

ACT 1

Based on actual events

EXT. 1858 MASON COUNTY - NIGHT

A gang of 5 rustlers with a young woman cuts a fence and moves stolen cattle across the fence line. Emma Wechsler, pretty blonde girl, rides beside KB, the leader of the outlaws.

CLARENCE KARNES

Watch that girl don't get tangled up in them cattle KB!

KB HUTTON

Mind your business Karnes. This girl ain't your concern.

CLARENCE KARNES

Her daddy is all of our concern KB. Stealin' her daddy's cattle is one thing. Stealin' her is a whole 'nother thing.

KB gives Karnes a hard look but makes no response.

KB HUTTON

Pretty as you please Karnes. We're clear of the Wechsler place. Let's get these beeves to the buyer and Emma and me are off to San Antonio to find a padre.

Karnes looks around them into the darkness, obviously still concerned about getting caught.

EXT. WILDERNESS 2 - CONTINUOUS

The rustlers move the cattle beyond the fence. As they enter a grove of live oak trees they are surrounded by a group of hooded armed men on horseback.

The hooded man at the front points his gun at KB but talks to his daughter Emma.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Emma, what do you think you are doing with this rustler?

YOUNG EMMA WECHSLER
 Father, Kyle and I are to be
 married.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
 With my cattle as a dowry? The rest
 of you outlaws dismount.

The rustlers step off their mounts.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)
 Not you.
 (He indicates KB with his
 rifle.)
 Verner, toss a rope over the limb
 of that Live Oak.

YOUNG VERNER KOENIG
 Yes sir.
 (Verner rides over to the
 big tree and tosses a
 rope over a low large
 branch.)
 This one will hold.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
 Bind his hands behind his back
 Ernst.

Young Ernst Wechsler dismounts and ties KB's hands.

The rustlers protest in a general din of complaints.

Karnes speaks to Wolfgang.

CLARENCE KARNES
 It ain't right to lynch a man
 without no arrest or trial.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
 Shut your mouth outlaw or you'll
 get what he's got coming.

Wolfgang nods at Ernst who leads KB's horse to the tree.

YOUNG EMMA WECHSLER
 Father, you can't hang him. I love
 him.

Wolfgang moves his horse towards his daughter. He backhands
 her and she falls off of her horse.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Silence whore! You laid with a cur outlaw. You run away with him in the dead of night as you steal my cattle. I swear to God I will bury you next to him if you make another sound.

(Wolfgang turns his horse back towards the hanging tree.)

Finish this!

Ernst slaps the horse on the rump and KB swings, kicking as he strangles.

DISSOLVE TO:17
YEARS LATER

EXT. MASON, TEXAS - AFTERNOON

Boyd Wechsler, a 17 yr old who seems older, rides a roan gelding into town. He rides slowly, taking in the town. He finally arrives before a school house. A large group of students watch as three boys, Pogue and Gayle Spears and a 3rd boy, circle a small tow-headed boy. Boyd pulls up and watches from his horse for a moment.

The tow headed boy is Boyd's cousin, Hans. He stands in white knuckled readiness, turning slowly to keep the leader of the attackers, Pogue Spears, in front of him.

POGUE

I heard you been jawing about us.

Hans makes no comment.

POGUE (CONT'D)

You square heads think you own this town. I got news for you. You don't.

GAYLE

He ain't denying it Pogue

POGUE

Ain't no denying it.

Hans makes no comment, but he appears nervous.

Pogue looks away before punching Hans hard in the face. Hans goes down. The other two boys close in and begin kicking Hans.

Boyd dismounts and moves through the crowd until he arrives at the fight. He grabs the third boy by the hair and flings him onto his back. Pogue sees this and takes a swing at Boyd. Boyd blacks his eye then punches him behind the ear. Pogue goes down. Gayle punches at Boyd who lowers his head taking the blow on the crown of his head. Gayle cries out and clutches his busted knuckles. Boyd bloodies Gayles' nose and he falls to the ground.

Boyd grabs Hans by the arm and drags him back to his horse. Hans resists.

HANS

Let off me Boyd. I can't run from this.

Boyd makes no response but continues leading him to the horse. Boyd mounts, beckoning Hans get on the horse.

A loud yell from the crowd draws Boyd's attention.

POGUE

You ain't been dismissed Wechsler!

Pogue moves towards Boyd who steps off his horse and finishes Pogue with a flurry of blows to the face and body. He beats him more than is necessary to defeat the boy.

Gayle runs towards Boyd from the crowd with a furious cry. Boyd fells him with a knee to the body and an elbow to the back.

Boyd remounts, extending a shaking hand to Hans. Hans sees the emotion in Boyd's face and climbs up behind Boyd's saddle.

INT. WECHSLER RANCH - LATER

Emma Wechsler, Boyd's mother, an attractive blonde blue eyed German woman, peels onions with her elderly mother at the kitchen table in the kitchen of their ranch house. She hears the sound of an approaching horse. She rinses her knife and places it and the onion in her hand on the table. She goes to the back door and opens it.

EXT. WECHSLER RANCH

Boyd arrives at the back door to the kitchen with Hans. They dismount and Emma sees Hans' injuries. She rushes to him.

EMMA WECHSLER

Did you hurt your cousin, son?

BOYD

Townies.

(Boyd is not happy with
the veiled accusation.)
Spears boys. I expect Russ Spears
directly.

EMMA WECHSLER

What did you do?

BOYD

They were gonna hurt little Hans...

HANS

I ain't little Boyd. Don't say
otherwise.

Boyd's mood lightens at Hans' protest.

BOYD

The Spears boys are a little worse
for wear right now.

EMMA WECHSLER

We don't need no more trouble from
the Städtbewohnen.

Boyd shakes his head and leads the horse to the stables.

EMMA WECHSLER (CONT'D)

Aren't you going back to help with
the branding?

BOYD

It's getting late. By the time I
get to the Creek Pasture they will
be headed back.

EMMA WECHSLER

Your grandfather won't like your
absence.

BOYD

No doubt about that Ma.

EMMA WECHSLER

That sassy mouth won't help you
when your Grandfather returns.

I/E. WECHSLER RANCH - EVENING

Wolfgang, Boyd's grandfather, an older German immigrant rancher, rides up to the kitchen door with his branding party. Hans steps outside, looking worse for wear. Wolfgang surveys him silently.

Boyd appears from around the rear of the stables, two buckets of water in his hands.

Wolfgang approaches Boyd on horseback until he towers over him. Hans follows behind Wolf's horse.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Why didn't you return to the branding directly from town?

BOYD

Three boys from school were beating on Hans. I broke it up. I was afraid the Spears boys' pa would show up here. I didn't want to leave Hans alone.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Why do you have to cause trouble for me? I asked you to do one thing, and you had to do it the hard way. We don't need any more trouble with the Städtbewohnen. We'll talk about this later. I'm tired and hungry.

Wolfgang dismounts, handing his reins to Boyd. Boyd sets down one of the buckets awkwardly, spilling water as he does.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

I don't want you in the house tonight. You act like an animal; you will sleep with them. Komst du Hans.

Wolfgang walks away. Boyd leaves one bucket and leads Wolf's horse to the stables looking defeated.

Hans looks back towards Boyd, upset that he has once more gotten his cousin in trouble.

EXT. WILLIAMSON RANCH - AFTERNOON

Tim Williamson, a man in his early forties, and Scott Cooley, a former Texas Ranger turned rancher in his mid twenties, sit on the front porch sipping whiskey.

SCOTT COOLEY
 What is this stuff? Kerosene?

TIM WILLIAMSON
 Kerosene's kissing cousin. I'm
 pleased you never took up drinking.
 The good Lord knows you had every
 right.

SCOTT COOLEY
 You've come a long way Tim. You've
 got a nice place here. Cattle,
 horses, a new house.

TIM WILLIAMSON
 Billy, our path is the same. I am
 only a few miles further along the
 road you yourself are on. I've
 always believed in you. I even
 agree with your reasons for leaving
 the Texas Rangers Frontier
 Battalion. You needed room to grow
 into those shoulders of yours.

Scott is obviously embarrassed by the praise.

TIM WILLIAMSON (CONT'D)
 I see great things in you - Mary
 does too. She said so just now when
 I fetched the bottle from inside
 the house. You have always been
 like a son to me - and her.

SCOTT COOLEY
 You know the feeling's returned,
 Tim you believed in me when no one
 else would. You took me on my first
 trail drive, taking Army beeves
 into Kansas. You made a full-
 fledged cowman out of me. You have
 always been fair and even handed,
 no matter that I was green. For
 that you will always have my
 loyalty and support.

TIM WILLIAMSON
 Well, you ain't green anymore
 Billy, but your words mean
 everything to me.

Tim pours them both another drink.

TIM WILLIAMSON (CONT'D)
I am happy you moved back, even if
you are a full day's ride away.

Tim downs his drink as Scott sips again.

TIM WILLIAMSON (CONT'D)
You'll do fine in Menard County. At
least you're closer than Kansas, or
Oklahoma, or even Jack County.

SCOTT COOLEY
Like you said, maybe I can make a
go of the cattle business like you
have.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Maybe make a go? William Scott Cooley. That is a name we will
all come to know in time

SCOTT COOLEY
Let up on me now Tim. I can't take
much more without bustin' out in
tears like a schoolgirl.

They laugh at the idea of big Scott Cooley crying over
anything.

TIM WILLIAMSON
Alright, alright, son. I can't help
myself. I often think about our
adventures together and here you
show up like a specter from a
dream.

(Tim pauses. His manner
grows more sober.)

I gotta know Billy. Your uncle told
me once, when I met you, you and
him, and his brother were trailing
a couple dozen Indians for horse
stealin'. I can never keep it
straight. How many of them Injuns
did you scalp? Beau said all of
'em.

SCOTT COOLEY
I don't do that no more Tim. I'm
ready to let the past stay in the
past.

TIM WILLIAMSON
The work you did with the Rangers
ain't gonna stay in the past Scott.

(MORE)

TIM WILLIAMSON (CONT'D)

Last time I saw Captain Dan Roberts in town, he asked after you. He retold that story about how them Indians ambushed your unit at Lost Valley. Despite your watering down the details, he claims your actions saved a lot of men that day. He said you rushed into that Indian camp like a banshee - that's his word - and single handed spoiled them redskins' will to continue their war party on them settlers from Nebraska.

Cooley frowns dangerously. The subject is a sore one for him.

TIM WILLIAMSON (CONT'D)

Maybe the past is the past Billy.

Mary, Tim's wife, dressed conservatively in her late thirties, joins them on the porch.

MARY WILLIAMSON

Supper is ready. Come and get it before I throw it out.

INT. WILLIAMSON RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

Sitting at the small table in the Williamson kitchen. Tim, Mary and Scott eat steak and potatoes.

SCOTT COOLEY

I hear the Germans are getting tired of the Anglos rustling their cattle. I've seen some questionable brands as near as Menardville. Them cattle thieves are getting mighty bold if they are selling stock closer than Kansas City. You reckon the Dutch will form an association like the ranchers in Menard County?

TIM WILLIAMSON

They tried to put one together again last year. It didn't go well with the former county sheriff. There are more rustlers than there are cattle to steal. No one sees much in it - except them German invaders.

MARY WILLIAMSON

The Germans live on legal land grants from the government. According to the law they have the same right to their property as you do. Anyway, that's no kind of talk to have at the dinner table, Tim.

(She turns to Scott Cooley.)

Scott, have you met a nice girl since you moved to Menardville? I can make some introductions if you like.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Let the boy be Mary. The best girl from these parts is already spoken for.

SCOTT COOLEY

Some things never change no matter how long I'm gone. You both still talk like you just met. If I had designs on a girl, she would struggle to meet what I see with you two.

TIM WILLIAMSON

You're right Billy. There is only one, and I'm glad she made the promise before she knew about all my bad habits.

Tim pushes his chair back.

SCOTT COOLEY

I have enjoyed your kindness and hospitality, but I must return to my ranch.

TIM WILLIAMSON

It's a late start. You're welcome to stay the night Billy.

SCOTT COOLEY

Thank you for the offer. I was passing through when I decided to stop. With a new ranch and pressing business needs attending to, I must get back.

All three rise. Mary takes one of Scott's hands in hers.

MARY WILLIAMSON

Promise me you won't wait so long
until your next visit Billy.

SCOTT COOLEY

I promise. Thank you for your
kindness and hospitality. Both of
you.

INT. WECHSLER STABLES - NIGHT

Boyd sits beside a lantern in the hay mow above the stables
cleaning a pistol. He hears the stable doors open. Hans
appears, climbing the ladder to the hay mow. Hans sits beside
Boyd, watching him clean the pistol.

HANS

Is that Martinez's old gun?

BOYD

Grandfather will tan you for coming
out here after dark.

HANS

Only if you tell him.

BOYD

I should after all the trouble you
cause me.

HANS

You're right to say so.

Boyd loads the pistol and returns it to its holster.

HANS (CONT'D)

Do you still practice with it?

BOYD

Not enough to talk about.

HANS

Do you miss him - Martinez?

BOYD

Sometimes.

HANS

He liked you.

BOYD

Is that right?

HANS
He said so.

Boyd leans back in the hay.

BOYD
I liked him too.

HANS
I wish he taught me fightin, and
shootin, and trackin.

BOYD
I'll pass it on to you when you're
big enough.

HANS
I am already big.

BOYD
Compared to what?

HANS
I'm nearly as big as Chlodwig.

BOYD
Your cousin is nearly twice your
size.

Hans looks down in disappointment.

BOYD (CONT'D)
But he doesn't have your sand. I'd
lay to that.

Hans smiles beneath his unkempt tow locks.

HANS
You'll see someday when I pull you
out of a tight spot. I'll save you
someday.

BOYD
Maybe Hans. Like I said, you got
sand, I'll give you that.

FEMALE VOICE FROM OUTSIDE
Hans. Get to bed - now.

Hans grabbed Boyd's hand.

HANS
I ain't small Boyd. You'll see.

BOYD

Go to bed before we both get in trouble.

Hans scampers away down the ladder.

EXT. WECHSLER RANCH - AFTERNOON

Sheriff Clark, a hard-looking man in his thirties, ties his horse to the rail at the front porch of the long house. He casts a look around the ranch buildings, noticing there is little activity near the paddocks or the cattle pens.

Emma Wechsler appears in the doorway as the Sheriff approaches. Clark observes her with desire. He has wanted her for as long as he has been in town. Emma has repelled his advances before.

SHERIFF CLARK

How are you Ms. Wechsler? I guess the men are working the young stock today.

EMMA WECHSLER

They are indeed Sheriff. What can I do for you?

SHERIFF CLARK

You are looking mighty comely this morning, Emma. You could invite me in, and we can talk inside the house.

EMMA WECHSLER

Did you come here to insult my honor Sheriff? I don't invite strangers into my home unattended.

SHERIFF CLARK

I'm hardly a stranger Emma. Besides, I don't see how you could take what I said other than complimentary.

EMMA WECHSLER

There are rumors about your conduct around untended women.

SHERIFF CLARK

Don't tell me you are like them gossipy biddies who believe that was against her wishes.

EMMA WECHSLER

This is not proper conversation,
Sheriff. State your business or
leave now.

SHERIFF CLARK

Is your boy about?

EMMA WECHSLER

He's with the hands. Only us women
and children are left here. Is
there anything else you are
needing?

SHERIFF CLARK

I wouldn't say no to water, thank
you.

EMMA WECHSLER

Take a seat on the porch and I'll
bring you some.

Warily, Emma disappears to fetch the water. Clark leans
against the porch post, looking around as he waits. She
reappears with a stone ware cup of water.

SHERIFF CLARK

Now did that hurt one bit Emma?

Emma returns to the safety of the doorway.

EMMA WECHSLER

Is this about Hans and the Spears
boys?

SHERIFF CLARK

This is about your boy. He jumped
them two Spears boys. Russel Spears
is up in arms about it. He asked me
to do something.

EMMA WECHSLER

What do you plan to do?

SHERIFF CLARK

I ain't decided yet Emma. Maybe we
can work it out now and avoid any
unpleasantness.

EMMA WECHSLER

Work it out now?

SHERIFF CLARK

I don't want to cause you any trouble Emma. You know how I feel about you. I only want what's best for your son.

EMMA WECHSLER

It sounds like you are looking out for your own interests Sheriff.

SHERIFF CLARK

That may be a small part of it, Emma, but I still have a job to do. I can't show any more favoritism than I already have.

EMMA WECHSLER

What favoritism do you think you have shown to me or my son Sheriff?

SHERIFF CLARK

Oh, come on Emma. Your boy has earned a reputation as a bad seed, or at least everyone thinks he is headed that way.

EMMA WECHSLER

That is just talk, John...

SHERIFF CLARK

Thank you for calling me by my given name Emma. Talk is how laws are made. Talk is how guilty verdicts are found. And talk is the reason you stay away from town. Talk is all we got in this part of the world. I'm just saying I can't protect you and yours if you don't allow me to.

EMMA WECHSLER

I am not going to be able to help you as you think I should. I don't feel that way about you. I never will John. I don't mean to put a hard edge on it, but I have to be true to my feelings.

SHERIFF CLARK

If not me, then who Emma? You're gonna go to seed out here alone with no man to look after. You don't want to end up with one of Wolfgang's saddle tramps, do you?

(MORE)

SHERIFF CLARK (CONT'D)
 (Clark steps closer

causing Emma discomfort.)
 Your reputation will never die. But I don't care about any of that. The past is the past. I'm an important man. I've got position and title. No one would dare say a foul word as long as you were my wife.

EMMA WECHSLER
 I'll tell my father you came by Sheriff. Is there any other thing you want me to tell him?

SHERIFF CLARK
 I'm trying to be a good man to you despite your foolish mistakes. You won't find anyone else of station who will treat you like a regular woman considering your tainted reputation.

EMMA WECHSLER
 Leave now!

SHERIFF CLARK
 I gotta see Wechsler and talk to your boy before I go back. Are they in the south pasture?

Emma is near tears.

EMMA WECHSLER
 The creek pasture, west of here.

She turns to go inside.

SHERIFF CLARK
 Emma, you are a fine woman. I think about you often. At least give us some thought when you're not so unsettled about your son.

EXT. CREEK PASTURE BRANDING AREA - LATER

Wolfgang Wechsler is in the saddle, pointing and yelling at his men. Clark watches as grunting, sweating riders pull calves to the branding fire where the livestock bawl in pain as other men put the iron to them, burning away hair, and cooking the brand into their flesh.

Clark pulls up beside the rancher who seems displeased with the scene.

Wolf glances at him briefly but remains focused on the activities around him.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
 (yelling at his men.)
 Get those few into the squeeze chute, We're running out of daylight.

SHERIFF CLARK
 Herr Wechsler. We need to have a talk about your grandson, Boyd.

Wechsler makes no response.

SHERIFF CLARK (CONT'D)
 Herr Wechsler, he's not a child anymore. I can't sit by as he goes to town and fights with schoolboys. A large group of townsfolk were at my door when I got there this morning. They are in a lather for me to do something about the fight.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
 What do you plan to do Sheriff?

SHERIFF CLARK
 Not much. How does a night in the jail sound? Spears and his friends will see that I did something, and the boy learns a lesson he'll take into manhood.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
 Take him then.
 (Wolfgang guides his horse roughly to the branding fire where Boyd heats branding irons.)
 Boyd, collect your horse. The Sheriff needs you to go with him to town.

Boyd looks at both men incredulously.

SHERIFF CLARK
 Step to son. I don't want to be out after nightfall.

BOYD
 Sir, you're going to see me arrested because I stood up for your grandson?

(MORE)

BOYD (CONT'D)

Do you know what they would have done to little Hans if I didn't step in?

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Don't sass me boy. Get to it.

Boyd drops the iron in the fire and goes to his horse. Clark follows him. Boyd mounts and they ride away.

EXT. CREEK PASTURE - CONTINUOUS

Boyd and Clark ride along towards Mason.

SHERIFF CLARK

You shouldn't have beaten the Spears boys.

Boyd says nothing.

SHERIFF CLARK (CONT'D)

Russel Spears wants your hide nailed to the courthouse wall. There's no telling what he is trying to get the town folk to do about this.

BOYD

I defended my cousin against three boys who thought they would bully a German kid hardly big as a girl. What was I supposed to do Sheriff?

They ride on silently.

INT. JAIL - EVENING

Clark leads Boyd into his office, a large office within the Mason County Courthouse, locking him in the first of the two barred cells. Boyd moves to the back wall and leans against it, scowling at the sheriff.

SHERIFF CLARK

I'll stable your horse for you. All you got to do is cool your heels for a day or two and you'll be back home.

Boyd lays down on the cot as the Sheriff leaves.

EXT. WALLS PRISON UNIT HUNTSVILLE, TEXAS - AFTERNOON

It is midday in Huntsville, Texas and the Sun's heat is a welcome discomfort for the near dozen men standing in the dusty street before the Walls Prison Unit. Each of them peers through squinting eyes, hands shading their tortured faces as they grow accustomed to the Sun's brightness and the idea they are truly free.

Jarvis Hutton, a lean man with greying hair in his fifties, and his friend Charlie Johnson, a rawboned man only a few years younger, cast a final look as the tall steel doors lock with a clang. Jarvis' time served at the Walls is finished. Twenty years left behind, nearly half of his life.

He and Charlie Johnson cross the street to a mercantile.

I/E. HUNTSVILLE GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

Jarvis and Charlie Johnson pause before the store.

CHARLIE JOHNSON

Jarvis, we just got our freedom.
Don't you want to try it out for a
few days before you start your
vendetta?

JARVIS HUTTON

That old man murdered my brother.

CHARLIE JOHNSON

Twenty years ago.

JARVIS HUTTON

Nobody's making you do anything you
don't want to do Charlie.

CHARLIE JOHNSON

KB was a good kid. Rustlin' is a
dangerous business. I'm just saying
that nothing will bring him back.

JARVIS HUTTON

Charlie, I like you. Don't make me
change my mind.

Charlie Johnson looks at the ground, obviously reluctant to press his companion. They enter the store.

INT. HUNTSVILLE GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

Jarvis and Charlie enter and go to the counter where pistols are displayed on the wall. The proprietor meets them on the opposite side of the counter. He seems dubious about his new customers.

JARVIS HUTTON

I need a gun and the makin's. What will this get me?

(Jarvis drops regional bank notes on the counter.)

PROPRIETOR

Not much. We don't sell weapons to inmates.

Jarvis leans towards the proprietor menacingly.

JARVIS HUTTON

I ain't an inmate, store keep. I'm a free man. I'm fresh enough from the Walls that I kinda miss it. You might be my ticket back inside if you don't unlimber a gun and the makin's directly.

CHARLIE JOHNSON

I'd think hard before I speak.

PROPRIETOR

Yes sir. I got the perfect pistol for your needs.

The proprietor, a well fed man in shirt sleeves and glasses, steps away, returning with a black colt and a box of ammo. He pulls tobacco and papers from below the counter. Jarvis produces a few regional bank notes and places them before the proprietor.

PROPRIETOR (CONT'D)

Will you be needing anything else?

JARVIS HUTTON

How do I get to Mason County from here?

PROPRIETOR

Head west. When they talk German you know you're there.

EXT. MASON, TEXAS - THE NEXT DAY

Emma rides a horse into town. She ties it at the rail before the courthouse then steps inside.

INT. JAIL - CONTINUOUS

Emma enters the Sheriff's office where Boyd leans against the back wall and Clark sits at his desk.

SHERIFF CLARK

How do Ms. Wechsler. Aren't you all cornflower and goldenrod today. Your boy's safe and sound as promised. Did you give any thought to our conversation yesterday?

EMMA WECHSLER

May I have a moment alone with my son?

SHERIFF CLARK

I can't allow you to be alone with a prisoner Emma...

EMMA WECHSLER

He is my son. You said yourself you have him here for show. He is not a danger to you, me, or anyone else. Give me time with my son Sheriff.

SHERIFF CLARK

Keep yourself in hand Ms. Wechsler. I'll grant your request this one time.

Clark gathers his hat and departs. Emma moves to Boyd's cell.

EMMA WECHSLER

Boyd, I'm sorry. Your grandfather is a stern man. He thinks you will learn a lesson from this.

BOYD

What do you think Ma?

EMMA WECHSLER

I see some merit to his sentiments, but I don't agree with his methods.
(Emma seems to be saying the safe thing.)
Besides. This is all a performance for the Städtbewohnen.

BOYD

This ain't gonna amount to anything with these Townies. They'll see this as less than a small atonement for us settling their country. The full price will be more than Grandfather - or you - are able to pay.

Emma tears up as she thinks of the price she has paid for her mistakes so far.

EMMA WECHSLER

I've already paid more than you will ever know. Please quell your anger Boyd. Do this thing and return to the ranch. Just come home. I know what they have done to you. I see how it hurts you. You are not a child anymore. Everyone sees you as a man.

BOYD

Not Grandfather.

EMMA WECHSLER

He sees you as a man too. Make no mistake. He treats you as he does because of what he sees you may become. Promise me son you will keep your temper in hand. Promise me to come straight home after.

Boyd turns from her, returning to his place at the back of the cell.

EMMA WECHSLER (CONT'D)

Do you need anything?

Boyd remains silent, ignoring her.

EMMA WECHSLER (CONT'D)

I will see you in a day or two.

The door to the office bangs open and Sheriff Clark and Russel Spears enter mid-argument. Spears, 40's, is a large, red faced man with a hot temper. He is the father of the Spears boys.

SHERIFF CLARK

This is a law matter Spears...

RUSSEL SPEARS

Shut up Sheriff!

(Spears approaches the
cell violently,
addressing Boyd.)

You're not getting out of this so
easy. We have you here and you
ain't going anywhere until we are
finished with you.

Emma retreats slightly.

EMMA WECHSLER

Mr. Spears, my son...

Spears grabs Emma by the dress collar.

RUSSEL SPEARS

Shut your mouth you whore. We know
all about you...

Boyd leaps to the cell door, reaching for Spears. With his
right hand, Boyd grabs the back of his neck and slams his
head into the bars. With his left he pummels Spears' face
with four quick hard blows.

Emma is slammed against the bars in the fray, bumping her
head soundly. She pushes away from the struggling men,
straining against the bars. She falls to the floor, a red
mark on her forehead.

Clark rushes to the cell, drawing his pistol. He trains the
weapon on Boyd.

SHERIFF CLARK

Let go. Let go or I'll shoot!

Boyd doesn't hesitate. He shoves Spears from him. The man
falls inertly to the floorboards, blood dripping from his
nose and mouth.

SHERIFF CLARK (CONT'D)

Do you know what you have done?
This can't be undone Wechsler. You
were on thin ice before...

Boyd backs to the wall once again.

BOYD

Nobody talks to my Ma that way, not
in front of my face. Get him out of
here before I kill him.

Emma rises from the floor. She shakes her head and covers her mouth with a pale hand. She dares not trust herself. Instead, she flees from the room, leaving the front door ajar.

Sheriff Clark helps Spears to his feet.

Spears' red face is bruised and bloodied.

RUSSEL SPEARS

I'll kill you for this. Mark my words, these are your last days above ground.

Clark attempts to guide Spears to the door. Spears shakes of his hand.

RUSSEL SPEARS (CONT'D)

Let go of me. I ain't forgetting your part in this.

SHERIFF CLARK

What are you talking about Russel?

Spears collects his hat and storms out.

SHERIFF CLARK (CONT'D)

You got your wish. There is no place left for you here in this town. I wouldn't risk a wager on your chances even on the ranch.

Obeying an impulse, Clark moves to his desk. He produces the jail keys. He returns to the cell and opens the door.

SHERIFF CLARK (CONT'D)

Your horse is in the livery. Go home. Tell your grandfather what has happened here today. My advice is you get away from this place. You are old enough to go it alone from here. Maybe things will cool down for you in time. As I said, I wouldn't give a plug nickel for your chances if you stay.

Clark unlocks the cell door, letting it swing wide. He steps aside, clearing the way for his prisoner.

Boyd leaves the Sheriff's Office without a word.

EXT. MEUSBACH'S STORE - AFTERNOON

Jarvis and 5 men including Charlie Johnson, tie their horses before the saloon entrance, making their way inside the cool narrow room. Jarvis and his men fill the simply furnished bar from end to end. Behind the bar is the proprietor, Meusebach.

Meusebach, a beefy German man with walrus moustaches and a jolly yet knowing demeanor, places short glasses before each man in Jarvis' gang. He pours whiskey in each. As Jarvis and his men down the shots Jarvis drops coins on the bar.

MEUSEBACH

You anteed enough for a second.

He refills the glasses.

Jarvis nods and they finish those off as well.

Tim Williamson, Skeeter Collins, 20's ranch hand, and Allan Bolt, 15 year old with a chip on his shoulder, enter.

MEUSEBACH (CONT'D)

Come in Tim Williamson. Is that Skeeter Collins with you? I can serve him but not the kid. This ain't no haven for juvenile delinquents.

Tim steps to the bar.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Mr. Meusebach is known for his hospitality and friendly ways.

JARVIS HUTTON

So it seems. A crowded hole in the middle of the day will start the talk.

MEUSEBACH

No talk will come from this hole unless you stop the flow.

Meusebach pours for Williamson and Skeeter. Williamson sips his drink. Bolt waits near the door. Tim addresses Jarvis.

TIM WILLIAMSON

I'm not one to inquire of a man's plans. Are you men passing through or would you be looking for some work?

JARVIS HUTTON

We consider ourselves men of the road with an eye towards an opportune moment.

Tim nods and indicates a table away from the bar.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Perhaps we should repair to a more sober locale in which to discuss our doings.

JARVIS HUTTON

Another round for the boys.

Meusebach pours as Williamson and Jarvis move away.

INT. MEUSBACH'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

Williamson and Jarvis sit at the table.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Like the man said, my name is Williamson. I heard only that I was meeting a crew with loose stock. Can I know yours?

JARVIS HUTTON

Jarvis Hutton, and you heard right.

TIM WILLIAMSON

How many head you got?

JARVIS HUTTON

Not many. Less than twenty in all.

TIM WILLIAMSON

That's not much. I could make the risk more worth your while in the future if you're game.

JARVIS HUTTON

Tell me something new.

TIM WILLIAMSON

I'll buy your stock today. How much do you know about the Prussian homesteaders about?

JARVIS HUTTON

I know enough. What do you know about them?

TIM WILLIAMSON

They got way too much livestock for my liking.

JARVIS HUTTON

So I noticed.

TIM WILLIAMSON

As for something new, with a goodly sized crew, we could help with their livestock worries to the tune of a hundred head of loose stock.

JARVIS HUTTON

When would you need a crew for the work?

TIM WILLIAMSON

It don't get easier with time.

JARVIS HUTTON

I have one piece of business I need to undertake before we do the other.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Maybe we can work together on both. Do I know the other?

JARVIS HUTTON

What do you know about a German named Wechsler?

TIM WILLIAMSON

It just happens your business is our business after all. It's of his stock we're talking. A hundred head should take care of both.

JARVIS HUTTON

He is going to pay a steeper price for what I want from him.

TIM WILLIAMSON

I'm the first to say a man's business is his own, but with so much on the hook, may I inquire if there is a place we can work together and get what we both want?

JARVIS HUTTON

I reckon you have been around long enough to know about the history here.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Been here since before the Fort at Mason was abandoned and they used the remains to build the town.

JARVIS HUTTON

You ever hear of, or worked with a young fellow named Hutton?

TIM WILLIAMSON

KB. I knew him only by name. He worked with a crew of former Confederate vagabonds. He was good with an iron I hear. How did you know him?

JARVIS HUTTON

My last name is Hutton, same as his.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Brother?

JARVIS HUTTON

Was. Wechsler is going to pay for his handling of my brother.

TIM WILLIAMSON

I heard about that. I would want the same thing if he was my brother. I know a lot about that old Prussian, and I know this. He cares a lot less about his life than he does about them cattle. If you want to hurt him, take your revenge by the pound. Take the rest after.

Jarvis doesn't seem willing to wait.

TIM WILLIAMSON (CONT'D)

I can see you are a man who takes his commitments seriously. After you turn this little trick, and if you live through it, what will your next step be? You might need to make it heeled. Your men will move the cattle. My men will help. I will provide the plan and the holding pens to brand them, then I'll arrange for the sale locally.

Jarvis remains silent.

TIM WILLIAMSON (CONT'D)
 Normally, I would offer a fifty-
 fifty split, but you have a lot of
 mouths to feed, and I sense you
 wouldn't accept that offer.

Jarvis does not answer.

TIM WILLIAMSON (CONT'D)
 Tell you what: I'll offer you sixty
 percent.

JARVIS HUTTON
 Our number is seventy-five percent,
 and we'll do the heavy lifting
 ourselves. I don't have a man that
 don't know how to handle himself in
 a scrape.

Tim Williamson seems surprised. He finally agrees.

TIM WILLIAMSON
 I believe we have reached an
 agreement Mr. Hutton. I say we go
 tonight.

INT. WECHSLER RANCH - AFTERNOON

Boyd enters the house by the back door. His mother mends a
 garment in her kitchen chair.

EMMA WECHSLER
 The Sheriff released you today?

BOYD
 I need to speak to grandfather.

EMMA WECHSLER
 He won't help you Boyd. He can't.

Boyd moves forward, touching the mark on her face where she
 hit the jail bars.

BOYD
 Are you hurt mother?

EMMA WECHSLER
 This was not your fault. It is
 nothing.

BOYD

There seems more wrong here than just a bruise. What did you do Mother?

EMMA WECHSLER

What are you asking me?

BOYD

Spears called you a vile name. You never go to town. You said you have paid more than I will ever know. What is it you are hiding from me?

EMMA WECHSLER

You overstep yourself son.

BOYD

Do I? You have nothing else to say.

EMMA WECHSLER

I am pleased the Sheriff decided to release you so soon.

BOYD

The Sheriff advised I leave Mason County, maybe Texas.

(Boyd quells his frustration.)

I will speak with Grandfather.

Boyd strides from the kitchen.

INT. WOLFGANG'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Boyd enters the office. Wolfgang pores over ledgers and ignores Boyd. Boyd waits silently and impatiently. Finally Wolfgang lays his pencil down on the legers.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

What is it boy? I am surprised to see you here so soon.

BOYD

The Sheriff released me. He advises me to leave the country immediately.

(Boyd waits for a reaction in vain.)

Russel Spears came to the jail this morning. Mother was there.

(MORE)

BOYD (CONT'D)

He laid hands upon her and called her a vile name. I was able to stop him from my cell.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

You were able to stop him.

BOYD

Yes sir.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

So, you not only attacked his sons, you assailed him also?

BOYD

Yes sir.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Is it your intention to see me hauled from this region on a rail, tarred and feathered, and dishonored?

BOYD

If that is the response of the Townies to protecting a woman from the insulting attack of a strange man, then I suppose your fate is set Grandfather. I don't see how you would have reacted differently, yourself.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Don't sass me junge.

BOYD

Would you have seen little Hans beaten and maimed? Am I so different from you that...

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Silence! You are bringing trouble down upon yourself - and this family. There is a bad seed within you that will grow into a pernicious weed: a damnable force which will ultimately destroy you and those around you.

Wolfgang looks at Boyd like the spawn of evil.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

I will do my part in the matter you have created.

(MORE)

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

I can do no more for you. My concern is for those in my family who have no part in this, yet stand to suffer because of it.

BOYD

I am nothing to you grandfather?

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

You are something to me, boy. You are a continual source of strife and a highly conductive conduit for attracting trouble and conflict. You cannot help who - or what - you are. I cannot do but what must be done as a result.

BOYD

Yes sir.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

I have grown weary of our time here. I see you have much upon which to reflect.

INT. WECHSLER RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Boyd turns and leaves the room, He passes through the kitchen. His mother is no longer at her mending.

I/E. WECHSLER STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Boyd enters the stables. He saddles his roan gelding. He digs through a pile of hay until he finds a six gun rig. He straps on the pistol and mounts the horse. He rides away from the ranch on horseback.

INT. WOLFGANG'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Emma enters the office. Wolfgang watches her.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

You heard our conversation?

EMMA WECHSLER

Of course father. He reacted to an attack on me.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

There was no business for you in town, daughter. What good did you expect would come of it?

EMMA WECHSLER

I had to...

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Spears will kill him, Emma. Ready yourself for that inevitable truth. He is a boy, nothing more. He is hardly a capable hand around my ranch. It is my opinion he lacks the courage or the strength to stand against a man like Spears.

(Wolfgang rises from his chair.)

What does he believe will sustain him? Bearding the lion ends one way, no matter the lies we tell ourselves.

EMMA WECHSLER

You will do nothing?

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

What would you have me do? Am I to fight his fights for him? Am I to show support when the reason he is in this predicament is because he disobeyed me? It is in his nature to disobey. Good riddance.

EMMA WECHSLER

He is your blood - at least in part.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

The rustler's blood flowing through his veins overshadows any small trace of Wechsler blood you may have shared with him. Press your will no longer, woman.

Emma flees from the room in tears.

END ACT 1

ACT 2

EXT. CHLODWIG'S CAMP - NIGHT

The camp is near a large herd of cattle. Chlodwig Wechsler, Wolfgang's grandson and son of Wolfgang's eldest son Ernst, is a big boned German boy in his early 20's. He chews on tough hardtack, pulling from his canteen to combat the salty thirst it causes. A carbine is near at hand. Flames lick at the Mesquite limbs in the fire nearby.

His horse nickers, ears erect, eyes searching towards the western darkness. The mare's attention is focused just beyond the light circle from the fire.

Chlodwig grabs his rifle and approaches the horse.

RUSTLER 1
Lay the rifle on the ground son.

Chlodwig doesn't obey immediately.

RUSTLER 1 (CONT'D)
No point dying on such a fine
night. Set it on the ground and get
on your belly.

Chlodwig obeys.

Rustler 1, his face is covered by a scarf but he looks similar to Skeeter Collins, binds the boy and covers his eyes with a cloth.

Rustler 1 leaves to the sound of moving cattle and horses in the darkness beyond.

EXT. CHLODWIG'S CAMP - LATER

Boyd rides into camp. He sees Chlodwig on the ground next to the dying fire, bound and blinded. He dismounts and approaches the boy.

With a start, Chlodwig struggles as Boyd unties him.

BOYD
The cattle are gone.

CHLODWIG
Rustlers.

Boyd walks to the edge of the darkness.

CHLODWIG (CONT'D)
You going after the rustlers?

Boyd doesn't respond or turn around.

CHLODWIG (CONT'D)
Why are you wearing a gun? Are you
going to do something other than
stand there?

Boyd returns to the fire.

BOYD
Nope.

CHLODWIG
Why are you here, then?

BOYD
Just happened along.

CHLODWIG
Just out for a lark? We gotta get
on their trail.

BOYD
How many rustlers would have to be
in a gang to steal that many
cattle?

CHLODWIG
I didn't see 'em. I heard a few
horses. Maybe a half dozen or more.

BOYD
You want to brace a half dozen
outlaws in the dark? If I help you
kill yourself, your grandfather
will hang me.

CHLODWIG
Our grandfather.

BOYD
Gather your pack and mount up.

CHLODWIG
I ain't going back without them
cattle.

Boyd moves swiftly, grabbing his cousin.

BOYD
Get on your damned horse and follow
me. I'll bust you up if you argue
with me.

(MORE)

BOYD (CONT'D)
 You don't know what you are saying.
 I won't let you die out here.

Silently, Chlodwig gathers his pack, mounts, and follows Boyd back to the ranch house.

EXT. WECHSLER RANCH - MORNING

Russel Spears leads a large contingent of Town Folks into the clearing beyond Wechsler's ranch house. Spears lifts a hand as he pulls up before the kitchen door. Emma appears in the doorway. Judge Hey, a chubby man in his 50's with wiggling jowls and a commanding demeanor, rides forward until he is beside Spears.

JUDGE HEY
 You know me, yes?

EMMA WECHSLER
 I do Judge Hey.

JUDGE HEY
 We are here for your son Ms.
 Wechsler.

EMMA WECHSLER
 He isn't here, judge.

Boyd emerges from the stables.

BOYD
 I'm right here. Go inside Ma. This isn't your affair. I've already seen how these Townies treat women. Let's see if Spears has the sand to front me outside of prison bars, without the cover of a woman to protect him.

RUSSEL SPEARS
 You are a blackguard liar...

JUDGE HEY
 Russel, this is a matter for the law, not vigilantes.
 (Judge Hey addresses
 Boyd.)
 Now young man. The allegations against you are growing at an alarming rate.

(MORE)

JUDGE HEY (CONT'D)

These latest charges levelled by the law-abiding citizenry, combined with your past misdeeds, warrant my involvement today. Sheriff Clark is unavailable, so I recognize my participation as being a bit outside of normal procedures. Nevertheless, I need you to surrender yourself to me and these men and return to jail until we straighten out this matter.

Wolfgang appears at the kitchen door.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

On what charge do you arrest this boy?

JUDGE HEY

Wolf, a charge is not required to secure a suspect in an investigation, particularly if I am unconvinced he will not flee the jurisdiction.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

I'll need an accounting of potential charges if I am going to release him to your custody judge.

RUSSEL SPEARS

You ain't entitled to a reason. You got no authority to resist an officer of the law.

JUDGE HEY

Shut up Spears.

(He returns the conversation to Wolfgang.)

Wolf, this boy has attacked three members of the Spears household. One of his attacks was upon Spears himself in the Sheriff's office. The Sheriff had to quell the attack at gunpoint. Your daughter participated in the assault.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Where are you getting your information Judge?

JUDGE HEY

I will hear from all sides in this matter. I intend to end this thing peacefully, with those responsible accounting for it in the eyes of the law. My participation here today is to ensure the peace is kept and the matter is handled properly.

Wolfgang seems unimpressed.

JUDGE HEY (CONT'D)

Come now Wolf. I know you. We have always seen eye to eye when it comes to right and wrong, good and bad, legal and criminal. I am counting on your equable nature in this matter.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

I appreciate your consideration of my sense of reason and fair play. It is true we have seen eye to eye in the past. I think you may remember dealings singularly from long ago. Since then, I trusted you and the law to deal fairly with me when I brought you hard evidence of those who rustled my cattle, only for you to release them on a twist in the wording of the law. I recall that one of my men went to town after collecting his wages. You may remember him - Martinez. He was beaten within an inch of his life in the hotel saloon for being an outlaw and gunman. At my insistence, he was unarmed.

POSSEMAN 1

He was a Mexican pistolero, wanted by the law. We did what we had to...

JUDGE HEY

That's enough.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

That man is no longer in my employ, gone for parts unknown to escape the death he narrowly avoided. I see among you several of those same men who attacked him that night.

(MORE)

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

They were never arrested, nor was anyone arrested in the case. In another instance, you awarded a rustler one of my prize horses after my son shot his horse as he attempted to make off with my cattle. We elected a Sheriff who swore to bring these rustlers to justice, and you say he is not here to do his job."

Wechsler places his hands on his hips as his two sons, Klaus and Verner emerge from the door behind him, rifles in their hands.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

"Our days of like minds are a part of history now Judge. Bringing this large a group of men to my ranch seems a mite heavy handed. You will forgive me if I say I feel a bit pressed by the number of men in your troupe today. Not a one is of my people. Not a one is friendly towards me or mine.

JUDGE HEY

What you don't know is that I have sent a missive to Governor Coke requesting Ranger assistance with this rustling problem. Now the law may not work on your schedule, Wolfgang, but it does work.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Get off my land, all of you. The boy stays here.

RUSSEL SPEARS

I will have satisfaction Wechsler.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Is that what you are after? Well there the boy is. Face him and end this like men. He doesn't seem afraid to meet you here and now. How about you Spears? Are you afraid of a boy?

RUSSEL SPEARS

Damn you and your spawn. I have no fear of any of your blood, much less a snot-nosed kid.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

What say you, your honor? A duel is archaic, but not illegal if it is mutually agreed and witnessed.

JUDGE HEY

If we have a willing accord then I will not intercede.

Spears dismounts.

RUSSEL SPEARS

I see the boy is heeled. A Dutch gunfighter! You'll die before your pistol clears leather. Say when.

Boyd releases the hammer strap, turning sideways to give Spears a narrower target.

JUDGE HEY

Men, when I drop this kerchief, fill your hands. I will personally gun down the man who pulls early.

The others back away to clear a space for the combatants.

JUDGE HEY (CONT'D)

Is this what you want son?

Boyd says nothing, watching Spears intently.

JUDGE HEY (CONT'D)

Are you certain this is what you want Russel?

RUSSEL SPEARS

Are you gonna give the signal or are we gonna die of old age?

JUDGE HEY

Very well. Ready - draw.

Spears' hand is nearly to his pistol when Boyd draws and shoots him center mass. Spears crumples to the ground.

Boyd looks around. His mother, Hans, and his male kin are on the porch. Shock shows on their faces, except for Hans who grins gleefully.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Collect your dead and get off my land. This was unnecessary and solved nothing.

JUDGE HEY

I disagree Wolf. With the complainant dead, I vacate all charges against your grandson.

Wolfgang looks at Boyd with a mixture of surprise and fear. He glances at his sons Klaus and Ernst.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Ride out boys. Gather the association here tonight.

Klaus and Ernst scramble to the stables.

INT. WECHSLER RANCH - NIGHT

Wolfgang is in his large seating room as he speaks to the local German ranchers in the region. The other ranchers are German immigrants like Wechsler. They are dressed in overalls or other simple farmer's garb.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Last night, more than one-hundred head of my cattle were rustled from my lower pasture. They overpowered and tied up my grandson as they did it. We were readying to go after them when we received visitors from town. A large contingent of Städtbewohnen came to my home to take my grandson by force. Judge Hey was among them. Sheriff Clark was said to be in dispose. We supported his campaign and ensured his election with his promise to end this scourge. He has not honored his word. We have very few avenues left to us. I propose the reformation of the cattleman's association. Alone, nothing will change. Together, we are brothers united by a common cause. As one, we have great power in both number and in might.

Bernard Keiferstein, a tall man possibly ten years older than Wechsler, shakes his head.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

What say you, Bern?

BERNARD KEIFERSTEIN

After the last hanging, we agreed to disband and never to gather again without a vote and a quorum for that vote.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

There will be no vote. There will be no quorum. There will be no debate about how we rid the range of these thieves. If you will not join, leave now.

Wolfgang waits for any to leave. None leave.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

These thieves have likely fled beyond our grasp. I am certain they are local men who know us and the country around. We will post sentries at all quarters. From this moment we will maintain patrols on horseback day and night. If our sentries see a group of men who seem suspiciously intentioned, they will send word to the patrol. The patrol will react accordingly. Henry Pluenneke will lead the primary patrol. Pick your best men and be ready. Peter Bader will lead a second patrol.

A general din of conversation rises.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

I know what you are worried about. I am also aware you have no faith that John Clark will do what we are paying him to do. I am not asking you to trust Clark. I am asking you to trust me. I have spoken with him. I will do so again - soon. Assemble the patrols as I ask. I will do the rest.

INT. WECHSLER RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Boyd watches from the back of the room. His mother appears from somewhere within the house and places an arm around his shoulders.

EMMA WECHSLER

I love you son.

BOYD

I know Ma. I love you too.

EMMA WECHSLER

This will lead to bigger trouble.

BOYD

I don't think I can be in more trouble. I keep seeing Spears fall to my gun. I can't think of nothing else.

EMMA WECHSLER

Don't you mourn that man. He intended to lynch you then shoot you himself. You did what you had to do to protect yourself and your family.

BOYD

Grandfather doesn't see it that way.

EMMA WECHSLER

Did he say something?

BOYD

It's what he ain't saying.

EMMA WECHSLER

Isn't saying.

Boyd faces Emma.

BOYD

Isn't saying.

Boyd walks away.

EXT. ROAD TO MENARDVILLE - AFTERNOON

Jarvis, Williamson, Skeeter, Allen Bolt, Charlie Johnson, the brothers Eli and Pete Baccus, Caleb Hall, a short but cunning man in his 30's, Abe Wiggins a fugitive from justice in his late 20's, and Tom Turley, a known gunman and dangerous man, ride towards Mason from their cattle sale in Menardville. The proceeds from the theft have been distributed. There is a general feeling of joviality.

Charlie Johnson pulls up. Jarvis calls a halt.

JARVIS HUTTON

Your horse throw a shoe Charlie Johnson?

CHARLIE JOHNSON

This is it for me boss. I ain't never been comfortable with cattle work. I've got a stake that will buy me a place west where I can settle down and go straight - if you'll let me.

JARVIS HUTTON

So that's why you've been hoarding all your money Charlie. Well, I guess this is so long then.

CHARLIE JOHNSON

You can come with me Jarvis. I know you want blood for your brother. Maybe you can find peace with an old friend and honest work. This here trail ends only one way. I can't bear it that it may be your final one.

JARVIS HUTTON

That means a lot coming from you Charlie. I have to see this thing through. Here's wishing you good luck.

CHARLIE JOHNSON

Good luck men.

Jarvis and Charlie shake hands. Charlie nods to the others and rides back towards Menardville.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Skeeter, the Kid, and me are headed back to Loyal Valley. We'd best let this one die down before we take on another job.

JARVIS HUTTON

Do what you think is best Tim. The boys and me will head back to camp and lay low for a few days. We'll send Caleb in for whiskey tonight.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Meet up in fifteen days in Loyal Valley.

JARVIS HUTTON

Charlie Johnson spoke sense. This is it for me too boys. I got business to finish then I head out for parts west.

Tim shakes Jarvis' hand. Tim, Skeeter, and Bolt ride ahead towards Mason.

CALEB HALL

I hate a break up boss, but if it has to happen that way, a night indoors would do us all some good. We've been drinking whiskey on the ground for weeks. A hot meal and one night in a bed won't kill nobody. Besides, who is to say we didn't earn our money honestly?

JARVIS HUTTON

It's risky.

TOM TURLEY

It's your last night and you know what's best, but the kid is making a lot of sense to us.

ELI BACCUS

We ain't risking it boss. Pete and I are getting out of town while the gettin's good.

CALEB HALL

Hell boys, if the Baccus brothers ain't drinking with us, who can I make fun of? Besides, I'm buying the first round.

Caleb and Eli nod, reluctantly accepting the invitation.

JARVIS HUTTON

Alright. Don't flash your loot. The first sign of trouble and we slope - no arguments. Agreed?

They spur their horses towards Mason.

INT. SOUTHERN HOTEL - LATER

Jarvis and his men sit in the back of the hotel saloon. They dine on thick beef steaks, potatoes, and warm bread. They fill their glasses in turn from the whiskey bottle going around the table.

The six rustlers watch as the kid, Allen Bolt, enters then leans on the bar and orders a whiskey.

The aproned bartender moves behind the bar, positioning himself before the youth. He is disapproving of Bolt and seems to know who he is.

BARTENDER 1
We don't serve kids in here.

ALLEN BOLT
I ain't no kid.

BARTENDER 1
If I was to serve you, which I ain't, how do you plan to pay for it?

Bolt pulls out a sack and drops it heavily on the bar. He fishes out a coin and slaps it on the bar.

ALLEN BOLT
Now pour.

The bartender brings Bolt a glass and a bottle.

Without recognizing Bolt or making a fuss, Jarvis and crew drop coins on the table and make for the front door.

EXT. SOUTHERN HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Jarvis and crew mount up and ride away. They walk their horses, not wanting to look suspicious.

EXT. MASON COUNTY COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Jarvis and crew approach the courthouse, Sheriff Clark and Deputy Worley, a smallish round faced man in his 30's, appear from the front door. Both are armed. Worley carries a rifle. They watch Jarvis' gang intently. The two lawmen approach the Jarvis and crew as they ride slowly.

CALEB HALL
It looks like things may be hotter here than we guessed. I'm for putting miles behind us until this beehive settles back down.

JARVIS HUTTON
Too late for that.

SHERIFF CLARK
 You men hold up for a moment.
 (Clark pulls his pistol
 though he doesn't point
 it directly at anyone.)

JARVIS HUTTON
 What's the trouble Sheriff?

SHERIFF CLARK
 I'll ask the questions. Where are
 you boys headed?

JARVIS HUTTON
 West. What concern is it of yours?

SHERIFF CLARK
 What's your name?
 (Clark cocks his pistol.)

JARVIS HUTTON
 Charlie Johnson. And these are my
 boys. We are headed to New Mexico
 for work.

SHERIFF CLARK
 New Mexico you say?

JARVIS HUTTON
 Yeah.

SHERIFF CLARK
 Why don't you boys step down from
 them horses and lay your weapons on
 the ground.

JARVIS HUTTON
 Now see here Sheriff...

Deputy Worley levers a round into the chamber of his rifle.
 He raises the gun to eye level, training the sites on Jarvis.

DEPUTY WORLEY
 You heard the Sheriff. Step down
 and unlimber them pistols.

JARVIS HUTTON
 Do as they say. This is a mistake
 Sheriff.

I/E. JAIL - CONTINUOUS

Clark and Worley lead their prisoners into the sheriff's office and lock them into the two cells. Three men already occupy the cells: MB Thomas, Tom Gamel, and Allen Roberts.

SHERIFF CLARK

Thomas, you, Gamel, and Roberts got company. This is Mr. Johnson and friends.

Worley returns with a paper and grease pencil.

DEPUTY WORLEY

You newcomers write your names on this paper. If you can't write, Deputy Worley will write it for you. You are all under arrest for cattle thievery. Turn out your pockets and surrender your belongings to the Deputy for safe keeping in the courthouse safe.

With general protests and groans, the rustlers turn out their pockets surrendering their money. Caleb Hall produces none and Jarvis looks at him curiously. Hall points at his boot where he's hidden his loot.

DEPUTY WORLEY (CONT'D)

You boys are in possession of a lot of cash for out of work drifters headed to new Mexico.

The Sheriff pokes the pile with an index finger, making an informal tally of the amount.

SHERIFF CLARK

You men will be arraigned in the morning by Judge Hey. Until then, behave and don't cause me no trouble.

Clark motions to Worley. They gather the money and possessions on the desk and place them into a white sack. They move to a steel box bolted to the floor. They open it and lock the loot inside.

INT. JAIL - CONTINUOUS

MB Thomas a well dressed rancher in his 40's who seems to be a legitimate prosperous rancher, approaches Jarvis.

MB THOMAS

My name is Thomas, MB Thomas.

JARVIS HUTTON

I'm Charlie Johnson.

MB THOMAS

This is my partner Allen Roberts. We own ranches in Llano and Burnet Counties. This man is Tom Gamel, a local man we hired to guide our search. Mr. Johnson, I'm not sure of anything except that this county is rustler crazy. We were on a hosted hunt, looking for our lost cattle when the Sheriff and a large posse of men fell upon us and arrested us. There is talk of a lynching party. The charges against you are the same. I recommend you and your men watch your step.

Jarvis has no reply. MB moves away. Hall sidles up to Jarvis.

CALEB HALL

If that kid is caught, he's going to sing like a bird about the whole operation.

JARVIS HUTTON

I expect just that. That kid is drunk by now and he has been stupid his whole life. We're sunk. Keep your head down and your mouth closed. We'll see what opportunity presents itself. Be ready for anything.

I/E. SOUTHERN HOTEL - NIGHT

Allen Bolt drags himself into his saddle, the vapors from the liquor befuddling his efforts. He rides from the hotel into the darkness, leaving a boisterous crowd of newly acquired friends behind him.

EXT. ROAD TO LOYAL VALLEY - LATER

Bolt is surrounded by a dozen men in masks. They converge upon him en masse, encircling him. One member of the group seizes his reins while others relieve him of his two pistols. They drag him from his horse and throw him to the ground.

HOODOO 1
Where did you get the money?

ALLEN BOLT
I earned it at Williamson's ranch.
What business is it of yours?

HOODOO 1
You are a goddam rustling thief.

ALLEN BOLT
I am not.

Another Hoodoo hits him from behind, dropping him to the ground.

ALLEN BOLT (CONT'D)
Let me go. You got no right to beat me. I'm harmin' no one.

HOODOO 1
Name your confederates.

ALLEN BOLT
I got nothing to say. You are cowards, waylayin' a kid on his way home.

A gunshot scatters the masked men. A red spot spreads under the kid's shirt. Another man retrieves the leather money bag from the dying boy's clothes.

The men remove their face coverings.

Peter Bader, a German immigrant in his late 20's with a stubborn jaw and surly demeanor, and Henry Pluenneke a nondescript farmer of German descent, and Verner Koenig, ranch hand to Wechsler in his 40's step forward. Bader retrieves Bolt's money bag. He tosses it to Koenig.

PETER BADER
Verner, see that Wolfgang receives what's in this bag for his losses. Anyone have a paper and pencil?

Pluenneke produces both. Bader reads aloud as he writes.

PETER BADER (CONT'D)
Here lies a noted cow thief.

He pins the sign to Bolt's shirt with a cactus thorn.

PETER BADER (CONT'D)
 My place is near Williamson's in
 Loyal Valley. I'll deal with
 Williamson.

INT. MASON COUNTY COURTHOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

Judge Hey sits at his dais in his robes and gavel. Deputy
 Worley stands guard. All those from the jail sit in irons in
 the pews before the judge.

JUDGE HEY
 Bail is set at \$500.00 each. Your
 court date will be announced as the
 docket allows. If you fail to post
 bail, you will stay in jail until
 your court date. The money
 surrendered at the time of arrest
 is evidence and cannot be used for
 bail.

General protests.

JUDGE HEY (CONT'D)
 Court Adjourned.
 (Hey hits the gavel.)

INT. JAIL - LATER

The men are raucous back in their cells. Worley stands
 outside the bars.

DEPUTY WORLEY
 There is no use in arguing. The
 judge made the decision, not me.
 You can bring it up with him in
 your trial. The rest of you men
 step forward if you can cover your
 bail now.

Hall steps forward with Thomas, Gamel, and Roberts.

DEPUTY WORLEY (CONT'D)
 Hall, you are not allowed to use
 any money we collected from you for
 bail.

CALEB HALL
 You didn't collect any money from
 me because I ain't got any on me.

MB THOMAS

I'm covering this man's bail. I have enough among my possessions to cover both of us, and Roberts, and our guide Tom Gamel.

DEPUTY WORLEY

Are you sure that's a good idea Thomas?

MB THOMAS

I don't have a need for counsel, not even you. Take the money and release us at once.

The Deputy does as he is bidden, and four of the nine inmates walk out of the jail.

Eli and Pete Baccus approach Jarvis.

ELI BACCUS

How'd Hall work that one?

JARVIS HUTTON

He hid his loot. He must've worked a deal with them ranchers.

EXT. WECHSLER RANCH - THE NEXT DAY

Verner Koenig rides to the house. His horse is weary and he is dusty.

VERNER KOENIG

Hello the house! Herr Wechsler I have news.

Wolfgang emerges from the house. Boyd appears from around the house with Hans. Wolfgang's 2 sons, Ernst and Klaus join them.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

What news?

VERNER KOENIG

Last night Kaefenstein's boy saw a group of mounted men split into two parties a few miles northwest of town. Three men of the group headed east and south of town. The other group of a half dozen men rode into town.

(MORE)

VERNER KOENIG (CONT'D)
Kaeferstein's boy lit out and passed the word to the Sheriff, then he found the on-duty Association Posse. I was with them, as you ordered. A lookout followed the second group into Mason. They ate and drank at the Southern Hotel. One of the men he saw headed east earlier, a boy, came back to town and entered the hotel. He showed off a lot of money and bought rounds at the bar. The other men didn't tarry but hightailed it when the kid showed up. I'm guessing those are the men in the jail.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
Go on.

VERNER KOENIG
We did as you said Herr Wechsler. When the thieves came back to town we tipped off the Sheriff and he has a jail full of rustlers. The strangers were carrying a lot of money with them. I don't know the exact amount, but Worley told me it was considerable.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
In the jail you say.

VERNER KOENIG
I was with the patrol and we followed a kid from the Southern. We caught up with him on the road southeast of town. We braced him and he told us he got all that money working for Williamson out of Loyal Valley. He wouldn't tell us more, so we shot him."

Verner produces the leather sack.

VERNER KOENIG (CONT'D)
Here is what he had on him, maybe forty dollars. I kept it to give to you.

He hands the leather bag over.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
He's dead?

VERNER KOENIG

As the confederacy. Bader hung a sign on him warning other rustlers what would happen if they follow his example.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

I know Williamson. He has a reputation for moving cattle from time to time. Last I heard he was foreman over the Lehmberg Ranch. Carl Lehmberg would have nothing to do with rustlers. He is one of our own.

VERNER KOENIG

The kid rustler said he was working for Williamson. That's all I know.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

I have to go to town.
 (Wolfgang looks at his sons Ernst and Klaus.)
 Saddle up - both of you. You shall accompany me.
 (He looks at Boyd.)
 You too.

I/E. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

A storm is building as Wolfgang, Ernst Wolfgang's eldest son, Klaus, his younger son, and Boyd enter the courthouse. They enter the Sheriff's office where the cells are full of lazing prisoners and Sheriff Clark sits behind his desk with his feet up.

SHERIFF CLARK

Hello Herr Wechsler. To what do I owe this unexpected visit?

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

You should have expected it John. There's more than a storm in the wind. The devil is up and busy.

SHERIFF CLARK

If you are talking about the Bolton boy found dead on the road this morning, you're right.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

I didn't know about the dead boy but I lost more than one-hundred head of young stock to rustlers and it appears you have those rustlers here behind bars. The Städtbewohnen have made much of my grandson's actions here in town, visiting my place twice, once with Judge Hey. I am told you were ill-available.

A loud lightening clap strikes and thunder booms.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

Klaus, stable the horses across the street until the storm passes.

Klaus leaves to obey.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

What do you know about Tim Williamson?

SHERIFF CLARK

Not much. He works for Lehmborg out past Loyal Valley. What does he have to do with any of this?

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

I have heard through rumors he is known to round up a stray from time to time. There is some talk he might have been a part of this latest theft. Don't you agree it might be worth a look, if you can fit it into your busy itinerary?

SHERIFF CLARK

I suppose there ain't no such thing as a coincidence.

(Clark shuffles through paperwork on his desk.)

I just got this missive today. The state wants me to bring him in on a state warrant for a tax matter. Now I have two reasons to ride to Loyal Valley. I'll head out after the storm.

(Clark sees the prisoners are paying keen attention to their confab, Jarvis in particular.)

Why don't we step outside for a moment Herr Wechsler.

Clark rises and leads Wolfgang to the door.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Ernst, you two stay away from those cells until I return.

Clark and Wolfgang leave.

I/E. MASON COUNTY COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rain starts to fall as Clark and Wolfgang step onto the front steps of the courthouse.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

I'm certain I don't need to remind you I got you elected, a man without a past. We put you in office for one purpose, and one purpose only. That purpose did not include men visiting my ranch to remedy some inconsequential town matter. That purpose was to rid this county of the scourge that is the preponderance of rustlers hereabouts. You gave your word you would commit your time and efforts to that end. Your time is now, Sheriff Clark. I want two things from you. The first is to root out the remaining cattle thieves and bring them to justice. The second is that you stay out of my way when the Cattlemen's Association participates.

SHERIFF CLARK

Wolf. I heard about your so-called Cattlemen's Association. I can't stand by while you or anyone else takes the law into his own hands.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Don't hand me that guff, Sheriff. You are as loyal to your oath of office as the money we add to your salary is regular. I mean no slight when I say you are a chosen man, here particularly because you are not a man who finds refuge in an oath of office. This ends with peace and goodwill in the region. On that matter we both agree.

(MORE)

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

Don't split hairs how we achieve that end, John. Do I have your help, or do I need to pay someone else?

SHERIFF CLARK

Don't work yourself into a lather, Wolfgang. I was just gauging your commitment to what must be done. I have business elsewhere today and tomorrow. The keys to the jail are safely in the hands of Deputy Worley. He'll be on watch tonight.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

That seems convenient for a man who was just talkin' hard about the association.

SHERIFF CLARK

I can't control what happens when I ain't around.

INT. JAIL - CONTINUOUS

Jarvis moves to the bars, watching Boyd with interest.

JARVIS HUTTON

What's your name kid?

BOYD

What's it to you, mister?

JARVIS HUTTON

Not much. You look familiar is all.

BOYD

I don't know you.

JARVIS HUTTON

I'm sure of that. I'd still like to know your name, son.

BOYD

My name is Boyd Wechsler.

The impact of hearing the name causes a change in Jarvis.

JARVIS HUTTON

You said 'Boyd' Wechsler?

BOYD

That's right. I don't know you mister, like I said.

JARVIS HUTTON

Did you know your daddy?

BOYD

I don't owe you any more answers.

JARVIS HUTTON

He died before you were born, didn't he?

BOYD

How do you know that?

JARVIS HUTTON

You would be interested in what I know.

BOYD

What's your name?

JARVIS HUTTON

I'm Charlie Johnson.

BOYD

The name don't ring any bells.

JARVIS HUTTON

It wouldn't. But I knew your daddy, Kyle Boyd Hutton. He died before you were born.

ERNST WECHSLER

He was a rustler. That proves you are one too. Were you a part of his gang of thieves too?

JARVIS HUTTON

I wasn't anywhere near when he was lynched.

BOYD

He was lynched, you say?

JARVIS HUTTON

By your grandfather personally.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
 Shut your mouth, prisoner!
 (Wolfgang and Sheriff
 Clark had reentered under
 the cover of the storm
 noise.)

Boyd, you and Ernst get us a room
 at the Southern for the night. The
 storm is coming, and it is a big
 one.

Boyd remains, looking at Jarvis. Wolfgang steps forward,
 grabbing Boyd by the shoulder.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)
 Do as I say, boy.

Boyd shrugs off the hand with a gesture.

BOYD
 Is what he says true, Grandfather?

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
 Your father was a cattle thief and
 a coward. He stole cattle from me
 while he tried to steal my
 daughter. He didn't have the
 courage to ask my blessing because
 he knew what he was. He received
 the justice he deserved. If it
 hadn't been me, it would have been
 someone else.

Boyd is in shock.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)
 Obey me, boy.

JARVIS HUTTON
 Kyle was taking her away that night
 to elope to San Antonio. The old
 man told Kyle he would see him dead
 before he saw him with his
 daughter. He didn't know she was
 with child - with you.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
 I'll kill you, you lying cur.

Wolfgang rushes the bars. Jarvis grabs him and pulls him
 towards the cell.

JARVIS HUTTON
I'll kill you old man. Bank on
that.

The Sheriff rushes to Wechsler's aid, his gun drawn.

Jarvis releases the old man, shoving him away from the bars. He shows no fear of the Sheriff's gun. He glances at Boyd.

Boyd watches his grandfather. He seems dangerous and he is armed with his holstered pistol.

SHERIFF CLARK
Give me that gunbelt son.

Boyd looks at Clark, then turns to the door, and walks into the storm.

JARVIS HUTTON
I may not get out of here before
the job is done for me Wechsler.

The Sheriff moves to the cell, holding his pistol on Jarvis.

SHERIFF CLARK
Who are you, mister?

JARVIS HUTTON
I'm Charlie Johnson, just like I
said before.

SHERIFF CLARK
Why do you seem to know so much
about our town?

JARVIS HUTTON
There ain't no secrets a man can
keep out here. Word will always go
the rounds.

Jarvis looks at Wechsler, standing beyond the Sheriff. The old rancher searches the floorboards, oblivious to those around him.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
Keep these men under lock and key
Sheriff.

With that, Wechsler leaves the Sheriff's office.

EXT. SOUTHERN HOTEL - NIGHT

Captain Roberts, 30's, a decorated veteran of the Civil War and current officer in the Texas Rangers' Frontier Battalion, and three Rangers enter the outskirts of town. To their surprise, Mason is alive with noise and activity. Every house, and most of the commercial buildings, are aglow with lights. Even at that late hour, townspeople mill about the streets. The rangers dismount and move to the Southern.

I/E. SOUTHERN HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The lobby and saloon are filled to capacity. Tobacco smoke obscures the ceiling. At the bar, a tightly packed audience pays attention to a central figure whose voice booms above the din. The figure is Sheriff John Clark and he is drunk.

SHERIFF CLARK

I don't control what happens when I am not here, but that doesn't mean it goes unanswered. Those men deserve what they have coming. I suppose the citizens lack the patience to wait for the slow workings of the law. I am the law here, but the law is no less than an extension of the people.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

What goes on here? Sheriff, what have you done?

TOWNSMAN 1

The goddam Prussians organized a vigilance committee. They broke into the jailhouse and took away the prisoners for their own justice. The Sheriff here works for them Germans and is turning a blind eye to the lawlessness of them foreign invaders.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

Is this true, Sheriff?
(Roberts grabs Clark's shoulder.)

SHERIFF CLARK

Don't paw me mister. What do you expect me to do about it? I don't have the men to go against a mob of angry and armed men.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

I expect you, sir, to do your job.
You swore an oath.

(Roberts turns to Townsman
1.)

Where did these vigilante's take
those men?

TOWNSMAN 1

They rode southeast on the road to
Fredericksburg.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

Who will volunteer to ride with me
and my men?

The room grows silent.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS (CONT'D)

No one? You men ask the state for
help, but you are willing to do
nothing to help yourselves?

TOWNSMAN 2

We didn't ask for nothing. Them
Germans are taking the law into
their own hands. That is your
problem. The only thing we want
from you is for you to do 'your'
job.

Roberts shoves his way through the crowd towards the door. He
joins his men at the edge of the room.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

Mount up Rangers. We got a job to
do.

EXT. ROAD TO FREDERICKSBURG - CONTINUOUS

Masked vigilantes surround their prisoners on all sides as
they escort them along the dark trail. The prisoners'
(Jarvis, Tom Turley, Eli and Pete Baccus, Abe Wiggins) horses
are chain-tied together.

HooDoo 1 raises a hand as he pulls up his mount.

HOODOO 1

This is far enough men.

Hoodoo 1 points at three men.

HOODOO 1 (CONT'D)

You men take two ropes and locate
two good hanging trees.

(Hoodoo 1 looks at two men
nearest him.)

You three men pick out two of these
rustlers for the first round.

Hoodoo 2 and 3 dismount and untie the chain knots from Eli
and Pete Baccus' horses, freeing Jarvis', and Abe Wiggins'
horses.

The Baccus' are led into the grove of tall trees where the
others tie two ropes into nooses.

Abe Wiggins begins to weep.

ABE WIGGINS

I ain't hangin'!

(Abe kicks his horse's
flanks. The horse bolts
forward.)

Two Riflemen aim rifles and shoot Wiggins. He falls from his
horse.

Jarvis kicks his horse. His horse escapes out of range, brush
slapping horse and rider. Shots ring out, but they miss
Jarvis.

HOODOO 1

You two. Catch him before he gets
away!

The 2 riflemen give chase.

The Baccus brothers sit their horses, nooses draped around
their necks.

HOODOO 1 (CONT'D)

Stretch 'em boys.

The hangmen slap the horses. The Baccus brothers hang.

Other hoodoos bring Tom Turley forward to the hanging tree.
They put a noose over his head.

HOODOO 1 (CONT'D)

Hang him!

They slap the horse, Turley slides from his horse, hanging by
the neck. He kicks and makes strangling sounds.

HOODOO 1 (CONT'D)
The knot snagged. He'll dangle a
while now.

The sound of horses breaking through the brush catches the vigilantes' attention.

HOODOO 1 (CONT'D)
That can't be the boys bringing
back the escaped prisoner. Wrong
direction. That's law boys. Time to
slope.

The remaining hoodoos mount and flee the opposite direction from the approaching riders. Captain Roberts and his rangers enter the grove.

Roberts goes to Abe Wiggins who lies in a puddle of blood and brains. The 3 rangers cut down the struggling Tom Turley.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS
This is bad business, Men.
(Roberts moves to the
rangers.)
Carruth, get him back to the jail
and call a doctor. Guard your man
until we return. The Sheriff is not
to be trusted with him.

Roberts addresses the remaining 2 rangers.

You men are with me.

Roberts and the two remaining rangers mount up to give chase to the hoodoos.

EXT. BACKWOODS 1 - MOMENTS LATER

Jarvis kicks his horse although he has no control of its direction. The horse pulls up suddenly at a ravine. Jarvis falls from the saddle. He stands, his hands tied behind his back.

The two riflemen appear, pulling up hard.

RIFLEMAN 1 (ERNST WECHSLER)
Hands up Johnson.

RIFLEMAN 2 (VERNER KOENIG)
Ernst. Finish this piece of shit
rustler here and now. We don't need
more trouble from him.

ERNST WECHSLER
I'm not a murderer Vern.

VERNER KOENIG
This ain't murder. This is justice.
(Verner chambers a round
and aims at Jarvis.)

A gunshot cracks from the woods nearby and Verner Koenig falls from his horse, twisting like a snake hit with a shovel.

Boyd steps into view, his pistol in his hand.

BOYD
Take off your mask Ernst

Ernst removes his mask abruptly.

ERNST WECHSLER
You killed Verner Boyd. Are you one of them now?

BOYD
I don't know what I am Uncle. I know what I ain't, though. I ain't one of you.

ERNST WECHSLER
We already knew that.

BOYD
I wouldn't say that too loud Uncle. I haven't decided whether I am one of them or not. You may not like my decision.
(Boyd watches Verner writhe then grow still.)
Get out of here Uncle.

Ernst turns his horse and flees.

Boyd approaches Jarvis.

BOYD (CONT'D)
You hit?

JARVIS HUTTON
Not a scratch. You have my thanks.

BOYD
Don't mention it Mr. Johnson. You did me a good turn. I just returned the favor.

JARVIS HUTTON

My name ain't Johnson. I'm Jarvis Hutton. Your daddy was my brother.

BOYD

It had to be something like that. You seemed too close to it all.

JARVIS HUTTON

You can't get no closer. So, what's next for you Boyd Hutton?

BOYD

I was going to ask you the same question.

JARVIS HUTTON

We'd best slope before the one you let go gets word to the others.

Boyd cuts Jarvis' ropes with his pocket knife. They mount and ride away.

EXT. WILLIAMSON RANCH - THE NEXT DAY

Worley arrives at the Williamson Ranch. He ties his horse at the rail and climbs the stairs to the neatly appointed ranch house. Before he can knock, the door opens, and Mary Williamson stands there.

DEPUTY WORLEY

I'm Deputy Worley of Mason County, ma'am. Is Tim Williamson about?

MARY WILLIAMSON

What's your business with my husband Deputy Worley?

DEPUTY WORLEY

Law business, Mrs. Williamson.
(Worley produces a folded paper from his jacket pocket.)

I have a warrant for your husband's arrest for failing to pay a tax debt he promised to pay. This is a warrant from the state. I'm to take him into custody and deliver him to officers of the state when they come for him.

MARY WILLIAMSON

That is preposterous. My husband is not going anywhere with you. If the state has a cause, they can come by if they must.

DEPUTY WORLEY

Ma'am, I am only doing my job. Is your husband here?

Tim Williamson steps onto the porch.

TIM WILLIAMSON

There must be some mistake, Deputy. This matter was handled weeks ago. I have the receipts to prove it.

DEPUTY WORLEY

Nevertheless Mr. Williamson, my orders are clear. I am to take you in without fail. You can clear this up with the judge, and if you did take care of this matter, I imagine you will be free to return without delay. So, if you'll come with me, we can avoid any unpleasantness.

TIM WILLIAMSON

I'll come along peacefully Deputy. Let me grab my hat.

EXT. ROAD TO MASON 2 - LATER

Tim Williamson and Deputy Worley ride along the road.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Look yonder. That is a large group of riders bearing down on us.

EXT. ROAD TO MASON 2 - CONTINUOUS

By this time, the riders have approached near enough where it is plain to see their faces are concealed behind masks. Their weapons are drawn and held threateningly.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Vigilantes! Back to the ranch.

Tim Williamson wheels his mount and heads back. Deputy Worley turns to follow, drawing his pistol. He fires and Williamson's horse goes down.

Tim Williamson is thrown but rises as Deputy Worley rides the other direction. He passes the approaching hoodoos as they stop, surrounding Williamson.

EXT. ROAD TO MASON 2 - CONTINUOUS

Williamson looks around him at the mounted vigilantes. He recognizes one of the horses as belonging to a man he knows. The rider is masked, but Williamson recognizes his stocky build.

TIM WILLIAMSON

Peter Bader, I know you. We have been friendly for many years. Talk to these men. Tell them they are making a mistake. I know your horse Daniel Hoerster. That paint horse is unmistakable. Men, we go back a ways. Don't do nothing rash.

PETER BADER

This ain't personal Tim.

Bader fires his pistol, striking Williamson dead center. The others fire a fusillade, spinning Williamson in a tight circle before he falls and lays still.

The riders retreat, heading back from where they came.

EXT. MERNARDVILLE, BRADFORD'S STORE - MORNING

William Scott Cooley arrives in Menardville. He leaves an empty buckboard in front of Bradford's Store, a squat but longish planked building. The simple structure houses the general store, a saloon, and a blacksmith shop at the rear. Cooley drops lightly from the tall buckboard seat to the ground. He stretches his legs as he makes for the store entrance.

I/E. BRADFORD'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

Cooley entered the mercantile. Adam Bradford, strongly built bearded man in his late 40's, stocks cans on a shelf towards the back wall.

ADAM BRADFORD

How do?

SCOTT COOLEY

Mr. Bradford.

Cooley moves about the store inventory. He selects items from the shelves, placing them on the planked counter at the front of the store.

ADAM BRADFORD
Anything else for you Scott?

SCOTT COOLEY
That should do it, Mr. Bradford.

Bradford tallies the total.

ADAM BRADFORD
Didn't you tell me once you were acquainted with Tim Williamson over Loyal Valley way?

SCOTT COOLEY
More than acquainted. He and Mary are family to me.

ADAM BRADFORD
Well, that makes this doubly difficult to say. The driver who delivered this lot repeated a story he heard when he made delivery to Ranck's Store in Mason. He heard Tim Williamson was gunned down by a band of vigilantes about a few days ago.

SCOTT COOLEY
What happened?

ADAM BRADFORD
Apparently a Mason County Deputy Sheriff served an arrest warrant on him at his ranch. Tim Williamson and the deputy were jumped by a dozen or so masked men. The deputy escaped, but the Hoodoos shot Tim's horse out from under him then shot him dead on the road.

SCOTT COOLEY
Why would someone murder Tim Williamson?

ADAM BRADFORD
The delivery man mentioned no reason, but I hear Mason county is up in arms about the rustling that has gotten out of hand there.

(MORE)

ADAM BRADFORD (CONT'D)

I also heard the local German ranchers formed a cattlemen's association to do something about it. Maybe Williamson got caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, or they mistook him for an outlaw.

Cooley appears hit hard by the news.

ADAM BRADFORD (CONT'D)

I haven't heard any proof of it, but rumor has it the sheriff and deputy are on them German ranchers' payroll. It seems pretty odd to me them Hoodoos would jump a lawman and his prisoner on the day that lawman serves a warrant.

SCOTT COOLEY

You think the deputy was a part of the murder plot?

ADAM BRADFORD

I got no opinion one way or another, Scott. I'm just relaying what I heard. That deputy may not have any part in it and was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

SCOTT COOLEY

That's two wrong place wrong times. I don't believe in happenstance. Thanks Mr. Bradford.

Cooley pays and takes his goods outside.

EXT. BRADFORD'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

He stows the merchandise in his wagon then moves to the saloon.

I/E. SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Inside the saloon he goes to the bar. Three men enjoy the hospitality of the saloon. Two are cattlemen, talking quietly together at a table near the door. The third man stands at the bar, a foot resting on the long footrail. He holds a drink in his left hand. His right hand hangs free in telltale fashion. He is tall with a strong jaw and the piercing gaze of a gunfighter, yet his manner is strangely light and almost cordial although his deadliness is unmistakable.

SCOTT COOLEY
Bring me a bottle.
(Cooley slaps a coin on
the bar.)

The bartender brings the bottle and a glass. He collects the coin and moves away. Scott pours the glass full and drinks it dry. He repeats the process.

JOHNNY RINGO
I'll have to charge you if I have
to carry you out, friend.

SCOTT COOLEY
I can carry myself out if I need to
be carried anywhere.

JOHNNY RINGO
Suit yourself.

SCOTT COOLEY
No offense meant, friend. I just
received some unwelcome news and
I'm not at my best.

JOHNNY RINGO
None taken.

SCOTT COOLEY
How about a refill?
(Cooley slides the bottle
towards Ringo.)

JOHNNY RINGO
Thanks.

SCOTT COOLEY
I'm Scott Cooley.

JOHNNY RINGO
Johnny Ringgold.

They shake hands.

SCOTT COOLEY
Pleased to make your acquaintance
Mr. Ringgold.

JOHNNY RINGO
Call me Johnny if I can call you
Scott.

(Ringo pours a drink from
the bottle and slides it
back to Cooley.)

(MORE)

JOHNNY RINGO (CONT'D)

I've seen men throw on a drunk for a lot of reasons. Most are their own. You seem to be a sensible gent with an expensive buckboard full of newly bought goods. You must have got bad news from the shopkeeper.

SCOTT COOLEY

You said a mouthful there. Bradford relayed the news of the murder of a man I considered to be everything but a pa to me. I hear he was waylaid in Mason County and gunned down like a cur.

Cooley grips the bar hard with both hands.

JOHNNY RINGO

Other than gettin' outside of this bottle and wrecking the carpentry of this bar what is your plan from there?

SCOTT COOLEY

Well, that's where it gets fuzzy. I haven't worked out anything past this bottle.

JOHNNY RINGO

I wouldn't mind seeing Mason County during the Spring. Maybe we could take a look see for the men who killed your friend.

SCOTT COOLEY

It would be a waste of time to say you aren't from here, Johnny. What brings you to Mernardville, if I'm not being too nosey?

JOHNNY RINGO

I'm headed west. I'm from Missouri by way of California. I've been east for a couple years and feelin' a little homesick. I thought I might see the sights on the way back.

SCOTT COOLEY

This trip to Mason County could hurt more than being homesick does.

(MORE)

SCOTT COOLEY (CONT'D)
I appreciate your offer, but I wouldn't want to take a man to hell even if I am buying the tickets myself.

JOHNNY RINGO
That sounds pretty noble, Scott. I know you mean it to be noble. When men talk about a thing, that's a way to pass the time. When men talk about a thing, commit to a thing, then drink to that thing. That is a promise made. We shook on it, remember?

SCOTT COOLEY
Johnny, we shook when we met, before we talked about going to Mason.

JOHNNY RINGO
The promise I made was to the man, not the work. To wait until the stars line up in your favor before you throw in guarantees only when the work gets rough, the man will crawl. I don't crawl for no man.

SCOTT COOLEY
A promise made is a promise kept.

EXT. ROAD TO MASON 3 - THE NEXT DAY

Jarvis and Boyd ride west along the trail towards Menardville. Rounding a bend in the road, Boyd and Jarvis come suddenly face to face with two heavily armed men, Scott Cooley and Johnny Ringo.

All riders pull up abruptly.

SCOTT COOLEY
Clear the road.

JARVIS HUTTON
You might show a little caution about who you order off a road, mister.

SCOTT COOLEY
I might advise caution on your part, talking up to a stranger before you know his capabilities.

JARVIS HUTTON

I guess you see a worry on me I don't know about.

SCOTT COOLEY

I don't have time to waste jawing with strangers. I got business in Mason County, and I'd rather save my energy for that.

JARVIS HUTTON

With your saucy ways, you can count on business being good for you in Mason. Take a hint and go easy or you may find yourself at the end of a rope.

SCOTT COOLEY

Is that so? I guess you know something about that?

JARVIS HUTTON

Since you seem curious about it, yeah. I nearly got hung just being in town. I managed to get away before they stretched me. Some of the other boys in my party weren't so fortunate.

SCOTT COOLEY

I might owe you an apology. Was a Mason County Lawman involved in that necktie party?

JARVIS HUTTON

There's both a deputy and a Sheriff. They seemed pretty respectful of that old German rancher who runs all of the deviltry going on with that Hoodoo gang.

SCOTT COOLEY

Hoodoo gang? Are you talking about a vigilante mob?

JARVIS HUTTON

That's exactly what I'm talking about.

SCOTT COOLEY

Did you know a man named Tim Williamson?

JARVIS HUTTON

I do. We have done a bit of business recently. Are you a friend of his?

SCOTT COOLEY

I was. I got word a gang of vigilantes killed him a few days ago.

JARVIS HUTTON

What? They killed Williamson?

SCOTT COOLEY

You didn't know?

JARVIS HUTTON

Hell no. I know they killed a kid who worked for him, but I didn't know anything about him being killed.

SCOTT COOLEY

Well, I'm here to collect a blood debt for his murder. If you can tell me anything about the men who tried to hang you, that might lead me to the men who killed Tim, I'd be beholden'.

JARVIS HUTTON

I've got a debt to collect of my own. The job is too big for me alone. Maybe we can help each other out and satisfy both for what we want.

SCOTT COOLEY

Maybe. What do you know about this Hoodoo gang and who leads it?

JARVIS HUTTON

I'll tell you what I know, but the one to ask is the boy here, my nephew Boyd. He has lived amongst them all his life.

SCOTT COOLEY

Is that right?

JARVIS HUTTON

It is. I had a little group of men, and we worked the occasional loose stock up the trail between San Antonio to Mason. We sold some beeves to Williamson and partnered with him on a piece of business. The sheriff tossed us in jail and a lynching party took us down the trail and tried to hang the lot of us. I hear they hung two of our number, then shot another. I didn't see it because I managed to escape. Boyd shot one of the vigilantes who caught up with me. The other was his mother's brother, so Boyd let him go. The boy's grandfather is involved in some way. I heard the Sheriff tell the deputy to take the jail keys home for safe keeping. The vigilantes must have gotten the keys from him, for they unlocked the cells with the same keys.

SCOTT COOLEY

Well, that cuts it. That Deputy served a warrant on Tim Williamson. The Hoodoos waylaid them on the road and killed Tim. The Deputy and another man escaped. It is clear to me it was a set up.

Scott Cooley spurs his horse. Jarvis takes his place riding beside Cooley. Ringgold and Boyd ride together behind.

Boyd glances at Ringgold. The man watches him with a trace of a smile.

BOYD

What are you lookin' at?

JOHNNY RINGO

You're a salty kid, aren't you? How deep are you into all of this kid?

BOYD

Who's asking?

JOHNNY RINGO

My name is Johnny Ringgold, what's yours?

BOYD

Boyd Wech... Hutton.

JOHNNY RINGO
Sounds like a big change. We'll see
how you hold up.

BOYD
I'll hold up just fine.

JOHNNY RINGO
You just might. You just might at
that.

BOYD
What's your stake in this?

JOHNNY RINGO
No stake. I'm just along for the
ride, and the action: sure to be
plenty of action.

SCOTT COOLEY
Say kid. Do you know much about
them lawmen or maybe that gang that
ambushed Tim in Loyal Valley?

Boyd looks conflicted about answering the question.

BOYD
The Deputy's name is Worley. He
lives in a shack east of Mason. If
your friend was jumped in Loyal
Valley, that would be Peter Bader's
patrol.

SCOTT COOLEY
How many members are in this
Association?

BOYD
All told, leaders and followers,
likely upwards of fifty or sixty
men.

JOHNNY RINGO
We're gonna need more men. I may
know some men who could help. They
are in Loyal Valley.

SCOTT COOLEY
Let's pay Deputy Worley a call
first.

EXT. DEPUTY WORLEY'S HOUSE - LATER

Worley and Doc Harcourt, mid 30's, town carpenter, well-digger, and general handyman for the town of Mason, look into Worley's well.

DOC HARCOURT

You've nursed this well as long as you can. It needs to go deeper and wider. That means somebody has to go down there and dig.

DEPUTY WORLEY

It don't get easier with time.

Harcourt grabs a shovel and steps onto the bucket as Worley lowers him down the well by the bucket rope. As Harcourt is just below ground level Cooley, Jarvis, Ringo, and Boyd ride up.

SCOTT COOLEY

I'm Scott Cooley, a friend of Tim Williamson's.

Cooley pulls his pistol and shoots Worley in the back. He empties his pistol into the deputy. Worley drops the rope and Harcourt is heard falling to the bottom of the well with a yell.

Scott dismounts, pulling a big knife from its scabbard. He moves to Worley and scalps him expertly.

JOHNNY RINGO

That's a fine bit of Injun knifework pardner. Not your first time I see.

Cooley and gang ride away.

EXT. BAIRD PLACE - EVENING

Brothers Mose, the eldest, and John Baird step onto the porch with their friend George Gladden, 20's, as Cooley and gang approach. They recognize Johnny Ringo and relax.

MOSE BAIRD

Well, I'll be damned. Two visits from Johnny Ringgold in one month. How can we be so lucky?

JOHNNY RINGO

Men, this is Mose Baird. That well-fed fella to his left is his brother John. That young man hiding in the back is George Gladden. This is Scott Cooley of Mernardville. This is Jarvis Hutton, and the kid is his nephew, Boyd.

MOSE BAIRD

If Johnny Ringo vouches for you boys, then step down and grab some chow. We just sat down ourselves.

Johnny doesn't like the name Mose calls him, but says nothing.

MOSE BAIRD (CONT'D)

Turn your mounts loose in the corral for the night.

(Mose looks at Boyd.)

Son, there's hay in the mow and a curry comb in the bin if you're so inclined.

Boyd hesitates before obeying. The others go inside.

INT. BAIRD PLACE - LATER

Boyd enters the shack. Everyone else has eaten and are smoking, drinking and talking.

JOHNNY RINGO

The job is too big for the three of us. No offense Kid.

Boyd shrugs as he fills his plate.

SCOTT COOLEY

We can't be certain about that. You know Tim Williamson? He was like family to me. Honor binds me to this path. I got no choice. According to Boyd here, there are too many of them for me to handle with a small crew. I'm hoping some of you, and others around, might understand what happened to Tim could happen to any man in the county, and be willing to make sure it doesn't.

(MORE)

SCOTT COOLEY (CONT'D)

In the short term, if you boys will ride with me and my men over to the Bader place tomorrow, I'll handle Bader myself. If he ain't alone, we'll have enough men to get out of there in one piece.

MOSE BAIRD

Tim was my friend too. The only reason we ain't gone after them goddam Prussians who did for him is exactly what you say. We don't have the numbers to make a fight. We'll join you. No more needs to be said as far as I'm concerned.

SCOTT COOLEY

We start in the morning.

EXT. BADER FARM - THE NEXT DAY

Carl Bader, a man two yours younger than his brother Peter, but with a similar look, plows a field with a draft horse as Cooley's gang arrives. Carl doesn't recognize them but sees the dangerous look of the newcomers.

CARL BADER

What's your business here? I've got work to do.

SCOTT COOLEY

Are you Peter Bader, the man who murdered Tim Williamson in cold blood on the road to Mason?

CARL BADER

Peter is my brother. I'm Carl Bader. You have no right to come onto our land and make unfounded accusations. Get off my property.

SCOTT COOLEY

I'll bet you'll deny being a part of them masked cowards who shot Tim down.

CARL BADER

I don't know what you're talking about.

Cooley dismounts and pulls Worley's dried scalp from a leather sack on his saddle.

SCOTT COOLEY
This was Deputy Worley's hair until
yesterday. Now it's mine.

CARL BADER
My god man. You're an animal.

Cooley shoots Carl then scalps him.

Mose Baird speaks to Ringgold.

MOSE BAIRD
Johnny, you still know how to pick
colorful friends. That's the first
scalp I ever seen. Looks like you
boys have this matter in hand. The
boys and me are gonna head back.

Cooley watches the three riders depart with a combination of
disappointment and disfavor.

SCOTT COOLEY
What about you three?

JOHNNY RINGO
Why should I want to part ways with
a new 'colorful' friend? The
party's just getting started.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - LATER

Sheriff Clark is seated behind his desk when Wolf Wechsler
arrives. Ernst Wechsler follows closely behind. They pull two
chairs from against the wall and take seats on the opposite
side of the Sheriff's desk.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
What are you going to do about all
of these murders?

SHERIFF CLARK
Which murders? Are you talking
about those your men are doing, or
are we talking about whoever is
killing those same murderers?

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
Is that what Deputy Worley was, a
murderer?

SHERIFF CLARK
I place his death at your feet
Wechsler.

(MORE)

SHERIFF CLARK (CONT'D)

He was intercepted on his way to deliver a warrant on Williamson. They forced him to play a role in his murder. He was accosted by your men in the dead of night. They took his keys and lynched them rustlers.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Do you honestly believe that story will cut muster under scrutiny? If so, you are a bigger fool than I thought you were. Worley went along willingly. Leaving the keys with your deputy was too simple a plan to be mistaken for genuine...

SHERIFF CLARK

Don't talk to me like that...

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Shut up and listen to sense John. You are up to your neck in this. This whole thing is circling you like buzzards around carrion. By your own admission, the Rangers have a keen interest in your involvement in the lynching. Ernst here barely got away alive when one of your escaped prisoners killed my man Verner Koenig.

ERNST WECHSLER

That was Boyd.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Be silent junge. My grandson has joined the outlaws - as I always knew was in his nature. The killing of Deputy Worley and Carl Bader are murders in the name of vengeance, Sheriff. You have to know your name will be on their kill list.

Clark looks surprised.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

So, you didn't guess that until now? They scalped Deputy Worley, for god's sake. What do you think they are going to do to you?

SHERIFF CLARK

A witness identified the Baird brothers and George Gladden riding with four men he didn't recognize. That makes seven. Word has been sent to the Rangers.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Their numbers are growing. I can send more of my men to join your posse if you think it wise.

SHERIFF CLARK

I'm riding out today in pursuit of Deputy Worley's murderers. I have 6 capable men freshly deputized. That should be enough to handle these killers.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

This matter does not come to my doorstep Sheriff. This is your moment. This is why we brought you here. This is what you are being paid for. Root out these brigands and bring them to justice.

Wolfgang rises.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

Komst du. (He speaks to Ernst as he leads the way out.)

John Cheney, a gambler with a red nose and hunched shoulders, in his 40's, enters the office, glancing at the departing Wechslers. He takes off his hat as he enters.

JOHN CHENEY

You sent for me Sheriff?

SHERIFF CLARK

You remember you owe me a favor, don't you Cheney?

JOHN CHENEY

I remember that you won't let me play poker at the Southern no more.

SHERIFF CLARK

You got drunk and shot a drifter.

JOHN CHENEY

He turned out to be a wanted man.

SHERIFF CLARK

You can't get drunk and shoot up the Southern, John.

JOHN CHENEY

What's this about Sheriff?

SHERIFF CLARK

Do one thing for me and you are back on the tables. Ride to Loyal Valley and look up the Baird boys. They were last seen with George Gladden. Bring 'em here. Tell 'em I'm trying to get to the bottom of the Williamson ambush. He don't have many friends here in Mason and we are trying to add any information that might show his side of what happened.

JOHN CHENEY

I doubt they were there Sheriff.

SHERIFF CLARK

No doubt they were not there John. They are providing what we call character facts - you know, 'he wasn't the sort of a man to rustle cattle,' 'he was a God-fearing family man' - that sort of thing. We're looking out for the widow and her reputation. Just get 'em here.

JOHN CHENEY

I'll head out first thing in the morning Sheriff.

SHERIFF CLARK

Go now John. I want them here in the morning - midday latest.

JOHN CHENEY

Yes sir.

Cheney leaves.

EXT. BAIRD PLACE - AFTERNOON

George Gladden and Mose Baird are seated on opposite sides of a small fire. They smoke cigarettes and toss stones in the fire, talking about nothing in particular.

Cheney rides into the little clearing encircling the dilapidated shack.

CHENEY

How do boys. Hope I'm not catching you at a busy time.

GEORGE GLADDEN

I don't remember you owing me any more money John.

CHENEY

It's nothing like that George. The Sheriff is looking into the Williamson killing, and he's having trouble finding anyone in Mason who will say anything good about Tim Williamson. You were his friends and he asked if you two might drop in and give a statement. The Sheriff is concerned about how this whole thing is affecting the Williamson widow.

MOSE BAIRD

The man is killed. What does the Sheriff expect Mary will gain in the bargain?

CHENEY

Hell Mose, I don't suppose to guess what the law wants or needs. I only do what I'm told. I don't see John here. Is he doing alright today?

MOSE BAIRD

He's up to his own business. Does the Sheriff want him for some reason?

CHENEY

I'm not sure how I got on your bad side boys. I thought I was doing you and your friends a good turn by riding all this way to help out. If you don't want to say your piece for Williamson and his widow, I'm not gonna try to make you. I'd better slope anyhow.

MOSE BAIRD

Sorry John. It's true we don't know each other very well, but that ain't no reason to send a man off on a long ride on an empty stomach. We'll go to Mason and make our statement in the morning. Why don't you sit down and eat with us? We got an extra bed - if that's good by you George.

GEORGE GLADDEN

Sure it is.

CHENEY

I am obliged boys. I've got a poker game waiting on me at the Southern. Maybe look me up when you're in town tomorrow.

MOSE BAIRD

Suit yourself Jim. Buy us a drink with your winnings.

CHENEY

Bring your billfolds boys. I ain't that hospitable.

Cheney departs.

EXT. HEDWIG'S HILL - THE NEXT DAY

George Gladden and Mose Baird ride towards Mason.

MOSE BAIRD

Buying young cattle makes for a longer time to earnings but it costs less at the start. I talked to John about it, and he agrees with me. If you have a better idea, I am all ears.

A large contingent of riders appear around the bend ahead, riding at speed. They see Sheriff Clark, Peter Bader, and a few other Association members in the group.

MOSE BAIRD (CONT'D)

Hell's in the wind George. We've been had. The Sheriff and Peter Bader are among them riders.

They wheel their horses and flee the direction they came from.

Shots ring out from the chasers. Bullets sing past Mose's head like angry hornets. The dirt beneath their horses' hooves spats dust puffs, and tree branches splinter overhead.

Mose is hit hard in the back. George catches a bullet in the butt. They veer off the road into the trees. They ride away, losing the pursuit for the moment. George is in the lead when Mose falls from his horse. George circles back.

GEORGE GLADDEN

My god, Mose. Please brother, get on your horse. You gotta be alright. We'll just ride out of this.

Mose can't rise. He dies on the ground.

GEORGE GLADDEN (CONT'D)

We'll just ride out of this.

George cries as he flees from the sounds of approaching riders.

EXT. BAIRD PLACE - NIGHT

George Gladden, sagging in the saddle, cautiously walks his horse towards the Baird house. Several horses are tied out front.

GEORGE GLADDEN

Hello the house. It's George Gladden.

The front door opens and John Baird appears.

JOHN BAIRD

Step down George. The boys are just sitting down to a drink. Where's Mose?

GEORGE GLADDEN

I can't get off my cayuse on my own John. Can you bear a hand?

JOHN BAIRD

You can't get off your... What the hell has come off George. Where is my brother?

GEORGE GLADDEN

He got shot. He's dead John. I'm shot too. I can't get off my horse. Please help me.

By this time the others are out of the house to assess what delayed John and the newcomer. Ringgold is outside when George announces Mose is dead.

JOHNNY RINGO

Mose is dead you say? Who shot him
- and you George?

GEORGE GLADDEN

Jim Cheney showed up at my place yesterday. He said Sheriff Clark wanted a statement from Mose and me to vouch for Tim Williamson - something about helping Mary. He seemed friendly enough and the request made sense at the time. Mose and me left out this morning. Sheriff Clark, and about a half dozen others, jumped us at Hedwig's Hill near Mason. Peter Bader was in the posse. Before I ran, I recognized a few other faces as German ranchers, but I'm having trouble remembering their names. I think...

George passes out. John Baird catches him. John Baird and Johnny Ringo carry George inside the shack.

I/E. BAIRD PLACE - CONTINUOUS

John and Ringo take Gladden to the table where the others brush the table clear of dishes and debris. They lay George on the table. Ringo pulls a knife and cuts away George's clothes.

JOHNNY RINGO

That bullet is too deep. I don't
dare try to dig it out.

JOHN BAIRD

He'll die if you don't try Johnny.

JOHNNY RINGO

I know it.
(Johnny looks around at
the others.)
I'll try. He's lost a lot of blood.

Johnny Ringo goes to work on the wound. He digs as best he can. George convulses.

JOHNNY RINGO (CONT'D)
 Goddammit! I cut the vein. I can't
 stop the bleeding. I'm sorry John.

George dies on the table.

Johnny storms around the room, breaking whatever he can get
 his hands on. Scott moves to calm Ringo.

JOHNNY RINGO (CONT'D)
 Best not touch me Scott. I'm gonna
 kill somebody and I don't want to
 start with you.

Scott Cooley backs away.

SCOTT COOLEY
 Alright Johnny. Let's start with
 them goddam Germans. The kid says
 there are sixty or so. We're with
 you - you know that.

JOHNNY RINGO
 Who is this Cheney? I'll start with
 him.

BOYD
 I know him. He lives up Comanche
 Creek just outside of Mason.

JOHNNY RINGO
 Get some sleep men. The next time
 you lay down might be for the last
 time.

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3

EXT. MONTAGE OF COOLEY, RINGO AND GANG KILLING HOODOOS -
 CONTINUOUS

The gang kills hooded men and others on the streets and
 roads. Cooley scalps some. They hang some.

EXT. MEUSBACH'S STORE - EVENING

Sheriff Clark and his 6 man posse pull up in front of the
 store. Clark dismounts leaving his men mounted. He walks to
 the door.

EXT. GROVE BEYOND MEUSEBACH'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

Cooley, Ringo, Jarvis, Boyd, John Baird are in the cover of a tree grove. Beyond, they watch as Clark walks in and his posse wait in front of Meusebach's Store.

JOHNNY RINGO
The Sheriff plus six deputies.

SCOTT COOLEY
This is our chance. Cut the head
off the snake.

JARVIS HUTTON
Old man Wechsler is the snake. The
sheriff is just his cutthroat.

SCOTT COOLEY
He dies nonetheless.

JOHNNY RINGO
He does.

BOYD
What's that coming from behind the
store?

A large group of riders approaches Clark's men.

JARVIS HUTTON
That's a lot of men.

SCOTT COOLEY
Rangers.

BOYD
How can you tell?

SCOTT COOLEY
I was one of 'em. I recognize some
of them from the old days.

JOHNNY RINGO
I would hazard a guess you
experienced what is called an
epiphany somewhere along the way,
because you are pure outlaw now.

SCOTT COOLEY
Something like that.

I/E. MEUSBACH'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Clark finds Meusebach serving drinks to locals.

MEUSEBACH

Sheriff.

SHERIFF CLARK

Mr. Meusebach. We're looking for a group of murderers. Their leader goes by the name Scott Cooley. Have you seen anyone who might answer to that name?

MEUSEBACH

Been slow today. I've served no murderers I know of. Can I offer you a libation?

SHERIFF CLARK

No time. Any of you men seen anything?

The few locals stare mutely. Clark leaves.

EXT. MEUSEBACH'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

Outside, a large group of Texas Rangers join Clark and his men in front of the store. Captain Roberts leads them.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

Funny seeing you again way out here, Sheriff. You don't seem drunk now.

SHERIFF CLARK

I ain't drunk Ranger. What are you doing here?

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

Governor Coke's orders. Your Judge Hey sent for Ranger help. I reckon he's tired of you shirking your sworn duties.

SHERIFF CLARK

I'm not gonna stand here and take abuse from you or anyone else. I'm the law here, not you.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

Good god! You are as dumb as you sound.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN ROBERTS (CONT'D)
 I'm assuming command of this
 manhunt. You and your men can go
 home or you can join us. I know you
 don't lift a finger anyhow so I can
 guess your decision.

SHERIFF CLARK
 You and your men can go to hell for
 all I care. We continue the hunt on
 our own.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS
 Suit yourself.

EXT. GROVE BEYOND MEUSEBACH'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

Cooley pulls his rifle from its scabbard. Ringo places a hand
 on his shoulder.

JOHNNY RINGO
 Not the right time. Let's ease on
 out of this while they are
 occupied.

They slip back through the woods.

EXT. MEUSBACH'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

Clark leads his men away. Captain Roberts leads his the other
 way.

EXT. WILDERNESS 1 - LATER

Cooley, Ringo and their gang ride along through brush sand
 trees. They are not on a trail and the going is rough.

SCOTT COOLEY
 We got a goodly sized pack of
 lawmen looking for us. It's a long
 chance, but we ought to lay low and
 travel by cover of night straight
 out of Mason County and this
 hornets' nest.

JARVIS HUTTON
 We can't hide here, Scott. We're
 too exposed. Any ideas Boyd?

BOYD
 I don't know this country as well
 as I do Mason proper.

(MORE)

BOYD (CONT'D)

The only place I know where we could hide out would be a bat cave I know of this side of Hilda. It's no more than five miles or so.

SCOTT COOLEY

Have you been there?

BOYD

No, sir. I've only heard stories about it, but it is easy to find at the base of the mountain yonder. Indians used to camp there when they massed for attacks on the white settlements. I can't think of anywhere else to hide.

SCOTT COOLEY

Lead the way kid.

EXT. WILDERNESS 3 - MOMENTS LATER

Boyd leads them deeper into the wilderness, ducking under reaching branches. Soon they reach the western edge of a copse, where they issue from the brambles one at a time. Jarvis is the last to emerge. He pulls up short, causing his horse to snort and rear. They are surrounded by a large group of Rangers, their badges easily recognizable.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

Keep them hands away from those pistols.

SCOTT COOLEY

Dan, quite a surprise seeing you here today.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

I'll bet it is, Scott. Who are your friends?

SCOTT COOLEY

Just some fellas I fell in with. You're looking for me. These boys were just on the trail. They don't have anything to do with any of this.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

Reports say you are marauding the country with a group of men. Are you trying to convince me you changed out your gang?

SCOTT COOLEY

Well, I'm glad it is a friend who got me.

RANGER LAMBERT

You don't remember nobody but Captain Roberts?

SCOTT COOLEY

Of course, I remember you Lambert; you too Jimmy Pitt; and who could forget that red hair and fiery temper McLaughlin hauls around at his own peril. How do boys?

The named men respond with unintelligible greetings.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

Scott, is this about that man you used to tell me about, the one who was murdered - Tim Williamson?

SCOTT COOLEY

It is Dan. These German ranchers are hanging men pell-mell. Some of them hung are just ranchers themselves, guilty of nothing but being in the wrong place. I can't sit idly by while my friends are murdered in cold blood.

Roberts looks over the gang members. He pauses on Jarvis.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

You got the look of a man who's been out of circulation for a long spell. You wanted other than this business here?

JARVIS HUTTON

No sir. I came to collect my dead brother's son here. My brother was hung a few years ago by a German rancher too. We're headed for parts more welcoming.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS

Is that right Scott?

SCOTT COOLEY

Yeah Dan. We're done here. No more dead men will bring Tim back.

Roberts give Ringo a long look.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS
What's your story friend?

JOHNNY RINGO
Just along for the ride Ranger.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS
Do I know you? Have I seen your
likeness nailed to a wall
somewhere?

JOHNNY RINGO
You'd probably remember clearly if
you had.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS
I got my duty to perform Scott. I'm
gonna have to take you into cus...

RANGER LAMBERT
Captain, I know your memory isn't
so bad you forgot Scott saved your
life - hell, all of our lives many
times. He never gave a thought to
his own welfare. As I see it, he is
only doing for his friend what he
would have done for us if we was
murdered. As far as I'm concerned,
we ain't seen anyone on this patrol
except some cowpunchers headed
home.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS
You look tired Scott. You ought to
get some rest. I'd keep moving on
to where the Rangers can't go. Take
a long break there and don't come
back. Lambert's right. I owe you my
life. After this, though, we are
square.

SCOTT COOLEY
Thanks Dan, fellas.

Cooley's gang rides away into the brush.

RANGER 1
What about all your talk about duty
and honor? You just let the
murderer we are after go.

RANGER LAMBERT
When he served, that man was worth
the rest of you put together.

(MORE)

RANGER LAMBERT (CONT'D)
 He was the fiercest and most loyal
 Ranger I ever met. If you was half
 the man he was, you'd know we
 wouldn't have let him go otherwise.

CAPTAIN ROBERTS
 Let's complete our patrol and get
 back to Loyal Valley.

EXT. JAMES RIVER BANK - NIGHT

Cooley and his gang are in camp. A rabbit roasts on the spit
 and a bottle is passed around. Boyd leans against a tree,
 fiddling with a twig as his mind works.

JOHNNY RINGO
 What's on your mind Kid?" You look
 like your plottin' somethin'.

BOYD
 Just remembering this picture so I
 don't forget what I see; what I
 learned; how I feel about it.

JOHNNY RINGO
 You're deep Kid. There will come a
 time when you won't be able to turn
 it off. Don't get in the habit of
 working it over in your mind. There
 ain't no use in it.

SCOTT COOLEY
 Sit with us. It's the end of our
 vendetta. Let's end it like it
 started - with no plan and only our
 wits to guide us. I won't forget
 how you helped. Thanks Kid.

EXT. JAMES RIVER BANK - MORNING

Cooley's gang are up with the dawn, saddling their horses and
 tying their packs. They say nothing until they are in their
 saddles.

SCOTT COOLEY
 Me and Johnny are headed west.
 Johnny says Arizona. I'm still not
 settled on that. I don't care for
 the desert much, and there is a lot
 of it between here and there.
 Wherever we go, you men are welcome
 to come along.

No one replies. Cooley sidles his horse over to Boyd.

SCOTT COOLEY (CONT'D)
(He shakes Boyd's
hand.) Thanks again, Kid.

He releases Boyd's then shakes Jarvis' hand.

SCOTT COOLEY (CONT'D)
Take care of him old man.

JARVIS HUTTON
I'll do what I can Scott. Keep your
eyes open. You too Johnny.

Ringgold tips his hat to the old outlaw with his usual smile.
The smile fades a fraction as he turns towards Boyd.

JOHNNY RINGO
You're going back to see your ma?

Boyd makes no reply.

JARVIS HUTTON
You'll be walking into a hornet's
nest if you go back to that ranch,
kid. You don't want to be in that
situation alone. I'll watch your
back.

BOYD
I want to talk to my Ma one last
time. I can't share that with you.
After that, unleash hell if you
want to.

JARVIS HUTTON
All right. I'll wait. This is the
only time I will. Bid her farewell
son. There ain't no future for you
anywhere but with me. That ain't a
boast. That's a simple fact.

JOHNNY RINGO
You want me to tag along?

BOYD
Thanks Johnny. I should be able to
handle this on my own.

JOHNNY RINGO
Boyd Hutton. Don't get killed too
young. I get a feeling we will meet
again on the trail. Adieu.

BOYD

When I'm done, where can we meet
up?

JOHNNY RINGO

Follow the bodies, Kid. We won't be
hard to find.

Ringo presses his horse to a trot. Ringo and Cooley disappear
with John Baird behind.

EXT. WECHSLER RANCH - LATER

Lights burn inside the house. Boyd creeps across the road
between the house and the stables. The moon shines brightly
on the bare packed road, providing ample but unnecessary
light. He hears Emma's voice through an open window near the
front of the house. Boyd hides out of sight and listens.

INT. WECHSLER RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Wolfgang sits on a chair in the large seating room. Emma
stands with her back to the window.

EMMA WECHSLER

Father, this whole affair is
getting dangerously out of hand.
Adding my only son to your list of
wanted outlaws goes beyond anything
I thought you capable.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

The boy is no good, just like his
father. Blood will always flow
true, and it has here. This uncle,
what did you say his name is...Jarvis
Hutton? The name is acid on my
tongue. He is here for revenge,
pure and simple. He has, by now,
poisoned what small portion of your
boy's mind was not already against
us.

EMMA WECHSLER

I should have never told you his
name but Kyle spoke of him often.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

A base criminal; doubtless another
murdering thief.

(MORE)

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

How could you go around with your bastard's father after learning the entire family was nothing more than a bunch of cutthroats?

EMMA WECHSLER

If you must know the truth, father, Kyle was the only cutthroat as you say. His brother took the blame for his younger brother's crime. He spent almost two decades in Huntsville for his brother. That means something doesn't it?

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Do you hear yourself, girl? You are as lost as your son. You boast of honor among criminals as though I would understand and agree. You are half witted if you think I am moved by your story. Get out of my sight!

EXT. WECHSLER RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Boyd feels a pistol at his back. He stands and turns. Ernst and Klaus train guns on him. Ernst takes Boyd's pistol.

ERNST WECHSLER

I told you he would come back, sneakin' around in the dark like the snake he is.

BOYD

I could of shot you when I had the chance. I let you live.

ERNST WECHSLER

That was your mistake outlaw.

KLAUS WECHSLER

You never should have come back. Move.

INT. WECHSLER RANCH - CONTINUOUS

They walk Boyd into the seating room. Emma and Wolfgang watch curiously. Ernst pushes Boyd into a chair.

ERNST WECHSLER

He was eavesdropping outside Father.

BOYD
I wanted to say good by to Ma.

EMMA WECHSLER
Let him go Father.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
Be still woman. This is all your fault. Don't make it worse than it has to be.

EMMA WECHSLER
How can it be worse? No Father. You can't...

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
Not another word. Ernst, take her to her room and lock the door.

Ernst moves to Emma. He tries to grab her arm and she jerks away, going to her room on her own.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)
Bring him outside Klaus.

EXT. WECHSLER RANCH - CONTINUOUS

As they exit there is a scuffle in the darkness. Two association men drag Jarvis over. He is bound hand and foot.

HOODOO 1
Look who we found sneakin' around. Charlie Johnson.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
That man's name is Jarvis Hutton. He's wanted for the killing of old man Miller near Hye. Witnesses said the man we know as Charlie Johnson was identified riding away from the Miller place the night of his murder. Pick him up.

Association Man 1 punches Jarvis in the gut.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)
This man is Boyd's uncle.

KLAUS WECHSLER
So that's why he knew so much about the fate of Emma's rustler beau. I thought he knew too much to have learned it through hearsay.

Hans and Ernst emerge from the kitchen door. Hans looks at Boyd with what looks like disappointment. Boyd looks down, ashamed of the pain he causes Hans. Ernst walks over, taking his place beside Klaus guarding Boyd.

Wolfgang gets close to Jarvis.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

I'll see you are a glaring part of this county's history, Hutton - you, your dead brother...

(Wolfgang looks at Boyd.)

...and your brother's spawn, will all have a place in our history. The name Hutton will be remembered, not as a family name, but instead as a curse. Your name will be a catch all for everything evil: lowly curs, rustlers, murderers and ne'er do wells. The murders of innocent men will be placed at your feet for all time. Posterity will look upon you and the Hutton name for what you are now and will permanently remain.

Wechsler spits on the ground near Jarvis' feet.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

Put these two in the hog trap and lock it. We'll deal with them when the others have gone to bed.

Emma bursts from the kitchen door.

EMMA WECHSLER

You are not going to hang my son in the dead of night father. This murder and night terror ends now.

Wechsler looks at her silently, his judgement a palpable thing. Finally, he shakes his head, and a mirthless smile turns the line of his lips upward.

Furious at his reaction, Emma shoves him mightily. The Wolf staggers backwards two steps before he regains his balance - and his temper.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Get out of my sight. How dare you lay hands upon a man as if you had any right...

EMMA WECHSLER

I have every right. You have ruined this family. You have turned my brothers into base murderers. You did the same to my son. There is a hot place in hell waiting for you.

Wechsler turns to Association Man 1.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

You! Take her into the house and lock her there.

Emma struggles and Association Man 1 slaps her hard and drags her away. Boyd struggles mightily. Ernst hits him on the head with a pistol. Boyd falls unconscious.

ERNST WECHSLER

Father, you would allow a stranger to handle your own daughter - my sister?

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Your complaint is precisely why I did not depend on you to remove her.

Wolfgang watches as Emma is dragged away without further resistance.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER (CONT'D)

Take Boyd to the barn and tie him securely. Put his uncle in the hog trap.

INT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Boyd comes to, tied to a post. Ernst and Klaus tower over him.

KLAUS WECHSLER

He ain't going nowhere.

ERNST WECHSLER

Nope. Well Boyd, I guess blood will always tell. Still, I don't understand why you would turn against the family that raised you. At least half of your blood is the same as ours. You gotta hate that part of you. If you didn't, I believe some part of you would have been loyal.

KLAUS WECHSLER

Come on Ernst. He hates us as much as he hates those he and his gang killed.

BOYD

I don't hate you. I don't feel any way about you or Grandfather. You were my family all of my life. That is the only thing that would stop me from killing you if I survived this thing. Killing you all would hurt my mother nearly as bad as your killing me. I can't do that to her.

KLAUS WECHSLER

You ain't one of us. You proved that when you killed Verner Koenig, and you and your gang killed so many others.

BOYD

You are right. I ain't one of you. I think I've always known it. I surely know it now. Kill your sister's son. You may still earn the respect of your father. On second thought, we all know that ain't the truth, don't we. You and yours can burn in hell for all time. I'll see you when you get there.

Ernst takes a half step towards Boyd before Klaus restrains him by grabbing his arm.

KLAUS WECHSLER

His time will come brother. You can pull him high with the rope if you like. Save your anger for that time.

The two brothers leave the stables.

EXT. HOG TRAP - CONTINUOUS

Klaus and Ernst arrive at the hog trap, a steel cage on the ground, covered in pig shit and rotten vegetables. Jarvis is inside, tied, and on the ground in the filth. Wolfgang and 2 association men watch him.

KLAUS WECHSLER
Boyd is tied to a post Father.

Wolfgang keeps his eyes on Jarvis but nods.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER
They hang at midnight - in the
gloom of the witching hour.
Sunlight will never shine on their
faces again.

Jarvis looks slowly up at the old German.

JARVIS HUTTON
You are a murderous old man, ain't
you? I don't imagine you have given
much thought to the price you will
pay for the lives you have taken. I
admit it. I planned to kill you
tonight. But, as you said yourself,
I hail from a family of lowly curs,
rustlers, murderers and ne'er do
wells. How are you any different
despite your prattling on about how
justified you are to kill in cold
blood? That boy you're about to
kill tonight, he didn't do
anything. The man he killed was
about to murder me. He saved my
life only because he knew your man
was set to do murder himself. I
guess when an important man of your
station sets the example, others
follow without question.

(Jarvis spits on the
ground outside the bars.)
I ain't gonna crawl for you or your
blind followers. I curse you all
for what you are about to do to my
nephew. You will all burn in hell
for that. He's a kid. You treated
him like an outsider, but he still
backed you when we talked after
your men tried to hang me. He held
to a loyalty to you and your family
I will never understand. I take no
pride that I will be proved right
in what I said about you. I told
him his loyalty was misplaced and
wasted on you. I shut down his
protests with a warning - no - a
promise he would see the truth at
his own peril. Well, here it is.

(MORE)

JARVIS HUTTON (CONT'D)

I should have come sooner and killed every last man of you. I wouldn't mind if I had been killed doing it if that meant the boy's hands were clean and he lived a long life.

Wechsler steps to one of his men, yanking a shotgun out of his hands. He points the weapon rapidly and fires.

Jarvis jerks backwards from the impact before slumping against the bars, his chin lolling on his chest as he dies.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

Get the boy on his horse. He hangs now.

INT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Boyd hears the stable door swing open. He awaits his fate when he sees Hans hurrying towards him. Hans cuts the ropes with a knife.

HANS

I don't care what they say, Boyd. I love you. You are my family. I heard what that outlaw said, and he was right. You have always been loyal to me.

(Hans hands Boyd the knife.)

Get away from here, Boyd. I'll never forget you and when I'm big enough, I'll find you and be your family again.

Boyd grasps little Hans' shoulder in his left hand. He glances towards the sound of men outside the front door.

BOYD

Come on. Let me get you out of here. No telling what will happen if they don't see you in the dark.

Boyd leads Hans into one of the horse stables. He drops to his hands and knees and presses rotting planks away from a small hole in the wall, making the opening large enough to escape through.

I/E. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Hand squeezes through to the outside followed by Boyd. They flee towards the woods beyond the home pasture. They hear voices inside the stables.

KLAUS WECHSLER

(o.s.)

He's gone

ERNST WECHSLER

(o.s.)

This way. He got out though this hole in the wall.

EXT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Wolfgang and the 2 association men arrive outside the stables. Boyd and Hans can barely be seen through the darkness, Wolfgang grabs the rifle from one of the men and levers a round. He fires and misses.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

You won't get away from me you bastard!

Wolfgang takes aim again.

EXT. HOME PASTURE - CONTINUOUS

Boyd and Hans run, dodging left and right to avoid brush falls and stumps. More shots ring out, the bullets whistling close by. Hans is slightly ahead. Hans hops over a stump as Boyd dodges it to his right. A shot sounds and Hans drops to the ground. Boyd picks him up and carries him to the nearby treeline. Boyd looks into Hans' eyes as he lays him down gently.

BOYD

Stay with me Hans. You're gonna be alright.

HANS

I told you I wasn't small, Boyd.

BOYD

And you are right. You're bigger than all of us. I should have seen it sooner.

Hans dies. Boyd finally flees, leaving Hans there.

INT. WOLFGANG'S OFFICE - LATER

Wolfgang Wechsler sits in the chair behind his desk. He pays no attention to the forms and papers strewn across the rich wooden top. His gaze focuses inward. His appearance is one of a man haunted by his thoughts and his conscience.

Thunder rumbles somewhere in the distance. The sound resembles a gunshot. Another sounds. It was a gunshot. Wolfgang looks to the pistol laying on his desk.

Lightning flashes revealing the silent appearance of Boyd Hutton. He stands inside the door frame of the Wolf's office. The next lighting flash clearly shows Boyd's face. He looks as miserable as the Wolf feels. In that brief flash of light, Wechsler detects tears mixed with blood on Boyd's face.

BOYD

Klaus and Ernst are dead. I killed them. They jumped me near the garden. I thought about just gathering my things and leaving, but I can't do that now. You and your family have killed my only family and tried to kill me. Now I'm gonna kill you, Grandfather.

WOLFGANG WECHSLER

I am not your grandfather! Your mother fled during the night. You have no one!

BOYD

Neither do you old man.

Wechsler moves as quickly as he can towards the pistol on the desk.

Boyd draws and kills the old man.

EXT. MASON COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAWN

Boyd and Johnny Ringo walk away from the courthouse door. As the shot widens, we see the building is on fire. They mount their horses.

JOHNNY RINGO

Well Kid, your wearing long pants now for sure. Why do you care about the reputation of an old convict and poor Scott Cooley, dead and buried in Blanco County?

BOYD

Jarvis told me once that all he had to show for his life was his name. He said a man's name is all he will ever have. Wolfgang threatened to ruin his, and mine. I couldn't let that happen.

A bell clangs at a distance as the town raises the alarm.

JOHNNY RINGO

We won't make it to Arizona if you burn down every courthouse we come across.

BOYD

I don't make promises I can't keep but I'll tag along as you let me.

Ringo and Boyd ride casually away as flames destroy the building.

FADE TO BLACK