUGHTER,
AND HEAR YOUR ROLLIN' RIVER.

Travis listens.

LAFE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

FOR HER I'D CROSS
YOUR ROAMIN' WATERS,
WAY, WE'RE BOUND AWAY

Lafe finishes quietly.

LAFE (CONT'D)

'CROSS THE WIDE MISSOURI.

He speaks.

LAFE (CONT'D)

Is there a girl you would cross a
rollin' river for, Marshal?

Rance ignores him.

LAFE (CONT'D)

How about you, Deputy? You got a
girl that would be upset if you
drowned in that rollin' river?

TRAVIS

Why don't you just shut up, Lafe?

Lafe LAUGHS.

LAFE

You answered my question!

He SINGS.

LAFE (CONT'D)

THE CHIEF DISDAINED THE TRADERS
DOLLARS
AWAY, YOU ROLLIN' RIVER
MY DAUGHTER NEVER YOU SHALL FOLLOW
AH-HA, I'M BOUND AWAY,
'CROSS THE WIDE MISSOURI

Lafe speaks.

LAFE (CONT'D)

Want another chorus, Marshal?

RANCE

Paper on you says "dead or alive."
Bringin' you in dead is a lot
quieter than alive. You chaw on
that a spell.

EXT. A DISTANT HILL - DAY

Several Sioux Warriors watch Rance and his party.

EXT. ON THE PLAINS - DAY

Doctor Whitney's abandoned wagon sits where he left it,
one wheel still leaning at an awkward angle.

Quinn and his gang gallop in, dust kicking up behind
them. Whitney rides among them, increasingly uneasy.

They rein in and dismount.

Quinn eyes the faded lettering on the wagon's side.

QUINN

Small world. This wagon has the
same name as you.

Axel hops onto the wagon bed, pries open a crate.

AXEL

"The Panacea of Life."

Quinn studies Whitney.

QUINN

That a coincidence, Doctor?

WHITNEY

Wheel was about to come off, so I
had to leave it.

Whitney forces a smile.

QUINN

Wheel was about to come off. Had
to leave it behind.

Quinn's gaze drifts past the wagon -- toward the horizon.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Don't see any majestic mountain
range out there.

Whitney's confidence wobbles.

WHITNEY

There isn't!? Well, I'll be
damned!

QUINN

How do you explain that?

Whitney stammers.

WHITNEY

We'll... I must have mistaken
early morning fog for a range of
snow-capped mountains...

Quinn tilts his head, unconvinced.

QUINN
 That won't wash.
 (gestures to the
 ground)
 Wagon tracks coming in from the
 east... but none going west.

Whitney swallows hard.

QUINN (CONT'D)
 Yet you seen the Owl Creek
 Mountains...
 (gestures)
 In that direction. Funny how that
 works.

Quinn leans against the wagon, casual but dangerous.

QUINN (CONT'D)
 Lie again and you die.

Whitney flicks his eyes to the others -- no help there.

WHITNEY
 I met up with a U.S. Marshal...
 two, actually. My rear wheel was
 damaged, so I rode with them.

QUINN
 West?

Whitney nods.

QUINN (CONT'D)
 Why?

WHITNEY
 They were hunting an outlaw.

Quinn studies him.

QUINN
 This outlaw have a name?

WHITNEY
 Coleman.

Axel and the others exchange looks.

AXEL
 Sounds like he doesn't know we're
 in the territory.

Whitney nods "yes."

QUINN
What's this Marshal's name?

Whitney hesitates.

WHITNEY
Crawford.

A beat. Quinn and Axel go still.

AXEL
Damn.

WHITNEY
You've heard of him?

Quinn swings up into the saddle.

QUINN
Heard of. Never met. Maybe you'll
be able to introduce me.

Axel and Whitney mount.

WHITNEY
Why stir up trouble!? He's not
looking for you!

Quinn smirks, nudges his horse into motion.

QUINN
Maybe not. But when he sees a good
opportunity, he won't pass it up.

They ride out, leaving the wagon behind.

EXT. THE TRAIL - DAY

Rance, Travis, and the prisoners have dismounted. Lafe
winces with pain as Wick drinks from a canteen.

LAFE
Damn it, Marshal! The sun is makin'
these irons red hot! They're
burnin' my wrists!

RANCE
Travis?

Rance nods for Travis to follow him, out of earshot of
the prisoners.

RANCE (CONT'D)

I've been thinking about what Lafe has been saying... about the Quinn Gang.

TRAVIS

What about them?

RANCE

If what he says is true and they were on Lafe's trail, we could be headed straight for them.

TRAVIS

Right.

RANCE

And they outgun us.

TRAVIS

What do you want me to do?

RANCE

(troubled, weighing options)

How would you feel about riding point?

TRAVIS

I can do that.

RANCE

If you spot Quinn, ride back so we can get a defensive position.

TRAVIS

I'll leave right now.

Travis heads for the horses.

RANCE

Remember...

Travis turns to Rance.

RANCE (CONT'D)

We're in Sioux territory.

Travis gives a slight nod.

EXT. THE PLAINS - DAY

Travis rides at a trot across a wide expanse of land.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Rolling hills are in the distance as Travis gallops toward them.

EXT. HIGH OVERLOOK - DAY

With his horse tethered a short distance away, Travis hunches low as he makes his way to the edge of a steep overlook, and sees the valley below.

His horse WHICKERS.

Travis looks behind.

Nothing unusual.

All is quiet.

He turns back and studies the valley.

CLICK.

With care, he turns to see a YOUNG WARRIOR (17), in war paint and a rifle pointed at him.

Travis holds his hands up as a surrender.

No reaction from the Young Warrior.

Travis motions that he wishes to stand.

No reaction.

With slow movements, he stands.

The Young Warrior slaps the side of his hip and then points to Travis' pistol. He repeats -- slaps his hip, points to the pistol, and points to the ground.

He raises his rifle and aims as Travis slowly reaches for his pistol.

The Young Warrior points to the ground.

Travis keeps one hand in the air as he tosses his pistol off to the side.

The Young Warrior lowers his rifle and keeps it pointed at the Deputy.

TRAVIS

I'm Travis.

He points to himself.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Travis.

The rifle stays steady. The Young Warrior doesn't flinch.

Travis swallows.

He studies the warrior's face -- young, but unreadable.

Travis speaks in a pleasant tone.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

So... you gonna kill me, or what?

No reaction.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

I'm a... Deputy Marshal.

Travis points to his badge.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Deputy Marshal. The law. Law.
What's your name?

He points to the Young Warrior.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Name? Your name?

The Young Warrior backs up, never letting his eyes off of Travis. He stops next to Travis' horse.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

That's a mighty fine horse you got
there!

He points.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Your horse. Fine horse.

The Young Warrior reaches into Travis' saddlebag.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

He removes a bottle of "The Panacea of Life."

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

No! No, you don't want to touch
that stuff. Tastes like hell!

The Young Warrior bites into the cork, pulls it out, spits it out. He takes a long swig.

He COUGHS and SPRAYS the Panacea from his mouth!

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Told ya it weren't no good.

With a furrowed brow and squinting eyes, the Young Warrior looks at the label and throws the bottle away.

He reaches into the bag and pulls out another bottle. He turns to Travis with a puzzled face.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

It ain't mine! I don't drink that stuff.

The Young Warrior hurls the bottle into the brush. He reaches into the saddlebag once more.

He pulls out a small photo in a frame.

Emily.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Oh... that's... that's mine.

The Young Warrior studies the photo.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

My girl. I hope.

He turns his eyes from the photo to Travis.

Travis pats his heart with both hands.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

My girl. Love. I love... her.

The Young Warrior points first to the photo and then to Travis, who nods yes.

He holds the photo as he goes to his horse and jumps on. He kicks the horse closer to Travis.

A pause. Then -- a flicker of amusement. A smirk. Maybe the first one he's ever let a white man see.

He tosses the photo to Travis, turns his horse, and gallops off.

Travis smiles at the photo.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Emily. I think you may have just saved my life.

He picks up his pistol and returns to the overlook.

He sees smoke signals from behind the hills.

Another set of smoke signals in the opposite direction.

Travis bolts for his horse, mounts, and gallops off.

EXT. THE TRAIL - DAY

Rance leads Lafe, Wick, and Red as they ride single-file as before. Travis gallops toward them and calls out.

TRAVIS

Marshal!

Travis reins in alongside Rance.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Smoke signals -- about five miles ahead.

RANCE

Well, they know we're here.

LAFE

Hope you're good with Injuns, Marshal.

Rance sees rocky terrain a short distance away.

RANCE

We'll hold up there for a spell.

They ride at a walk toward the rocks.

LAFE

Good a place as any to die.

WICK

Better than the gallows.

RANCE

I don't intend on dyin' here.

LAFE

The Sioux might have other ideas. You only got two guns, Marshal.

TRAVIS

Maybe we should keep riding.
Outrun them.

RANCE

This is the last place with any
kind of cover for miles. We don't
want to get caught in the open
with a Sioux war party.

LAFE

Yep. Right nice place to die.

EXT. ROCK ESCARPMENT - DAY

The horses are safely tethered behind large boulders.

Travis and Rance are behind cover and watch to their
front. Their rifles are next to them, at the ready.

The three prisoners are seated against the rocks.

TRAVIS

It's been over an hour. Nothing.

RANCE

Waiting till sundown.

A faint, distant THUMP-THUMP-THUMP. Then another. The
rhythm steady, unhurried.

The men freeze. Listening.

The drums build... but still, nothing on the horizon.

They listen for several moments. Rance seems unaffected
as he turns to Lafe.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Why did you hold up at Owl Creek
instead of heading into Mexico?

LAFE

Mexico was the plan, but I wanted
to get Quinn first.

RANCE

Last I heard, he was in
California.

LAFE

He was. He decided to make Wyoming
Territory his. He crowded me.

RED

We got the blame for a bank near
South Pass he hit up.

RANCE

I didn't hear about that.

LAFE

You will.

RED

And when you do -- it weren't us.

LAFE

We run into him at Saint Mary's
Station. He shot up my boys.

TRAVIS

What was the shootout about?

LAFE

Territory.

RANCE

So you fought it out, and Quinn
won.

LAFE

I wanted to talk with him. Agree
to boundaries. Instead, he
ambushed us. Red and Wick here
were all that was left out of
eleven.

Rance listens.

LAFE (CONT'D)

I know what you're thinkin'. Nine
less outlaws in the world. Maybe
so. But they was all good men.

RANCE

I don't know as outlaws and good
men can be one in the same, Lafe.

LAFE

We weren't no saints, Marshal. But
we never gunned down a man for a
sack of cash. Can't say the same
for some lawmen I met.

RANCE

Robbery is robbery.

LAFE

Still -- we ain't never killed no one... except for Quinn's men.

RANCE

In the shoot-out.

Lafe gives a short sigh of defeat.

LAFE

Two days ago. We found his camp and fired into 'em. But Quinn weren't there.

RANCE

That's why you're expecting him?

LAFE

Killed his younger brother.

TRAVIS

That's why they're expecting him.

LAFE

The Sioux will probably get us before Quinn do.

TRAVIS

Marshal... If the Sioux don't get us, Quinn will. And with just two guns...

Lafe pulls his hat down over his eyes and leans back against the rock.

LAFE

...that ain't good odds.

EXT. THE TRAIL - NIGHT

The steady, ominous POUNDING OF WAR DRUMS echoes through the hills.

Quinn leads his men at a slow walk. Whitney rides beside him, uneasy.

WHITNEY

I'm no expert tracker, but... wouldn't it be wiser to ride away from the drums?

QUINN

Depends on your objective, Doctor.

WHITNEY
Mine would be survival.

QUINN
That's where we differ. Mine's
killin' Lafe Coleman.

WHITNEY
And the Sioux? Their objective
might be killin' us. So who wins?

QUINN
You're soundin' mighty yeller,
Doctor.

WHITNEY
Don't confuse cowardice with
wisdom, my good man.

Quinn leans in, mock-inspecting Whitney's back.

QUINN
Son of a bitch! Lookee there! A
big streak of yeller goin' down
your spine.

The men LAUGH.

Whitney remains unamused.

WHITNEY
Sir, if I were thirty years
younger --

QUINN
You'd what?

WHITNEY
Call you out onto the field of
honor.

QUINN
A duel?

WHITNEY
If I were thirty years younger.

QUINN
More like forty.

His men LAUGH again.

WHITNEY
I am not a coward.

QUINN

Well, I think you are. And if you resent it, you can do something about it.

WHITNEY

You have the advantage of youth.

QUINN

That's an excuse. You ever fire that oversized horse pistol?

WHITNEY

I have.

QUINN

Anytime you wanna prove it, you just say the word.

WHITNEY

I shall keep it in mind.

QUINN

Hell, we don't need no duel. We can just down a bottle in a saloon and start shootin'!

MORE LAUGHTER.

But the sound fades as the WAR DRUMS SWELL.

The laughter dies.

A long, uneasy silence.

AXEL

They sound close, Quinn.

Quinn glances to the hills.

Black shapes within black shadows.

His hand hovers near his gun.

QUINN

Keep your eyes open! Hal!?

HAL (O.S.)

Yeah, boss.

QUINN

Watch our backs.

HAL (O.S.)

Right.

They ride on -- watching. Listening.

The drums pound louder.

EXT. ROCK ESCARPMENT - NIGHT

The WAR DRUMS POUND. A relentless, steady THUMP reverberates through the rock.

The prisoners sleep, slumped against the stone.

Rance and Travis keep watch behind their barricade.

TRAVIS

Can't see a thing out there.

Rance lights a cheroot.

The tiny flame flares, flickers, fades.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

You don't seem rattled. I've seen folks pretend they ain't -- but you can always tell. Not you.

Rance stares into the dark. Silent.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

(watching him)

You ain't afraid, are ya?

RANCE

You gotta give a damn to be afraid.

Travis exhales. That answer wasn't what he expected.

RANCE (CONT'D)

I stopped caring a long time ago.

LAFE (O.S.)

Most men stop carin' when they're runnin' from somethin'.

Lafe pushes his hat back, eyes glinting in the low light.

LAFE (CONT'D)

What are you runnin' from, Marshal? Somethin' in your past troublin' ya?

RANCE

You talk too much, Lafe.

LAFE

Might wanna get it off your shoulders... before we get our scalps lifted.

The WAR DRUMS stop.

Dead silence.

Red and Wick stir awake, blinking into the dark.

RED

What's that!?

A stillness thick enough to choke the air.

Rance slides his pistol from its holster, and slowly cocks the hammer.

Travis lifts his rifle from the rock, slow and careful.

Thre quiet breaks when a MORNING DOVE calls out -- soft, distant, from their left.

All eyes turn left.

A beat.

Another MORNING DOVE answers -- from their right.

Travis opens his mouth.

Rance raises a finger -- silent.

They wait.

EXT. BOULDER - NIGHT

A SIOUX WARRIOR crawls in silence. His rifle glints in the moonlight as he slithers forward..

He reaches the edge.

Aims.

EXT. ROCK ESCARPMENT - NIGHT

Travis listens, tense, scanning the dark.

BANG!

A rifle CRACKS the night -- his arm erupts in blood!

He tumbles back, groaning!

In the same instant --

BANG! BANG!

Rance FIRES without hesitation.

EXT. BOULDER - NIGHT

The warrior is HIT -- he jerks, topples -- vanishes into the dark below.

EXT. ROCK ESCARPMENT - NIGHT

Crouched, Rance rushes to Travis.

TRAVIS

(groaning)

Damn... dammit!

Rance presses down on the wound, scanning his face.

RANCE

Gotta stop the bleeding...

A hand appears beside him -- holding a neckerchief.

Rance turns.

Lafe. No words. Just the offer.

Rance takes it, wraps Travis' arm tight.

TRAVIS

(weak, unfocused)

Feel like I'm gonna pass out...

RANCE

(sharp, commanding)

Keep your eyes open! Look at me!

Lafe kneels beside them.

LAFE

He needs a tourniquet.

Rance bolts for the horses.

Travis' eyes flutter.

Lafe leans in.

LAFE (CONT'D)

(low, urgent)

You close your eyes... you might
never open 'em again.

TRAVIS

(murmuring)

Emily... knew... she knew...

Rance returns, leather strap in one hand, a bottle of
"The Panacea of Life" in the other.

He wraps the strap around Travis' arm. Pulls tight.

RANCE

Who's Emily? She your girl back
home?

TRAVIS

(hissing through
teeth)

She said I'd git myself killed.

RANCE

She was wrong. You're not
killed... but I gotta get that
bullet out.

Rance uncorks the bottle.

TRAVIS

What's that for?

RANCE

(pouring some out)

I got a feeling it'll sterilize a
knife... and your wound.

He splashes the blade, then the wound.

Travis grimaces in pain.

TRAVIS

Wait!

Rance pauses.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

You gonna be able to see the bullet? Maybe... maybe we should have a fire...

RANCE

No fire. Moon's full. Plenty of light.

The WAR DRUMS ERUPT again -- closer.

Rance and Travis freeze, listening.

A long, ominous BEAT.

Rance pours the elixir over the wound.

TRAVIS

(thrashing)

Damm! Damn! That hurts!

LAFE

Probably better than drinkin' it.

Rance splashes more on the blade of his knife.

Travis turns away, teeth clenched, breathing hard.

Rance goes in for the bullet.

EXT. APPROACH TO THE ESCARPMENT HILL - NIGHT

The WAR DRUMS THUNDER from the hills.

Quinn and his gang dismount, using the cover of jagged boulders. Shadows flicker under the moonlight.

Axel, tense, points toward the hill.

AXEL

That firin' sounded like it was from there.

QUINN

Yeah.

Whitney's gaze drifts up the hill, uneasy. He shifts in his saddle.

WHITNEY

The outlaws you're hunting?

Quinn doesn't answer. Just watches.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

I asked if you was married...
sounded like you had been. But not
now. Was it 'cause... you was a
lawman?

Rance's gaze fixes on the fire. Still. Distant.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

(softer)

I just ask 'cause... Emily. The
girl I want to marry. She ain't
for it. So... I was wonderin' if
that's how it was with you.

A beat.

When Rance speaks, his voice is calm, too calm -- like
something dead inside him is talking.

RANCE

Seems like I'm always on the
trail. Sometimes a week. Sometimes
three. Most times, a month or
more.

(a slight breath)

A month away from home, chasin'
vermin. One time, I came back
after a long one. Those last two
miles, all I could think about was
seein' her face. Takin' her in my
arms. Telling her I was done. That
I was never leavin' again. Then I
saw it.

A long pause.

RANCE (CONT'D)

A split-rail fence... around a
stone. A stone with my wife's name
on it.

The fire CRACKLES.

RANCE (CONT'D)

She took with fever... and she
died.

A gust of wind moves through the rocks.

RANCE (CONT'D)

A year later, I was at Laramie...
they had held a letter for me.

RANCE (CONT'D)
It was from my wife... beggin' me
to come home.

Travis watches him closely.

RANCE (CONT'D)
Said she was sick. Said she
couldn't tend the livestock.

His eyes finally meet Travis'.

RANCE (CONT'D)
She knew I'd be at Laramie
eventually.

A beat.

RANCE (CONT'D)
(quiet)
She just didn't know... I already
had come and gone.

Travis doesn't move.

RANCE (CONT'D)
There ain't a day goes by I don't
curse myself for it.

Rance lets the silence settle.

He shifts -- puts his hat over his eyes, like the
conversation never happened.

TRAVIS
(quietly)
I'm sorry, Marshal.

No response.

The dirt kicks up as a small rock lands at Rance's boot.

He turns to see Red, who waves him to the lookout point.

RED ON LOOKOUT

Red peers into the dark as Rance joins him.

RED
Over there.

Rance follows Red's gaze --

A distance away, Quinn and his gang move through the
terrain, heading straight for them.

RANCE
Is that your man Quinn?

Lafe steps up, eyes locked on the riders below.

LAFE
(grim)
That's Quinn.

TRAVIS
Any sign of the Sioux?

RANCE
(still watching
Quinn's gang)
No.

WICK
Maybe they pulled out when they
saw Quinn... think he's coming to
reinforce us.

RANCE
Doubt it.

Down below, Quinn leads his men off the trail,
disappearing behind the rock formations.

RED
Why they takin' cover?

WICK
(uneasy)
They couldn't have seen us.

LAFE
They heard the gunfire.

Rance's eyes narrow.

RANCE
Yeah.

Lafe exhales, shakes his head.

LAFE
Now it's one man against the Sioux
and the Quinn gang.

Rance doesn't react.

LAFE (CONT'D)
Just wanted to make sure you knew
that we're gonna die, that's all.

Red keeps watch at the rock, eyes scanning the valley.

RED
I see something!

Rance and Lafe shift toward him.

A lone rider emerges onto the trail below --
The glow of moonlight catches a beaver top hat.

LAFE
(baffled)
Who the hell is that?

Rance squints -- then exhales in disbelief.

RANCE
I'll be damned.

From below --

WHITNEY (O.S.)
Hello, in camp!

RANCE
(calling back)
Doctor!

A long beat.

RANCE (CONT'D)
(mutters)
I'll be damned.

EXT. BELOW THE ESCARPMENT - NIGHT

Doctor Whitney, ever-present cigar clamped in his teeth,
squints up into the darkness.

WHITNEY
It is... Crawford!? Is that you!?

INTERCUT RANCE / WHITNEY

Rance stays behind cover.

RANCE
(dry)
Doctor Whitney. Small world.

WHITNEY

And about to get less populated.

RANCE

You lookin' to get an arrow in
your chest?

Whitney glances around, suddenly very aware of his
exposed position.

WHITNEY

Yes, well, hopefully our native
friends are enjoying a lull in the
action!

RANCE

What do you want, Doctor?

Lafe watches from the side, amused.

LAFE

He's a friend of yours?

RANCE

Loosely speaking.

WHITNEY

Marshal, Quinn wants Lafe and his
men. You turn 'em over, you and
your deputy ride out of here. No
trouble.

RANCE

That so? And how's Quinn know I
got 'em?

Whitney clears his throat.

WHITNEY

Well... I may have told him I was
traveling with you. Against my
will, of course.

RANCE

Right.

WHITNEY

And I may have mentioned you were
lookin' for Lafe...

RANCE

Singin' out to 'em, Whitney?

WHITNEY

Strictly in the interest of self-preservation, Marshal.

Rance glances at Lafe, then back down at Whitney.

RANCE

I've got 'em, all right. And I intend to ride out of here without givin' 'em up.

WHITNEY

(sputters)
Marshal, that is not a wise choice.

RANCE

If Quinn wants Lafe, he can come get him.

WHITNEY

I strongly suggest you reconsider... and I say that as a friend.

Rance raises an eyebrow.

RANCE

A friend?

WHITNEY

Past misunderstandings aside, he's got more men than you!

RANCE

You with Quinn, Whitney?

Whitney starts to reply --

WHOOSH - THUMP!

An ARROW slams into the dirt in front of his horse!

Whitney's eyes go wide. He spins his horse and gallops into the dark.

BACK AT THE ESCARPMENT

Rance watches Whitney disappear, then checks his pistol's cylinder. Loads a few rounds. Pats his vest pocket for more. Not much left.

Red sees this.

RED
You runnin' low?

Rance doesn't answer. Turns to the others.

RANCE
How many rounds you got?

RED
Just what's in the pistols and on
the belts. We was just expectin'
Quinn -- not a war party.

Rance crouches next to Travis, still weak but alert.

RANCE
(quiet)
We need more ammo.

Lafe, hat over his eyes, sprawled against the rock like
he hasn't got a care in the world

LAFE
Ammo? You need more guns.

EXT. APPROACH TO THE ESCARPMENT HILL - NIGHT

The men have taken up firing positions as Doctor Whitney
gallops and meets Quinn.

WHITNEY
The Sioux are all over! I barely
escaped with my scalp!

He dismounts.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
I talked to him. I tried.

QUINN
I could hear some of it. He ain't
budgin'.

WHITNEY
I wish the Marshal had taken my
advice.

QUINN
No matter. I was gonna kill 'em
either way.

WHITNEY

What!? You are not a man of your word!?

He calls out.

QUINN

Fulton, Miller! See if you can get some high ground and fire down into them.

The men move out.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Watch out for Injuns.

WHITNEY

Well, I delivered the message. If it's all the same, I'll be heading east now...

QUINN

You're stayin' right here, Doc.

EXT. ROCK ESCARPMENT - NIGHT

Travis drinks from a canteen as Rance keeps watch. The prisoners sleep against the large rock. Lafe opens his eyes and sees Rance.

LAFE

Don't you ever sleep?

RANCE

Once in a while.

LAFE

Anything out there?

RANCE

I don't think we're facing a lot of them. Maybe just a small scouting party.

TRAVIS

What makes you think so?

RANCE

They would have rushed us by now if they were in force.

LAFE

If they saw Quinn headed this way,
maybe they decided to hold off the
attack.

RANCE

Quinn doesn't have enough men to
make a difference if this were a
large war party.

LAFE

Large or small, you still can't
outgun them.

TRAVIS

I can shoot with my left hand.

LAFE

Sure -- but can you hit anything?
You know what you need to do,
Marshal.

Rance turns to Lafe and a silent stare.

Travis figures it out.

TRAVIS

Wait! No! Rance!

LAFE

He can't hold off what's facin' us
all by himself. Use your head,
kid.

TRAVIS

Rance, you can't trust them!
They'll shoot us and ride off!

LAFE

Ride where? Nowhere. We die here
like men or out there like dogs.

Lafe's eyes divert back to Rance.

Rance studies his face. His grip tightens on the key.

TRAVIS

Rance... no...

Rance makes his way to his horse.

He grabs the three gun belts.

Rance returns to Lafe, Red, and Wick.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
Marshal, this is loco!

The eyes of the outlaws are glued to the key as it turns in the iron locks as each heavy shackle squeaks, grinds, and falls to the ground.

Rance holds the gun belts in front of them.

RANCE
Lafe, if any of you make a wrong move... the slightest hint of a wrong move... I'll blow your head off.

He turns to Red and Wick.

RANCE (CONT'D)
Understand?

The message meets sober, serious faces who nod back.

Lafe extends his hand, and Rance gives him the gun belt.

LAFE
We still got a little problem of ammunition.

RANCE
Yeah.

Red and Wick put their belts on and assume firing positions behind the rocks.

LAFE
I thought you would be better prepared.

RANCE
I was. Don't get me started.

BANG! A shot RICOCHETS off the boulder next to Rance. He FIRES back.

Three WARRIORS shoot ARROWS into the camp. One SLAMS into the ground next to Red.

EXT. APPROACH TO THE ESCARPMENT HILL - NIGHT

Quinn and his men keep up a steady fire.

QUINN
Don't shoot them Injuns!

GIL

Why not! They're shootin' at us!

QUINN

They's shootin' at Coleman and the
Marshal!

Quinn and his men reload, fire, reload, fire—caught in
the rhythm of the fight.

Whitney edges back. One step. Then another.

Quinn doesn't notice.

Axel fires. Reloads.

Whitney holds his breath.

One more step --

Quinn's head TURNS.

Whitney ducks into the dark.

A short distance from the shooters, Whitney comes across
Miller, who has his own firing spot behind a boulder.

Whitney creeps up behind him. Miller spins around like a
whirlwind with his pistol pointed at Whitney, who thrusts
his arms into the air!

WHITNEY

Don't shoot!

Miller turns back toward the fight.

MILLER

You almost got it, Doc!

He turns back to his front and fires -- BANG!

Whitney hesitates, glances back at Quinn, then steels
himself. He pulls a bottle from his pocket, steps
forward, and -- WHAM!

Miller slumps over, and Whitney hurries past the boulder,
toward the rocky terrain.

EXT. NEAR ROCK ESCARPMENT - NIGHT

Two SIOUX WARRIORS fire their rifles toward Rance.

Behind them, Whitney sneaks by with care.

EXT. ROCK ESCARPMENT - NIGHT

Rance and the outlaws continue to fire.

RICOCHETS hit the rocks around them.

Travis picks up his pistol with his left hand and slides to the right side of their defense.

He lifts the pistol and aims.

WHITNEY (O.S.)

I'm on your side!

TRAVIS

Doctor Whitney!?

Whitney climbs into the rock fortress, out of breath.

RANCE

You sure you're on the right side,
Doctor?

The shooting stops.

Silence.

WICK

I don't trust this...

RANCE

Keep your ears and eyes open.
They're probably moving in closer.

Rance crouches low as he makes his way to Whitney.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Didn't expect to see you here.

WHITNEY

I was shanghaied by that ruffian.
Marshal. That man is a cold-
blooded killer! He almost shot me
dead! Me, who never harmed a soul!

RANCE

That shouldn't be a problem for
you. You have "The Panacea of
Life." It cures anything.

WHITNEY

I am not in the mood for levity.

RANCE

How many guns have they got?

WHITNEY

Let's see... six, including Quinn,
and several Sioux Warriors that I
could make out.

RANCE

With luck, the Sioux will take out
more of them than us.

Rance turns to Lafe, on alert at their defense line.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Anything?

LAFE

Nothing. Maybe we did some damage.

Rance notices Whitney's Dragoon pistol.

RANCE

You're gonna need that. Make sure
it's loaded.

WHITNEY

This? It hasn't been fired for
years! The barrel would probably
blow up.

RANCE

Then what do you carry it around
for?

WHITNEY

For protection against Injuns and
outlaws!

RANCE

But it won't fire!

WHITNEY

They don't know that!

Rance reaches into his coat and grabs a pepperbox pistol.
He gives it to Whitney.

RANCE

Hope you can shoot.

Whitney notices Travis.

WHITNEY

You got hit?

TRAVIS

First shot.

Whitney reaches into his pocket.

WHITNEY

I have a bottle...

TRAVIS

No thanks, Doc.

Whitney leaves the bottle in his pocket.

He notices Lafe.

WHITNEY

Ah! This must be the Coleman Gang.

LA FE

Who are you?

RANCE

This here's a household name.
Doctor Whitney.

LA FE

Yeah? Must be a small house.

Whitney smiles and sits. He's tired, and it shows.

WHITNEY

This is the life for a young man,
Marshal.

RANCE

I'm starting to feel that way
myself.

WHITNEY

When we get out of this... if we
get out of this... I'm headed
east. I found a nice fishin' spot.

TRAVIS

Yeah?

WHITNEY

They practically jump out of the
pond and into your lap. Do you
fish, Marshal?

RANCE
Never found the time.

WHITNEY
Sometimes... you have to make the
time.

Rance thinks on this a moment.

RANCE
How much ammo does Quinn have?

WHITNEY
I don't know -- but I saw some of
them pull boxes from their
saddlebags.

TRAVIS
What are you thinking?

RANCE
Liberatin' Quinn of his
ammunition.

WHITNEY
Are you out of your mind!?

RANCE
Might be our only chance. One more
attack, and we'll have to throw
rocks.

LAFE
He's right. The Sioux may have
sent a runner for more warriors.

WHITNEY
I'd go with you, of course... but,
my back...

Rance eyes him. Just shakes his head.

RANCE
Where's he staked out?

WHITNEY
Once you get down the hill, there
are boulders a short distance
away. Horses are tethered just
behind.

RANCE
All right. I won't be long.

He turns to Travis.

RANCE (CONT'D)
You're in charge.

Rance makes his way to Red's lookout point. He climbs over the rock and disappears into the dark.

EXT. SIDE OF ESCARPMENT HILL - NIGHT

Rance moves low and silent down the steep hill.

WHOOSH!

A WARRIOR explodes from the dark--tomahawk whipping toward Rance's skull!

Rance jerks back, the blade slicing air where his face was. He drives forward --

A gut punch. A grapple. The warrior swings again--Rance traps his wrist!

They STRUGGLE -- vicious, slipping, grunting, limbs tangling in the dirt.

The tomahawk nearly finds Rance's throat.

With a final SNARL --

Rance locks his arm around the warrior's neck.

A violent thrash -- then the body goes limp.

Rance exhales. Shoves the corpse aside. Moves on.

EXT. ROCK ESCARPMENT - NIGHT

Travis leans against the boulder, pistol in his lap.

Something shifts in the dark. A hush.

A WHISTLE -- low, distant. A signal.

WHOOSH! An ARROW slams into the dirt near Whitney!

BANG! Red FIRES back --

A distant SCREAM.

FOUR WARRIORS jump over the rocks! One TOMAHAWKS Wick, who drops dead instantly.

BANG! Travis fires, and the Warrior falls.

Lafe and Red both fight the Warriors.

SMACK! Lafe punches one!

The Warrior recovers and pulls a KNIFE.

He lunges as Lafe jumps to the side!

The Warrior and Lafe engage in a close fight until the Warrior is pinned, and Lafe kills him with his own knife.

BANG! Red fires and misses as a tomahawk SLAMS into his back, and he crumples to the ground.

The Young Warrior jumps into the compound, tomahawk ready to strike!

He freezes in place as he comes face-to-face with Travis.

It's the Young Warrior he met.

BANG!

The Young Warrior staggers.

Eyes wide. Uncomprehending.

His lips part -- like he wants to speak --

But only blood spills out.

He drops.

Travis stands frozen. Staring.

Whitney, still holding the smoking pistol, steps forward.

WHITNEY

He almost got you.

Travis looks at the face of the Young Warrior. Dead, unseeing eyes stare back at him.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

Travis?

Travis doesn't move.

BANG! BANG! BANG! Thunderous gunfire erupts! Travis fires back. Whitney fires another shot.

EXT. APPROACH TO THE ESCARPMENT HILL - NIGHT

Quinn and his men keep up their fire at the escarpment.

Two WARRIORS rush them with rifles blazing!

Quinn's men fire and kill both.

THE TETHERED HORSES

stand at a makeshift tether line. As the gunfire continues, Rance appears from the dark.

He reaches into the saddlebags of a horse and pulls out two boxes of ammo.

He puts them into the saddlebags of another horse.

Rance repeats this with a third horse. As he is putting the ammo into the saddlebag, Quinn's man Fulton appears.

He sees Rance and smiles.

FULTON

Well, what have we here?

As Fulton raises his pistol, Rance pulls a knife from a holster next to the saddle and hurls it at the outlaw. THUD -- it burrows into his chest. Fulton drops dead.

Rance unbuckles the saddlebag, and retreats into the dark as the gunfire continues.

EXT. SIDE OF ESCARPMENT HILL - NIGHT

Rance stumbles over the uneven ground as he climbs the steep hill. Two WARRIORS rush forward! Rance pulls his pistol and shoots one.

The other closes in fast. Rance swings the saddlebag and it SLAMS into the Warrior's head. He stumbles as Rance fires -- BANG!

The Warrior falls in a heap.

EXT. APPROACH TO THE ESCARPMENT HILL - NIGHT

Quinn stops shooting and peers into the dark.

QUINN

What the hell!?! Axel! Check on the horses!

Axel races for the tether line.

MILLER

What is it?

QUINN

Someone's headed up that hill, and it ain't an Injun. Everyone, load up!

The men load their pistols. Axel returns.

AXEL

They stole a saddlebag, and the other bags are missing ammo boxes!

QUINN

All right! We're goin' up there!

EXT. ROCK ESCARPMENT - NIGHT

Sporadic gunfire as Lafe, Whitney, and Travis man their positions at the rocks.

LAFE

Down to three bullets.

TRAVIS

Two here.

WHITNEY

I hear something!

They listen. A distant SCUFF on the dirt.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

There it is again!

RANCE (O.S.)

Don't shoot, Doc! It's only me.

TRAVIS

Rance!

Rance appears, climbs over the rock and into the camp. Lafe takes the saddlebag, opens it. He takes a box of ammo, hands it to Travis, who hesitates and takes it.

RANCE

Load up and keep the spares handy. I think there's more Sioux out there than we thought.

Whitney glances over the edge of the escarpment.

WHITNEY

We've got company!

Rance and Lafe turn to see Quinn and his men rush the hill and fire!

BANG! BANG!

Lafe reloads as he glances at the bodies of Wick and Red.

LAFE

You would go an' get yourself
killed when I need ya!

Lafe finishes loading and aims to fire as Hal jumps into the compound! He and Lafe fight hand to hand.

Punches are thrown, bodies slammed into rocks, Whitney hits Miller over the head with a rock.

Gil fires at Rance and misses; Rance fires back -- BANG -- and Gil falls dead.

In the dust of the rock fort, Rance turns to see Quinn, who has him dead to rights with his pistol.

Rance fires!

CLICK! CLICK!

Rance's face lights up for the anticipated shot!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Quinn falls dead.

Rance turns to see the smoking pistol in Lafe's hand.

With his eyes glued on Rance, he holsters the gun.

No one speaks as they see the dead all around.

Lafe watches as Rance bends down, picks up the shackles.

A long beat.

Lafe exhales. Braces himself.

Rance steps forward. Holds up the irons.

TRAVIS

Marshal. He saved your life.

Rance stops in front of Lafe.

RANCE
Lafe, I'm beholding to you, and
I'm thanking you.

WHITNEY
Marshal... under the
circumstances...

Rance turns to Whitney.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
Why don't you let him go? The man
saved your life.

RANCE
I know. But I'm a United States
Marshal. I can't let him go. Lafe,
I'll do all I can for you in front
of the Judge.

LAFE
I could have killed you first,
then Quinn. I didn't. I could have
killed you after Quinn. I didn't.

Rance holds the hand irons up.

RANCE
I swore to uphold the law.

WHITNEY
You couldn't uphold it very good
if you were dead -- and you almost
were!

Lafe puts his hands into the irons.

Rance closes them... but doesn't latch them.

Lafe lifts his eyes.

Rance stares back, emotionless. He turns to the others.

RANCE
Let's get these bodies out of here
and get some sleep. We'll head out
at first light.

EXT. ROCK ESCARPMENT - DAY

Rance rides towards the camp as Travis and Whitney finish saddling their horses.

RANCE

No sign of the Sioux. Let's git before they come back with their friends.

WHITNEY

Lafe is gone.

RANCE

Gone?

TRAVIS

It was my watch. I fell asleep. I'm sorry.

WHITNEY

Was he here when you left camp?

RANCE

It was dark. I didn't notice.

Travis holds the shackles.

TRAVIS

How could he get out of these?

Whitney studies Rance's face for a beat.

RANCE

I don't know.

WHITNEY

(amused, to Rance)
He is quite the magician.

Rance locks eyes with Whitney for a moment.

RANCE

Mount up.

Travis and Whitney mount their horses and depart.

TRAVIS

Marshal.
(beat)
When we get back to Fort Laramie... I'm turnin' in my badge.

Rance turns to Travis.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

I need to.

RANCE

You sure about this?

TRAVIS

I think... I think I had a sign...
to be with Emily.

RANCE

What kind of a sign?

TRAVIS

She thought I would die... and I
almost did... but someone let me
live... because of her.

Rance turns to him.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

I can't explain it.

RANCE

I think you're making a good
decision, Travis.

WHITNEY

What I can't understand is, how
did Lafe get free?

RANCE

I'll find out when I catch him.
But first... Doctor, where is that
fishin' hole you were talking
about?

WHITNEY

East.

RANCE

How far?

WHITNEY

About a week's ride.

RANCE

I'd like to get some fishin' in
before I take up Coleman's trail.

Whitney is perplexed.

RANCE (CONT'D)
You said you found a place...

WHITNEY
I did... indeed I did.

RANCE
Lead the way.

WHITNEY
Onward, Minnie!

Whitney taking the lead as they turn their horses and ride toward the horizon.

TRAVIS
What about Lafe?

Rance doesn't respond.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
You're letting him go.

RANCE
Let's just say I'm giving him a couple of weeks head start.

TRAVIS
You'll never catch up with him before he reaches the border.

RANCE
Wouldn't that be the luck?

They ride into the morning sun.

FADE OUT.