

QUIET CLAIM

Written by

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INT. GRAND PACIFIC HOTEL, PRIVATE SUITE - NIGHT

FIVE commodities brokers in suits sit at a felt covered table with a DEALER and a well dressed woman. SARAH MILLER (30S) studies each of the men in turn through the haze of cigar smoke.

SARAH  
How is work, Henry?

HENRY (40s) shifts in his chair. He makes eye contact with her then looks at his cards.

HENRY  
Busy. As the West expands, the commodities trade grows.

JOSHUA (20s), the younger man to his immediate left, pipes up.

JOSHUA  
We're bringing in grain and cattle from California now.

STEPHAN (30s), on Joshua's immediate right kicks him under the table. He winces.

STEPHAN  
Keep work at work.

Sensing she's found the weak link, Sarah leans forward and pours Joshua a shot of whiskey. She makes certain to reach across him so he can drink in a healthy dose of her cleavage.

Joshua gulps, then pounds his drink. She refills it, maintaining eye contact. He looks at his cards and folds.

The ash trays are empty. Everyone has a healthy stack of chips. The whiskey bottle is full.

The grandfather clock strikes 10:00 PM

MATCH CUT:

The grandfather clock strikes 3:00 AM

The ash trays are full. Most of the chips are now in front of Sarah. There are two empty whiskey bottles.

The two unnamed men are passed out at the table. Henry has a few chips left, and folds in disgust. Stephan steps out of the room. The dealer goes on break.

SARAH  
What's the rumor on the streets?

HENRY  
Are you asking us about hot  
commodity tips after taking our  
money?

SARAH  
I didn't twist any arms. This is  
the cleanest game in town.

Joshua tries to focus his eyes.

JOSHUA  
What are you looking for?

SARAH  
Rumors of the next big thing.

HENRY  
I don't know about any one big  
thing. Business grows as the  
country grows.

Through his haze, Joshua spies Sarah's beauty and lets  
something slip.

JOSHUA  
What about baux--

HENRY  
--zip it, kid.

Sarah sits up in her chair a bit.

SARAH  
Baux? What is baux?

Henry glares at Joshua.

HENRY  
Not another damn word.

SARAH  
Bauxite?

Henry throws up his hands and stands.

HENRY  
I wasn't here.

Henry storms out of the room, leaving Joshua with Sarah.

SARAH  
Who's interested in bauxite?

INT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DAY

Sarah stares out the window of a cross-country train. She's traded her finery for casual travelling clothes.

The rhythmic motion of the train, the clackety-clack of the rails, and the warm sun shining on her face hypnotizes her into a state between wake and sleep. She remembers a world that seems forever ago.

**BEGIN FLASHBACK:**

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Sarah in her twenties visits DR. PETERS' (50s) office in a small frontier town. He examines her. He shakes his head.

DR. PETERS  
I'm sorry.

INT. A FRONTIER CHURCH - DAY

Sarah and her husband DAVID MILLER (20s) sit in a pew. He is a large man. Large enough that anyone sitting behind him in church would rather move than ask him to slouch.

Some voices from the congregation filter through the background noise. She should be used to the sniping by now. She has heard it before, but she's never heard it in church.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)  
Poor thing.

BRUNETTE WOMAN (V.O.)  
She's lost three babies now.

OLDER WOMAN (V.O.)  
She's cursed. That young man should send her away and just focus on raising chickens. Serves them right. Rich kids coming in to town with family money.

David grabs her hand. With her free hand she wipes away tears of sadness and rage.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah stands at the stove in the kitchen of their modest frontier cabin. Her back is to David. He hesitates, then holds her from behind.

She shrugs him off, still with her back to him.

DAVID

I don't care what they say.

SARAH

We moved here to build a poultry empire. We need kids to do that.

DAVID

Maybe it isn't God's will.

Sarah spins around gesturing with the wooden spoon in her hand and tears in her eyes. She stomps her foot.

SARAH

Maybe He could find a kinder way to tell us.

EXT. HOUSE FIRE - NIGHT

A few dozen men from town attempt to douse a house fire with buckets of water but the blaze is too far along. David turns to SHERIFF WALT JEFFRIES (40s).

DAVID

Were the Jacobis inside?

SHERIFF

Won't know until we go through the debris.

A wail comes from behind them. Everyone turns.

A small boy BEN JACOBI(10), materializes from the dark rocky wilderness, wide eyed. He rushes toward the fire.

BEN

Noooooouh!

David and Sarah stop him from running into the flames. He fights them, sobbing. His tears fall on David's shirt as reflections of his burning home dance in his eyes.

INT. FRONTIER CHURCH - DAY

Ben, Sarah and David sit in the front church pew facing PASTOR LUKE (50s).

SARAH  
We want to take in Ben.

PASTOR LUKE  
It's a huge commitment. You'll need to learn a new language.

Sarah and David nod.

PASTOR LUKE (CONT'D)  
A horrible thing happened to him.

SARAH  
What if giving Ben a home is why God wouldn't give us children?

PASTOR LUKE  
What if it isn't?

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

Sarah, David and Ben take the horse and wagon into town for supplies. David pulls the reins in front of the general store. They've grown accustomed to whispers from the townies.

Sarah and Ben get off and head into the store. David brings the wagon around back to load.

Most people are decent enough to only whisper. A choice few aren't that well bred.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Sarah and Ben walk the shelves. It gives her an opportunity to practice her sign language.

SARAH  
*Would you like some candy?*

Ben smiles and nods.

BEN  
*Yes, please, ma'am!*

Two goons that work for Adams Cattle Company see them and twitch in mockery. They laugh. One has a gold front tooth. Sarah pretends not to hear them.

Ben sees them out of the corner of his eye, does a double take, and flips them off.

BEAU  
Did that little shit just--

CLETUS  
--Yup. Let's teach it some manners.

As they take a step forward, a large hand grabs the backs of each of their collars and stops them cold.

DAVID  
You weren't thinking of touching my son, were you?

Beau and Cletus rush out the door.

MR. POTTER (50s) steps out from behind the counter.

MR. POTTER  
Those boys are bad news.

David's eyes keep following the two goons.

DAVID  
Let's add some ammo to the bill.

**END FLASHBACK**

INT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DAY

The train whistle brings Sarah back to the present. They roll into a small station.

Sarah wanders. The sun beats down. She buys a beer from a MATRONLY WOMAN (50s) who has a small kiosk. It's warm and flat. Perfect for washing down dust.

She drinks it while surveying the rugged landscape.

The train whistle sounds again, so she slams the rest of her beer and returns her glass jar to the woman.

MATRONLY WOMAN  
Leaving home or headed home?

Sarah looks up the tracks from whence she came and looks down the tracks toward her destination.

SARAH  
I'm not sure.

**BEGIN FLASHBACK**

EXT. MILLER RANCH - DAY

David teaches Sarah and Ben how to shoot. Ben has a .22 Rifle and Sarah a .45 caliber revolver. They shoot at cans and behind the chicken barns. They miss more than they hit.

The pigs in the pen don't seem to mind the noise.

INT. BANK - DAY

David, Sarah and Ben visit the bank to make a deposit. They wear damp raincoats. MR. JENKINS (40s), the banker, hands him a receipt.

MR. JENKINS

There is a matter to discuss  
regarding young Ben.

DAVID

What would that be?

MR. JENKINS

His parents left a box in the  
vault. The annual rent is due.

DAVID

What's in it?

INT. VAULT - DAY

Mr. Jenkins opens the Jacobi's deposit box and they look inside. There is a basic will, which names Ben the beneficiary of their meager estate, and some official looking papers from the Federal Government.

DAVID

What's this?

MR. JENKINS

It appears to be a mining claim.

David thumbs through it.

DAVID

What's bauxite?

MR. JENKINS

A mineral. It's where aluminum  
comes from.



DAVID  
Isn't aluminum expensive?

MR. JENKINS  
Yes, because it's expensive to process.

DAVID  
Ben's parents never had the money to mine it.

MR. JENKINS  
It would seem not. The claim is still good though. Ben owns it now.

DAVID  
What would have happened if Ben had died in the fire too?

MR. JENKINS  
Their property would have gone to the State and the claim would have reverted to the Federal Government to be resold.

DAVID  
Does anyone else know about this?

MR. JENKINS  
Not as far as I know.

DAVID  
Let's keep it that way.

EXT. MILLERS' YARD- DAY

Snow covers the ground. Ben is now as tall as Sarah. He and Sarah practice shooting. Their breath fogs the air. They hit their targets most of the time.

EXT. MILLERS' CHICKEN SHEDS - DAY

A bit of snow still dots the landscape, but new plants pop up out of the soil. Ben scatters chicken feed for the yard hens. He spots a fox slinking around the perimeter.

Ben takes the .45 revolver from his hip, cocks it, and slowly draws a bead on the fox. He takes a deep breath, exhales, and pulls the trigger, ending the threat to the chickens.

Sarah comes out of the house at the sound of gunfire.

SARAH  
*What was that?*

BEN  
*A fox by the new hen house.*

SARAH  
*Did you get it?*

BEN  
*Yep. When I get enough, I'll make you a coat, Mom.*

Sarah tears up.

SARAH  
*That's the first time you called me Mom.*

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

David, Sarah and Ben dine in at home.

DAVID  
*I spoke with Mr. Adams today. He wants to buy your parents' property.*

BEN  
*No.*

David and Sarah look at each other puzzled.

SARAH  
*Just no?*

BEN  
*That bastard and two of his goons were at the house the day it burned down.*

SARAH  
*Why is this the first time we're hearing about this?*

BEN  
*He's rich, powerful and I have no proof.*

DAVID  
*Fair enough. I'll tell him tomorrow.*

INT. ADAMS CATTLE COMPANY - DAY

David and Sarah visit JOHN ADAMS (40s). Mr. Adams is so proud of being named after the sixth President of the United States, he has a portrait of him on his desk.

JOHN  
I'm sorry?

DAVID  
He doesn't want to sell.  
Sentimental reasons.

JOHN  
So he's deaf and stupid?

David stands.

DAVID  
There's no reason to be  
ungentlemanly. That's my son you're  
talking about.

JOHN  
Perhaps you should talk some sense  
into him.

DAVID  
Perhaps you should hear "no" more  
often.

JOHN  
I don't like your tone.

DAVID  
Then you're really not going to  
like this: Drop it or I will use my  
considerable family connections to  
make your life a living hell.

David controls his temper just well enough not to break anything on his way out.

John watches after David. A moment later, Beau and Cletus walk in.

JOHN  
Persuade them.

**END FLASHBACK**

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

The next train station is a bit larger. This one has a small restaurant. She opts for a decent meal.

She has traded her gingham dress for a more masculine style of traveling wear.

Brown cotton leggings, knee high riding boots, suspenders, a white shirt, a wide brimmed hat and a pair of chrome .45 revolvers.

A cold, steely glare finishes the look.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

She walks in and seats herself at a table with her back to the wall, facing the door. The men at the bar know to steer clear of anyone that watches a door. A SALOON GIRL walks over.

SALOON GIRL  
Everything okay?

SARAH  
So far.

SALOON GIRL  
Can I bring you something hot to eat?

She nods.

SARAH  
And a whiskey.

The saloon girl eyes Sarah with a bit of pity.

SALOON GIRL  
Is someone looking for you?

SARAH  
I'm not taking any chances.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

As Sarah's train pulls into town, she notices a new sign that reads: "Welcome to Adams County". She's still wearing her riding gear complete with a pistol on each hip. She hitches a ride into town on a coach.

INT. COACH - NIGHT

Nothing much has changed in the three years she's been gone. A few new buildings. Nothing fancy. She tucks her hat down over her eyes so no one recognizes her and gets off at the livery.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

A lone rider walks out of town into the blackness of the thinly inhabited frontier.

INT. MILLERS' BARN - NIGHT

Sarah lets herself into the barn, lights a lamp and untacks her horse. She's so involved she doesn't hear anyone behind her until the sound of the hammer on a pistol is cocked.

DAVID

Don't move.

Sarah puts her hands up. Her eyes dart back and forth.

SARAH

I've rehearsed this moment in my head for a long time.

David frowns at first. He slowly holsters his weapon.

DAVID

Sarah?

She turns around with her hands still up.

SARAH

Wanna pat me down?

David rushes to her and takes her into his arms.

DAVID

Where have you been?

SARAH

Later. How is Ben?

DAVID

Great. Taller than you. Let's wake him up.

SARAH

Why don't I say "hi" in the morning?

INT. MILLER HOUSE - DAY

Ben stumbles down from his attic bedroom, rubbing his eyes, to the smell of bacon and eggs. He stops when he sees Sarah in the kitchen.

She turns around. Starts toward him. He scowls and retreats to his room and slams the door. She glances at David.

DAVID

Did you think it would be easy?

SARAH

Will he forgive me before his birthday?

DAVID

In his mind, one Mom died and the other abandoned him.

Ben bolts out of his room fully clothed. He grabs the rifle by the door and stomps out.

SARAH

Looks like I have some work to do.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Ben buys a few boxes of .22 caliber ammunition. People stare at him, but he's accustomed to it. As he turns to leave a BIG DUFUS (late teens) blocks the door.

BIG DUFUS

What are you doing here?

Ben stares at him with disinterest. He can't read his lips through the bushy tobacco stained beard, but he's dealt with idiots like him his entire life so he gets the general idea.

Ben puts his hand into his left jacket pocket. He practices speaking out loud.

BEN

Go fuck yourself.

Big Dufus is unprepared for this. He turns his head to shout outside.

BIG DUFUS

Hey guys! It can talk!

As he turns his head back, Ben pulls his fist out of his pocket. It's now wearing jewelry.

Ben's fist and his brass knuckles connect with Big Dufus' chin. He crumples to the floor.

Ben casually exits the store.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Ben packs his ammo into his saddlebags. FIVE DUFUSES surround him. It takes them a moment, but they realize Big Dufus hasn't come out yet. SKINNY DUFUS goes inside to check.

SKINNY DUFUS (O.S.)

Help!

The rest of the morons run into the store. They return, with Skinny Dufus and UGLY DUFUS dragging the still unconscious Big Dufus out of the store. The other three are angry and ready to beat Ben.

A crowd gathers. The three oafs attack Ben, opting for a group attack with brute force.

They are strong but slow. GINGER DUFUS throws a haymaker which exposes his knee. Ben stomps on the side of it, dislocating it. He falls, screaming.

He spins to meet up with the next corn-fed dim-wit, FAT DUFUS, who dives directly into his brass knuckles, breaking his jaw.

CROSS-EYED DUFUS continues forward, but Ben is faster, rotating again to grab the shotgun from his horse. Ben clubs him in the side of the head.

Skinny Dufus and Ugly Dufus, holding up the first casualty, stare Ben down but decide against making a move.

SHERIFF

What's going on fellas?

The Sheriff strolls up on the wood plank sidewalk and glances at the carnage.

A horse walks up opposite him and stops.

DAVID

Looks like some inbred rednecks  
tried to jump my son and failed.

BEN

**What are you doing here?**

DAVID  
**I had a feeling you might pick a  
fight.**

Ben grins. David glares at the Dufuses.

The conscious Dufuses wilt under his glare.

SHERIFF  
I could run him in.

DAVID  
You could try. Sellout.

The Sheriff approaches David and whispers.

SHERIFF  
Dammit, David. You have no idea the  
shit I protect you all from. Keep  
your heads down. The only reason  
you're still alive is because of  
all the tax money he collects from  
you.

David snorts.

DAVID  
Tax money? That's what we're  
calling it now?

David motions to Ben, who climbs up on his horse. They ride  
away together.

INT. SALOON - DAY

David and Ben grab lunch at the saloon. Only a few diners are  
there. They glance at the Millers occasionally and finish  
their meals quickly so they can leave.

By the time their food arrives, they are the only patrons.

DAVID  
***With your Mom back we need to lay  
low.***

BEN  
***She left us.***

DAVID  
***She did it to protect you.***

BEN  
***We could have fought back.***



DAVID

*Adams is too powerful. Since your Mom left he's declared himself Mayor, renamed this town "Adamsville" and made it the county seat of Adams County.*

BEN

*I'm starting to think this guy has an ego.*

David grins.

BEN (CONT'D)

*We should keep an eye on them. Map their operation. Go on the offensive.*

DAVID

*What do you have in mind?*

BEN

*Don't know yet.*

David and Ben both look over at MR. AND MRS. SAMUELS (40s), the Saloon owners. They look around their empty lobby and sigh.

DAVID

*I have an idea.*

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

SARAH

What?

DAVID

Hear me out. In order to clear your name we need to map out Adams' operation. Find the weak points. Systematically shut each part down.

SARAH

You sound like your father.

DAVID

I'll try not to take that personally.

SARAH

Shutting him down may not be enough.

DAVID  
Now you sound like your father.

Sarah casts a momentary scowl.

SARAH  
I only care about winning Ben back.

DAVID  
Don't push it. The good news is  
he's still angry with you.

SARAH  
What does that mean?

DAVID  
We only hate those we love. Just be  
your usual patient self.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

About half of the congregation file out after the sermon. The  
rest remain seated. The pastor locks the door.

David walks to the front.

DAVID  
Thanks for staying. I'll be quick.  
Adams must go.

Murmurs of assent run through the crowd.

MR. SAMUELS  
He's bleeding us dry. His new "city  
business tax" is killing us.

People nod.

MR. JENKINS  
Does anyone else think it's suspect  
that bandits suddenly appeared and  
his "County Protection Fee"  
started?

More murmurs of assent.

MR. POTTER  
What do we do, David?

DAVID  
First, we need to map his  
organization. In order to take this  
to the authorities we need proof.

MRS. SAMUELS

How do we do that?

DAVID

If you see or hear anything suspicious, write it down. Ben or myself will pick up your notes every day and compile a master list. Sooner or later we'll have enough data to take to the Attorney General.

MRS. SAMUELS

We'll be broke before then, David.

DAVID

Which is why Miller Poultry is going to pay you for this information. An amount equal to your monthly tax bills.

Gasps ripple through the crowd.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

David and Sarah sit at the kitchen table.

SARAH

You promised them what?

DAVID

Whatever it takes to clear my wife's name so we can be seen in public together again.

SARAH

That's going to cost a fortune.

DAVID

We've grown to be the second largest agricultural business in the county since you left.

SARAH

You two have worked hard.

DAVID

If we can't spend it on you, then what's the point?

SARAH

I've missed you.

David leans in for a kiss. Ben blasts through the front door and empties his pockets of scraps of paper.

BEN

*Notes from town.*

They uncrumple them and read.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - DAY

They stand back and admire their work. On one wall they've hung an old sheet and pinned all of the notes onto it in strategic spots. Different pieces of colored yarn link some of them.

SARAH

Adams has been busy.

DAVID

What's the plan, boss?

SARAH

Why am I the boss?

DAVID

Because you've been working on a plan since the minute you left.

Sarah smirks.

SARAH

Am I that obvious?

DAVID

I just know you.

Ben studies the scraps of paper.

BEN

Look.

He points at two separate notes. One is from Mr. Potter at the general store. The other is from Mr. Jenkins at the bank.

SARAH

Seems that Potter and Jenkins were chatting about an attempted bank robbery. When was that?

DAVID

About six months ago.

SARAH

Potter remembers four guys on horses ride through town that day. He didn't recognize them.

DAVID

And four men tried to rob the bank. It rattled people so badly Adams said he was going to hire extra muscle to protect the town.

SARAH

That's how the new tax started?

David nods.

DAVID

Adams hired four guys for the town's protection.

SARAH

He staged a fake bank robbery to scare everyone into giving him money?

DAVID

And those are the same guys that collect the tax.

SARAH

The people are financing their own tyranny.

DAVID

He calls them "Adams Security". They have badges, but they don't answer to the Sheriff. Only to Adams.

Ben points to another note.

SARAH

Mrs. Stanford says Adams is doubling the security staff.

DAVID

This isn't just about control. Something else is going on.

SARAH

We need more information. I hate being stuck here.

DAVID  
Maybe I should just ask him.

INT. ADAMS CATTLE COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

David and Ben walk in. They knock on his door.

JOHN (O.S.)  
Come in.

INT. JOHN ADAMS' OFFICE - DAY

John sits behind his ornate desk, smoking a cigar. He scowls once he sees who it is.

JOHN  
What do you two want?

Ben glares.

DAVID  
What's your plan, John?

JOHN  
What are you asking?

DAVID  
I know you're a controlling  
bastard, but taxing people out of  
business? That isn't a long term  
scheme.

JOHN  
None of your damn business. Now  
take your feral kid out of here.

DAVID  
I warned you not to talk about my  
son that way.

David grabs John by the lapels. A struggle ensues. Ben spots something interesting on John's desk. He stuffs it in his jacket while they are distracted.

JOHN  
Goddammit. Guards!

TWO of his SECURITY TEAM run in and peel David off of John. One stands between them and the other holds Ben back.

DAVID

Get your hands off my son or I'll  
kill you.

The first guard attempts to grab David so he punches him in the gut and hits him on the side of the jaw as he's doubled over, knocking him out cold.

Ben uses the distraction to stomp on the other guy's foot. As he hops around in pain, Ben pushes him over where he strikes his head on the edge of the Mayor's desk, knocking him out as well. They head for the door.

JOHN

Dammit, David. You're trying my  
patience.

DAVID

I don't know what you're up to, but  
I will find out and I will put a  
stop to it.

They walk out. The guards come to.

JOHN

It's time to turn up the heat.

INT. SALOON - DAY

David and Ben stop for a bite of lunch. Mrs. Samuels smiles and brings them food.

Ben looks around and pulls something from his jacket and sets it in front of them.

DAVID

*A map? You sly dog.*

They spread it out.

BEN

*Adams' property and my parents'  
property?*

DAVID

*It looks like an outline of a  
building to be built on your  
property. It's big.*

BEN

*What are these red lines coming out  
of it?*

DAVID

*I don't know. One of them runs to town. Another one goes to your claim. And this one goes to Adams' meatpacking plant.*

BEN

*He's drawn in a new rail spur, too. What does it all mean?*

DAVID

*I don't know, but maybe this is why he needs all the money he's stealing from the town.*

John and FOUR of his GUARDS walk in. Ben stuffs the map back into his jacket. They all glare at David and Ben. They glare back.

They approach the Samuels who work behind the bar.

JOHN

Because of the actions of one David Miller, the business tax and security tax are going to double.

David's eyes roll. Since David is paying everyone's bill, no one reacts.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And I'm doubling rents on main street.

Groans come from the Samuels and the business lunch crowd. As they turn to leave, John turns and peers over his shoulder.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(sing songy)  
Have a nice day!

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

The Millers dine while looking over today's intelligence. Sarah expresses special interest in the map.

SARAH

What are these red lines?

BEN

Don't know. Any ideas?

She shakes her head.



SARAH

What's his game? He wants to build something big on Ben's land so he's fleecing the town to pay for it?

DAVID

Ben doesn't want to sell.

Sarah covers her mouth so Ben can't read her lips.

SARAH

Why hasn't Adams killed all of us? We don't have any heirs. The claim would revert to the Federal Government. He could buy it cheap.

DAVID

He might be a little afraid of us.

Sarah smiles.

SARAH

Chip off the old block.

Ben glares at Sarah and pounds the table.

BEN

Stop hiding your lips!

SARAH

**Sorry, baby.**

BEN

**I'm not your baby.**

DAVID

What's the plan?

SARAH

Keep snooping. Figure out what he wants to build on Ben's land and keep us all alive.

**BEGIN MONTAGE**

-- Ben rides into town.

-- He hitches his horse in front of the general store.

-- He strolls down Main Street.

-- People greet him. Shake his hand. Slip him scraps of paper.

-- He ducks into every business.  
-- In each one of them, someone sneaks him a scrap of paper.  
-- A wink, a scrap of paper.  
-- A smile, a scrap of paper.  
-- A beer, a scrap of paper.  
-- Working girls at the hotel fawn over him. And slide a scrap of paper into his pocket.  
-- He picks up David's cleaning. A scrap of paper is inside.  
-- Two of the goon squad spot him from across the street. He flips them off and laughs. They scowl but do nothing. Onlookers snicker.  
-- Ben mounts his horse and heads home.  
-- Four of Adams' goons watch him leave.

**END MONTAGE**

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

David, Sarah and Ben read the notes over dinner.

Ben reads a note. Sets it aside. Reads a few more, sets one of them with the first. Reads the two notes again and scans a few more, selects one and puts it with the other two.

He holds them out to Sarah. She takes them. Reads them. Stands and goes to the sheet on the wall.

SARAH

It can't be.

She pins the notes to the sheet.

DAVID

What is it?

They both get up and look over Sarah's shoulders.

SARAH

The girls at the hotel said they entertained someone from a railroad, a coal company and an electricity company this week.

DAVID  
What does that mean?

SARAH  
If they met with Adams, it's the missing piece of the puzzle.

DAVID  
What puzzle?

BEN  
Leave it up to me.

EXT. MAIN STREET HOTEL - DAY

Ben ties his horse to the hitching post in front of the Main Street Hotel. Three of the girls ABIGAIL, DOLLY, and FLORENCE (20s) relax on the front porch. They like Ben.

They rush over to him, which he clearly does not hate.

BEN  
How's business, ladies?

They all roll their eyes.

ABIGAIL  
The Mayor's rent increase has put a crimp on our pocketbooks. Locals can't afford frivolous expenses right now.

FLORENCE  
Yeah, we are stuck with only the out of town visitors.

DOLLY  
It's cut my revenue in half.

They become aware of two of Adams' goons watching them from across the street. They flip them off in unison.

Ben hands each of them a five dollar bill and they make a show of leading him inside.

INT. ROOM 103, MAIN STREET HOTEL - DAY

They all sit.

ABIGAIL  
How can we help, Ben?

Ben reads her lips and responds vocally.

BEN

I need to know more about the coal man, the railroad man and the electricity man.

DOLLY

Whatcha wanna know?

BEN

Did they meet with Adams?

FLORENCE

Yes. All at the same time. They were consulting on building something.

Ben stands.

BEN

Great! I need to go.

Abigail stands and blocks the door.

ABIGAIL

What's your hurry, cowboy?

BEN

I need to report this.

DOLLY

You've only been here a minute. If you leave now, people will know we gave you information.

FLORENCE

We could be in trouble.

BEN

We can't have that. What should we do?

They all approach Ben slowly.

Abigail runs her fingers through his hair.

ABIGAIL

We have a few ideas.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

The Millers have dinner. Ben seems distracted.

SARAH

*You okay?*

BEN

Huh?

David hides his grin behind a mouthful of mashed potatoes.

DAVID

*Good work on the spying.*

BEN

What does it all mean?

Sarah looks up at their clue sheet. Their eyes follow hers.

SARAH

Bauxite.

DAVID

How do the parts all fit?

SARAH

Aluminum is expensive because  
bauxite is difficult to convert.

DAVID

Which is why Ben's bauxite claim is  
worthless. It's too expensive to  
mine and convert.

SARAH

Except--

DAVID

--I knew it! You found something in  
Chicago.

SARAH

Someone has been working on a way  
to make it easier.

DAVID

Where did you get this information?

SARAH

I started a high end poker game  
near the Chicago Mercantile  
Exchange. I made some contacts.

DAVID  
Of course you did. Why?

SARAH  
Ben's bauxite claim. I thought perhaps I could find some investors. Help you two out even if I could never see you again.

DAVID  
But you're back.

SARAH  
I met a very interesting man. A Swiss industrialist. He told me there is a new process for extracting aluminum from bauxite.

DAVID  
What does it need?

SARAH  
The main ingredient is electricity.

Ben frowns and looks at the map he stole from Adams' desk. He traces it with his finger.

BEN  
**This is the new rail spur that will bring the coal in to feed the new electrical plant he's going to build.**

DAVID  
**And the red lines?**

BEN  
**Electrical lines to power the mining plant and the town.**

SARAH  
There's a Federal program that gives money to companies who want to bring electricity to rural areas. The Federal government is giving him the money to build the electrical plant.

DAVID  
Between cattle, aluminum and electricity, he's going to own half the state.

SARAH

Which makes him dangerous.

DAVID

Ben turns eighteen in three weeks.  
The only way Adams can get his  
hands on that claim is to kill all  
of us.

BEN

If I die, you inherit it. If we all  
die it reverts back to the  
government.

SARAH

Around here, he is the government.  
We need to speed up our timetable.

Sarah sits at the writing desk and scratches out something.  
She hands it to Ben.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I need you to take this to the  
telegraph office first thing  
tomorrow.

INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

Ben hands the letter to the TELEGRAPH OPERATOR. He takes it  
and keys it.

TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

Four dollars even, please.

Ben pays and leaves.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

As he exits the telegraph office, he runs into two of Adams'  
GOONS.

FAT GOON

What's your hurry?

BEN

Fuck you.

DIRTY GOON

We've had about enough of you.

Before the goons can rear their fists back, Ben knees one in  
the groin and punches the other in the throat.

A crowd gathers and cheers him on as he curb stomps them.

FOUR more GOONS appear and toss observers aside to get to the center of the circle. Two of them restrain Ben and the others push up their sleeves.

LONG HAired GOON

Time to end this.

As he approaches a struggling and defenseless Ben, a voice booms from behind.

DAVID

I agree.

David takes two big strides forward. He takes MOUSY GOON to the ground with one punch. BLONDE GOON moves to block David but a fist to the gut and one to the side of the head drops him.

David draws his .45.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Get your hands off of my son.

The angry goons holding Ben defiantly hold tight. David pulls the hammer back on his pistol and points it at one of them.

A loud shot.

The crowd gasps.

They all turn.

Behind them, an angry Sheriff stands, with a smoking rifle pointed at the air.

SHERIFF

Goddammit, David.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - DAY

The Sheriff slams the jail door on David and Ben.

BEN

Why are we here and not those  
assholes?

DAVID

You know why. The Sheriff here is a  
crooked sell-out.



SHERIFF

I'm getting a little tired of your insinuations, David.

DAVID

I'm not insinuating anything. You're a lazy crook. You're letting Adams enslave this entire town.

SHERIFF

If I weren't here it would be much worse.

DAVID

If you weren't here I'd have killed him already.

SHERIFF

You can't keep doing this. He's just going to get rid of you. He has a small army now and you know the marshals are in his pocket.

DAVID

Then let us out of here.

INT. ADAMS CATTLE COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

Adams' twelve goons stand in his office staring at the floor.

JOHN

How can you let a chicken farmer and a simple kid continue to make you all look like assholes?

Silence.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This last incident destroyed any bit of fear and respect the townsfolk had for you.

BIG GOON

What should we do, boss?

JOHN

Take care of them. Tonight.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

SARAH

You both were arrested?

DAVID

Ben needed to get arrested before he turned eighteen. It's a rite of passage.

Ben grins and nods.

Sarah shakes her head.

SARAH

You two. I could just spit.

DAVID

It'll be fine.

SARAH

You pissed them all off.

DAVID

We forced Adams' hand. If he wants the claim he needs to make a move.

SARAH

You two did this intentionally?

Ben smiles and nods.

Sarah looks at them both and throws up her hands.

There is a loud knock at the door.

Sarah turns and looks at the door in a panic.

David answers it.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Don't!

David opens the door to find a dozen armed men from town.

MR. SAMUELS

Are we late?

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

DAVID

Everyone was happy to see you.

SARAH

More surprised, I think.

The Millers sit at the table cleaning and loading every gun in the house.

DAVID

Everyone is in place. The hen sheds, the barn and the woods are covered.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

TWELVE MEN on horses approach the Miller ranch. They turn off their lanterns and ready their guns.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Ben peers out the window.

BEN

I see something. A light.

Sarah turns down the lamps inside and opens the back door. She flashes a lamp three times. A lamp in the barn flashes in response.

DAVID

You two need to hide.

SARAH

Like hell.

Sarah and Ben cock their pistols.

David peeks out the front window again. They split up in three groups of four.

One group heads for them, the second for the barn and the third for the henhouses.

DAVID

Two are headed here and two are going around back.

BEN

I'll be in my room.

Ben starts upstairs. Stops.

BEN (CONT'D)

Warning shots?

David smiles and shakes his head.

Ben smiles and races upstairs.

EXT. MILLER RANCH - NIGHT

The moon is full, giving the goons just enough light to see, but also just enough light to expose them.

Two of the henchmen linger in front of the farmhouse while the other two creep around back on their horses.

The riders out back don't see it, but the end of a small rifle barrel pokes out of the attic window.

POP! POP!

The two riders drop onto the ground like limp rag dolls. TEN left.

The chaotic melee begins.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Ben races downstairs. Sarah guards the locked front door while Ben and David run out the back. They run to the front of the house. Two confused riders start firing into the house. Sarah ducks behind furniture as bullets fly.

EXT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

David and Ben race toward the group headed to the barn. Sarah, seeing the remaining two crooks reloading after dumping their ammunition into the house, throws open the front door and blasts both of them with her pistols. EIGHT left. She runs after David and Ben to help.

EXT. MILLERS' BARN - NIGHT

FOUR horsemen creep toward the barn. They hear gunfire behind them, but carry on with their mission.

They stop to light torches from their one shared lantern. The light from their torches blind them briefly.

Before their eyes can adjust, Ben and David catch up and each shoot one of the riders. The sound spooks the horses. The ones with no live rider flee. SIX left.

David and Ben each place a well aimed shot at each of the bandits. Ben strikes his square in the torso.

David tries to hit his target but the horse is panicked. It dances around and whinnies.

When he gets a bead on the bandit he fires. He hits his target and the bandit falls from his horse and hits the ground hard. FOUR to go.

Mr. Jenkins and one of his clerks come out of the barn.

MR. JENKINS

I didn't get to shoot anyone.

DAVID

There's four more left. And we still need to shut down Adams.

Sarah catches up. They head toward the hen barns.

**BEGIN FLASHBACK**

INT. SHED - DAY

Ben skins his fifth fox and hangs the pelt in the barn. He picks up his .22 rifle and heads out into the wilderness to hunt more foxes.

EXT. MILLER HOUSE - DAY

Cletus and Beau knock on the Miller's door. Sarah answers. Her eyes narrow as she recognizes them.

SARAH

What do you idiots want?

They push their way inside and close the door behind them.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - DAY

Sarah backs away from the men, nearly tripping over the furniture behind her. The two men attempt to surround her while unbuttoning their trousers. She runs around the living room, putting obstacles between them. They separate and move to flank her.

She runs into the kitchen and grabs a pot of boiling stew from the stove. She throws it in Beau's face burning him horribly. It takes him out of the fight momentarily.

As Beau writhes on the floor screaming, Cletus takes in the surroundings. They both spot the gun belt with the .45 revolver hanging from the coat rack in the kitchen.

They both go for it. Sarah is a bit faster, but Cletus has reach. He dives and grabs her foot, forcing her to fall to the floor.

She kicks, landing on his nose with a sickening crunch. She crawls to her feet a split second ahead of him and grabs the gun, drawing it.

Beau stands by now, in agony, but livid. Using pain as his fuel he screams and flies at Sarah. Cletus follows his lead.

She has no choice but to fire her hand cannon and put a bullet right between Beau's eyes, killing him instantly.

INT. CHICKEN BARN - DAY

David hears a gunshot and pauses his task of gathering eggs in the barn. His eyes open wide as he realizes it came from the direction of the house.

He drops the bucket of eggs and races toward home. Yolks drip in the straw that covers the packed dirt floor.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - DAY

Sarah and Cletus freeze as the reality of the situation sinks in. Sarah comes to her senses first by a split second. She cocks the gun again and points her gun at Cletus.

SARAH

What exactly was your play here,  
asshole?

CLETUS

We were told to scare you into  
making the simple kid sell his  
property and the claim.

SARAH

Oh, he's the simple one?

Cletus holds out his left hand in surrender.

CLETUS

We can talk about this. Just put  
the gun down.

Cletus reaches behind him to grab the knife in his waistband. Sarah shakes from adrenaline.

SARAH  
Don't move until my husband gets  
here.

Cletus' eyes dance around the room.

CLETUS  
Your husband?

SARAH  
Yeah. The big angry guy that  
doesn't like you. I'm sure he heard  
the gunshot.

Cletus licks his lips. Sweat appears on his upper lip. He wipes it with his free hand. The glint of his gold front tooth shines in the lantern light.

They stare each other down. Cletus has a decision to make.

David blasts through the door, startling them. Cletus throws his knife. Sarah fires.

Sarah is faster by a split second. Her bullet tears through Cletus' throat, spraying blood all over the rough-cut plank floor.

His knife sails past her ear and lodges in the beam behind her. It quivers like a guitar string.

David takes in the scene briefly the rushes to Sarah.

DAVID  
What happened?

SARAH  
Adams sent them to threaten Ben to  
give up the property and the claim.

He takes the gun from her hand.

DAVID  
Amateurs. Where's Ben?

SARAH  
Fox hunting, I think.

DAVID  
Good. No need for him to see this.

EXT. PIG PEN - DAY

David drags two naked bodies into the pig pen. The pigs seem grateful for their feast.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - DAY

Sarah scrubs every inch of the house to remove all of the blood and brains.

EXT. BURN PILE - DAY

David burns Beau and Cletus' clothing.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

They hear Ben on the front porch taking off his boots.

DAVID  
Act natural.

David cleans the .45. Sarah recooks dinner. Ben walks in. He stows his .22 by the door. He takes in the scene and stops. David and Sarah look up.

BEN  
*What's wrong?*

David and Sarah glance at each other and look back at Ben.

SARAH  
*Nothing. Why?*

BEN  
*You're being weird.*

DAVID  
*What do you mean?*

BEN  
*The place smells like soap, you cleaned the gun yesterday, Mom started the stew this morning but the onions smell freshly cut.*

David looks at Sarah and smiles.

DAVID  
Your son is smart.



BEN

*And he can read lips. You were also harvesting eggs this morning, but our egg basket is empty. I'm almost an adult. What's happening?*

SARAH

*Let's discuss it over dinner.*

INT. MILLER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Millers sit for dinner.

BEN

*Bauxite?*

DAVID

*Yes. It's worth a lot of money once its converted to aluminum but it's very expensive to do so.*

SARAH

*We think John Adams got wind of your parents' claim and wants to get into the mining business.*

BEN

*If I was in that fire he'd be in the mining business right now.*

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Church service has ended and the congregation files out of the small rustic cathedral.

John Adams and the Sheriff greet The Millers on their way out of the church.

SHERIFF

May we speak with you for a minute, please?

JOHN

What the hell kind of Sheriff are you? Haul their asses to jail.

Ben scowls at John and balls up his fists. Other churchgoers hear and distance themselves, but make a point to stay within earshot.

JOHN (CONT'D)

See that? The simple shit is violent. His father threatened me and the kid wants to kill me.

SHERIFF

Relax, Mr. Adams. Let me handle this.

DAVID

Handle what, Walt?

JOHN

Two of my boys went to visit you a few days ago and haven't been seen since.

DAVID

Maybe they quit.

JOHN

Your feral kid killed them!

The crowd from church that was dissipating gathers again. David turns to Sarah and Ben and signs.

DAVID

***Don't say a word.***

JOHN

See that? They're talking in that idiot language.

DAVID

You call my kid an idiot one more time and someone really is going to die.

SHERIFF

Stop it or I'll throw both of you in jail to cool off.

John and David exchange glares.

DAVID

***Go home. I'll catch up.***

JOHN

He's doing it again!

David can't help himself and sucker punches John in the chin, knocking him out cold. The Sheriff throws up his hands.

SHERIFF  
Goddammit, David.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - DAY

The Sheriff closes the cell door on David. John sits next to the Sheriff's desk massaging his sore jaw.

JOHN  
I want that guy to hang.

DAVID  
You break every law there is but when someone stands up to you, you hide behind your pet Sheriff's skirt.

JOHN Hey! SHERIFF Hey!

DAVID  
What's this really about, Walt?

SHERIFF  
Beau and Cletus are missing. John says he sent them to your place a few days ago and they haven't been seen since.

DAVID  
Why did he send them?

SHERIFF  
That's a great question. Why did you send them, John?

JOHN  
That's not the issue. Where are my boys?

DAVID  
Maybe they got lost. They are pretty stupid.

John glares.

JOHN  
I think your kid killed them. If we find any evidence, he'll hang by the end of the week.

SHERIFF

I'm obligated to look for them and  
I need to search your place, Mr.  
Miller.

DAVID

Like hell. You have no probable  
cause for a warrant.

JOHN

Are you a lawyer?

DAVID

Shut up, asshole.

JOHN

I want his place searched.

SHERIFF

He's right. I don't have probable  
cause.

JOHN

Then what good are you?

John stands up and storms out the door.

DAVID

How does it feel to be owned like a  
head of cattle?

SHERIFF

If it wasn't me it would be someone  
worse.

INT. MILLERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Millers are sound asleep when someone pounds on their  
door. David gets out of bed. Sarah's eyes plead with him.

DAVID

Don't say anything.

He grabs the .45 from his bedside and creeps toward the front  
door. He stands with the pistol ready, back to the wall.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Who is it?

MARSHAL (O.S.)

U.S. Marshal! Open the door.

DAVID  
U.S. Marshal or Deputy U.S.  
Marshal?

He responds with a little less bravado.

MARSHAL (O.S.)  
Deputy U.S. Marshal, sir.

DAVID  
You got a warrant?

MARSHAL (O.S.)  
Yes, sir.

David lays his gun down on a table by the door and opens it.

The MARSHAL (30s) plus the Sheriff stand on the porch. David stands in the doorway holding a lamp.

He holds out his hand and the Marshal hands him the warrant. He hands him the lamp so he can read it.

DAVID  
What the hell? You think my son, a  
15 year old deaf kid, killed two of  
Adams' goons?

MARSHAL  
We just follow the clues, sir.

DAVID  
You don't have any clues. This is a  
fishing expedition. I'm lodging a  
complaint with the courts.

David looks at the Sheriff. He shrugs.

SHERIFF  
John has lots of friends.

Gunfire erupts from behind the house. An alarmed David races around back.

EXT. PIG PEN - NIGHT

David rounds the corner to find another MARSHAL (30s) executing his pigs.

DAVID  
What the hell are you doing?

The two marshals dig through the feces in the pig pen with rakes.

MARSHAL  
Looking for clues.

David runs back inside the house.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

SARAH  
What's happening?

She stands with her arms stiff at her sides. Ben sits at the kitchen table.

DAVID  
Marshals are digging in the pig pen for clues.

She gasps.

SARAH  
Go watch them. Make sure they don't plant any evidence.

DAVID  
Dammit, you're right.

He races out of the house to supervise.

Sarah dresses in riding clothes.

BEN  
*What are you doing, Mom?*

SARAH  
*Just dressing. Why don't you go back to bed?*

BEN  
*I can't sleep. Are they going to arrest us?*

Sarah chokes up.

SARAH  
*No, baby. No one's getting arrested.*

Sarah sits at the writing desk and begins a letter. Once finished she places it in an envelope and writes "Sheriff" on it.

She sets it aside and writes two more. One for David and one for Ben.

She puts on her riding boots and coat.

BEN

*Where are you going, Mom?*

Sarah realizes how hard it is to lie while signing. You have to face the person you're lying to.

SARAH

*Just stepping out for a minute.  
I'll be back as soon as I can.*

EXT. MILLER'S BARN - NIGHT

Sarah saddles her horse and walks her to the edge of the property where she mounts her and rides into the night as she hears a voice:

MARSHAL (O.S.)

I found a tooth! Cletus' gold  
tooth!

**END FLASHBACK**

EXT. CHICKEN BARNS - NIGHT

The last FOUR BANDITS creep around the chicken barns looking for anything amiss. It's dark. Quiet. They dismount to light their torches. They're obviously going to burn the barns.

They weren't prepared for ten armed townies to burst from the buildings, guns drawn.

MR. SAMUELS

Put those out and drop your guns.

The henchmen make a show of dropping the torches and stomping them out. As they do, they slowly, subtly fan out.

MR. POTTER

Don't even think about it.

Mr. Potter racks a shell. They freeze. It gives them time to think. They make eye contact with each other. One nods.

They all grab their pistols and fire blindly but hit no one. The bad guys scatter for cover. The townsfolk fire but don't hit anything either. They scatter as well.

Each time someone peeks from their hiding spot, a gunshot rings, but no one places a hit.

The balance of power changes when David, Ben, Mr. Jenkins and his clerk and Sarah sneak up from the rear.

DAVID  
Give up. You're surrounded!

A gunshot is their reply.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Okay then. Fire at will.

The townies make it rain hot lead. Sarah drops the first bad guy behind the cart. Ben hits the second behind the chicken house. David kills the third behind a tree. The fourth, sensing defeat surrenders.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Drop it.

The man drops his pistol. They breathe a sigh of relief. The man raises his hands.

The group surrounds him and they march back to toward the house, David in the lead.

Their captive is waiting for a chance. Waiting for them to become complacent.

He walks a bit faster than the people surrounding him, creeping closer to David. They don't notice.

Almost near enough.

He lunges forward and steals the pistol off David's hip and starts firing indiscriminately. Mr. Jenkins pulls the trigger on his pistol and ends the fight.

CLERK  
Looks like you got to shoot someone  
after all, Mr. Jenkins.

But something is wrong. Someone gasps for air.

David is on the ground, a gaping hole in his back. Even in the moonlight they can see the growing circle of blood. Ben rushes to his side.

BEN  
Dad!



SARAH

David!

They can tell that David is gone, his brain just doesn't know it yet. They give Ben and Sarah space. Ben rolls David over onto his back.

DAVID

Take care of your Mom.

EXT. MILLER RANCH - NIGHT

The impromptu militia leave Ben and Sarah to their grief while they clean up.

After many tears, Sarah gives orders.

SARAH

We don't want a repeat of the Cletus and Beau event let's do it right this time.

MR. STANFORD

I'll take the horses and their tack. I can get rid of them out of town. It'll be like they were never here.

MR. POTTER

I can dispose of the guns. I know someone.

MR. JENKINS

What about the bodies?

SARAH

Strip all the bodies and feed them to the pigs. Remove anything metal from their persons and throw it in the river. Burn everything else.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah and Ben sit quietly. A polite knock brings them to the present. It's Mr. Samuels. He chokes back tears.

MR. SAMUELS

Everything is taken care of.  
We...uh...David...is on the cart.  
Would you like us to take him to town for you?

SARAH  
No. I'll do it myself.

She closes the door and rests her head against the jamb. Sarah knows she can't break down just yet. She hears Ben go upstairs to his room. A moment later he comes down.

Sarah turns around. A large cardboard box sits on the kitchen table. She looks at him, puzzled.

He motions for her to open it. She lifts the lid.

Inside is a beautiful, floor length grey fox fur coat.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
What is this?

BEN  
I made it for you. From all the foxes I killed while you were gone.

SARAH  
How did you know I was coming back?

BEN  
You're my Mom.

Sarah finally allows herself to break down in her son's arms.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Ben drives the flat bed cart normally used to haul eggs and supplies. Today it hauls his father.

Sarah sits up front, her hair blowing in the gentle breeze. Stoic. Warm in her fox fur coat.

Pedestrians stop. The men remove their hats. People come outside from their businesses. Ben slows down for effect. He wants everyone in town to share their pain. The only sounds come from their cart.

They could have covered him with something but chose not to. They want everyone to see that David paid the price for their acquiescence.

The townsfolk continue to stare. Some follow.

They stop at the undertaker's shop. Two men respectfully retrieve David's body and take it inside. The undertaker, MR. STUBBS nods.

Sarah nods in return.

They continue to the telegraph office. Sarah hands Ben two envelopes. He takes them inside and returns. They continue down the road.

The townsfolk continue to stare. More follow.

Ben stops at the church. He ties up the horses and helps Sarah out of the cart. The crowd grows. They don't even murmur.

SHERIFF

Sarah?

She turns around. The Sheriff stands before her. He walks toward her. Past her. Into the church. She follows.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The Sheriff, Sarah and Ben sit in the front pew.

SHERIFF

It's dangerous for you to be here.  
You're still a wanted fugitive.

SARAH

If the world were true and just,  
John Adams would be the one in  
danger.

SHERIFF

Sounds like he might be.

SARAH

Are you going to arrest me?

SHERIFF

Did you see the throng of people  
out there? If I try to arrest you,  
I'll be tarred and feathered.

SARAH

Then get on the right side of this,  
Sheriff. It may be your last  
chance.

The Sheriff leaves.

Sarah and Ben sit in a stunned, meditative silence.

The doors open. An unlikely trio enters. Abigail, Dolly and Florence tiptoe in. They look around as if they expect to be struck by lightning. They silently sit next to Ben.

A few more people trickle in. Mr. Potter, the Samuels, Mr. Jenkins, Dr. Peters, Mr. Stanford.

More people file in. They fill the pews. Once the pews are full they stand. In the aisles. In the back. Outside. People prop open the front doors and windows.

All completely silent.

Pastor Luke kneels in front of Sarah.

PASTOR LUKE

It would appear you have a few admirers.

Sarah turns around completely unaware of the crowd until now.

BEN

I think they want you to say something.

Stunned and unprepared, Pastor Luke leads her to the pulpit. She has the look of a frightened animal. She's unsure of what to say. Not even sure she should say anything.

She says the first thing that pops into her head.

SARAH

Sinners.

She pauses. The townsfolk with the ability to self-reflect look at their shoes.

SARAH (CONT'D)

John Adams is our fault. We allowed him to happen.

She pauses.

SARAH (CONT'D)

"Those who do nothing about sin and evil, help the sin and evil to prevail. One who is silent when there are those around him in sin becomes a partaker with them." Ephesians chapter 5 verse 7.

She steadies herself against the podium.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I'm tired and I'm out of tears, but I'm going to stop him. I don't care if it kills me. I don't care if HE kills me. Who's with me?

Murmurs of assent ripple through the crowd.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Who wants to take this town back?  
Who wants to take their lives back?

The crowd roars. Eventually it subsides.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
The first thing we need to do is  
stop paying him.

MR. JENKINS  
He's just going to hire more men.

Abigail slowly raises her hand.

ABIGAIL  
Could we have a recall election and  
replace Mayor Adams with Mrs.  
Miller? Then she can stop the  
taxes.

SARAH  
Can we do that?

PASTOR LUKE  
Yes. I believe since most of the  
eligible voters are here, we just  
write a letter to the county clerk,  
attach the petition and have a new  
election.

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

Sarah and Ben present their recall petition and candidate  
registration application to the county clerk.

CLERK  
Everything appears to be in order,  
Mrs. Miller.

John Adams storms in.

JOHN  
Just what the hell do you think  
you're doing?

Ben steps between John and Sarah.

SARAH  
I'm going to take your job.

JOHN  
A woman can't be mayor.

SARAH  
Watch me. Recall and election is in  
a week.

**BEGIN MONTAGE:**

- Sarah shakes hands with everyone up and down Main Street.
- Adams threatens everyone up and down Main Street.
- Sarah bribes people with chickens and eggs.
- Adams hires a few big temporary goons to threaten people and ends up getting chased out of their stores.
- The girls at the Hotel give discounts for those who vote for Sarah.
- They refuse business to those who don't.

**END MONTAGE**

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

A street party under a banner reading "Congratulations Mayor Miller" rages on Main Street. While flattered, Sarah has business to take care of.

INT. MAIN STREET HOTEL - NIGHT

Sarah meets in a private suite with what she has come to accept as her inner circle.

Ben, Mr. Jenkins from the bank, Mr. Potter who owns the general store, Mr. Samuels who owns the saloon, Mr. Stanford who owns the livery and the girls from the hotel that are her eyes and ears, Abigail, Dolly and Florence.

SARAH  
You know as well as I that this  
isn't a fairy tale.

MR. JENKINS  
No, but Adams is weakened. By  
abolishing his taxes you've hurt  
him.

SARAH

And made a grave enemy.

MR. JENKINS

We killed his posse. He'll need some time to recruit.

SARAH

Maybe. I need two weeks to wrap up my plan. Will you please help me buy time?

MR. POTTER

Thy will be done, Madam Mayor.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A box of Adams' personal belongings sits on the edge of Sarah's desk. The Sheriff walks through the open door. She gestures for him to sit.

SHERIFF

You're gonna need my help.

SARAH

What sort of help are you offering?

SHERIFF

I know how John thinks. He's going to try to find a gang of bandits to be his new muscle.

SARAH

That sounds dangerous for him.

SHERIFF

And us. They'll be ruthless and pretrained. They'll be hardened criminals used to robbing trains. They'll all be murderers.

SARAH

Out of the frying pan?

SHERIFF

I know some men. I served with them. They had a hard war. Keep to themselves, but they could be persuaded to take up a cause.

SARAH

Did you just pick a side, Sheriff?

He grins and nods.

SHERIFF

My side. I can't face my maker  
right now. I need to fix this.

SARAH

I look forward to you saving us.

SHERIFF

It's the least I can do since  
you're saving me.

A loud angry man storms in.

JOHN

You bitch!

The Sheriff stands and makes a wall between him and Sarah.

SARAH

That's Mayor Bitch to you.

JOHN

Arrest that woman, Sheriff.

The Sheriff steps nose to nose with John. He sniffs.

SHERIFF

Loud. Threatening the Mayor. Been  
drinking already. I should arrest  
you for drunk and disorderly.

JOHN

Like hell! Do your damn job.

SHERIFF

I am. Finally.

He turns to grab the box of John's personal belongings and  
shoves it into his hands.

JOHN

I'm warning you--

SHERIFF

--Just get your shit out of the  
Mayor's office or I'll write you a  
ticket for illegal dumping.

John looks past the Sheriff at Sarah and sneers.



JOHN

You have so many, many things you need to protect, Madam Mayor.

He storms out.

SHERIFF

I'll need to be out of town for a few days. Keep your head down.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Sarah gathers her inner circle, plus MR. JONAS (40s), owner of the hotel.

SARAH

The Sheriff is out of town for a few days gathering a few dozen of his old army buddies to guard the town.

MR. JENKINS

That sounds expensive. Is there room in the town's budget?

SARAH

No, it's going to have to come out of my pocket.

They gasp.

MR. JONAS

You can't keep doing that. Let me put them up at the hotel at no charge.

MR. SAMUELS

And we'll feed them.

MR. POTTER

I'll buy the bullets.

MR. STANFORD

I'll take care of their horses.

INT. ADAMS CATTLE COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

John sits across his desk from DANIEL "EL DIABLO" TORREZ (40s), a hardened bandit.

DANIEL

What's in it for me?

JOHN  
A daily wage for all your men.

DANIEL  
We could earn more robbing a bank  
or coach.

JOHN  
What do you want?

DANIEL  
Legitimacy. Respect.

JOHN  
What does that look like?

DANIEL  
It doesn't look like sleeping under  
the stars every night wondering  
when the Marshals are going to come  
hang me.

JOHN  
Kill the Mayor and you can have her  
job. You can tax the town and keep  
the money. I'll throw in her  
poultry farm. You can even make  
your number two the Sheriff.

Daniel stares at John for an uncomfortably long time.

DANIEL  
See you next week.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Sarah makes her rounds visiting with the business owners in  
Main Street when she spots the Sheriff riding back into town.

SARAH  
How did it go?

SHERIFF  
Swimmingly. They're right behind  
me.

A crowd gathers to catch a glimpse of the brave soldiers  
willing to protect them.

Townfolk line the street and sidewalk to see their saviors.

About two dozen figures on horses appear on the horizon. The  
crowd buzzes with anticipation.

The heat shimmer blurs the figures as they approach. They still can't make out their features.

The Sheriff waits for them in the middle of the street.

They are near enough now to see more clearly. Two dozen men with wide brim hats over their eyes to block the mid-day sun. All are dressed in riding gear.

All carry rifles on their saddles and pistols on their hips.

The lead rider approaches the Sheriff.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)  
Madame Mayor, meet Colonel Paul  
Jeffries.

COLONEL JEFFRIES (NATIVE AMERICAN, 50s) removes his hat. His long black hair falls from his hat and blows across his bronzed, weathered face.

COLONEL JEFFRIES  
Nice to meet you Madam Mayor.

SARAH  
Call me Sarah. Let's get you  
situated.

SHERIFF  
I'll lead them to the livery.

The crowd is quiet and still as their private army rides past.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

The saloon is full of soldiers dining and some locals trying to get to know them.

Sarah, Ben, Walt, and Colonel Jeffries sit at a table.

SARAH  
Colonel, did you serve with Walt in  
the 1st Colorado Cavalry Regiment?

He and Walt smile.

COLONEL JEFFRIES  
Not exactly.

She looks at Walt with a curious expression.

SHERIFF  
We didn't exactly serve together.

SARAH  
I don't quite understand.

COLONEL JEFFRIES  
I served with the 1st Indian-Texas  
Regiment.

SARAH  
But that was--

SHERIFF  
--Confederate.

SARAH  
So you--

COLONEL JEFFRIES  
--Fought against each other.

SARAH  
That must be quite the story.

SHERIFF  
It was winter. Bitter cold. We  
fought for days.

COLONEL JEFFRIES  
Neither side was making much  
headway. We travelled a long way  
and lost a lot of men before we got  
to Colorado.

Walt nods.

SHERIFF  
The pox was bad that winter. And  
the native folk are particularly  
susceptible.

COLONEL JEFFRIES  
In any case it was Christmas Eve  
and spirits were low on both sides.  
I don't know who's idea it was, but  
one of the officers called for a  
twenty-four hour truce.

SHERIFF  
We were all a bit nervous at first,  
but we found we had a lot in  
common.

COLONEL JEFFRIES

We were all tired, hungry, cold and scared. Fighting in a war we didn't understand. Didn't exactly volunteer for.

SHERIFF

We gathered around a big fire and sang Christmas carols.

COLONEL JEFFRIES

After that we retreated. By the time we got back to Texas the war was over. We started with almost nine hundred men and returned with a little over a hundred.

SARAH

That's horrible. What brought you back here?

COLONEL JEFFRIES

We outlived our usefulness so the white people shunned us again. Since we lost the war, our native communities didn't want us back either. That warrior machismo thing.

SARAH

So, back to here?

COLONEL JEFFRIES

Lots of cheap land. Not many people so we could keep to ourselves, and Walt was here so we knew we had at least one friend.

SARAH

Heartbreaking.

COLONEL JEFFRIES

Not really. Most people never find their place in life. That's what's truly heartbreaking.

SARAH

Now I feel bad about disturbing your retirement.

COLONEL JEFFRIES

Don't be. This war makes a lot more sense than the last one.

SARAH  
You sound like a philosopher.

COLONEL JEFFRIES  
I have a degree in philosophy with  
a theology minor from Dartmouth.

SARAH  
Don't tell me you speak Latin.

COLONEL JEFFRIES  
Facio, ita.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

JUDGE MILLER (60s) sits at his desk reading briefs. A knock  
on the door echoes.

JUDGE  
Come.

A LAW CLERK enters with an envelope.

LAW CLERK  
An urgent telegram, your Honor.

He accepts it and the clerk leaves.

The Judge opens it and reads.

INT. ORNATE OFFICE - DAY

A stuffy looking gentleman JAY COOKE (50s) sits at his  
imposing desk in his intimidating office. An AIDE knocks and  
walks in.

AIDE  
An urgent telegram, sir.

He takes it, waits for the aide to leave, and begins to read.

EXT. OUTSIDE ADAMSTON - DAY

The new security team assembles outside of town.

COLONEL JEFFRIES  
What do you all see?

PETE PETERSON (40s), the best sniper in the group, points to  
a rise.

PETER

That ridge is a good place for a sniper. Looking West I can see what's coming into town or pivot East to see most of Main Street.

GEORGE WILLIAMS (30s) responds.

GEORGE

What if they don't come this way? Or split up and hit us from both sides?

COLONEL JEFFRIES

I have some ideas.

PETE

We'll need to come up with an alert system, Paul.

COLONEL JEFFRIES

Compile all your observations and ideas. We'll meet with the town militia and present a plan to the Mayor.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Sarah, Colonel Jeffries, the Sheriff, and Mr. Potter meet.

SARAH

The Torrez gang?

MR. POTTER

That's the rumor. Two dozen murderers. No more than a few days out.

SARAH

El Diablo himself. I always thought that sounded like a nickname some bedwetter gave himself to sound imposing.

MR. POTTER

That bedwetter grew tired of a pregnant woman whining about being with child during a bank robbery so he cut it out of her and snapped its neck.

SHERIFF

You and Ben will be their first target.

SARAH

And you next.

COLONEL JEFFRIES

They may not attack conventionally.

SARAH

What do you mean?

COLONEL JEFFRIES

They might not just ride down the middle of town in a group and start shooting.

SHERIFF

I bet they won't. We need to consider every tactic.

COLONEL JEFFRIES

Torrez learned his trade under an Apache raider. It's a good bet he'll use Native guerilla tactics.

SARAH

What can we do to hedge our bet?

**BEGIN MONTAGE**

- Shopkeepers on Main Street, with the help of their new Native friends, nail extra boards into place on their shutters and doors.

COLONEL JEFFRIES (V.O.)

All the businesses need to reinforce their doors and windows.

- They nail extra boards on their back doors as well.

SHERIFF (V.O.)

Back doors too. Don't assume an assault from the street.

- Townies flood into the general store to buy ammunition.

COLONEL JEFFRIES (V.O.)

Everyone should stock up on ammo. Buy all they can afford.

- People pair up as they go about their business in town. They all carry guns, even the women.



SHERIFF (V.O.)  
 Everyone needs to travel in a  
 group, or at least in pairs.

COLONEL JEFFRIES (V.O.)  
 Armed, too. Even ladies.

- Men are on roof tops building blinds.

SHERIFF (V.O.)  
 Wherever possible, build crow's  
 nests for snipers.

- People park wagons full of loose hay in random spots on  
 Main Street. Men crawl under the hay and test their  
 visibility.

COLONEL JEFFRIES (V.O.)  
 We need to create extra hiding  
 places for our people. Places no  
 one would think twice about.

- At night, shopkeepers peek out of their windows. The saloon  
 closes early. The hotel is dark and quiet.

SHERIFF (V.O.)  
 We need a tight curfew as well. I  
 doubt our attackers will hit us in  
 broad daylight.

- Mr. Potter wheels a cart into the vacant storefront across  
 the street. The object on top of it is covered with a heavy  
 tarp.

MR. POTTER (V.O.)  
 I traded the guns we swiped from  
 the last goons for a secret weapon.

**END MONTAGE**

SARAH  
 You aren't going to tell us?

Mr. Potter grins.

MR. POTTER  
 No.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

George and Mr. Potter act as if they are relaxing and  
 greeting townsfolk, but they are actually on guard, watching  
 for anyone suspicious.

GEORGE  
Oh, come on. You can tell me.

MR. POTTER  
It's a surprise.

GEORGE  
It shouldn't be a surprise to the  
guy in charge of it.

MR. POTTER  
Military secret. Someone might  
overhear.

GEORGE  
What if I don't know how to use it?

MR. POTTER  
You were Calvary, right?

GEORGE  
Yeah.

MR. POTTER  
You'll know how.

GEORGE  
That's just plain mean.

EXT. MAIN STREET HOTEL - DAY

Abigail, Dolly and Florence flirt with three brothers, SHEM, HAM and JAPETH (30S) as they help reinforce the shutters on the hotel.

ABIGAIL  
Shem. That doesn't sound like a  
Native name.

SHEM  
It isn't. Our parents enrolled us  
in Indian Mission School as soon as  
she could.

HAM  
Mostly for her sanity.

JAPETH  
That poor woman. Dealing with all  
three of us at the same time. We're  
each only about a year apart.

DOLLY

You seem alright to me.

SHEM

Yeah, now. When We were kids we were holy terrors.

HAM

Remember when we snuck into the shaman's tent and drank all the sacramental black drink?

JAPETH

Barely. We were seeing things for a week.

FLORENCE

Did you get in trouble?

JAPETH

We had to dig out everyone's outhouses while we were hung over.

The girls giggle.

ABIGAIL

You turned out fine.

JAPETH

It's too bad Mom didn't live to see it.

DOLLY

Oh, how did she pass?

JAPETH

Tuberculosis. We're really susceptible to diseases of the white man.

FLORENCE

Oh, then I guess we shouldn't offer our services.

SHEM

Let's not be too hasty, ladies.

Mr. Jonas pokes his head out of the front door.

MR. JONAS

Will you three harpies leave these good men alone? They're trying to save your lives.

HAM

It's okay, Mr. Jonas. The sound of a lovely voice makes the work seem lighter.

MR. JONAS

Well alright then. If you men need anything let me know.

He leaves. The girls giggle.

DOLLY

I feel like my mama just caught me in the barn kissing a boy.

INT. DR. PETER'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. PETERS

Thanks for your help DR. GARRETT  
(40s)

DR. GARRETT

I'm not a doctor. Just a field medic. The boys just call me doctor.

DR. PETERS

I'd rather have an experienced field medic in a situation like this than some wet-behind-the-ears kid just out of medical school.

DR. GARRETT

I appreciate the vote of confidence, sir.

DR. PETERS

You don't know what a treat it is to have the help of another medical professional in a town where I get paid in chickens and turnips.

Dr. Garrett chuckles.

DR. GARRETT

Sounds like my practice. There's something nice about knowing the names of all your patients.

DR. PETERS

You have a refreshing outlook.

DR. GARRETT

Early on I realized I had a choice:  
Manage the practice like a business  
or treat the patients like family.  
The latter seemed more fulfilling  
to me.

Dr. Peters pauses a moment.

DR. PETERS

Your words humble me.

DR. GARRETT

Sorry, I didn't intend--

Dr. Peters waves his hand.

DR. PETERS

--I didn't mean anything by it. It  
was a pleasant reminder of what's  
important. Thank you.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Judge Miller sits in his overstuffed leather chair, lost in  
thought. His elbows are on his desk. His hands are together  
forming a steeple.

A knock at the door.

A law clerk enters.

LAW CLERK

Your carriage is here, Your Honor.

He nods and stands. The law clerk grabs the trunk on wheels  
and follows him out the door.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Jay Cooke strides through the train station with authority  
with an aide a half-step behind him.

MR. COOKE

Is my luggage aboard?

AIDE

Yes sir.

MR. COOKE

Do we have a hotel reservation?

AIDE

Yes sir.

MR. COOKE

When do we arrive?

AIDE

About forty-eight hours, sir.

He rolls his eyes and sighs.

MR. COOKE

Why are my damn trains so slow?

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sarah, Ben and the Sheriff meet.

SARAH

We all set?

SHERIFF

Yes ma'am. Just one last thing.

BEN

What's that?

SHERIFF

Get you two to safety.

BEN

No.

SARAH

We aren't letting others take all of the risk.

SHERIFF

This town won't go on without you.

SARAH

This town started without us and it will continue without us.

BEN

And we have no intentions of getting killed.

SHERIFF

I know better to try and talk you out of this.

SARAH  
We're going home.

SHERIFF  
I'm gonna hafta draw the line  
there.

BEN  
Why?

SHERIFF  
John knows where you live. He's  
sent people there twice. Do you  
really think it's the best idea?

They pause and reflect.

BEN  
The ranch needs protected and we  
can't afford to take anyone from  
town.

SARAH  
He's right. That's exactly why we  
need to go back and guard the  
ranch. We need every able body in  
town right now. Ben and I can  
handle it.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Warm evening winds kick up and blow dust around. Lightning  
flashes in the distant hills.

Four men check their horses into the livery and head to the  
hotel.

The Sheriff patrols Main Street for suspicious characters.

He approaches them as they head to the hotel and nods, sizing  
them up.

Four dusty, travel weary men stop.

TRAVELER 1  
Evening Sheriff.

SHERIFF  
First time in town?

TRAVELER 1

Yeah. We're passing through. That lightning made us think this would be a good time to have a bath and a bed.

SHERIFF

Where you headed?

TRAVELER 1

San Francisco. Looking for work.

SHERIFF

You still have another week of travel then.

TRAVELER 1

We're hoping to trim a day or two off that.

Satisfied, Walt opens the door to the hotel for them.

SHERIFF

Enjoy your stay.

He walks a little further and stops short before being struck by TWO DRUNKS flying out the saloon's double doors, brawling in a ball like two rodents fighting.

The drunk cowboys roll around in the street, too drunk to do any real damage to each other.

He grabs them both by the collar and drag-walks them to the jail.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - NIGHT

Walt slams the cell door on the two drunk-and-disorderlies.

SHERIFF

Sleep it off. I'll let you out in the morning.

The church bell rings, signifying the start of curfew.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Pedestrians hear the church bells and head home.

Business owners finish their final transactions and shutter their businesses.



The sounds of thunder grow closer.

The street grows quiet.

EXT. MILLER RANCH - NIGHT

Lightning flashes.

Ben and Sarah ride home in the cart. Ben stops. He eyes the house.

SARAH  
**Do you see something?**

BEN  
**No. Just being cautious.**

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Ben carefully walks through the house with his .45 in hand, inspecting every room.

BEN  
**It's clear, Mom.**

Sarah allows herself to breathe.

SARAH  
Maybe they aren't coming.

BEN  
**Sign only. Keep quiet. Lights low.**

Sarah nods and turns off unnecessary lamps.

SARAH  
**I'm proud of you Ben.**

BEN  
**I'm proud of you too, Mom.**

She tries to decide how to say what she wants to say.

SARAH  
I--

BEN  
**--I read your letter. I know why  
you left. You took the blame for  
killing those assholes so we could  
be absolved. It's okay. I  
understand now.**

SARAH  
We missed so much time together.

BEN  
Once we kill these bastards, we'll  
make it up.

SARAH  
You've grown into a fine young man,  
even with everything life has  
thrown at you.

BEN  
You and Dad saved me. Now it's my  
turn to save you.

Before Sarah can reply, they hear a horse outside. They douse the lights.

Thunder rolls.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Seven men on horseback ride into town from the West. They slowly pass the church and the livery.

They pass the Sheriff's office and stop. The undertaker's door opens.

Mr. Stubbs looks at the men, takes a pencil from behind his ear and makes notes. He does this several times. The lead rider, EL DIABLO, makes eye contact.

EL DIABLO  
What are you doing?

MR. STUBBS  
Estimating materials. You about six  
foot one?

EL DIABLO  
There about.

MR. STUBBS  
Twenty-four of you?

EL DIABLO  
Twenty-five.

The undertaker nods, studies his notepad and goes back inside.

El Diablo looks at his traveling companions with a furrowed brow and they continue.

Lightning flashes.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Six men on horseback enter town from the East. The street is quiet.

They stop. Take in their surroundings. The street is clear, apart from some carts full of hay parked on the side of the street.

Without people it's eerie. A ghost town. Their hands hover over their pistols.

Thunder rolls.

INT. MAIN STREET HOTEL - NIGHT

The four dusty travelers headed to San Francisco meet up in the hallway.

TRAVELER 1  
We go in five.

They separate and go to their rooms.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - NIGHT

The two drunks sit patiently, watching the clock on the wall. One pulls a jail key out of his vest and smiles.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Ben races upstairs to his room where he has a good look at the lane leading to the house and the barn.

Sarah wears her pistols on a gun belt and has a shotgun near her. She peers out a gap in the shutters.

Six men on horseback, each with pistols, rifles and torches approach the house. They take in the ranch. The house. The barn. The hen sheds.

They split into pairs.

Lightning illuminates their scowls.

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ben sees them split up and takes the opportunity to bring the odds closer to their favor.

POP! POP!

He fires two shots, each hitting a would be arsonist in the head. Their bodies fall. Their horses scatter.

The FOUR remaining bandits split up to avoid being targets and pull back. Ben runs back downstairs.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The SEVEN bandits at the West entrance to town wait calmly for the signal. El Diablo lights a cigar.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The SIX bandits at the East entrance to town wait calmly for the signal.

Lightning flashes.

EXT. MAIN STREET HOTEL - NIGHT

Light smoke seeps from four of the hotel windows. The four travelers on their way to San Francisco run out of the front door screaming.

TRAVELERS 1-4

Fire!

Curious business people hear the cry and peek out of their shutters.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - NIGHT

The two drunks use their key and let themselves out of jail.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Lightning flashes.

Thunder rolls.

It begins to rain.

Ben and Sarah peek out at the FOUR remaining bandits. Two attempt to light the house on fire. The other two ride to the barn.

Sarah and Ben look at each other, nod and spring into action.

Sarah throws the front door open at the same time Ben yanks the back door open.

The surprised bandits look up from their attempts at lighting the brush around the house. A well placed round from each of their pistols takes them out.

Lightning flashes like a strobe light now. The other two are too far ahead to catch. Ben runs back into the house to retrieve their rifles.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Rain falls on El Diablo and his crew. The streets turn to mud. He looks at the Sheriff's office. His two spies peek out the window. He nods.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The six bandits from the East plod forward in the mire. They see smoke rising from the hotel and hear the cries of "fire!" But the residents seem unconcerned.

EXT. MAIN STREET HOTEL - NIGHT

Alarms ring inside the hotel.

EXT. SHERIFF'S STATION - NIGHT

One of the two bandits arrested for drunk-and-disorderly runs across the street into the City Hall building.

EXT. MILLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Ben returns with their rifles. He hands Sarah hers. The rain comes down in sheets. The lightning allows them to see the bandits racing toward the barn.

They raise their rifles, smile and pull the triggers.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

El Diablo and his crew continue to march through the driving rain toward the center of town. He inspects every inch of town carefully.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The group of bandits that entered from the East approach the center of town. They see El Diablo and his men through the driving rain and stop in front of the hotel.

EXT. MAIN STREET HOTEL - NIGHT

Smoke stops rising from the hotel. El Diablo pauses in front of the hotel and studies it.

EL DIABLO  
Something's not right.

His second in command responds.

NUMBER TWO  
Is anyone even here?

El Diablo looks at the travelers that lit the fires.

TRAVELER 1  
We did it right, boss. We each lit the beds in our rooms on fire. The place should be in flames right now.

NUMBER TWO  
How many people were in there?

TRAVELER 1  
It was full. We got the last four rooms.

EL DIABLO  
Then where the hell is everyone?

Rifle shots ring out. A lot of them. The bandits are caught in a crossfire.

Four hay carts line Main Street. In each cart, under the now sopping wet straw lie two highly trained Native snipers.

Each of them has fired before the bandits could figure out what was going on.

Six of these seventeen hired killers are now dead leaving El Diablo and TEN more.

Another volley rains from above as they scramble for cover. The six sniper's nests on the roofs of businesses on Main Street also each have a sniper. Two more bandits are hit.

El Diablo plus EIGHT. They return fire from behind cover. They get lucky and hit a sniper. While bullets fly, El Diablo sees a muzzle flash from the back of a hay cart.

He motions to his men. They all start firing at the carts. More luck in their favor. SIX Native snipers left.

The fight is nearly even now.

Men from both sides fire at each other in the driving wind and rain but hit no one.

It's a standoff until Mr. Potter and George push the tarp covered cart out of the vacant storefront into the center of Main Street.

Mr. Potter screams over the raging storm.

MR. POTTER  
It's all yours, George!

He tears the tarp off of the cart and exposes something big and shiny, which George recognizes instantly.

A Gatling gun.

George jumps on top of it with glee.

He cranks the handle and fires down the street. He doesn't hit very often, but he doesn't need to. The sheer quantity of hot lead makes it easy to drop two more bandits.

EL DIABLO  
Let's get out of here.

El Diablo and his SIX remaining henchmen mount their horses and retreat to the West while ducking bullets. They lose two more before they reach the edge of town and George runs out of ammunition.

George hears horses galloping behind him. They breeze past him at speed.

It's Sarah and Ben.

They fearlessly tear toward the bandits. El Diablo, done with this job, looks back and nudges his horse to go faster.

As he turns around, he sees six more Native soldiers with long rifles pointed right at them, blocking their exit.

They stop. He holsters his pistol, dismounts and raises his hands. The others do the same.

EL DIABLO (CONT'D)

Well, shit.

Six Native soldiers block the street in front of the church. El Diablo and his men stand in front of the undertaker's premises. Sarah and Ben close the gap. The Sheriff comes from nowhere on foot and stands in the street.

SHERIFF

Daniel.

EL DIABLO

Walt.

SHERIFF

Who hired you?

EL DIABLO

You know.

SHERIFF

I need to hear you say it. Who hired you and why?

Walt puts his hand on his pistol.

EL DIABLO

Adams. John Adams hired me to kill the Mayor and you and take over the town.

Out of the corner of his eye, Walt sees the door to his office open. At the same time, directly across the street the door to city hall opens. One of the drunk-and-disorderlies step out of each door and shoots at the Sheriff, dropping him in the muddy street.

Sarah and Ben each scream from their galloping horses and fire their pistols at the fake drunks, killing them.

Behind El Diablo, the Native soldiers fire, dropping the last four bandits, leaving only El Diablo alive.

He stands alone in the torrential rain with his hands in the air.

Sarah and Ben jump off of their horses and run to Walt's side. He's still alive, but just barely.



Walt gasps for breath, his mouth full of blood. He coughs. Sarah and Ben kneel in the mud.

SARAH

Dammit Walt. You can't die on me too.

Walt paws at his chest. She grabs his hand. He shakes it loose and paws at his chest again.

After several tries he finds the Sheriff's star on his vest. He tears it off and pins it to Ben.

SHERIFF

Take care of your town.

He exhales and his eyes lose focus.

Ben rests on one knee. He looks up at El Diablo with rage in his eyes. The Native soldiers behind the bandit step aside.

Ben stands. Thunder rolls. Lightning strikes illuminates the righteous ire on his face.

El Diablo has seen the look before, but this is the first time he's feared it.

SARAH

Ben. Don't. Let me.

BEN

Draw.

El Diablo tries to smile with bravado, but fails.

EL DIABLO

You're just a kid.

BEN

I've killed a lot of your adults.

The lightning makes the silver star on his chest flash.

EL DIABLO

I don't want to kill you kid.

BEN

What's wrong, El Pendejo?

EL DIABLO

Don't call me that.

BEN  
 Why? Is that what your Mom called  
 you?

SARAH  
 Dammit Ben!

EL DIABLO  
 Callate cabron!

BEN  
 Speak up, El Pendejo. I can't hear  
 you!

Sarah grabs Ben by the lapel and puts her face in his.

SARAH  
 Please let me have this one.

With tears in his eyes, Ben steps aside, hand on his gun just  
 in case his mom misses.

She squares up against El Diablo, rain in their faces.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
 What do you say, El Pendejo?

El Diablo drops his hands. Sarah draws.

One shot rings out.

**BEGIN MONTAGE**

-Soldiers and civilians alike help bring the wounded into the  
 doctor's office.

-Drs. Peters and Garrett work tirelessly.

-Abigail, Dolly and Florence hold the hands of the men more  
 seriously hurt.

-The Samuels donate whiskey for disinfectant and anesthesia.

-Volunteers help clean up the hotel. The fire suppression  
 system handled the fires before it raged out of control.

-Some townsfolk gather the bandits' bodies at the Miller's  
 house.

-The ranch hands carry on and gather eggs as if nothing  
 happened.

-Soldiers and civilians alike help bring the dead to the  
 undertaker.

-Mr. Stubbs prepares the bodies.

-Volunteers build coffins

-Ben coordinates volunteers.

-Once the street is clear, Ben heads to the Mayor's office.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

The sun peeks over the horizon. Ben is barely awake after the events of the past twenty-four hours. He opens the front door.

The weather has cleared. The crisp morning air makes him gather his jacket around him.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Ben looks up and down the street. Traffic is light. A few people wave. He crosses the street and enters the Mayor's Office

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE

The bell on the door dings as Ben walks in. Someone sits with muddy boots on the Mayor's desk.

They lean back in the chair with a hat covering her face.

He knocks her feet off the desk and she wakes up.

BEN

God, Mom!

SARAH

That's "Madam Mayor" if anyone is around.

BEN

**Okay, Mayor Mom.**

She hands him an envelope.

SARAH

Happy birthday, Baby.

BEN

**That's "Sheriff Baby" if anyone is around.**

He opens the envelope.

BEN (CONT'D)  
The mining claim?

SARAH  
And the deed to your parent's  
property. I had it officially  
transferred last week.

BEN  
Better be nice to me. I can vote  
now.

SARAH  
Ha ha.

Sarah glances at the clock.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
We need to go home and get cleaned  
up. I need to introduce you to some  
people.

BEN  
What? Who?

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Now clean and dressed in their best clothes, Sarah in her fox  
coat and Ben await some VIPs.

Two men walk in. They are very well dressed but more  
importantly, they carry an air of power. One of those  
qualities that is difficult to define but easy to see.

MR. COOKE  
Sarah?

He drops all pomp and circumstance and runs over to hug her.

SARAH  
Hi Daddy.

MR. COOKE  
You look just like your Mother. And  
you're Mayor? First woman mayor  
ever, I think.

SARAH  
I actually owe it all to David.

The other gentleman stands behind them stiffly.

MR. COOKE

Sorry, Samuel.

JUDGE MILLER

Thank you. Perhaps you could fill me in later on your lives here. Maybe I can take some tidbit back with me to console David's mother.

SARAH

How about his killer's head on a platter?

JUDGE MILLER

That'll do.

SARAH

Oh, I'm so sorry. This is Ben. Your grandson.

Ben steps forward and extends his hand.

JUDGE MILLER

That won't do boy.

Judge Miller takes Ben into his arms. He's a very large man, like David. Ben is lost in his embrace. Both of the strong, powerful men weep.

Just as Ben starts to feel uncomfortable, Samuel releases him so he can get some air.

MR. COOKE

What's that on your chest? A silver star? Are you the Sheriff?

BEN

Yes, sir. It's my first day.

JUDGE MILLER

Then let's make it memorable. Where can we find this John Adams?

EXT. ADAMS CATTLE COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

The luxury coach carrying Ben, Sarah, Mr. Cooke and Judge Miller arrives at Adams' Cattle Company offices and parks beside three other luxury coaches, including one with the Presidential Seal on the side and one with the Swiss flag.

SARAH

What the?--

MR. COOKE  
--Trust me, baby.

JUDGE MILLER  
Did you bring your handcuffs, son?

Ben nods, in awe of what is happening around him.

They pull in beside the other coaches. They exit and the occupants of the other coaches exit as well. They all wear suits and exude power.

Samuel Miller strides over to shake hands with an equally impressive man.

JUDGE MILLER (CONT'D)  
A.G. Brewster!

ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Justice Miller. I'm so sorry for your loss. Is this the bastard that took your son?

JUDGE MILLER  
And a lot others.

ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Let's bury him.

An aide hands him his briefcase and they storm into Adams' office with about a dozen people in tow.

SARAH  
(whispering)  
What exactly is going on, Daddy?

MR. COOKE  
Our turn is coming up. Sam and I rehearsed this.

He gives Sarah a big wink. Ben follows, unsure of his place here.

Sarah tries to hold Ben's hand, but it doesn't feel very manly in this sea of testosterone, so he shakes free before his new grandfathers see.

Sarah smiles.

INT. ADAMS CATTLE COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

A dozen imposing men dressed in black suits storm John's office. Two with shotguns flank the Attorney General.

They storm the lobby and barrel into Adams' office.

John Adams' freshly lit cigar sags in his mouth as the small army of men storm into his office.

JOHN

What the--

ATTORNEY GENERAL

--Mr. Adams. My name is Benjamin Brewster and I am the Attorney General of These United States. You are under arrest.

Adams sputters nonsensical syllables.

JOHN

I...whu..who...why...huh...

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Don't hurt yourself. You are under arrest for Murder, conspiracy to commit murder, murder for hire, indoctrinated civil servitude, tax evasion, illegal taxation, fraud, intent to defraud, and seventeen counts of bribery of a federal officer.

JOHN

What?

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Those are crimes. You are now going to jail.

Ben is a bit behind reading lips so he doesn't quite understand he is up.

SARAH

**Cuff him.**

Ben steps forward, newly empowered, and places Adams in handcuffs.

JOHN

Let me go you simple shit.

JUDGE MILLER

What did you just call the Sheriff?

Judge Miller draws himself up to his imposing six foot five inch stature and stares down upon John Adams.

JOHN  
Wh...who...who are you?

JUDGE MILLER  
Supreme Court Justice Samuel  
Miller. You murdered my son.

If these entire proceedings weren't deflating enough. John finally realizes he's firmly ratfucked.

MR. COOKE  
And for the rest of your short  
life, you shall NOT disparage my  
grandson.

John is thoroughly confused now.

JOHN  
W..wh..who is your grandson?

MR. COOKE  
Sheriff Ben Miller. You should  
know. You're wearing his jewelry.

Ben happily shakes the handcuff keys in front of his face.

JOHN  
Wait. Who are you?

MR. COOKE  
Jay Cooke. Sarah's father. I own a  
few railroads. Thanks for laying  
the groundwork for the bauxite  
mine. I'll take it from here.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - NIGHT

Ben happily slams the cell door in John's face.

BEN  
Now what?

Samuel, Jay and Sarah look on.

SARAH  
We go to dinner.

They leave to hit the saloon for Ben's birthday dinner. One of Jay's aides slides into the Sheriff's Station behind them as they leave.

He tosses a bedsheet into John's cell.



JOHN  
What the hell is this?

AIDE  
You'll figure it out.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Ben's birthday was an excuse to blow off a lot of steam. The party rages. People dance on the bar at the saloon, they drink more than they should and Ben's grandfathers actually let their hair down a bit along with the government officials and people of industry he has not yet been introduced to.

As the party winds down, and the harpies cast him suggestive glances in such a way his mother doesn't see, Mr. Cooke suggests having a cigar on the front stoop.

Sarah watches as Ben and her father leave. She rises.

Samuel puts his hand on her arm. She sits back down. Judge Miller looks at her with tears in his eyes.

JUDGE MILLER  
They're fine. Please tell me about David and his life here.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

Ben isn't used to the cigars and whiskey at his young age. His head swims.

MR. COOKE  
You're going to be faced with a decision tomorrow.

Ben tries to focus his eyes. Mr. Cooke chuckles.

MR. COOKE (CONT'D)  
I've gathered a money man, an electrical company, a coal man, and a mining company to discuss terms. I'm the railroad man, of course.

BEN  
What are you saying, sir?

MR. COOKE  
I envy you, Ben. You are at a crossroads and you have nothing but good choices.

(MORE)

MR. COOKE (CONT'D)

But I feel as your grandfather I should lead you a bit.

BEN

Of course, sir.

MR. COOKE

You have two ways to go. Have a banker fold your claim into a package with the electrical company, the mining company and the coal company as a joint venture and make an obscene amount of money.

BEN

Is that bad?

MR. COOKE

Not necessarily. But it also comes with an obscene amount of headaches. Do you want to become John Adams?

BEN

No, sir.

MR. COOKE

The alternative is to give them your rights in exchange for ten percent of the profits and let those other men die of heart attacks at their desks at 40.

BEN

You make it sound so appealing.

Mr. Cooke throws his head back and roars in laughter.

MR. COOKE

You remind me so much of your Father. That cunning wit.

BEN

What would you do if you had to do it over, sir?

MR. COOKE

I can't tell you what to do, but you have an entire town that loves you, a fulfilling career, and an amazing Mother who's success is tied up in your happiness. We will all respect your decision as a man.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

In the morning after Ben's birthday bash, Main Street is sparsely trafficked. A cart with a sheet over it traverses the street between the Sheriff's office and the undertakers' lab.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben sits outside Sarah's desk. Jay and Samuel stand as Ben signs paperwork prepared by Jay's attorney.

Ben finishes and the attorney folds the papers and stows them in his briefcase.

ATTORNEY

I'll file these immediately, sir.

MR. COOKE

How do you feel, Ben?

BEN

Liberated. But I wish Dad was here.

Samuel appears as if he was struck, but he responds regally.

JUDGE MILLER

We all do, son. He leaves a big hole in all of our hearts.

They all pause the appropriate length of time.

MR. COOKE

You'll come visit, right? I mean, my railroad goes right to your backdoor now.

SARAH

Of course, Daddy.

Jay leans in to Ben.

MR. COOKE

You can bring a few of those girlfriends if you want.

SARAH

Dad!

MR. COOKE

Just like your Mother.

The men leave for their train.

SARAH  
What did you decide?

BEN  
What's ten percent of a gold mine  
verses forty-nine percent?

SARAH  
Thirty-nine percent?

BEN  
Technically true, but is that worth  
my soul and happiness?

SARAH  
What did my father say to you?

BEN  
He said to follow my heart.

SARAH  
Where is your heart?

BEN  
Here with you and Dad.

As the Mayor and the Sheriff walk out onto Main Street in  
Millerstown they look to the West and see nothing but blue  
sky.