

LA VENGANZA (THE REVENGE)

Written by

Tony Garcia & Evette Betancourt

Inspired by the true story of Mexican outlaw Joaquin Murrieta, in
1850s California.

evette.betancourt@gmail.com
619-208-1249

FADE IN:

SUPER: "Mexican-American War, 1858."

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Two infantry companies, American soldiers, and Mexican soldiers fight each other hand-to-hand, with rifles, bayonets, pistols, knives, and fists.

There's no discipline or strategy. Both have resolved to take no prisoners.

SMOKE fills the air as the Mexican Army fire their cannons. Men scream as cannonballs EXPLODE. Horses twist and buck in terror. Soldiers and horses from both sides lie sprawled upon the ground.

Blood and dirt stain the bodies. HEAVY SMOKE from the cannons obscures the field.

A battle-hardened and dust-covered Mexican General, who looks as though he's lived several lifetimes in the saddle, JOAQUIN MURRIETA (37), stands on a hilltop.

He squints through a spyglass at the fierce battle taking place in the valley below.

Joaquin hands the spyglass to his aristocratic-looking Lieutenant, MANUEL GARCIA (40s).

MANUEL

Are we winning?

JOAQUIN

I can't see anything through the smoke.

Joaquin shakes his head.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

The damn Americans have stipulated in their "friendship" treaty; they want compensation for their invasion of our country.

MANUEL

Putos! I suppose they want to rule Mexico, like the French?

JOAQUIN

The greedy *Americanos* want all of Northern Mexico and twenty million dollars.

MANUEL

Madre de Dios! The putos are nothing more than bandits.

JOAQUIN

To the victor, go the spoils.

MANUEL

To the pigs, go the slops.

Joaquin leaps onto his saddle.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

JOAQUIN

To be with my men.

MANUEL

But the other Generals --

JOAQUIN

What kind of man would I be, Manuel, if I did not fight alongside them?

ALEJANDRO FELIZ (35), idles on his horse. His dimples deepen when he smiles.

ALEJANDRO

You're supposed to marry my sister; She'd prefer you're alive. Me too, or I won't hear the end of it.

Joaquin's older brother, MARCOS MURRIETA (29), a lean man with hard eyes, sharpens his knife.

MARCOS

Why are we talking about marriage? Let's go kill some Americanos.

Marcos bolts down. Joaquin slyly smiles, spurs his horse down the hill and into the midst of battle.

Manuel jumps on his horse and follows Joaquin into the fray. Alejandro shakes his head and jumps on his horse, and follows.

EXT. WEDDING PARTY - DAY

A MARIACHI BAND sings and plays in the background. GUESTS at an elaborate wedding banquet laugh and enjoy themselves. CHILDREN chase after one another between the tables.

In an immaculate General's uniform, Joaquin sits next to ROSA MURRIETA (25), a glowing young bride with fine features and thick, up-swept hair.

Joaquin looks down at his petite bride and smiles. Rosa averts her expressive eyes and blushes.

JOAQUIN

Why do you blush every time I look at you?

ROSA

You stare at me like I'm a piece of cake. I'm afraid you'll gobble me up at any minute.

Joaquin laughs and lifts his bride's chin toward him.

JOAQUIN

I want to remember this moment forever. It's the day I married the most beautiful woman in the world.

The couple looks at each other in adoration. Marcos stands up from the table and clinks his glass. The music stops.

MARCOS

Attention everyone! A toast to my brother, Joaquin, and his beautiful bride, Rosa.

A hush falls over the crowd. Marcos lifts his glass.

MARCOS (CONT'D)

Joaquin has found himself a jewel among women, and I wish them both all the happiness in the world! Welcome, Rosa, to the honorable Murrieta family!

The crowd CHEERS THEIR APPROVAL.

ALEJANDRO

It is an honor to welcome my esteemed new brother-in-law, General Murrieta, into the distinguished and honorable Feliz family.

More CHEERS and WHISTLES.

JOAQUIN

(whispers)

I'm not sure whose family is more proud of this marriage, the Murrieta's or the Feliz.

ROSA

Oh, without a doubt, it's the Murrieta's.

Joaquin lifts Rosa's hand and kisses it. Manuel stands next to them, lifts his glass to salute Joaquin.

JOAQUIN

Be polite, Manuel! There are ladies present.

MANUEL

Today, I celebrate the wedding of my best friend... The most courageous, honorable, and--

(coughs)

Foolish man, I've ever known. May his life with Rosa be filled with happiness and numerous sons!

JOAQUIN

I would not mind having beautiful, sweet daughters who look like their mother.

ROSA

I shall do my best to give you both.

Joaquin lifts Rosa's hand and kisses it.

INT. HACIENDA - DAY

On one side of a long table sit three old men: DON COUTO, DON DE ATRISTAIN, AND DON GONZAGA-CUEVAS.

Across from them sit representatives of the United States: NICHOLAS TRIST, and a giant of a man, CAPTAIN HARRY LOVE, 62.

GENERAL SCOTT

Gentlemen, we are here to negotiate the terms of a treaty promoting peace and friendship between the United States of America and the Republic of Mexico.

The Mexican representatives stare angrily at the General.

DON COUTO
You ask for too much!

GENERAL SCOTT
Your armies are decimated, and your
government is in collapse. Under
the circumstances, I'd say we're
making a very generous offer.

One by one, the older men sign the treaty. In his General's uniform, Joaquin Murrieta leans against a wall in the back of the room. His head is wrapped in bandages.

Manuel stands next to him; his right hand is heavily bandaged. Manuel and Joaquin stare disgustedly at the Dons. Joaquin strides up to the Dons.

NOTE: ITALICS IN SPANISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

JOAQUIN
Men of honor do not surrender so easily.

DON CUEVAS
We have no choice, General!

Joaquin turns and gives General Scott a look. General Scott stares thoughtfully after him.

SUPER: "EIGHT YEARS LATER - 1866"

EXT. JOAQUIN'S HOMESTEAD - DAY - 1866

Mirages ripple above the dusty landscape of dead grass, scrub brush, and cactus. Cattle in the distance BELLOW for water.

Joaquin sits astride his horse and takes off his hat. He wipes his forehead with his sleeve. A young man with mischief in his eyes, ALBERTO, 17, laughs.

ALBERTO
I'll bet you wish you were still a General?

JOAQUIN
Herding cattle and soldiers are not so very different. They both smell, are stubborn as bulls, and kick up a fuss at every order.

ALBERTO
When I was in town yesterday, I heard about a family that was murdered in their beds.

Joaquin pulls the reins of his horse up short. Twists to face Alberto.

JOAQUIN

Who?

ALBERTO

The Sotos.

JOAQUIN

The ones who own that mine to the South?

Alberto nods.

ALBERTO

They said the family, even the children, were butchered like hogs.

JOAQUIN

Madre de dios! That's horrible. But, you don't worry about that, now, hijo. Understand? It was probably a lone incident. Justice will catch up to them. Wait and see.

Joaquin nudges his horse forward.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

Don't mention this to your Tia, alright? We don't want her to worry, do we?

Alberto shakes his head.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

Go home, I'll be late for supper.

Joaquin spurs his horse and rides off into the distance.

EXT. MINING CAMP - NIGHT

Dozens of MINERS of all races surround a dimly lit campfire. Among them is Joaquin and Alberto. An IRISH MINER, 60's leads the meeting.

IRISH MINER

I went to the clerk's office and looked for our claims. They weren't there. The Barrow Brothers are taking our land from under us.

MEXICAN MINER

They say if we don't sell, we'll end up with nothing! Or worse...

JOAQUIN

We need to stick together. Don't sell.

IRISH MINER

I can't stay any longer. I came home today and found my camp burned and ruined! My horse's dead...

Another miner steps forward.

ITALIAN MINER

I sold.

JOAQUIN

No, you said you wouldn't!

ITALIAN MINER

(pointing to Irish Miner)

I'm too scared to end up like him. I'm too old and tired to start somewhere new. I'm going back to New York.

JOAQUIN

That's just what they want!

IRISH MINER

What about a lawyer?

ITALIAN MINER

No lawyer is going to take on a bunch of Mexicans, Chinese, or an old washed-up man like me. Besides, the Mexican and Chinese miners can't testify against gringos.

Another miner, TOM MCHENRY (60), stumbles into camp, badly beaten. He puts his support on his grandson, CHARLIE (20).

CHARLIE

They killed our animals, and look what they did to my granddaddy.

The elderly miner collapses on the ground. The other miners surround him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
They came to our camp, and they never even said a word... They just started shootin'.

MCHENRY
They said that because we were trespassing on their land, we could be hanged.

CHINESE MINER
What are we going to do?

ITALIAN MINER(O.S)
I'm leaving!

MEXICAN MINER(O.S)
Me too!

Joaquin steps forward, his gaze focused and determined.

JOAQUIN
I'm staying! So help me, God no one is running me off my land.

INT. HACIENDA - ALBERTO'S ROOM - DAY

Joaquin wakes Alberto.

JOAQUIN
Get up; we're going into town?

ALBERTO
Why?

JOAQUIN
I need to check on something.

EXT. PATH - DAY

Joaquin and Alberto pass an oak tree near the mining camp.

Joaquin reads a note posted on the tree.

JOAQUIN
Private Property, Official Mining Claim of Barrow Brothers Mining, March 3rd, 1866. Location: Saw Mill Flats.... Trespassers will be shot.

ALBERTO
What is it?

JOAQUIN

Bad news...

Joaquin rips the notice off the tree.

INT. CLERKS OFFICE - DAY

Joaquin stands at the counter. A sign behind the CLERK reads "COUNTY OF STANISLAUS ASSESSOR/RECORDER" the Clerk reads the notice.

CLERK

I'm not sure what to tell you.
Everything looks in order-

JOAQUIN

That's impossible! That's my
land... That's my claim.

CLERK

If this is your claim.... Then
where are your papers?

JOAQUIN

In Mexico, I've owned that land for
many years.

CLERK

Why are your papers in Mexico?

JOAQUIN

Because that's where I was living
when I purchased it.

CLERK

Then how are you going to prove the
land is really yours?

JOAQUIN

I don't have to prove anything!
I've been working that claim for a
year now.... everyone knows that's
my claim!

CLERK

(patronizing tone)

Listen, Senor... I don't know how
things work down in Mexico, but
here, you have to have the
paperwork that proves it's your
claim.

JOAQUIN

Pinche cabrones! You can't keep
kicking us off land that is
rightfully ours-

CLERK

Whoa! Listen, amigo... nobody's
kicking anyone off any land...
looks to me like you been
trespassing and now ya'll been
caught. Now you best get off that
land before you are arrested-

JOAQUIN

Arrested? Arrested for living and
working on my own land?

CLERK

Maybe you should go back to Mexico-

JOAQUIN

Maybe you should go to HELL-

CLERK

We're done here.

The clerk slams down the window.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

The surrounding trees have filled out; the grass grows wild
and tall, flowers bloom. Joaquin, Alberto, and his father,
Marcos pan and dig for gold. They find nothing.

The work is back-breaking under a hot sun, but soon they find
some gold dust. Joaquin sifts through his pan and spots a
small gold nugget.

JOAQUIN

Gold?

Marcos grabs the nugget, holding it within his fingertips. He
holds it up to the morning sun in disbelief. A look of shock
and joy washes over his tired face.

MARCOS

GOLD!.....GOLD!

The men celebrate by hooting and hollering. On a distant
hilltop, a SHADOWY FIGURE moves away slowly.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Joaquin, Marcos, and Alberto stop at the General Store and dismount. Marcos continues on toward a small saloon.

INT. GENERAL STORE - SAME

The bell above the door RINGS as Joaquin enters. He approaches the grocer, JEREMIAH MILLER (45), who stocks his shelves with jars of preserves.

JEREMIAH

Hello, General! Where's Rosa and the boys? How are they doing?

JOAQUIN

They're fine, Jeremiah. Thanks for asking.

JEREMIAH

What can I get for you today?

JOAQUIN

I need some information.

Jeremiah raises his eyebrows.

JEREMIAH

Information?

JOAQUIN

S̃. My nephew told me there was a family murdered. The Sotos? Jeremiah shakes his head.

JEREMIAH

Dreadful business that.

JOAQUIN

So it's true?

Jeremiah nods. Jeremiah's wife, a nervous Hispanic woman, ALMIRA (22), joins the men.

ALMIRA

No one bothered us while their civil War was being fought, but now that it's over... Americans are moving West. And they want land. Our land. Be careful, General.

Joaquin smiles and shrugs.

INT. SALOON - DAY

A dusty saloon, many MEN of all sorts, stand about, exchanging stories of mining. Marcos proudly makes his way through the crowd as he looks around at the other men.

Two dingy-looking white MINERS stop Marcos. The first man, MCHUTCHINS (44), has a scarred face; the second miner, LEVI (33), a thin, lanky man. Marcos stops dead in his tracks.

MCHUTCHINS
Hey, you speak English?

MARCOS
I speak English.

The miners look Marcos over with disdain.

LEVI
You been panning for gold, amigo?

MCHUTCHINS
You're a little too far from home to be panning for gold, ain't ya, *amigo*?

Marcos glances at the scarred-faced miner. MCHUTCHINS palms a pistol stuffed into his waistband. The saloon falls silent.

LEVI
Ain't you one of them Mexs that's been panning near our boss's land?

MARCOS
I'm not looking for trouble, *senor*.

LEVI
Neither are we... We just wanted to tell you there ain't no place here for goddamn greasers.

MCHUTCHINS
Hell, I wouldn't worry about it.... Ain't never been a Mex that has found any gold here anyway... Like the roaches they are... They always scatter back to Old Mexico.

MARCOS
Maybe, but... Then again-

BARTENDER(O.S.)
Hey! Knock it off. I don't wanna any trouble!

Marcos walks up to the counter takes out the small nugget.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
Well I'll be damned...

McHutchins and Levi slither out of the saloon.

EXT. JOAQUIN'S HOMESTEAD - DAY

Rosa draws water from a well when Joaquin, Marcos, and Alberto thunder into view on horseback. She drops the bucket, and it smashes on the ground with a splash.

Joaquin rides right up to her and scoops her up across his saddle.

ROSA
Joaquin *que haces?*

Joaquin pulls a wad of CASH from his breast pocket.

JOAQUIN
Gold... *Me amore..* We found gold.

ROSA
Dios mio!

JOAQUIN
I'm going to build you a bigger place!

ROSA
I don't need a bigger place.

JOAQUIN
Then I'm going to build you a better place. We are going to live like royalty!

Joaquin and Rosa embrace and kiss passionately.

INT. BARROW MANSION - NIGHT

McHutchins and Levi sit at a table slamming whiskey shots with JOHN BARROW (65). He's a hardened man who looks every bit his years.

JOHN
This Mex.... you sure he had gold?

MCHUTCHINS
We seen it alright--

LEVI

As big as an acorn!

SMITTY BARROW (40), and JAMES BARROW (30), brothers are fit men with dirt always on their face and rough hands from horse reigns and punching people.

JOHN

The other Mexicans, Alberto, and Marcos.... you sure they left town to get proof of their claim.

JAMES

Heard it from the County Clerk myself. At least one of them is gone back to 'Ol Mexico.

JOHN

Sounds like the perfect time to acquire some new property.

SMITTY

It's easier to kill one or two dirty Mexs than three.

JOHN

Goddamn greasers! James, Smitty... tomorrow you take a couple of the boys, and you send those Mex bastards below the snakes.

JAMES BARROW

You goddamn right. We're gonna have us a hog-killin' time... Wooo!

INT. MURRIETA RANCH - NIGHT

Rosa serves dinner. Joaquin puts his carving knife down and pats his wife lovingly on her bottom. Alberto attempts to smother his laughter.

ROSA

Joaquin! Where are your manners? You're setting a poor example for your nephew.

JOAQUIN

Did you hear your Tia? When you get married someday, there'll be no patting your wife on the bottom.

ALBERTO

(smirks)
No patting my wife on the bottom?

ROSA
You're a terrible influence on the
poor boy.

A baby CRIES in the next room. A sweet little boy, ERNESTO (7), enters the room. He grits his teeth as he carries his little brother, a squirming JUANITO (12 months).

Rosa rushes to take Juanito from Ernesto.

ROSA (CONT'D)
Sit and eat, *mijo*.

JOAQUIN
Did you wash your hands?

Ernesto nods and holds up his hands for inspection.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)
Good boy!

EXT. MINING CAMP - DAY

The dingy orange light of dusk bathes a sign nailed to a tree. The sign marks Joaquin's claim.

James and Smitty ride up to the tree along with three other men, LENNY (28), CLYDE (21), and DALE (19). James dismounts and rips the sign from the tree.

JAMES
It's a good day to kill some Bean
Eaters.

The men survey the Murrieta camp from the hilltop.

LENNY
Goddamn, Mexican has built himself
quite a spread.

DALE
I dunno fellas; it don't seem
right? I heard he use to be a
General of some sort.

SMITTY
Whose fuck'n idea was it to bring
along the goddamn pussy?

DALE
I ain't no pussy, Smitty! All I'm
say'n is---

JAMES

Ain't no one interested in what you got to say, boy. Now you grow yourself a pair of balls--

SMITTY

My brother ain't paying you to think! He's paying you to do a job, and it's time to go to work!

INT. MURRIETA RANCH - NIGHT

The house is quiet. Peaceful. Rosa serenely sits in a rocking chair and knits a baby blanket.

Joaquin sits in an oversized chair. He rests his hand on his chin and reads a book. Rosa peeks over at him and smiles. Joaquin raises his head from the book.

JOAQUIN

What?

ROSA

Nothing. I just like to look at you.

JOAQUIN

You're a crazy woman.

ROSA

Crazy about you.

Joaquin chuckles and goes back to his book. Rosa sets her knitting down. She stands behind Joaquin and massages his head. He takes Rosa's arms and pulls her onto his lap.

JOAQUIN

You're not going to leave me alone, are you?

ROSA

Enjoy the peace and quiet while you can. It won't be long before you're going to be interrupted every few hours. Joaquin's eyes open wide.

JOAQUIN

Again? So soon? I hope it's a girl this time.

ROSA

I hope so too. I've been praying to the Virgin Mother for a girl to keep me company.

JOAQUIN

Ahh, *me amore*, I'm a very lucky man.

ROSA

I'm glad you realize how lucky you are. Now, let's go to bed.

Rosa leads him by the hand toward their bedroom.

DOGS BARK OUTSIDE--

SOUNDS OF HORSES' HOOVES--

JOAQUIN

Get the kids!

Joaquin reaches for his rifle on the wall. The front door BURSTS OPEN. James, Smitty, Lenny, and Clyde, faces covered, rush inside the room.

James knocks the rifle from Joaquin's hands. Rosa SCREAMS. Baby Juanito CRIES in the next room.

Alberto runs into the room with a knife in his hand. Smitty SHOOTs Alberto in the forehead. Alberto's body crumples to the ground.

Joaquin swings a lamp at James. The lamp crashes across James' face. His face bleeds profusely.

JAMES

You fucking Mexican shit!

Joaquin raises the lamp. Before he can strike, James swings his rifle against the back of Joaquin's head. Joaquin's eyes roll to the back of his head.

His face slams to the floor. Rosa SCREAMS.

EXT. MURRIETA RANCH - DAY

In the background, Joaquin's house smolders. Wisps of smoke rise above the blackened ruins. An indistinct body lies in front of the house.

Sprawled on the ground appears a lifeless Joaquin. A rope noose with a frayed end is wrapped around his neck.

Joaquin slowly opens his eyes. He sees a broken rope hang from a tree. Joaquin turns his head: the bodies of his children and nephew swing from the other limbs of the tree.

Flies BUZZ around their bodies.

JOAQUIN

Nooooo!!!

Joaquin pulls himself up. He staggers to his children and nephew. Joaquin climbs the tree and unties their ropes. Their rigid corpses drop to the ground.

Joaquin leaps from the tree and clutching his children to his chest. Joaquin looks around. He sees a body lying in the front yard. He runs to it.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

Rosa!!!

Rosa's body lies face-down in the dirt.

Her skirt is ripped up the back. Copious amounts of blood cover her upper thighs.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

No! No! Nooooo!!!!

INT. MARCOS' HOUSE - NIGHT

In a plain, Spanish-style bedroom, the concerned faces of Marcos and a Hispanic DOCTOR hover over Joaquin. Thick bandages cover Joaquin's neck.

In the corner of the room stands Marcos' oldest son, CARLOS (20). His red-rimmed eyes and shocked expression reflect the feelings of the room.

DOCTOR

Physically, he should be back to himself in a couple of weeks. Lucky for your brother, whoever hung him used old rope.

MARCOS

I doubt my brother will view it as lucky.

DOCTOR

How did you find him?

MARCOS

I was in Mexico getting proof of our claims. I also wanted to talk to him about a new bull from Texas that's for sale. When I found him, he was unconscious... Lying across Rosa's body.

Small porcine eyes and a perpetual sunburn, SHERIFF DOUG DRYER (48), enters the room. Dryer leans over Joaquin.

SHERIFF DRYER
Not awake yet, huh? Probably for
the best.

Sheriff Dryer fingers Joaquin's neck bandage to the side. He whistles as an ugly abrasion oozes blood across Joaquin's throat.

SHERIFF DRYER (CONT'D)
Jesus!
(turns to Marcos)
Did your brother say who did this?

MARCOS
If he had, I wouldn't be standing
here now. They killed my boy... My
Alberto.

Marcos voice breaks.

MARCOS (CONT'D)
He was only seventeen.

SHERIFF DRYER
Now, listen, Marcos. Don't you dare
go vigilantly without knowing all
the facts. We'll get the bastards
the right way. For all, we know it
could have been Indians.

MARCOS
Indians? No way in hell did they do
this. I'll find the monsters who
killed my son. And when I do,
they're as good as dead.

SHERIFF DRYER
Marcos, I'm going to do everything
I can to find whoever did this. You
don't do shit; let me do my job.

Joaquin moans. His eyes spring open in horror. Arms flail.

JOAQUIN
No! No!

DOCTOR
Hold him down!

As Marcos and the Sheriff hold Joaquin down, the Doctor pours milky liquid from a vial down Joaquin's throat. Joaquin passes out.

MARCOS

What did you give him?

DOCTOR

Opium. His mind and body need time to recover.

MARCOS

But I need him to tell me who did it?

SHERIFF DRYER

Just remember what I said, Marcos. Let me do my job. Doc, as soon as he wakes, come get me.

He leaves.

DOCTOR

You and Joaquin need to be careful. California is ruled by the *gringos* now. They'll never give us justice. But Dryer is a good Sheriff. Don't do anything brash.

MARCOS

I can't wait on good.

INT. MARCOS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joaquin sleeps, his eyes twitch, his body trembles. Rosa's screams fill the air.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

Dark, a shadowy figure moves to Joaquin; it's a woman. Joaquin doesn't recognize the woman. As the ghostly figure comes closer.

A familiar voice calls to him. His body rests... He's calm.

ROSA

Joaquin..... Joaquin.

JOAQUIN

Amore.

ROSA

Hace me un favor.

JOAQUIN
Si amore.

ROSA
 Kill them all... Kill them all.

JOAQUIN
 Rosa!..... Rosa!

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

INT. MARCOS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joaquin stirs awake. Carlos stands over him. The smoke of fire fills the house.

CARLOS
 Hey... Tio... Wake up.

JOAQUIN
 Rosa...

CARLOS
 You were dreaming.

JOAQUIN
Si.

CARLOS
 We need to go. My dad went to Fresno.

JOAQUIN
 Fresno... Why?

CARLOS
 He said he went to find some old friends. So we can figure out what to do.

JOAQUIN
 I already know what to do.

CARLOS
 What?

JOAQUIN
 I'm going to kill them all.

EXT. MARCOS' BARN - DAY

Near the entrance to the barn, Joaquin straps six shooters to his legs. Saddled and ready to go, Joaquin's horse NEIGHS with nervous energy.

CARLOS

You're not well yet. I'm going with you.

JOAQUIN

There's no need to babysit me. I'm a grown man. Your dad has lost one son already.

CARLOS

And I lost a brother.

JOAQUIN

I'm going to meet Marcos in Fresno. You stay here.

CARLOS

But--

JOAQUIN

Stay here! When I find your dad and we learn the names of the men who did this; We'll come back.

CARLOS

Promise?

Joaquin nods.

Joaquin gets on his horse and rides away. Carlos watches him leave. Carlos jumps on his horse and races after his Uncle.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Joaquin sits in front of a small campfire. He roasts a rattlesnake on a spit. Fat SIZZLES as it drips into the fire.

JOAQUIN

You might as well come out and join me.

CARLOS

How did you know I was here?

JOAQUIN

I could smell you.

Carlos lifts his arms and smells his armpits. He shrugs and joins his uncle next to the fire.

CARLOS

You're not really going to eat that, are you?

Joaquin cuts off a piece and holds it out to Carlos, who shakes his head.

JOAQUIN
Tastes like chicken.

Carlos shudders.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)
Suit yourself.

CARLOS
Does it really taste like chicken?

JOAQUIN
See for yourself.

Carlos hesitantly takes a piece and puts it in his mouth. His eyes open in surprise.

CARLOS
Hmm, who would have thought snake
was good-eating?

JOAQUIN
Hunger makes everything taste good.

CARLOS
When we kill these gringos, they'll
be a whole posse after us, right?

Joaquin stares into the distance.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
I don't care either.

JOAQUIN
Better get some sleep. We have a
long way to go before we reach
Fresno tomorrow.

EXT. TOWN - MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Joaquin walks past a MAN stumbling out of a bar. Joaquin locks eyes with him. But the man doesn't recognize him.

Joaquin checks to make sure he's got his knife, pulls his hat low, follows the man down the street.

The man rounds a corner into an alley. Joaquin follows him. He's blinded by rage. The man senses something is wrong. He stops, turns to face Joaquin.

The two of them just stand there. Joaquin tips his hat. The man keeps walking, carefully stops, turns...

Joaquin pulls his knife, lunges at the man. The man dodges the blade but stumbles. Joaquin, filled with rage, stands over the man.

SLICE

Joaquin's blade cuts the man's arm. The man screams. Joaquin covers his mouth.

JOAQUIN

Remember me?

The man shakes his head.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

I remember you... I remember what you did to my wife! My sons!

The man cries, whimpers, mumbles. Joaquin takes his hand off his mouth.

MAN

Please... Please... I don't know you. I don't know nothing about your wife and sons... You have the wrong man.

JOAQUIN

No, I have the right man... One of them, at least...

MAN

No! No... You have the wrong man.... Please!

JOAQUIN

Shhhhh.... Shhhhhhh

Joaquin's eyes are filled with rage as he attempts to drive the knife into the man's chest.

MAN

Please, I have a wife and son.

Joaquin stops in his tracks and realizes what he is doing.

JOAQUIN

Get out of here! Go!

The Man takes off running. Carlos runs into the alley. Joaquin turns to him.

CARLOS

Tio.... Is that one of the men?

JOAQUIN

I...

CARLOS

What?

JOAQUIN

No, but I thought he looked like one of them.

CARLOS

Tio, are you going to be alright? We don't kill innocents.

JOAQUIN

I'm fine! I know who I'm after.

INT. JOAQUIN'S TENT - NIGHT

Joaquin slams shots of tequila by himself.

JOAQUIN

Oh Rosa.

He takes the same knife that he was going to kill the Man with and places it on the table. Joaquin stares at it.

In a fit of rage, Joaquin destroys his tent.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

MINERS of all races and their families sit in a small makeshift church. FATHER REYNALDO closes a sermon.

FATHER REYNALDO

And the Lord said, peace be with you..

CONGREGATION (O.S.)

And also with you.

FATHER REYNALDO

And now I ask you to turn to your neighbor and wish him peace...

We now see the whole congregation. In the background, a single HOODED FIGURE runs past the open doors to the church. The congregation exchanges handshakes and wishes for peace.

A SMALL BOY (12), looks back toward the open church doors. Two more hooded men carrying lit torches run past the church.

SMALL BOY

Papi?

Father Reynaldo sees the shadowy figures with the lit torches running past the church.

FATHER REYNALDO

Un momento... Un momento...

EXT. CHURCH - SAME

Armed men in hoods and torches surround the church. Suspicious, the congregation crowds the church doors. Father Reynaldo squeezes past the crowd and exits the church.

DAD comforts his son.

SMALL BOY

Papi... I'm scared.

DAD

Shhhh, mijo.... Shhhh.

Father Reynaldo approaches a hooded man seeking an explanation.

FATHER REYNALDO

Hola amigo, que pasa aqui?

The hooded figure says nothing, points a shotgun at him.

BAM

Father Reynaldo is dead. The hooded man turns to the congregation crowded at the door and fires again.

INT. CHURCH - SAME

The congregation scatters and hides behind anything they can find. More shots are fired into the church from all angles.

EXT. CHURCH - SAME

MEN, WOMEN, and CHILDREN spill out of the church and run in different directions.

SMALL BOY

PAPI!

DAD

Mijo!

A RIDER on a horse swoops in and grabs the Small Boy, frozen with fear. GUNFIRE erupts all around.

Confused people run around; bodies drop, an OLD WOMAN'S body is sprawled on the floor of the church, her body riddled with bullets. The Small Boy on horseback looks back fearfully.

People dart in and out of view as the hooded men continue to fire at the scurrying crowd. The young boy's father stumbles into view; he's been shot and is confused.

SMALL BOY

Papi!

DAD

Mijo!

SMALL BOY

Papi! Stop! I want my papi!

The rider continues furiously away from the massacre.

We see a hooded man walk up to the Small Boy's father and FIRES a bullet into the man's back. His body hurled forward the father's body lands limp. He's dead.

In the distance, the hooded man watches the smoke cloud rise to the skies. Two men unmask themselves to reveal John and Smitty Barrow.

EXT. STREETS OF FRESNO - DAY

Joaquin and Carlos ride somberly through the streets. They catch stares from various PEOPLE.

INT. SALOON - DAY

In a dark corner of a dingy, dirty saloon, Manuel, Marcos, and ALEJANDRO FELIZ (32), play cards. Manuel writes in his JOURNAL.

Joaquin, Carlos, and the others sit at the table drinking shots of Tequila.

MANUEL

(to Carlos)

I don't like it when people stare
at me as I write!

JOAQUIN

He doesn't mean anything by it.

Carlos diverts his stare.

MARCOS

Manuel, forgive my son's rudeness--

MANUEL
Your son? That's Carlitos! How old
are you now?

CARLOS
Twenty.

ALEJANDRO
How many do you want to kill?

JOAQUIN
All of them.

MANUEL
Where do we start?

JOAQUIN
We need to pay the Clerk a visit.
He's on the Barrow payroll.

The men all take shots of whiskey.

EXT. HOG PEN - DAY

The Clerk stands in the middle of a hog pen, trying to
separate the muddy hogs from one another.

The sound of hooves thunder as they approach. The squeal of
the hogs muffles the sound of the approaching gang.

CLERK
Woooooooooooo, Pig! Sooie!
Woooooooooooo, Pig! Sooie!

Suddenly the Clerk looks up Joaquin's almost on top of him.
Joaquin looks down at the Clerk, rage in his eyes. The Clerk
turns to run. The gang surrounds the pen.

Joaquin draws his pistol.

JOAQUIN
We need to talk.

CLERK
Please... Please have mercy.

JOAQUIN
Mercy? What did you do?

CLERK
Nothing.

JOAQUIN
Then why did you run?

CLERK

I... I didn't recognize you.

JOAQUIN

You have a reason to ask for mercy.
It's convenient the Barrows
brothers know where to find every
one of us Mexicans and threaten our
claim.

CLERK

I will tell you if you just let me
leave. You won't ever see me again.

MANUEL (O.S.)

I'm tired of his bellyaching. Just
shoot him, and let's go!

CLERK

Please, God, no!

JOAQUIN

Tell Me!

CLERK

The Barrows! It was the Barrows.

JOAQUIN

I know it's the Barrows! Where?

CLERK

The new Salt Mining Camp. I swear.

Joaquin turns to his men, nods and spurs his horse. Manuel
fires down into the pen. The others follow suit. When the
smoke clears, the Clerk lies dead in the muck.

EXT. SALT MINING CAMP - HILLTOP - DAY

Joaquin, Carlos, and Manuel spy on a mining camp from a
heavily brushed hilltop.

MANUEL

Is that him? The one they call...
Smitty?

Down below, Smitty Barrow laughs with other MEN. Joaquin
spots him, knows it's him, and nods. Manuel turns to Carlos.

JOAQUIN

Go get the others.

Carlos rides off quietly.

EXT. SALT MINING CAMP - NIGHT

Smitty walks away from a crackling campfire with only a dimly lit lantern to guide his way.

MINER(O.S.)

Hey Smitty! Where you head'n off too?

SMITTY

Got to go talk to a man about a horse.

MINER #1

Bullshit! You going off to take a dump!

MINER #2

Stupid... That's what he's sayin' he's gonna do.

SMITTY

Fuck'n idiots.

Smitty struggles to see in the darkness, his face whacked by small branches. A shuffling sound. Smitty stops, listens, nothing. He presses on. The sound comes again....

He stops, hears his own heartbeat. A coyote cries. Smitty's lantern goes out.

SMITTY (CONT'D)

God damn it! I forgot the goddamn matches.

Footsteps approach...

SMITTY (CONT'D)

Who's there?

The footsteps are louder. His friend's voices muffle. He's too far from camp.

SMITTY (CONT'D)

Is someone there? Y'all better not fuck with me, or I swear--

JOAQUIN(O.S)

Swear what?

SMITTY

Who's that? Benny? Is that you--

ALEJANDRO (O.S)
This is for my sister..

A deep vicious GURGLE. Smitty's throat is slashed. The lantern crashes to the ground.

EXT. DALE'S RANCH - DAY

Dale is watching his SON (10), ride his horse. John and James ride up to Dale, almost hit him.

DALE
Jesus Christ. What's all this about?

James circles Dale.

JOHN
You hear about my son, Smitty?

DALE
No.

JOHN
You give a heads up to those Mex's?

DALE
About what? What are you talking about? James, you're making me nervous, circling me like that.

James smiles. Dale puts his hand on his gun. John shoots Dale in the hand and the knees. For an old guy, John can shoot.

Dale's son notices and rides toward his dad. John gets off his horse and disarms Dale.

DALE (CONT'D)
(to his Son)
Stay back, boy.

JOHN
Smitty's dead. Throat slashed by those Mexicans. And our Clerk dead, too. Only a few of us knew the Clerk was on payroll, including you. You double-crossed us.

James riles his horse up. The horse's front legs lift from the ground and come down hard near Dale.

DALE

Just because I didn't ride with you fellas, doesn't mean I was trying to get anyone in trouble. I would never do that to you or your brothers. I put that on my life.

JOHN

What about on your boy's life?

A look of fright comes over Dale's eyes. James tugs on his horse, and the horse falls on Dale. Over and Over, again.

John fires a shot in Dale's son's direction. A loud thump immediately follows.

EXT. HACIENDA - NIGHT

Joaquin speaks with a group of MEXICAN LANDOWNERS, DON RAMIREZ, DON GOANA, and DON MOLINA.

DON MOLINA

They come whenever they want. Steal our food, burn our homes, kill our cattle.

DON RAMIREZ

They did the same at our ranch.

DON GOANA

We need your help.

JOAQUIN

My help? No... I'm not here to help anyone; just take care of what needs to be taking care of.

DON MOLINA

So do we!

JOAQUIN

In the morning... My men and I have to leave.

The Dons respectfully leave.

MANUEL

I was starting to get used to this...

JOAQUIN

Used to what?

MANUEL

To this... The people, the gifts.
You, me... We are heroes to them.

JOAQUIN

I can't help these people.

MANUEL

You can still get your justice and
be a hero to the people.

JOAQUIN

Well, we could use the supplies.

MANUEL

Especially the Tequila.

JOAQUIN

I'll think about it. In the
morning, gather any men who can
shoot.

EXT. HACIENDA - MAGIC HOUR

Joaquin sleeps. An OLD MAN (72), stares down at him, waiting.
He stirs awake, rubs his eyes, and sits up.

The Old Man smiles. Joaquin looks around, sees dozens of
people staring back.

OLD MAN

I am too old to run... Every night
I pray to God that he will send
someone to protect us.

The old man nods and walks away.

The Small Boy from the Church fire, approaches, rifle in
hand. He hands it to Joaquin.

SMALL BOY

This belonged to my father. They
killed him because he wasn't afraid
to stand up to them.

Joaquin is moved by the sincerity of the boys' actions. Next
up is a LITTLE GIRL with a toy. Joaquin looks down at her.

LITTLE GIRL

My brother was shot and killed. I
don't have money, but I heard you
have a son, and he can have this...

She hands him a small toy. More and more people approach, all of them with their stories and small offerings of gratitude.

A MAN, a grieving MOTHER, an OLD MAN, and a TEENAGER, approach them with gifts to give like food and blankets.

CARLOS

Tio, these people, our people, need our help.

Joaquin nods. Manuel has made his point.

EXT. MINING CAMP - DAY

Dozens of unarmed PEOPLE (MEXICAN, BLACK, WHITE, CHINESE) are ransacked by the Barrow Brothers and employees.

BANG. BANG. BANG.

Gunshots pierce the screams of women. A MAN dies. Families huddle together.

The gang has their horses and wagons full of supplies. The LEADER gives a signal, the gang regroup. A GUNSHOT!

The leader topples off his horse. Joaquin and his bandits descend on the camp. Guns fixed on the gang, firing. Joaquin spins around.

BAM

A cowboy falls. Shot in the chest. Carlos rushes over and plunges his knife into another fallen cowboy. The cowboy's fire back and retreat. Bodies lie everywhere.

EXT. MINING CAMP - LATER

Joaquin and his men mix with the rescued people. After a few moments, a group of RESCUED MINERS approaches Joaquin.

RESCUED MINER #1

To show our thanks...

He presents Joaquin with a small bag of money, rifles, and some tequila.

JOAQUIN

We can't... You keep it.

MINER

(insisting)

Please.

RESCUED MINER #2

If there's anything, we can do for you.... Food, shelter... it's yours.

JOAQUIN

Thank you.

CARLOS

You can't blame them for being grateful.

JOAQUIN

But they need this more than we do.

CARLOS

Then let's give it back.

Joaquin tosses Alberto a newly acquired hat.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

We did a good thing today, *Tio*. You should be proud.

MANUEL

Jefe... you're like Robin Hood.

JOAQUIN

Quien es Robin Hood?

CARLOS

Aye!

Carlos pulls a book from his pocket: ROBIN HOOD AND HIS MERRY MEN.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Bows and arrows? El Sheriff de Nottingham, *banda de merry men?*

Joaquin doesn't know this story.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Robin Hood stole from the rich, gave to the poor?

JOAQUIN

He was an outlaw?

CARLOS

Si...

Manuel and CLAUDIO FELIZ (30), step forward.

MANUEL

Jefe, these are the deeds and mortgages of the farms the Barrows have stolen.

JOAQUIN

All this isn't ours. There are a lot of people that are suffering. We should take some of this and give it back to the people. A lot of miners are hurting.

CLAUDIO

Why? None of them have risked their lives for this?

MANUEL

Think about it... We give back, and they make it easier to hide from Barrow and his men.

CLAUDIO

Fine. But I don't have to like it!

Joaquin's about to hand a bottle of tequila to a miner, but Manuel stops him.

MANUEL

Jefe... I'm glad you decided to keep the tequila!

INT. STAGECOACH - DAY

Joaquin aims his guns at a Barrow Brothers STAGECOACH DRIVER. The driver loads gold into a saddlebag.

Joaquin throws it over his shoulder. He tips his hat and jumps outside onto his horse. His men ride off.

JOAQUIN'S MONTAGE:

-Newspaper headlines across California speak of a bandit named Joaquin. His legend grows.

-Print presses all over the country tell of Joaquin and his outlaws' adventures.

-Joaquin and his men liberate a camp near the mountains, then hide out among the people. They rob more Barrow Brothers Mines.

-On a railroad, Joaquin and his men shoot their way out, avoiding a group of LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENTS.

-Joaquin amasses a small platoon of MEN, CHINESE, NATIVE-AMERICAN, and FREED SLAVES.

END MONTAGE.

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

In a richly appointed governor's office, a group of BANKERS, POLITICIANS, and GOLD MINE OWNERS gather in front of California Governor, JOHN BIGLER (48).

John Barrow is present and leads the meeting.

JOHN

Governor, isn't there anything you can do?

MINE OWNER

The Mexican people see this Joaquin Murrieta as a hero. The Mexican who stands up to the White Man.

JOHN

He and his gang killed Smitty, and our Clerk!

GOVERNOR BIGLER

Weren't you the one who said these were simple miners... Not to worry that you and your men could get rid of them?

JAMES

I was wrong... Make no mistake, they are killers through and through.

GOVERNOR BIGLER

I've already taken steps to bring this scourge to an end.

BANKER

How? When?

GOVERNOR BIGLER

Gentlemen, believe me when I tell you that your concerns are my concerns. No one is going to come to our country side robbing and killing the innocent people of our fine state.

JAMES

Not in an election year anyway--

GOVERNOR BIGLER
 Especially in an election year.
 I've already approved a posse of
 twenty men to be paid a sum of five
 thousand dollars for the capture or
 killing of Joaquin Murrieta and his
 band of thieves.

POLITICIAN
 Who is going to lead this posse?

GOVERNOR BIGLER
 I've sent word...

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

CAPTAIN HARRY LOVE (60s), sits in a barber's chair while
 DEPUTY BILLY RUSSELL (30) reads a newspaper.

RUSSELL
 Listen to this.... The bandit,
 Joaquin Murrieta, and his men have
 robbed banks, stagecoaches and
 share their loot with the locals
 who in turn provide the bandit and
 his men shelter from the law....

LOVE
 Whoever heard of such a thing?

BARBER
 I'm surprised they don't hang 'em
 all--

RUSSELL
 Californians... Sheesh.

A MESSENGER rushes in.

MESSENGER
 Captain Love?

LOVE
 I'm Captain Love.

MESSENGER
 I got a message for you, Sir...
 From California.

He pulls out a telegram.

RUSSELL
 I'll take that.

MESSENGER

My orders are to hand this
personally to Captain Love.

LOVE

It's fine, give the telegram to my
deputy.

RUSSEL

(reading out loud)

From the Office of the Governor
California, John Bigler: By order
of the Governor, for the purpose of
capture of the party or gang of
robbers commanded by the bandit
known as Joaquin Murrietta... I do
by authorize and empower Captain
Harry S. Love to raise a company of
mounted Rangers, not to exceed
twenty men, and muster them into
the service of the State....

EXT. MADUENA HACIENDA - DAY

ERNESTO MADUENA (45), stands with James, Lenny, and Clyde,
and Levi.

ERNESTO MADUENA

Here it is, please leave, now.

Ernesto hands James the Deed to his home. ANGELINA MADUENA
(20), runs out to stop Ernesto.

ANGELINA

Papa, no!
(to James)
You coward!

Angelina moves in to slap James, but Ernesto stops her.

JAMES BARROW

Pleasure doin' business with you.

ANGELINA

We don't have to do this, papa!

ERNESTO MADUENA

We have too!
(to James)
Don't worry *jefe*; we'll be gone by
morning.

JAMES

No. Today.

James pulls out his gun and fires one shot. Ernesto is dead before he hits the floor.

ANGELINA

Papa! No!

Angelina immediately bursts into tears. James rides off. Clyde and Levi stay behind and react instantly. They chase after Angelina.

INT. MADUENA'S BARN - DAY

Lenny shoots the horses and burns the barn.

EXT. BEATEN PATH - DAY

Joaquin and Manuel see a large cloud of smoke and hear gunshots in the distance. They head toward the smoke cloud.

INT. MADUENA HACIENDA - DAY

Clyde grabs Angelina's and tears off her clothes. Angelina punches him hard he loses his grip on her. She snatches a rifle and fires him, killing him. Levi runs for his life.

EXT. MADUENA HACIENDA - DAY

Joaquin immediately recognizes the men's faces.

JOAQUIN

Barrow boys! Check out the hacienda! I got the barn!

Manuel and Joaquin split up with guns drawn and ride hard.

EXT. MADUENA BARN - DAY

Joaquin and Lenny exchange fire.

ANGELINA

On the other side of the barn, she fires and hits him on the shoulder; he stumbles, falls, and returns fire. She takes cover.

Levi gets up and heads into the barn for his only cover, while it burns down quickly.

Angelina follows him in with a vengeance in her eyes.

JOAQUIN

Dismounts his horse near a stable and opens fire on Lenny.

Joaquin sees Angelina and Levi run in the barn. Lenny opens fire on Joaquin, but he can't move in a hail of gunfire.

Lenny bolts off from harm's way as soon as his ammo runs out. Joaquin fires with no results and runs after Angelina.

INT. MADUENA BARN -DAY

Levi enters and is hit by a falling, fiery piece of wood from the barn. He is caught underneath and has no time to move as Angelina stands over him, execution-style.

Fear grips him as he stays still. Angelina aims the gun right between his eyes and cocks the trigger back.

Right when Angelina takes the shot, Joaquin pushes Angelina out of the way before the upper level of the barn falls and kills her. Levi musters the strength and escapes.

ANGELINA

What the hell are you doing?

JOAQUIN

You're welcome. Come on, let's go.

Joaquin aggressively grabs her to save both their lives. Angelina is still holding the gun.

EXT. MADUENA BARN - DAY

In the distance, Manuel sees Levi running to his horse. So does Angelina. Angelina shoves Joaquin away and aims at him-- Before she can take the shot--

BAM

Manuel fires one Levi's head. Angelina feels defeated. Manuel rides over to Joaquin and Angelina.

JOAQUIN

Good shot, friend.

MANUEL

Are you two good?

ANGELINA

No! I had him. Why'd you do that for?

MANUEL

What?! We just saved your life.

Angelina drops to her knees and sobs. Joaquin and Manuel look behind them and see Ernesto dead on the floor.

JOAQUIN
Did you lose family?

Angelina nods.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)
For what it's worth, I'm sorry.

ANGELINA
You're sorry?

She bangs on Joaquin's chest.

ANGELINA (CONT'D)
Sorry? Why couldn't you have come sooner?

Joaquin stays silent and lets her hit him. He grabs her fists. She stops and looks at him. Joaquin kisses her hands.

JOAQUIN
(to Angelina, softly)
Go.

Angelina is still for a moment; she walks slowly away but turns one more time to Joaquin as if to say something. Joaquin nods. She turns and walks to her dead father.

INT. SHERIFF DRYER - OFFICE - DAY

Love, Billy, and Russell walk and meet with Dryer, who looks stressed. Dryer has paper everywhere. He doesn't look up or say anything.

LOVE
Sheriff Dryer, I presume? I'm Capt. Harry Love.

SHERIFF DRYER
The Capt. Love?

RUSSELL
One and only.

SHERIFF DRYER
Nice to me you, Capt. Love. I've heard many stories about you traveling the Rio Grande.

LOVE

Thank you. I'm looking for Joaquin Murrieta. I heard you use to live around this area. Did you hear anything?

SHERIFF DRYER

He did. I knew his brother Marcos. Sad soul, poor bastard.

BILLY

Marcos?

SHERIFF DRYER

No. Joaquin.

Love, Russell, and Billy all give each other a "look." Dryer reads their confusion.

SHERIFF DRYER (CONT'D)

So you haven't heard the story, huh?

LOVE

Continue.

SHERIFF DRYER

A little over two years Joaquin's family was murdered. His kids were beaten and hung. His wife was raped, and murdered, with him, left for dead. Marcos brought him to my town, and ever since than, he's been after them with a sharp stick.

RUSSELL

Who?

SHERIFF DRYER

The Barrow Brothers.

BILLY

Barrow Brothers? Cause of them, we're here.

SHERIFF DRYER

Are you men, working for the Barrow Brothers?

LOVE

No. The Governor. Do you have any idea where Joaquin and his men could be?

SHERIFF DRYER

Three-Finger Jack, maybe. I'm coming with.

BILLY

No you're not. This posse is for twenty men, and the reward is being split as so.

SHERIFF DRYER

Son, you aren't going to stop me. If the Barrow Brothers are the reason you're here, it ain't good business. They're suspects of a Church being burned down. I mean to get to the bottom of it.

Dryer grabs his guns.

LOVE

(to Billy)
It's fine.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Joaquin and Manuel ride in. They secure the horses. Carlos sits with Alejandro, and a few others, enjoying a drink.

JOAQUIN

What's all this?

CARLOS

Claudio and some of the others stumbled on a bunch of miners outside of town. He caught them off guard.

ALEJANDRO

So he imposed his own justice on them.

CARLOS

Three thousand dollars.

Joaquin shakes his head in disappointment.

JOAQUIN

Make sure everyone gets a share.

Joaquin walks into a tent. Angelina follows after him.

INT. DANCE HALL - NIGHT

The men have taken over a nearby dance hall and celebrate their new riches. A few onlookers watch as Joaquin's men laugh, drink, dance, flirt with women, etc.

Joaquin drinks by himself. Manuel sits next to him. Angelina sits at a table across the dance hall.

MANUEL

She's beautiful *que no?*

JOAQUIN

Who?

MANUEL

Who? The Bartender! Who do you think? It's been nearly two years. Rosa would want you to be happy.

An unassuming YOUNG WHITE MAN (19), enters the hall.

YOUNG MAN

(to Carlos)

Are you Joaquin Murrieta?

Joaquin looks over and sees a boy with long blonde hair.

CARLOS

(jokingly)

Si, soy El Diablo de Sonora!

The boy raises up a gun and pulls the trigger.

BAM

Carlos takes the bullet in the head and slumps out of his chair. A SHOT rings out.

The boy falls to the ground, a bullet to his chest.

Joaquin sees Manuel, smoking gun in hand.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Joaquin and his men are gathered around a mound of dirt with a cross in it.

MANUEL

He was a brave boy...

ALEJANDRO

Vaya con dios, Carlos..

EXT. CEMETERY - DUSK

Joaquin, alone, crouches in between the newly covered grave. He shifts a rosary around in his hand. Manuel approaches.

MANUEL

I believe one of those men were one of the miners Claudio and Carlos roughed up.

JOAQUIN

The man wanted to impose his own justice and hit back. We can't have that. Tell the men--

MANUEL

Say no more, *Jefe*.

JOAQUIN

I keep on living. Where's the sense in that?

MANUEL

Jefe... Living is hard, dying is easy and, none of this makes sense.

JOAQUIN

I tried... I failed. I failed Rosa, I failed my boys, and now I.... I failed Marcos. He trusted me to look after his son.

MANUEL

It's justice that's failed, not you. God is still with you.

Joaquin laughs at this; it's hard to believe.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

Why don't you think about heading to Mexico?

JOAQUIN

Do you mean stop now? No!

MANUEL

Not stop, just lay low for a little bit....

JOAQUIN

And the men?

MANUEL

You tell 'em to come, they'll come.
 You tell 'em to stay; they'll stay.
 They believe in you. I believe in
 you.

EXT. PUEBLO - DAY

SUPER: Los Alamos, Sonora, Mexico.

Not much has changed since Joaquin was last here. Joaquin and his men look tired from their journey. PEOPLE flock to see them, whispers all around. The hero returns.

MANUEL

I'm going to see my *familia*.

JOAQUIN

I'll see you in a few days.

Manuel rides off.

INT. JOAQUIN'S HOME - DAY

Joaquin walks around his house; faint light creeps in. The furniture is covered in a light dust.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Turn around slowly...

Joaquin stops walking, his back to the unknown voice.

Joaquin turns and sees Angelina.

ANGELINA (WOMAN'S VOICE)

Hola Joaquin...

Joaquin stares at her, uncertain. Not quite sure who she is. She smiles.

JOAQUIN

You...

ANGELINA

*Me llamo Angelina Molina de
 Maduena...*

JOAQUIN

Two years... It's been two years.
 How did you find--

ANGELINA

Manuel told me where I could find
 you...

JOAQUIN
I thought you just left the camp
with the others....

ANGELINA
I came here to wait for you.

INT. CANTINA - DAY

Almost drunk, Alejandro and Claudio talk low.

ALEJANDRO
I don't know...

CLAUDIO
There's a caravan carrying over
five thousand in gold it's ours for
the taking.

ALEJANDRO
And you want to lead the attack on
this one? Manuel said to calm down
on our Robin Hood actions.

CLAUDIO
Fuck Robin Hood. I bet he died a
poor man. I don't need any
permission. Nobody can tell me what
to do.

ALEJANDRO
Don't you remember Carlos?

CLAUDIO
They wanted Joaquin. Come on!

Alejandro nods.

EXT. MINING CAMP - DAY

A predominantly Mexican mining camp at the edge of a forest.
Nothing but MEN all around. Only a few buildings. Low thunder
rises, hooves on the ground.

Some men look to the south. On the horizon, TWENTY RANGERS
ride through. The rangers grow closer, people panic, run
inside their tents, homes, etc.

The rangers question various miners around town. Love walks
alone, eyes searching for activity. His best ranger, Billy,
rides up to him.

LOVE
Billy?

BILLY
We may have found someone.

LOVE
Show me.

EXT. CREEK BED - DAY

Love, Billy, and a few other rangers approach a small group of tents situated near the water.

BILLY
He goes by the name of Pedro Manuel
or Three-Fingered Jack. He claims
he's never heard of Joaquin
Murrieta... We found this on him.

Billy hands Love a badly bound journal, he looks it over, then hands it back to Billy.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

The rangers ready themselves outside, each of them approaches a tent. Love walks up to the first.

LOVE
*We are looking for a man called
Manuel!*

Love peeks inside; a man sleeps on the ground, peeks his head up groggily.

LOVE (CONT'D)
Manuel?

BILLY (O.S.)
Captain Love!

Love hurries out, sees a MAN running out from behind one of the tents into the water. Billy aims with his rifle. Love hits the rifle upward as Billy fires.

LOVE
I want him alive!

Love takes off after the man,. Two other rangers chase after them. The foot chase takes them through the creek, some brush, finally - they corner him.

The rangers have their pistols trained on Manuel. Love approaches cautiously, the revolver still in its holster. Love holds up the journal.

LOVE (CONT'D)
*Hola "Pedro"....We're gonna have a
 little talk.*

INT. JAILHOUSE - DAY

Manuel sits in a room, badly beaten, eyes nearly swollen shut. He is surrounded by the rangers. Love sits across from him, relaxed, eats a plate of food.

MANUEL
 I've told you, I am not the man you
 are looking for.

LOVE
 I have a dozen witnesses around
 town who swear you are Manuel. Your
 hand doesn't lie neither.

MANUEL
 I lost my fingers in a mining
 accident!

LOVE
 Mining accident? Bullshit. You're a
 damn murderer and thief. You're
 guilty as sin, and you'll hang.

Manuel laughs.

LOVE (CONT'D)
 Do you find that amusing?

MANUEL
 I'm only guilty of being Mexican.

Manuel stands, the rangers move, Love motions them down.

LOVE
 You're a degenerate, thieving,
 lowdown, lazy bastard. So don't
 waste any more of my time! Tell me
 where Joaquin Murrieta is?!

Billy yanks down Manuel's collar exposes his neck. He puts a knife to his throat. Russell punches Manuel in his back.

LOVE (CONT'D)
 He doesn't know anything... HA!

RUSSELL
 (holds the journal)
 But we know you wrote in here!

LOVE

Now tell us what we want to know..
Or I'm gonna stop being so damn
cordial!

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

Joaquin and Angelina walk atop a hill overlooking the encampment. Seated all about, the bandits kill time. People of all sorts with their sweethearts, talking, laughing.

JOAQUIN

Do you want to know the one thing I
remember most about Sonora..

ANGELINA

What?

JOAQUIN

It's the memory of my wife and
children, laughing and playing like
them.

ANGELINA

I'm sorry...

JOAQUIN

I don't think I'm ready.

ANGELINA

I understand.

JOAQUIN

Are you upset with me?

ANGELINA

I don't know how to tell you, or
how to explain to you...

JOAQUIN

Tell me.

ANGELINA

I've been acting like a stupid
little girl... I'm jealous of what
you and Rosa had.

JOAQUIN

That seems like so long ago...

His words trail off. His demeanor changes; he becomes melancholic. Angelina notices, she responds instinctively.

ANGELINA
I'm sorry, I didn't mean.

JOAQUIN
I, I..

Angelina reaches out to him, touches his face. Hugs him. For a moment, he hugs her back. Then he pushes her away.

INT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Love stares at the Politicians, Gov. John Bigler, John Barrow, and various, concerned business owners.

JOHN
Why has so little progress been made?

LOVE
Every lead we've followed ends up right back where we started, in hearsay and these sensationalist papers.

JOHN
This is bullshit!

GOVERNOR BIGLER
Men, please. We are all on the same side.

LOVE
(to John Barrow)
Are we?

GOVERNOR BIGLER
Enough--

BANKER
If I may? Captain Love, you have been commissioned with the finest Rangers--

JOHN
Murrieta is a criminal! He's breaking the law. The people he protects are savages with nothing to do but incite violence and--

LOVE
I'm not so sure. I've come to find that--

JOHN

You were hired because of your record for tracking and hunting ruthless killers. Murrieta isn't any different.

LOVE

They are more than just ruthless killers. I've done some checking. Murrieta and his men all served in the war. They are knowledgeable in sabotage, military tactics and have years of fighting experience. They are well trained.

JOHN

But this talk of heroism? And defense of the helpless? It betrays everything we know to be true of the brutality of the Mexican!

BANKER

Is there anything else you'd care to add--

JOHN

This meeting is adjourned!

Silenced and riled up, Love makes his way to the door. His boots echo off the marble floors. Love hesitates.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Is there something else?

LOVE

Make one thing clear. I don't work for you.

JOHN

Everybody works for the Barrow Brothers.

LOVE

And if they don't? Do you burn them, like those Church people?

John pushes Love against the wall. But, Love is quick and has his gun shoved in John's gut. John is taken aback and releases Love.

JOHN

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

LOVE

You better hope that it isn't true
about killing innocent people.

JOHN

Or what?

LOVE

It's going to be a long summer.

Love puts on his hat, heads out.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

James waits outside for John. John exits.

JAMES

How'd it go?

JOHN

Shit. I don't think Love is going
to get the job done.

JAMES

You mean, he ain't gonna catch him?

JOHN BARROW

No, stupid. Kill him. Love's just
gonna bring him in, and there's
gonna be that justice crap. We need
to get to Joaquin before Love does.

James spits on the floor.

EXT. RANCH CAMP - DAY

Joaquin works on a ranch with other RANCH HANDS. They brand
cattle. Joaquin looks up and sees--

ANGELINA

There you are.

JOAQUIN

Hello...

ANGELINA

I think we need to talk.

JOAQUIN

About what?

ANGELINA

About us...

JOAQUIN
Angelina. Please--

ALEJANDRO (O.S.)
Joaquin! Joaquin!

Joaquin turns and sees Alejandro running towards them, yelling at the top his of his lungs.

JOAQUIN
What is it?

ALEJANDRO
Come, quick, Pedro, he says something has happened to Manuel.

EXT. RANCH CAMP - DAY

Joaquin, Angelina, and Alejandro run-up to the camp. PEDRO, and a few other MEN are gathered.

PEDRO
They caught him. They caught Manuel.

JOAQUIN
What!?

PEDRO
It wasn't even for anything we had done.

JOAQUIN
Where is he?

PEDRO
Near El Arroyo de Cantua. They're going to hang him in two weeks!

JOAQUIN
(to Pedro)
I'm going to get him out of there. I need a horse, a few supplies.

Pedro nods.

ALEJANDRO
He said two weeks. It's at least three weeks... Maybe four weeks ride.

JOAQUIN
I want you and Claudio to get the men ready.

(MORE)

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)
When I get Manuel, we'll meet you
at Saw Mills Flats... It's time to
go back and finish what we started.

EXT. RANCH CAMP - LATER

Joaquin is ready to go. His men and Angelina gather around.

ANGELINA
Joaquin, we need to talk now. In
private. Please.

Joaquin says nothing but walks over to a nearby tree.

ANGELINA (CONT'D)
Why must you go?

JOAQUIN
I have to save Manuel.

ANGELINA
But--

JOAQUIN
And I have a promise to keep.

ANGELINA
You going to kill more men, aren't
you?

JOAQUIN
The men who killed my wife and
children are still out there.

ANGELINA
When does it in?

JOAQUIN
When I kill them all.

ANGELINA
You don't need to do this. Please
stay.

JOAQUIN
I can't--

ANGELINA
I'm afraid you won't come back.

JOAQUIN
I can't stop now. I owe it to my
family.

ANGELINA

You owe them a life! You owe them your life. You owe it to them to live! To live and love and be happy. You are going to die... They are going to kill you.

JOAQUIN

They already killed me... A long time ago.

Joaquin walks away. Angelina rushes to him. He stops, turns, and they embrace.

He kisses Angelina on the cheek.

EXT. MEXICO TERRAIN - DAY

Joaquin rides through Mexico, pushes his horse to the brink of exhaustion. He arrives at the next town, finds a loyal SUPPORTER, he trades horses with them and he's off again.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Joaquin arrives in Saw Mill Flats. He rides up to a nearby hotel, pulls out a bag of money from his saddlebag, walks inside.

INT. HOTEL - DAY

Joaquin cleans himself up. Soaps and powders everywhere.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

He opens the door, finds a young ERRAND BOY (14), holding two big packages. He takes them, tips the boy. Joaquin opens the packages-- A new suit.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Joaquin emerges from the hotel, looking like a new man. He catches smiles from white women passing by. He pulls out documents.

INT. MARSHAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Joaquin, superbly dressed and adorned with a splendid gold chain and watch, stands in the room.

A JUDGE sits behind his desk, signing documents, not paying much attention to Joaquin.

MARSHALL

Who are you?

JOAQUIN

Roberto Molina Manuel of Fresno, my family, and I own many grape vineyards there.

MARSHALL

So what can I do for you, Mr. Manuel?

JOAQUIN

I believe a grave injustice has been made. I understand you have a Mexican man in jail... This man is missing three fingers on his right hand--

MARSHALL

He fits that description, says his name is Pedro Manuel. He refuses to tell us the truth.

JOAQUIN

Perhaps he is... Or perhaps the law is quick to condemn a man for simply being Mexican.

MARSHALL

Just exactly what are you saying Mr. Manuel?

JOAQUIN

Forgive me. Please...

Joaquin pulls out the documents.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

It's been a long ride from Fresno.

MARSHALL

Continue.

JOAQUIN

The man you have in custody is in fact, Pedro Manuel, my brother.

MARSHALL

And I suppose you have proof of this.

Joaquin hands Marshall the documents.

JOAQUIN

Those papers prove that he is my brother.

(MORE)

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

A signed letter from the doctor who took his fingers and a dozen witness statements--

MARSHALL

I see... I see. Let me look these over. Do you have anything else?

JOAQUIN

Nothing, but my word.

MARSHALL

Is there anyone in this town who can--

JOAQUIN

No, I am sorry. We are not from here. May I go see my brother?

MARSHALL

Deputy, accompany Mr. Manuel to the prisoner's cell. While I look over these documents.

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

The deputy unlocks the cell. Manuel sits, nervous, in chains. Joaquin walks up to the cell, deputy in tow.

DEPUTY

This him?

JOAQUIN

You look like shit.

Manuel hardly recognizes Joaquin, dressed so formally.

MANUEL

Joaquin?

The deputy gets suspicious. His eyes dart over to the wanted posters tacked on the wall. One sticks out among the rest. The newest one, on unfaded white paper.

It shows a terrible depiction of Joaquin.

The Deputy looks back at "Mr. Manuel" just as-- Joaquin whips out a gun, sticks it in the Deputy's face.

Joaquin walks him over to the cell, Manuel takes his keys. With one quick strike, Joaquin knocks the deputy unconscious. Manuel drags the unconscious deputy into the cell. He is bound and gagged. Manuel is about to lock him in when..

JOAQUIN

Wait.

Joaquin grabs the wanted poster off the wall. "\$5,000 reward for Joaquin, Dead or Alive."

MANUEL

We make that in a week!

Joaquin pulls out a pencil and writes something.

EXT. JAIL - DAY

James and a few of their men wait patiently outside the jail. Hiding. The spot Joaquin and Manuel.

JAMES

It can't be this easy.

James moves to the back of the jail and gets on a roof next door. The other man takes strategic firing positions.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Joaquin.

Joaquin immediately turns around and fires. Joaquin and Manuel are outnumbered. But, Joaquin kills a few men and Manuel one.

Joaquin shields himself near a post. James fires a shot, the bullet bounces off the post, and the wood chips cut Joaquin in his face, cutting him.

Joaquin and Manuel split up.

JOAQUIN

Go you, fool. I didn't save you for nothing.

MANUEL

You don't have to tell me twice, *jefe*.

Manuel runs away and distracts a couple of Barrow's Men.

Joaquin runs back into the jail.

INT. JAIL - SAME

Joaquin is bleeding profusely in the face. Blood gets in his eyes; he can hardly see. Bullets fly into the building. James rushes in as Joaquin is blind.

James pulls his gun out, ready to fire.

SHERIFF DRYER
(to James)
Drop it, son.

JAMES
You've got to be shitting me. Do
you know who this man is?

SHERIFF DRYER
Sure do. And I know about you
Barrow Brothers. Drop your gun!

James drops his gun. Joaquin goes for his gun.

SHERIFF DRYER (CONT'D)
(to Joaquin)
No you don't.

Dryer draws his other gun.

SHERIFF DRYER (CONT'D)
You're both coming with me.

JOAQUIN
I'm not going to share a cell with
that asshole. I rather be dead.

SHERIFF DRYER
No one's dying, son. Not on my
watch.
(to James)
Get in the cell.

James does what he is told. Dryer closes the cell.

SHERIFF DRYER (CONT'D)
Damn it, Joaquin! I told you to let
justice handle it. Look at all the
mess you caused. Your family
would've wanted better for you.

Dryer ties Joaquin's hands.

James' men fire from the other side. Joaquin huddles near a
desk that is getting shot up. Dryer takes cover and signals
Joaquin that he's going to cover him.

SHERIFF DRYER (CONT'D)
Back door.

Joaquin nods.

EXT. JAIL - SAME

Dryer comes out first. Bullets fly. Dryer helps Joaquin on his horse. Joaquin is shot and falls down. Dryer covers Joaquin, saving his life.

Dryer is shot near to death... On his last breath... He slides his gun to Joaquin.

Joaquin escapes.

EXT. JAIL - NIGHT

A well-armed group of Love's Rangers wait patiently outside.

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

The deputy is tied up, the wanted poster pinned onto his person. In pencil, something has been scrawled: "I'll give \$10,000 for my safety."

Love surveys the area with James, Marshall, and the Judge.

LOVE

Do you realize how badly this looks?

The Marshall opens the cell, unties the deputy and James.

MARSHALL

He had the papers to prove--

LOVE

What papers? What are you talking about?

MARSHALL

Manuel of Fresno. His family owns a vineyard.

LOVE

There are no vineyards in Fresno! Who else was with him?

JAMES

Y'all are fucking idiots.

JUDGE

It was just him. Alone.

LOVE

You want to explain what happened to Sheriff Dryer.

JAMES

Like the Deputy said. Joaquin
killed him. Right, Deputy?

The Deputy is hesitant. James gives him a dirty look.

DEPUTY

It's true. Joaquin did it.

LOVE

Sure.

Love hurries out the door, not a moment to lose.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Love and his Rangers...

LOVE

He's close. This is the opportunity
we've been waiting for.

A dust cloud rises up as Love, and his Rangers take off on
horseback, headed for the mountains.

The rangers split into two smaller parties.

Love commands one, Billy the other.

EXT. HILLS - NIGHT

Camp. Joaquin and Manuel warm themselves by a fire.

JOAQUIN

What happened? How did--

MANUEL

I am not sure. What now?

JOAQUIN

We are supposed to wait for Claudio
and Alejandro--

MANUEL

Will they be here soon?

JOAQUIN

I don't think it will be too long.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Joaquin wakes and sees Manuel is gone. He looks around. Finds
half a dozen rifles trained on him, including Love's.

LOVE

Joaquin Murrieta... You are under arrest for murder, banditry, and cattle rustling.

Joaquin looks at Love awkwardly, sees Manuel already bound.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

The rangers stop for a moment by a river. Horses drink. Joaquin and Manuel sit, in chains, under a tree. Billy separates the two prisoners.

BILLY

Captain Love wants to see you.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Love sits in the grass near the hills and down the river, skipping rocks along the water. Billy brings Joaquin, then leaves the two alone.

LOVE

I wondered how long it was going to take to catch you...

Love skips a rock across the water

LOVE (CONT'D)

By some accounts, you're as wild as a wolf, cunning like a fox, and ruthless as the devil.

Love skips another rock.

LOVE (CONT'D)

Is it true what they say about your wife?

JOAQUIN

Yes. And my children.

LOVE

Back in Sacramento, they think you're just a highway robber, a blood-thirsty bandit after gold and riches.

JOAQUIN

What do you think?

LOVE

It doesn't matter what I think, not to them.

(MORE)

LOVE (CONT'D)

But I'd wager there was more to it than that; there usually is.

JOAQUIN

That's a pretty smart thing to say, coming from a lawman.

Love touches his badge.

LOVE

This? Well, we set out to live one kind of life. What we end up with is a whole other story, ain't it?

JOAQUIN

All I ever wanted was a family, a ranch, and to live in peace... All I got was a murdered family, my land stolen from me, and... You chasing me.

LOVE

And now that I have caught you, I'll take you back to Sacramento. Beyond that, whatever happens, it's out of my control. And since it's liable to be hangin' on my conscience for some time, I'd like to know, one man to another, why did you come back?

Love lights a cigarette.

LOVE (CONT'D)

You could have lived out a pretty nice life in Mexico.

JOAQUIN

I came back to save a friend, find justice.. Something you don't know anything about.

LOVE

I can understand your loyalty to a friend and your search for justice. To tell you the truth... If it was my family, I would have done the same...

Love motions to Billy to come over.

LOVE (CONT'D)

Hmmm... In another life, we might have been friends.

JOAQUIN

Friends?

LOVE

Maybe if I wasn't a lawman and just
a miner, we could have been
friends...

JOAQUIN

Perhaps.

EXT. TRAILS - DAY

The rangers' caravan pushes slowly through the trails.

BILLY

I scouted up ahead. It looks like a
good spot to make camp for the
night.

Love nods. Billy rides ahead, barks orders to put up for the
night. The caravan slows. A clearing up ahead. The lead horse
stops and refuses to go any further.

BAM

A gunshot hits Billy's shoulder.

The echoes bounce off the hills.

The rangers scatter, draw their revolvers, take cover.
Movement in the hills. Love grabs Billy, pulls him aside.

More gunfire pins them down. Love makes after Joaquin and
Manuel. The thunder of distant hooves.

Bearing down on them, SHOTS ring out. A bullet grazes a
ranger. Their assailants hide. The shooting stops Love in his
tracks. A barrier between him and Joaquin.

Joaquin looks to the hills.

Amidst the fray, horses wildly charge towards them. No
riders. Joaquin grabs Manuel. They run towards the horses.

LOVE

The prisoners!

The rangers take note, advance after them between gunfire--

Joaquin and Manuel run--

Joaquin trips and falls--

Manuel stops--

JOAQUIN
No... Run!

Alejandro emerges on horseback and scoops up Joaquin.

BAM

A shot hits Alejandro, but he presses forward. Joaquin scurries up, Alejandro helps him to his feet. The horses are nearly on top of them.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)
Let me see.

ALEJANDRO
I'm fine. That's two you owe me.

JOAQUIN
Alejandro.

ALEJANDRO
It's not like you to be careless.

A bullet strikes Alejandro's and Joaquin's horse near a quarry. It buckles. They fall.

Manuel and the other rider are gone.

Alejandro pulls Joaquin up--

Tosses him a pistol--

Both of them shooting, side by side as one covers the other--

JOAQUIN
Where are we going?

ALEJANDRO
To the trees!

JOAQUIN
You're gonna get both of us killed.
You shouldn't be here!

ALEJANDRO
I don't need your permission.

JOAQUIN
You're always so damn stubborn!

ALEJANDRO
Learned it from you.

JOAQUIN

The second this is over, you're
going right back to Mexico, this is
no pla--

They keep firing--

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

Reload!

In perfect unison; they roll off one another and take cover
behind a rock to reload.

Love, Billy and the rest of the rangers advance on them.

Joaquin sees them--

Surrounded.

Joaquin moves, Alejandro behind him--

From behind their cover, Love steps out--

Joaquin hurries around--

CLICK. CLICK.

A stand-off...

Joaquin and Love aim at one another.... The rangers surround
them... Guns fixed on Joaquin.... His eyes on Love.

LOVE

Your friend here put up quite the
effort. Damn shame it was all in
vain.

A whistle from the hills. They all look around. Alejandro
whistles back.

Then--

BAM

SHOT rings out.

DUST FLIES.

A bullet buries itself at Love's feet. Joaquin smiles slyly.

JOAQUIN

Damn shame.

In the hills above are dozens of bandits, including Claudio. They have the rangers set dead to rights. Love keeps his gun aimed at Joaquin, unflinching.

LOVE

Go back to Mexico. Raise a family.

JOAQUIN

I can't do that.

LOVE

From one man to another--

JOAQUIN

Tell your men to leave their guns.

Love holds on Joaquin a moment. Love lowers his gun slowly.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

Tell them.

LOVE

Leave your weapons!

The rangers slowly drop their guns to the ground.

JOAQUIN

Let them go.

ON THE RIDGE, Manuel is antsy for some violence; can't stand this truce. He hurls a string of expletives in Spanish.

Beside him, Alejandro looks more hopeful.

Below... Love backs away, defeated.

LOVE

The next time we meet, Murrieta,
one of us will die.

JOAQUIN

Asi es la vida, Senor Love.

The rangers make for their horses and ride off. Everyone of them angry as hell.

The men come down from the hills, celebrating. Many of them stand guard, pick up the rangers' guns.

Alejandro walks proudly up to him, slaps him on the back. Alberto clutches his side.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)
 I don't know how you pulled that
 one off. The horses, the ridge...
 it was like poetry.

ALEJANDRO
 Not a bad plan after all eh?

JOAQUIN
 If I forget to say so later...
 Thank you.

EXT. CAMP - AFTERNOON

Plush, rolling hills, trees, wildflowers. A little slice of heaven on Earth. Joaquin and the rest of his rescuers arrive. Everyone is happy.

Joaquin is surprised to see the camp resemble a small village. There are equal amounts of bandits, women, and families. A WOMAN runs up to Alejandro and hugs him.

He cringes in pain. She pulls his shirt open to reveal a wound.

WOMAN
Mi amor, what did they do to you?
 (beat)
 Joaquin!

Joaquin looks back, sees Alejandro on the ground. They rush over to him, checks the wound. It's bad. Alejandro keeps his eyes open.

JOAQUIN
 Son of a bitch.

Claudio rushes over with some water. Joaquin stops him.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)
 Tequila. The best we have.

Claudio nods and runs off. The woman knows what this means and wails.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)
 Why didn't you say anything?

ALEJANDRO
 And miss all the excitement?

He laughs. Turns to cough blood. Claudio returns with the whiskey...

JOAQUIN
Let me...

ALEJANDRO
Joaquin...

JOAQUIN
You'll be, fine.

ALEJANDRO
This is the best Tequila I've had
in a long time.

Joaquin gives Alberto the rest of the bottle. All of it.
Alejandro closes his eyes. He's dead.

Joaquin gets up and storms away.

EXT. TRAIL - NIGHT

Joaquin pushes his horse to the limit.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Manuel and Claudio walk out of a tent. Pissed off.

MANUEL
Goddammit.

CLAUDIO
Where's Joaquin?

MANUEL
He's gone.

CLAUDIO
That's it for us then. We're done.

MANUEL
You don't know that!

CLAUDIO
First, he lets Love go, now he
can't even stomach a single man's
death.

MANUEL
Alejandro was our friend.

CLAUDIO
He was my brother.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - MAGIC HOUR

Horse and rider stop on a dime, utterly exhausted. Joaquin cocks his head to the side, sees...

EXT. MISSION - MAGIC HOUR

A dilapidated Spanish mission tucked away in the mountains, a throwback to a much earlier time. A simple one.

EXT. CAMP - MAGIC HOUR

Manuel and Claudio sit by the fire.

MANUEL

Listen to me. We've got to get Joaquin back to Mexico. That's the only place he'll be safe.

CLAUDIO

That's what they want us to think. They're scared of us. We've showed them they're no match for us!

MANUEL

We got lucky today, but if they get him again, it'll be different. They'll see to that. They'll beat him, condemn him for probably every murder and robbery...

INT. CONFESSION BOOTH - NIGHT

Joaquin holds a rosary. His eyes averted downward. The SPANISH PRIEST (63), sits behind a veil.

JOAQUIN

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

PRIEST

Confess your sins to the Lord, my son, repent, and you shall be forgiven. But let the law--

JOAQUIN

Laws don't touch men like John Barrow. Only vengence does.

PRIEST

When will it stop?

JOAQUIN

When my name strikes fear in their hearts. When I've turned every single one of them into a pile of ashes.

PRIEST

That won't bring your family back.

INT. CONFESSION BOOTH - NIGHT

Joaquin keeps confessing. The priest's eyes divert downward.

MANUEL (V.O.)

Then, they'll just tie him to a horse, drag his body through the streets till we can't even recognize him, but that won't be the end of it, 'cuz he'll be alive.

Joaquin finishes. The priest looks up, stares into Joaquin's weary eyes.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Claudio listens to Manuel intently...

MANUEL

They'll make an example out of him, a warning to prevent anything like this from happening ever again.

INT. MISSION - NIGHT

Silence. The single stained-glass window illuminated by the moonlight: a simple yet beautiful depiction of Mary with a Child. Joaquin kneels before the altar, prays.

MANUEL (V.O.)

They'll prop him up in some public square, and everyone who's ever wanted him will be there. After that, whether he's still breathing or not, they'll cut off his head, keep it on display somewhere, charge people to see it. To see the head of, Joaquin Murrieta.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Claudio and Manuel...

CLAUDIO

If they get him!

MANUEL

Look, I know you're a fighter, but that's not what's gonna save him. We need to convince him to go back to Sonora. Live the rest of his life in peace.

INT. MISSION - NIGHT

Joaquin looks up at the image of Mary staring back at him. Joaquin sets down the rosary and walks away.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

The camp still bristles with activity even at such a late hour. People work, fix things, and story-tell.

MANUEL

Look at them. What do you think would happen if the law got their hands on their hero?

CLAUDIO

They'd stand up and fight.

MANUEL

No. They wouldn't. Not without him.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

The once former community of bandits and peasants now shows all the signs of being dissolved. Everywhere people pack up their belongings, load them onto donkeys, horses, pull-carts.

JOAQUIN (O.S.)

What's going on? Who decided this?

Manuel looks up, sees Joaquin just returning.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

No one is leaving!

The people stop what they're doing; they look confused. Manuel stands up, walks up to Joaquin.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)

Gather the men.

EXT. ARROYO DE CANTUA - LATER

Joaquin, Manuel, and Claudio are gathered. A map is laid out on the ground. Joaquin draws points of attack with a pencil, Manuel and Claudio nod as they observe.

JOAQUIN

We send out smaller groups to spread out, like this, we'll cover more ground, sweep across the whole land. Each group will have its own leader. Someone they trust. They'll be on their own but still working with all the others.

CLAUDIO

I have an idea.

Local women from the camp are busy at work sewing together black pants with a single white stripe, matching shirts.

INT. JAILHOUSE - DAY

Cramped, people stand shoulder to shoulder, all trying to get a view of Love, seated at the head of the table.

LOVE

They can't be far now. Somewhere in this region.

He draws a circle around an area on the map.

LOVE (CONT'D)

He slipped up once. He'll slip again. And when he does...

Love looks up at his men. Strong, proud rangers all of them.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Love and his rangers pursue one of Joaquin's bandit groups. A horse chase through a winding trail. Love and others bear down on them: shots firing, bandits falling.

Finally, they corner, Joaquin--

He's got nowhere to go--

Joaquin raises his pistol--

BAM

Billy hits him in the arm--

Joaquin drops his gun... Love approaches, cautious, his men at the ready.

LOVE

Murrieta?

The man LAUGH. He looks up... It's a miner dressed in Joaquin's trademark black pants and matching shirt.

LOVE (CONT'D)

Shit!

MAN

You've been fooled, you *pinche pendejo*. You'll never find him.

LOVE

Where is he?

MAN

Torture me, or kill me, I will never tell you! Cowards!

He spits in Love's face, lunges at him, a knife in hand. A pair of shots ring out. The man is dead.

LOVE

Bring the body.

EXT. TENT - DAY

Joaquin stands before half a dozen men; all dressed to look like him. Claudio looks at them curiously.

JOAQUIN

I don't want any more of these men dying because of me.

MANUEL

It's a stupid idea.

CLAUDIO

You're just jealous because YOU didn't think of it.

JOAQUIN

Is this what you want?

JOAQUIN IMPERSONATOR

I am Joaquin. I am Joaquin! The voice crying in the wild!

The others join in, echoing Joaquin's manner of speaking. Joaquin is impressed by their fervor.

MONTAGE:

-Joaquin #2 leads a group in robbing horses.

-Joaquin #3 and his own group rob various people of money.

-Other groups, other 'Joaquins' steal wares from rich miners. They give to the poor and the needy in churches, small encampments, villages, and towns.

-The people show their thanks with outstretched arms, food, and shelter.

-Love investigates each robbery.

-Billy and Love chart Joaquin's movements on a large map. Love grabs a man from behind, certain it's Joaquin. But it's not. Just a random Mexican bearing some resemblance.

-Love watches Billy add to the map. Red markers suggest that Joaquin is everywhere at once. Hollister throws a bottle of whiskey at the map, frustrated.

-In the capital, the governor is not happy.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. TULARE VALLEY - DAY

James and a group of HUNTERS ride through the valley. They're off the beaten path. DOWN THE TRAIL Claudio sits on the edge of a fallen tree.

CLAUDIO

A sword in my hand, and let me be
unbound, and with thee and thy men
will I fight 'till I lie dead on
the ground, Robin proclaimed.

Various bandits listen, engrossed like schoolboys. Joaquin stands by stoically, pretends not to listen.

CLAUDIO (CONT'D)

But the Sheriff of Nottingham would
by no means listen to his request
and swore that he should be hanged
a shameful death and not die by the
sword valiantly.

The hunters press on, then suddenly find themselves amid Joaquin, Claudio, Manuel, and company.

Manuel WHISTLES loudly.

Quickly, Joaquin's men surround the hunters, guns drawn. Joaquin looks them over.

JOAQUIN

All I want is Barrow.

He has a knife ready to slit his throat.

JAMES

Now, now, wait. Listen to me for just a moment. I want you to listen, I got something to say.

CLAUDIO

There is nothing you can say!

JAMES

(to Joaquin)

I promise you that if you spare our lives, which are completely in your power right now, we'll never breathe a word of this to anyone.

MANUEL

How many times we've heard that, Joaquin? Come on. I'm getting bored.

CLAUDIO

No. I want to hear him beg for his life.

JAMES

To spare our lives would be an act of great compassion, and if you are betrayed by my men, I promise you, I will kill that man the next time I see his cowardly face.

CLAUDIO

No, no, no, you see, that's our job.

JOAQUIN

You'd kill your own?

JAMES

Only if there were no other alternative as a man simply bound by justice.

Joaquin isn't moved by his sincerity.

JAMES (CONT'D)

If you say you'll spare at least my men... Please they have children.

JOAQUIN
They're dirty little fleas... That
are gonna grow up to be blood-
sucking fleas.

James fidgets nervously.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)
You killed my wife, my children, my
friends, and many more--

JAMES
Wait!... Wait... Ple--

Joaquin shoots him.

The rest of the hunters are shocked.

JOAQUIN
Let the rest of them go.

CLAUDIO
What? Are you fucking kidding me?

JOAQUIN
(to the hunters)
You can go.

Claudio is furious. The hunters, relieved.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Joaquin's company enjoys themselves around a fire.

MANUEL
Long live Joaquin! Our fearless
leader!

Everyone stops, see Claudio walking up to them, taking a
drink from a bottle. Joaquin and Manuel stand up. Joaquin
motions Manuel back.

CLAUDIO
That's right, sit down!

JOAQUIN
You're drunk.

CLAUDIO
And you're a goddamn coward.

JOAQUIN
If you believe that, then why don't
you just leave?

CLAUDIO
We should have killed them.

JOAQUIN
We did the right thing.

CLAUDIO
First Love, then these *cabrones*.
Who gave you the right to take that
chance for all of us?!

JOAQUIN
You did...

Joaquin grabs Claudio by the collar, pushes him back as he
rips into him with his words.

JOAQUIN (CONT'D)
Do you want to be in my place?! No,
because you can't handle it. That's
why you get drunk and swagger
around like a fool. Take a good
long look at yourself and tell me
what you see.

Claudio storms off.

EXT. TRAILS - DAY

Joaquin, Manuel, and a few others ride through the hill-
covered terrain.

MANUEL
What do we do now?

JOAQUIN
We need to find Claudio.

MANUEL
Any idea where he is?

JOAQUIN
Not sure.

MANUEL
How much further is the town?

JOAQUIN
Just over these next few hills.

A disheveled-looking CHINESE MAN wanders out from the nearest
hill. He stumbles, sees them and runs away.

MANUEL

Guess he doesn't like Mexicans.

Everyone laughs. They go over the first hill and see smoke rising over the second. They come to the top of the hill. Below they see a wrecked camp, smoke rises from a dead fire.

JOAQUIN

(to the miners)

Wait here.

MINER (O.S.)

But-

Joaquin and Manuel ride down. AT THE WRECKED CARAVAN They see a few dead bodies. Chinese, all of them scalped. It's an ugly sight. Manuel cringes.

Near the dead fire sits Claudio, sharpening his knife, a dead body lying next to him. Joaquin leaps off his horse.

JOAQUIN

What the hell did you do?!

Claudio looks at him blankly.

MANUEL

You son of a bitch.

JOAQUIN

Answer me! What did you do?!

CLAUDIO

I did what you wouldn't.

Claudio holds his knife up to his face, sees his reflection.

CLAUDIO (CONT'D)

Surprised?

Joaquin is about to strike Claudio, but Manuel pulls him away. Claudio stands, sheathes his knife.

JOAQUIN

(to Manuel)

Keep the others away, don't let them see this.

(to Claudio)

You're mad and stupid. We don't kill innocents.

Manuel nods, rides back to the others.

INT. SALOON - DAY

Love, frustrated, sits at a full bar with PATRONS. A WOMAN BARTENDER (18), approaches with a fine bottle of whiskey.

LOVE
Not now, thanks.

Bartender disregards him, pours anyway.

WOMAN BARTENDER
Just got this one in, all the way
from Scotland. See that?
(She points to the label)
No 'e'. Means it's the good stuff.

Love looks at it. W-h-i-s-k-y.

WOMAN BARTENDER (CONT'D)
One taste, that's all. Then I can
tell all the guests I served the
finest whisky to the finest Ranger
in all of history.

The Patrons yell and cheer for Love. Love isn't in the mood. A blonde hair and blue-eyed BAR PARTON (42), yells.

BAR PATRON #1
Get those filthy Mexicans. Show 'em
who's the boss race.

The Bar Patron lifts his glass to Love as a sign of respect, but Love doesn't return the gesture.

LOVE
(to Woman Bartender)
Thanks, but just a sip, alright?

As he drinks, Billy comes in with a large envelope in hand.

BILLY
Captain, there's been an awful
killing. Some Chinese mining camp
says there were some Mexicans
involved in the matter.

Billy hands him the letter. He reads the details slowly.

LOVE
(to bartender)
Give me another.

EXT. TRAILS - DAY

Everyone is dismounted. Joaquin orders some men around. They regroup one of the wagons, ready to go South.

Manuel walks up to Joaquin while Claudio watches everything from atop his horse.

MANUEL

What's happening, Joaquin? What are you doing?

JOAQUIN

I'm sending them to Sonora. You're going with them.

MANUEL

No! I'm staying with you. That's the agreement.

JOAQUIN

You are a good man, Manuel. It's over.

MANUEL

You're a damn fool.

JOAQUIN

Maybe, but I need to get Claudio back, and I don't want any more of the men killed. I'm going to get blamed for what happened at the Chinese camp...

MANUEL

I won't leave you.

JOAQUIN

Go home to Sonora. To your family. Live a long, happy life... I'll be right behind you... I promise.

EXT. MINING CAMP - NIGHT

At the sight of Claudio's massacre... Love and his rangers search the area. They're sickened by the sight before them.

LOVE

Survivors?

The rangers shake their heads.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

In one corner are the hunters. The doors swing open. Love strides in, flanked by his men.

People take notice of this intrusion of authority.

Love strolls up to the bar. The rest of the rangers fan out. The hunters watch all of this from their little nook.

Love walks up to a nearby table of men. They watch Love and Billy curiously.

LOVE

We're wondering if you might be able to tell us something about the massacre that happened just outside of town. Seems fairly recent.

PATRON

Nah, ain't seen nothin'.

LOVE

Are you sure? A couple of Chinese out there had their necks slashed from ear to ear.

BILLY

(to the hunters)
How bout you two, y'all see anything?

MINER (O.S.)

No, Sir.

Billy turns back to Love, they visit another table. One of the hunter's eyes pleads with the others for permission to talk to Love. They shake their heads, "no."

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Love sits at his desk. An unopened bottle of whisky sits atop a book. A knock on the door.

LOVE

Who is it?

BILLY (O.S.)

Billy, Sir.

LOVE

Come in.

Billy enters.

BILLY
 Someone downstairs you might want
 to talk to.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

It's fairly quiet. A few lamps. A few loudmouths at a saloon
 across the street that hasn't closed yet.

Love, Billy, a few rangers, and one of the hunters, MCBRIDE
 (50), are seated at a table.

LOVE
 Now, you're sure these are the men
 we described the other day?

MCBRIDE
 I know who it is yer lookin' for.
 Joaquin Murrieta.

Love nods.

MCBRIDE(CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 I saw him just the other day. I
 nearly lost my life for it.

LOVE
 Can you show me? On a map?

McBride nods.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Love and his rangers regroup in the lobby, along with a posse
 of other men. Guns, rifles and ammo lay out. He addresses
 them all...

LOVE
 As many of you know, we've been
 commissioned by the law of our
 great state, to bring to justice a
 feared murderer and bandit. We have
 reason to believe that he is camped
 out up North. We will to the best
 of our abilities, see that justice
 is served. Bring him in alive if at
 all possible.

BILLY
 Alright, men, make sure you're
 properly equipped and armed.

LOVE
 Mount up!

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

A few PEOPLE watch the happenings. The rangers and the posse ride slowly out of town.

BILLY
Ya think he was right about the camp?

LOVE
I do.

BILLY
A lot of people are going to die today, ain't they?

LOVE
You're a damn fine deputy. It's been an honor.

BILLY
It's been my honor to serve with you, Sir.

Love takes the lead. John and a few of the hunters from eariler move fast toward Love and Billy.

JOHN
We heard you got word of Joaquin and his Men.

BILLY
And?

JOHN
Don't be stupid, boy. We're coming.

Before Love can say anything...

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm paying for part of your fee. Murrieta took my brothers from me, and you're not going to stop me.

HUNTER #1 puts his hand on his gun. Billy does, too.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Any problems?

LOVE
There will be no problems as long as it's done my way. The right way.

Love gestures Billy to relax. Billy takes his hand off his gun. The Hunter follows.

JOHN
Whatever you say.

EXT. WOODS - CAMP - NIGHT

A quiet and peaceful night. Manuel and a few bandits enjoy a night of drinking. One of them plays a guitar.

JOAQUIN
Do you think the world ever really changes?

MANUEL
Huh? I don't know.

JOAQUIN
I don't think it does. It's just we that change and the way we see things.

MANUEL
There you go again with your crazy talk.

JOAQUIN
Not a fool, a philos--

Claudio emerges from the darkness and sits down next to them, creating an uneasy tension between them. Joaquin and Manuel watch him closely.

CLAUDIO
Joaquin... I... I.. How do I say this? I'm...

Claudio takes a deep breath. Joaquin looks at him, sympathetic. Claudio tries to apologize, but it's as if he is physically incapable of saying he is sorry.

CLAUDIO (CONT'D)
Joaquin, I. I'--

JOAQUIN
It's okay... I understand. We're still family *cabrone*.

MANUEL
Me, too.

They all drink.

EXT. WOODS - CAMP - DAY

Love and his men ride out towards the area the hunter told them of. They get closer and closer.

JOAQUIN'S CAMP

Joaquin, and his men are preparing to leave. Many of the horses are packed and ready. A routine morning.

Claudio is still asleep. Manuel tosses his boots to him, hits him in the chest, wakes him.

MANUEL
Wake up *cabrone!*

CLAUDIO
Hijo de su--

Joaquin stops, looks at Manuel. He got it right for a change. Claudio puts on his boots. He hears thundering hooves. Manuel looks around. Joaquin takes notice. Something is wrong.

Everyone slowly stops. Then before they are even close to being ready, the rangers and their posse appear, almost out of nowhere.

BANDIT #1
They're here!

The men yell, scramble around.

CLAUDIO
Son of a bitch!

Manuel starts for his guns, still barefoot.

CLAUDIO (CONT'D)
Wait!

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK.

Manuel stops. The rangers have got them. Guns locked and ready to fire. John behind Billy. Billy has Joaquin set dead to rights.

John and Billy lock eyes. Love moves between John's gun and Joaquin.

LOVE
You are all under arrest!

A few of the rangers dismount.

LOVE (CONT'D)
No one needs to die here.

John gives Hunter #1 the signal to dismount. He squeezes between Manuel, who has his hands up. Manuel notices the man slowing inching to get a clear shot on Joaquin.

Joaquin's eyes dart around.

Hunter #1 finds a clear shot with Love and Billy away, so they can't stop him. Hunter pulls out his gun and fires, but Manuel tackles him down.

Joaquin's Men and Bandits dive for their guns. Everyone scrambles. Chaos. Some Bandits make off into the hills, Alejandro is among them but most of them stay. Fight.

John fires.

Bandit #2 jumps in front of Joaquin, takes the bullet.

Joaquin scrambles, fires. He darts backward and tries for a horse, but it's spooked and knocks him over.

Hunter #1 and Manuel wrestle. Manuel escapes before the man can kill him.

Love shoots with accuracy killing all those who are trying for him.

Love sees John in the distance, chasing after Joaquin.

John has Joaquin in his sights. Joaquin struggles to defend himself. The trees have broken the defensive line of Love and his men.

Joaquin and John shoot at each other, the Hunter follows after John.

Manuel has his gun now.

POSSE MEMBER
I got you, you son of a-- BAM!

Manuel shoots Posse Member with his rifle--

Drops him--

He scrambles and helps Joaquin--

Manuel fights savagely. Knife and machete swinging, he's a frontier barbarian. Takes out Love's Men on every side of him. Joaquin's Men take many losses.

Billy aims at Bandit #1. SLICE! A knife buries into his chest. Manuel pushes it deep, killing Billy. Love is unaware that he lost Billy.

LOVE

We want Murrieta! Don't let him get away!

The Rangers set after Joaquin. Manuel and others help to protect him. Drive the men back.

Guns fire in every direction.

Love is set on Joaquin and John.

WHAM

A rifle butt knocks Love off his horse. Bandit #2 rears up on him, swings a machete. Love goes hand to hand with Bandit #2.

BAM

RANGER #1 shoots Bandit #2 dead, saving Love. Ranger #1 helps Love to his feet.

RANGER #1

Captain.

The Rangers grow closer on Joaquin--

They're almost on top of him then--

Claudio throws himself into the fray--

He Swings his machete left and right--

Fires his pistol and drives them back--

MANUEL

(to Joaquin)

Go! Get out of here! NOW!

Manuel fires. Drops a man. A shot hits Manuel in the shoulder. Manuel keeps fighting. Bandit #1, wounded, pulls Joaquin away.

BANDIT #1

Come on!

Finally, the Rangers overpower Manuel. Ranger #3 shoots him, drops him. Manuel drops his gun.

One last effort, Manuel reaches for his revolver. Ranger #2 takes a machete to Manuel's three-fingered hand, cuts them clean off.

Manuel trips him before he can finish him off--

They fight and end up on the floor--

Manuel is overpowered--

Manuel reaches for a gun--

Ranger #2 stabs him in the back--

Before Ranger #2 can take the machete out Manuel's back; Manuel grabs the gun and shoots him dead. Manuel loses blood with every inch as he gets up. He falls back down. DEAD.

The Rangers unload on Claudio, bullets driving into him. Full force. Joaquin watches, desperate, being pulled back by his men as more and more drop dead thanks in large part to John.

JOHN

Find Joaquin!

EXT. FOREST - OFF BEATEN PATH - DAY

John, Joaquin, and a few others are isolated from the rest of the battle. Joaquin, on foot, takes to the trees for cover.

RANGER #3 (O.S.)

Here! He's here.

Love searches and finds Joaquin. Love and some Rangers converge on Joaquin and the few of Joaquin's Men that protect him. Guns a blazing.

A bullet grazes off Joaquin's shoulder. The Rangers, still coming at them. Horses speed at them from over one of the nearby hills.

Bandit #1 valiantly rides towards Joaquin and his remaining men. He brings the horses to them. They mount up, ride off.

EXT. ARROYO - MAGIC HOUR

It's a horse chase. Frenzied through a winding arroyo. Joaquin and his men ride furiously.

Love and a few Rangers are right behind them. Bullets fired back and forth.

Speeding horses--

Hooves--

Gunshots--

Joaquin pushes on...

Love focused...

John is ahead of Love.... It's a race to Joaquin...

Joaquin pushes his head forward...

JOAQUIN

Hyaah!

Joaquin veers off, unloads his gun on John, but misses. Joaquin's men ride off in the opposite direction. They push on, the Rangers after them.

It doesn't take the Bandits long to lose the Rangers. John pursues Joaquin alone, fires several bullets at him.

A bullet strikes Joaquin's horse, but he rides on as if both he and his horse knew everything was suddenly at stake.

ANOTHER SHOT--

Hits Joaquin in the back, but still, they ride--

Another shot hits the horse--

WHUMP

Joaquin is hurled violently through the air. He lands hard. Kicks up dust.

Another gunshot rings out, strikes his shoulder. John approaches fast. He dismounts, gun fixed on Joaquin. Joaquin draws his gun. They're both ready to end this quick.

John's ammo is spent and fires three shots into Joaquin. Joaquin fires five into John. John falls on his ass.

Both men are breathing hard. Joaquin cocks his gun one last time. John and Joaquin lock eyes. Joaquin shoots John dead in between the eyes.

Love rushes forward with his gun on Joaquin. Love sees Joaquin is at the end of his rope.

LOVE

Put it down!

Joaquin rests on his back, but with the gun still in his hand, resting on the ground.

JOAQUIN

It's down.

LOVE

I don't want to kill you.

JOAQUIN

You're going to have to.

LOVE

It's over... Let me take you in.

JOAQUIN

It's too late for me. I've got my justice...

LOVE

I guess you did.

Love stands before Joaquin looking down at his valiant opponent now at the brink of death. Joaquin reloads his gun.

LOVE (CONT'D)

For what's it worth, I hope you have found peace.

JOAQUIN

I have.

Joaquin loads one last bullet into his gun. Love, not taking any chances, plays Joaquin's game. Love shoots Joaquin.

EXT. TULARE VALLEY - DAY

The sun rises fully over the distant mountains, the plains, the rivers, and valleys bathed in a golden glow. A single gunshot rings out, breaking the stillness.

CUT TO BLACK

AFTERWORD:

As proof of the outlaws' deaths, the Rangers cut the head of Joaquin Murrieta and Three-Fingered Jack. They were preserved in a jar as proof for their reward. It was displayed in Mariposa County, Stockton, and San Francisco. Spectators paid \$1 to see the relic. The preserved remains were destroyed during the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and subsequent fire.

FADE OUT.