

100 Seconds

by  
Barbara A. Davis

barbara@barbaraadavis.com  
602-309-2478

EXT. PITCH BLACK GRAVEL ROAD

RUNNING FOOTSTEPS ON GRAVEL in darkness.

FADE IN

CLOSE ON - BOOTS

Worn leather. Dusty. Running, tripping over railway ties.  
Heavy breathing of a man on the lam.

TITLE OVER: APRIL 1903

Lights of a distant town dot the darkness. One light  
moves splits in two then three. The POSSE in pursuit.

Closing in.

MEN SHOUTING: To each other, taunting, searching. HORSES  
HOOVES, PANTING & SNORTING. REINS WHIPPING a HORSE.  
SNORTS and GRUNTS.

RUNNING FOOTSTEPS fade into the night.

GUNSHOT TO BLACK.

EXT. GREEN DELL - DAY

Sunny, verdant southern Alberta foothills.

A mirage on the horizon becomes a moving shadow, a rider.

STOPPER (JOHN STOPF), cynical, weathered. Trappings of  
cowboy life, his horse CHESTER his only companions.

Distant SHOUTING.

MARIO - A NOOSE TIGHT AROUND HIS NECK

Mario bound, on an agitated horse under a tree. Others  
taunting. A Posse playing cat and mouse.

STOPPER

Looks like a square-dance.

He quickens Chester but stops short.

The Men stop, glaring at Stopper - itching to draw.

BURT

(French)  
Continue your journey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stopper gives him nothing, extracts a beaten, yellow paper.

"WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE: JIM HOLLAND, 5 JOAQUINS GANG OUT OF CALIFORNIA. ROBBERY & MURDER."

No matches. It's neatly folded, tucked away.

Nervous looks exchanged, Harold aiming at Stopper, steps up.

HAROLD

He said, move along. This is no concern of yours.

STOPPER

(French)  
I understood.

Mario, beaten, sweaty, dirty, chokes.

BURT

(French accent)  
There are no laws preventing justice.

STOPPER

Well, then you must be the judge.

The men stare him down. Stopper nonplussed, gaze fixed on Harold.

STOPPER

That must make you Constable.  
(motions to Ivan)  
Since he seems to be executioner.

They give him nothing.

STOPPER

Jury then?

Harold takes another step forward, aims at Stopper's head.

HAROLD

You need to mind your business.

STOPPER

What charges have been brought against this man?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BURT

Who do you think you are? Mounted  
Police?

Stopper reaches into a pocket.

Ivan still twitchy, draws, aims a Colt .45. as Stopper,  
unflinching, produces a silver badge.

HAROLD

Toss it here.

Stopper obliges. Harold fumbles the catch, retrieves it.

HAROLD

(motions South)  
Pinkerton Detective? You're a  
little far north. Border's that  
way.

BURT

You have no authority in Canada.

Burt (galoot) readies to draw, eases back as Stopper  
dismounts, spitting at his feet. Burt whipping out a  
pistol - handy, but no gunslinger.

STOPPER

You gonna complain to the  
constabulary?

ON BOOTS - CREEPING, A SHOT SPITTING UP DIRT

Ivan freezing - rapid blinking gone as Stopper takes aim.

Bullets spill to the ground. Harold drops to the dirt,  
struggling to load. He stops cold.

ON A PISTOL - AT HIS TEMPLE

STOPPER

Lemme see if I comprehend. You  
joined a vigilante posse with an  
unloaded rifle?

HAROLD

It was. I just -

STOPPER

Didn't figure on someone crashing  
the party?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HAROLD

We plan to finish this. Mark my words, Pink.

STOPPER

Well, then gentlemen. It sounds like we are all after the same objective in this situation.

The men exchanging confused glances, side-eyeing Stopper.

STOPPER

You said you were after justice.

(beat)

So am I. I can't abide law-breakers getting away with a crime.

HAROLD/BURT/IVAN

That's right.

FOLLOW STOPPER approaching the rope, grabbing it as the men egg him on.

Stopper, unimpressed, ignoring them releases the noose.

BURT

What are you doing?

STOPPER

Justice.

A SHOT rings out. Stopper glances at the scarred tree trunk.

STOPPER

Are you really ready to die out here?

BURT

I shoot you first. You never know.

STOPPER

You ain't no killer. Black nails. Pasty complexion. Prob'ly a miner. Too pale to be a farmer. - But you ain't no lawman and you ain't no killer.

Burt eyes his sooty, blistered palms, re-aims the Colt.

BURT

No time like the present. No?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

STOPPER

If you wield a pick-axe the way  
you handle that gun, you're never  
going to strike it rich.

BURT

What would you know? I did not  
have to miss. That was a warning.

STOPPER

I know rock salt when I see it.

Stopper casually approaches, beckoning Burt aside.

STOPPER

May I have a word?

The men exchanging confused glances as he obliges.  
Stopper leans in. Burt hesitantly leaning in.

Stopper putting an arm around his shoulders, sucker-  
punches. Burt stumbles, collapses, his pals rushing to  
his aide.

Stopper returning to his horse, mounts, grabs Mario's  
reins, begins leading them away, stopping by Harold.

STOPPER

I'll take my badge.

WIDEN TO - Stopper leading Mario's horse by the reins,  
Mario, still bound, struggling to remain upright in the  
saddle as they enter

FRANK, ALBERTA

Bustling mining town nestled at the base of a mountain.

CLOSE ON PUDDLE - TREMBLING WATER

INT. FRANK JAIL - DAY

Crude iron bar door pushed closed, padlocked. Mario on  
the other side glaring from a dark corner.

MARIO

They're gonna come get me out.

EVERS

Yes, well, I'll make sure you're  
safe as a babe until then.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVERS (CONT'D)

(beat)  
Jim Holland, huh?

Turning to Stopper holding out the WANTED POSTER, Constable EVERS BERG slipping on wire-rimmed spectacles, sits, accepting the poster. Absent-mindedly toying with an hour-glass while reading. No hint of recognition.

Stopper studies him, the wood-framed office.

EVERS  
Haven't seen him in these parts.  
Try further in. Greenwood or  
Sparwood. Maybe Fernie?

STOPPER  
I'd like to have a look around,  
just the same.

EVERS  
Suit yourself.  
(beat)  
Fair warning. Folks around here  
are none too impressed you broke  
up that posse.

Stopper shrugs as sand falls through hour-glass.

STOPPER  
I'll take my chances just the  
same.

Stopper turning to leave, pauses in doorway, half-turns back, motioning to Mario.

STOPPER  
What'd he do?

EVERS  
Killed a defenseless woman in cold  
blood.

Stopper turning squints at Mario - a shadow with eyes.

EVERS  
Is it true what they say?

STOPPER  
Who's they and what do *they* say?

EVERS  
People. About Pinkertons carrying  
a book?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EVERS (CONT'D)

I hear it's full of information on dangerous criminals.

STOPPER

The Gallery.

MARIO (O.S.)

Am I in that book? Bet my pitcher's real nice.

STOPPER

(to Mario)

You're a big talker now that your neck's not dangling.

MARIO (O.S.)

What of it? Just means I know when to keep my mouth shut.

STOPPER

Means you're a coward. You were snivelling out there, afraid I'd let them string you up.

Beat. Mario eases up to the bars, presses his sneering face against them.

MARIO

Lemme out, an' we'll see who the snivelling coward is. Pinky!

EVERS

I'll bet that's a real study of human nature, that book.

STOPPER

The pulpit isn't?

EVERS

Fair point. How did you know?

MARIO (O.S.)

A preacher? Well, shit!

EVERS

Former.

STOPPER

You stare into that book as long as I have, you get to know how to read people. Who they really are.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

STOPPER (CONT'D)

And how ugly and nasty folks can get.

EVERS

You don't like people very much.

STOPPER

Comes with the job.

EVERS

Still. That book would give you insight others might not possess.

STOPPER

As would yours.

Evers comes to face Stopper.

EVERS

Seems to me, we both have the same problem. Only on different sides of the coin.

STOPPER

How do you figure?

EVERS

You got a murderer you can't find, and I've got a murder I need to find a killer for.

STOPPER

What about him?

Stopper motions to the cell.

EVERS

Well, now, that's the thing. There's still some open questions about it, I can't quite shake.

STOPPER

Thought your vigilantes had that all squared away. They seemed to be in a right big hurry to string him up.

EVERS

Look, I'm going out right to the chase. I need those answers before the judge arrives from Cranbrook in three days.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

STOPPER

A trial should be just the thing  
to get answers.

EVERS

This judge isn't known for his -  
evaluative process and reasoning.

Stopper nods knowingly.

STOPPER

Well, I'd love to help, but I've  
got to keep on Holland's trail  
before -

EVERS

You'd get more help from the folks  
around here if they thought you  
had authority.

STOPPER

You mean, deputize me?

Evers nods.

STOPPER

More lives could be lost for every  
moment I don't find Holland.

EVERS

And what about this man's life?  
Will it matter if justice isn't  
served?

STOPPER

It is if the judge says it is.

EVERS

You're willing to take the chance  
of having an innocent man hanged?

Stopper's eye twitches.

EVERS

When justice is done, it brings  
joy to the righteous but terror to  
evildoers.

STOPPER

Proverbs.

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Evers, impressed, gives a slight nod.

STOPPER

I'm not giving up on Holland.

EVERS

Follow justice and justice alone.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE

A WOMAN'S PHOTO IN SILVER LOCKET, A TINY RIBBON-TIED TRESS OF HAIR, A WORN BOOK "GALLERY OF ROGUES", A NEWSPAPER CLIPPING: "WYOMING TRIBUNE. TRAGIC ACCIDENT CLAIMS FAMILY OF SENATE CANDIDATE JOHN STOPF", A SHORT RUSTED STAY CHAIN LAID ACROSS A WHITE COTTON DOILY.

Street noises, light breeze drifting through open window. Stopper sitting, entranced in modest room: a chest of drawers, wash stand, iron-wrought bed, oil lantern.

A KNOCK on the door breaks his trance.

LILLIAN (O.S.)

Mister Stopper? Sir?

STOPPER

Who is it?

LILLIAN

(subtle English  
accent)

Sir, it's Lillian Clarke. From downstairs.

STOPPER

What is it?

LILLIAN

I -

STOPPER

Go on, spit it out girl.

LILLIAN

Sir, could you please open the door?

STOPPER

I'm not dressed for company.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILLIAN

Oh. Well, I

(beat)

I just wanted to know how you were settling in. If there's anything I can get for you.

STOPPER

Everything's fine.

Stopper moves to the chest, touching the sacred items, wipes a tear, picks up the chain. The water in the basin turning red from hands stained by rust.

ON THE OPEN ROGUES GALLERY: "JIM HOLLAND: KNOWN TO FIND WORK AS A MINER, STAKE OUT THE MINE AND ROB THE MINE'S PAYROLL. COLD BLOODED KILLER. ARMED AND DANGEROUS. BULLET SCAR ON LEFT THIGH."

EXT. CLARKE HOME - AFTERNOON

LILLIAN CLARKE (15, subtle English accent) rushing to help her mother ARLENE wrangle her six young siblings - washing faces, issuing chore orders, before delivering a parting kiss on her mother's cheek.

ARLENE

Don't be too late.

LILLIAN

I won't mama.

FOLLOW LILLIAN walking swiftly along a dirt road into town, passing JAN KANTY (30s, pronounced: Yahn).

LILLIAN

Good afternoon, Mr. Kanty.

JAN

(Dutch accent)

Wait. I'm heading into town also.

He speeds up, but she doesn't slow.

LILLIAN

Sorry, sir. I don't want to be late.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAN

Leitch will understand. He finds you very helpful now that Mrs. Leitch has her hands full with the baby.

LILLIAN

That may be, sir, but I've a job to do, and it isn't going to do itself.

JAN

That's what I like to hear. Good work ethic. A strong young woman like you. I would hire you if I had a business.

APPROACHING THE BOARDING HOUSE - Jan catches sight of Stopper and makes an abrupt turn.

JAN

It was a pleasant walk, but I must go to the mercantile.

INT. MADDIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

MADDIE LOUIS (30s) nude save for a diamond necklace, partially exposed under white sheets laying next to a nude man. We can't see his face until -

MADDIE

(French accent)

I am sorry to hear about Birgitta.

Jan abruptly pulling away, sitting up.

JAN

Don't say her name.

MADDIE

(French)

Jerk -

JAN

You would not have been friends enjoying Sunday afternoon croissants.

Grabbing clothes, he dresses as he leaves.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE RESTAURANT - EVENING

Not an empty table in the place.

Stopper, alone, back to the wall, eyes darting between entry points amid bites. The water in his glass ripples.

Lillian approaches followed by a COUPLE, motions them to Stopper's table. He intervenes.

STOPPER  
I haven't finished.

LILLIAN  
We use family-style seat-

STOPPER  
Not here.

Stopper waves her away.

Lillian, bewildered, composes herself, shoots a nervous glance at the kitchen door. LEITCH frowns and nods. She escorts the couple to another table.

Maddie, bedecked in her trademark jewels, meanders over smirking.

MADDIE  
I do not think Orenthal will get over that so easily.

Stopper side-eyes the couple, looks through Maddie.

STOPPER  
You're blocking my view.

MADDIE  
Monsieur, is that any way to greet a lady?

Stopper gives her nothing.

MADDIE  
Well, aren't you a barrel of fun.

She plunks into a chair as he stops abruptly, glaring.

MADDIE  
I am not blocking your view now, unh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stopper's eyes dart quickly between exits, coolly resumes eating.

MADDIE

I am just being friendly. People around here do not like strangers who stick to themselves.

(beat)

You are the American, people have been talking about, yes? Looking for a murderer in our little town.

(beat)

Lots of people come through here - men in particular. First it was the railroad. Now coal. They come, they work, and if they don't die, they move on.

Stopper finishes eating, rises in silence.

MADDIE

You are a stellar conversationalist. When you get around to my humble abode - and you will - I do hope I can coax more than a single sentence out of you.

(beat)

Seems to me, conversation goes hand in hand with investigating.

Stopper begins walking away, but Maddie stops him.

MADDIE

I might just be the one person you need most.

INT. MERCANTILE - DAY

Behind the long wooden counter, ORENTHAL'S finishing up with a CUSTOMER as Jan walks over loaded with goods.

ORENTHAL

I didn't have the chance to speak to you after Sunday's sermon.

JAN

Obviously, I have been ... pre-occupied.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ORENTHAL

Of course. Of course. I meant no disrespect. The Missus and I were looking forward to offering you supper that evening.

Jan unloads as Orenthal begins tallying/wrapping the items.

ORENTHAL

Birgitta was a fine woman. She did not deserve what he did to her.

Beat.

JAN

She would have been pleased to know she made a good impression.

ORENTHAL

The American was in asking questions.

JAN

What did you say?

ORENTHAL

He certainly isn't very sociable.

Jan looks away.

JAN

I wouldn't know.

ORENTHAL

That's precisely what I mean.

Beat.

JAN

What did you tell him?

ORENTHAL

What could I say? She was a kind soul.

(beat)

I wish we'd had more time to get to know her better.

A silent stand-off before Jan reaches into a pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ORENTHAL

No. No. It's your time of need. We put it on credit for now. When you're feeling better.

INT. STOPPER'S ROOM - DAY

KNOCKING as Stopper cracks it open to Evers, hat in hand.

EVERS

May I?

Evers motions in. Stopper doesn't budge.

STOPPER

Why don't we sit on the porch instead?

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

ON EVERS PACING THE WOODEN PORCH.

Stopper taking in the town moving about the day. PEOPLE scowling at him, chattering amongst themselves, move on.

EVERS

I hear, you've been getting quite the reception.

STOPPER

You were right about these folks.

Evers pulling out a small flask and offering Stopper a swig before taking one.

EVERS

I've let the mine supervisor, Clarke Clarke know you'll be along to visit. He'll help get answers if the men won't cooperate.

STOPPER

Is he aware I'll be asking about Holland as well?

EVERS

They're saying you're just another bounty hunter out to make a dollar.

Stopper shrugs it off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

Every man's got to make a living.

EVERS

Just don't forget about our deal.

Evers tips his hat and leaves.

Stopper steps towards the porch rail and gazes up at the mountain.

A square outcropping juts from the rock face half-way up.

Below it, at the base of the mountain, the Frank train station.

A TRAIN WHISTLE blows.

EXT. FRANK TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - DAY

Sid Choquette walking around inspecting the locomotive as Stopper approaches.

SID CHOQUETTE

I was wondering when you would be around.

STOPPER

I spoke to Arnold yesterday, and he felt you probably wouldn't know too much about the comings and goings of passengers. - Seeing as you don't deal with the tickets and all.

SID CHOQUETTE

Nope. I expect he's right.

(beat)

Still though. I do see'em comin' and goin' just the same.

Stopper unfurls his tattered yellow poster.

STOPPER

Would this man be one of them?

Sid slips his wire-rimmed spectacles down his nose and peers over the top at the poster. He squints.

SID CHOQUETTE

Nope. Not a passenger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stopper folds the poster and tucks it into his breast pocket.

STOPPER

Well, thanks for your time. I do appreciate it.

He tips his hat and turns to leave.

SID CHOQUETTE

Didn't say I never saw him.

Stopper turns back.

SID CHOQUETTE

Just said he wasn't a passenger.

(beat)

It's part of my job to chase 'em off before the train leaves the station.

FLASH BACK TO:

A TRAIN PULLS AWAY FROM THE STATION - NIGHT

SID CHOQUETTE (V.O.)

The railway don't like for this to get out, account of they don't want to encourage others and scare paying travellers. Tramps slip onto the railwagons from time to time.

Three men running alongside. One jumps onto the side of a car, wrestles the door open - just barely, he slips in.

SID CHOQUETTE (V.O.)

It's my job to chase 'em off before the train leaves the station.

The door slides open. The other men tossing in bags, clamoring aboard.

FLASH FORWARD TO:

OPEN RAILCAR AT PLATFORM - DAY

STOPPER

You're saying he was one of these tramps?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SID CHOQUETTE

I really can't be sure. Most of that work's at night. Worst time for it.

(beat)

Suppose it beats walking or horsebacking through the mountains to Gastown.

Stopper looks down the railway track winding its way into the narrow mountain pass.

STOPPER

I reckon it does.

Beat.

STOPPER

That other fella. The one locked up for murdering the foreman's wife.

SID CHOQUETTE

Real shame about that business. I can't believe he'd do that to her after she was so kind to him.

STOPPER

They knew each other?

SID CHOQUETTE

Arrived on the same train. From Calgary, I think. Seemed like they might have only met on the train as they didn't seem to overly familiar.

STOPPER

What do you mean?

SID CHOQUETTE

She called him sir when he offered to help her with her trunk when Jan didn't show up to greet her. I ended up storing the trunk for a day or so before they came back to claim it.

STOPPER

They came back together?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SID CHOQUETTE

Oh no. I meant Mr. And Mrs. Kanty.  
Although he didn't seem very  
impressed having to deal with it  
at all.

STOPPER

You didn't by any chance get a  
peek into that trunk while it was  
in your possession, did you?

Indignant beat.

SID CHOQUETTE

I would never presume to snoop  
through a lady's belongings.

STOPPER

Can you recall anything else?

SID CHOQUETTE

Truth be told, we were all  
surprised to find out he was  
married.

STOPPER

You never knew?

SID CHOQUETTE

He never let on. Spent an awful  
lot of time and money with that  
Maddie Louis before Mrs. Kanty  
arrived.

EXT. MINER'S CAMP - DAY

A dozen dingy canvas tents clustered along a rushing  
creek.

A diversity of sweat-covered MINERS cooking, socializing,  
washing up.

ROBERT CLARKE (30s, English accent) and Stopper amid a  
handful of hostile MINERS.

SURLY MINER

(German accent)

You have no right coming here und  
asking questions. No one will help  
you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIDEKICK MINER

Go back to your side of the border.

Stopper gives them nothing, studies their faces. Clarke ignoring the miners, ushers Stopper toward

MARIO'S TENT

Stopper and Clarke rifling through Mario's shared tent.

CLARKE

We'll need to clear this out. Need the space for 128 miners coming in from Morrissey on the 28th.

STOPPER

What about the other camp?

CLARKE

Other camp? No, those men are transients looking for work.

STOPPER

There's gotta be 50, 60 men there, easily. Why bring in new workers when you can those men to work?

CLARKE

Not my decision, I'm afraid.

Stopper grunts an acknowledgement.

CLARKE

Lillian tells me you're staying in the boarding house.

STOPPER

Gossip. In a town like this? Who would'a thunk it?

CLARKE

She's my daughter. I like to know the comings and goings of strangers she'll be around.

STOPPER

Ah. No offence. Makes sense. She's quite young.

Clarke side-eyes him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLARKE

Fifteen. I'd prefer it if she was still eight, but alas, they do grow quickly.

Stopper's jaw clenches. Beat.

STOPPER

I wouldn't know.

CLARKE

Apologies. I wouldn't presume to know your situation or what encouraged to take on such a solitary life.

Picking up a heavy burlap sack, Stopper dumps the contents onto an unmade cot. Sifting through contents. Pushing aside a crumpled paper.

Stopper reaching down to grab ...

A silver brooch. He pockets it. Grabs the crumpled paper.

CLARKE

What's that?

He hands it to Clarke.

WANTED POSTER, MARIO'S PORTRAIT. "DEAD OR ALIVE. HARRY TRACY OF BUTCH CASSIDY'S WILD BUNCH. MINE & TRAIN ROBBERY, MURDER."

INT. FRANK JAIL

ON THE POSTER - Being handed back to Stopper.

EVERS

Well, suppose that should make me feel at ease when he's hanged.

STOPPER

Don't it?

EVERS

He isn't being tried for those crimes.

STOPPER

You think it means he's guilty?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVERS

Hard to change a man.

STOPPER

But there was no robbery. Why turn his back on thousands to kill one woman?

EXT. TRANSIENT CAMP

Makeshift lean-to's and tents clustered around the riverbank forming an eclectic camp of sorts.

Men of all nationalities sit around fires, talking, playing cards in various states of dress and undress.

Stopper is talking to a small group of CHINESE MEN drinking tea and smoking. He shows them the poster, but they all examine it then shake their heads.

STOPPER

What can you tell me the miners?  
Do you know any of them?

One man translates for the others, and they all shake their heads again. Some shrug.

The same scenario repeats when he asks the groups from various countries. Realizing now, they are clustered together. Chinese, Dutch, German, African, Polish, French.

Stopper approaches a cluster of BLACK MEN in the encampment. They quickly form a wall and some scurry away.

MAN

Ain't nothing here for you.

STOPPER

I'm just looking for information.

The Man spits at Stopper's feet.

STOPPER

Interesting accent. Louisiana, I'd say.

The Man gives him nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

I hear there was a big riot down there a couple of years back. Heard seven white people were killed.

MAN

And a dozen Black people. Good people they was too.

STOPPER

Sounds like you knew them.

MAN

I heard about it.

STOPPER

Must have been an awful day. People fighting, running, screaming. Heard a couple of men fled North.

Defiant beat.

STOPPER

Yessir. Probably headed into Canada.

Beat.

STOPPER

But I'm not here to worry about them. Got my own prey to keep my attention. How about? You know anything about the woman that was killed in town?

MAN

Only that she was. People in town think everyone in this camp is a criminal. They keep to themselves and we keep to ours.

Stopper pulls out the Wanted poster and shows it to the group.

STOPPER

How about this man?

The Men scrutinize the poster before each shaking his head. Stopper folds it and tucks back into his pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STOPPER

Those fellas heading North? I sure  
hope they made it.

He turns on his heel and walks away.

INT. FOREMAN'S HOUSE

Dishevelled. Stopper poking around, talking with a  
defiant Jan. Dusty, filthy. A wooden table, chair,  
battered tin coffee pot, unwashed cast iron pan thick  
with grease. Decidedly unfeminine.

JAN

What more you are looking for?

STOPPER

Just trying to make sure justice  
is accurate in it's aim.

JAN

Why did you stop them? He is the  
only one who really knows and will  
not say.

STOPPER

It's a fine line between can and  
will.

JAN

It won't matter if he is not  
around.

Beat.

STOPPER

You work at the mine as a foreman?

Stopper studying Jan as he speaks, scrutinizing as Jan  
chokes up.

JAN

Her eyes. Got so big. Like they  
would pop out. Who would do such a  
thing?

He slips into quiet sobs as Stopper starts to leave.

STOPPER

Where are her things?

Sobbing stops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAN

Things?

STOPPER

Dresses, doilies, bonnets?  
Anything like that.

Beat.

JAN

I could not look at them. I burned  
most everything.

Jan opens a trunk, shuffles the contents.

STOPPER

You burned China dishes?

JAN

I could not afford such things. I  
promise her I will buy them one  
day.

STOPPER

She had no fineries of any kind?  
Jewelry?

Jan pulls out a blue cotton dress, and hugs it against his chest.

JAN

This was only what we could  
afford.

STOPPER

I get the impression you weren't  
married too long?

JAN

One year. I come to work and she  
join me.

STOPPER

How long since she came to town?

Jan seems unprepared for this question.

JAN

Oh. Few weeks, only maybe.

STOPPER

Was that the trunk she brought  
with her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Beat. Jan flashing slight frown nods meekly.

STOPPER

Just seems strange to me, is all.  
A woman like that without a hope  
chest.

JAN

Her family did not have money.  
They came from old country. I send  
them money every week.

INT. FRANK JAIL - DAY

Tracy (Mario) chained to a chair, Stopper standing over  
him as Evers watches.

STOPPER

You can drop the act Tracy.

Beat.

STOPPER

Clarke told me how you were always  
skulking around the mine when you  
weren't working.

EVERS

What I don't understand, is why  
you killed Birgitta. Did she find  
out who you were? What you were up  
to?

Tracy gives him nothing. Stopper slamming his fist on the  
desk as Tracy sneers.

EVERS

Did you take a fancy to her, only  
to find out she was married?

STOPPER

We know you meant to rob the  
mine's payroll.

Tracy, wincing, snaps his head to face Stopper.

STOPPER

We know all about Butch Cassidy  
and the Wild Bunch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACY

Then you know they ain't far behind. Could be here any time. It don't concern me none being in yer cage.

STOPPER

Tell me about Birgitta. Maybe, I'll see how the judge feels about sending you back to Utah.

An evil grin spreads across Tracy's face.

TRACY

Oh, she was fine. Kinda woman makes a man forget hisself and take up prairie livin'.

EVERS

This isn't getting anywhere.

STOPPER

Where did you meet?

TRACY

Yessir. A real lady. I knowed it as soon as I seen that fancy fascinator. Kind like you see in them Boston home journals.

EVERS

We already know about the train.

Stopper pulling the brooch from his pocket. Flashing it to Tracy.

STOPPER

What about this?

Tracy becoming enraged.

TRACY

That's mine!

STOPPER

Where'd you get it?

Handing the brooch to Evers who examines it.

EVERS

It's a mighty nice bauble for a confirmed bachelor to be carrying around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TRACY

You had no right to go through my belongings! Give it back!

STOPPER

Was it hers?

TRACY

Give. It. Back.

STOPPER

If it's stolen property it ain't yours. I'm just trying to assess ownership is all.

EVERS

I cannot fathom why you're not helping to clear your own name. Do you want to be hanged?

TRACY

I ain't gone be strung up. My boys'll be along any time now ta spring me from this here chicken coop.

(beat)

When that happens, I'm gonna tell'em just what kind of hospitality I got here.

STOPPER

Where did you get the brooch?

Tracy gives him nothing.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Maddie perched on the edge of an ornate chair. Stopper across from her sitting uncomfortably, hat in hand.

STOPPER

The women of this town don't mind you sleeping with their husbands?

MADDIE

I don't.

STOPPER

Don't what? Sleep with them?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADDIE

No matter what you may think of me, I'm here for the miners.

Stopper ogles the room. Fancy, finery. The home of money.

STOPPER

Looks like you're doing well for yourself.

MADDIE

This is not my first town.

STOPPER

And the jewels?

MADDIE

Gifts from my many admirers over the years.

STOPPER

They treat you pretty nicely here. Like one of them?

MADDIE

Church on Sundays. Tea with the ladies in the afternoon. Quilting bees. I'm even building a new house.

(beat)

We have - an arrangement. Tell me something. Would ever sleep with your best friend's wife?

STOPPER

Of course not.

MADDIE

Well, then. You see. Every woman in this town is my best friend. It's a - a covenant.

(beat)

Besides, there are many miners who come through and like to get drunk when they get paid. What do you think would happen to my friends, if those men didn't have an - outlet - as you say?

STOPPER

And what about Birgitta? Was she one of your friends?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADDIE

She was young and needed her mother, but yes. She liked my tea, because it reminds her of Belgium.

(beat)

You see? I give everyone what they want. Men only want one thing.

STOPPER

And women? What do they want?

MADDIE

Why, love, of course! And companionship. But mostly, we want someone to see us for who we really are and appreciate it.

STOPPER

Did you ever visit her?

MADDIE

In that shanty the mine provides? No. Always, it was here.

STOPPER

Did you ever see her wearing anything fancy? Like a fascinator?

MADDIE

If she had such things, I never saw them. She was not like me.

(motions to jewels)

Enjoying attention.

Stopper pulling out brooch, showing Maddie.

STOPPER

You recognize this pin?

MADDIE

Oh how lovely! May I?

He hands it to her. She inspects it.

CLICK.

MADDIE

These kind of things can be dangerous, Monsieur Stopper.

STOPPER

How did you - So it is yours?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MADDIE

No. But I knew someone with something like this.

She shows him the tiny secret compartment. EMPTY.

MADDIE

She would keep poison in there in case a caller got too rough.

STOPPER

So you never saw Birgitta with this?

MADDIE

I doubt very much she would have understood such things.

INT. MINE ENTRY - DAY

Clarke rooting in a wooden supply cabinet as Stopper looks around the wide dark tunnel.

CLARKE

What is it you hope to find? To my knowledge, she was never here.

STOPPER

I'm not certain. A connection between the men, perhaps.

Beat.

STOPPER

All the miner's come through here?

CLARKE

All supplies are kept here. If a man needs anything, he has to come by here to get it. Unless he's secured his own.

Clarke handing Stopper a lamp, a leather-brimmed canvas cap and lamp bracket.

STOPPER

There are no other stations inside the mine?

CLARKE

A handful. Mostly disused at this point. Just some bits and bobs.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLARKE (CONT'D)

Lamp wicks and the like, for emergencies. Cave-ins.

ON A LAMP - HANGING FROM A BEAM IN THE DIM MINE-SHAFT.

Clarke stopping at a wide opening, ushering Stopper into STORAGE ROOM

Black, bare walls, old pick-axe handles littering the floor.

CLARKE

Stored tools in here, until they started getting nicked.

STOPPER

They stole pick-axes?

CLARKE

Pick-axes, hammers, spikes, lantern oil. We are not overly-selective in hiring. These men will rob you blind given the opportunity.

DIM MINE-SHAFT - FORKED IN TWO.

Lanterns bobbing in the darkness on one fork. Unseen MINERS toiling. Echoes of SCRAPING and HAMMERING.

Stopper peering into darkness in the other tunnel, light cutting only a couple of feet.

A hand grabbing his shoulder, yanking him back.

Beat.

CLARKE

Don't gomeandering off. Many of these tunnels have old shafts descending hundreds of feet. You wouldn't see it until it was too late.

Stopper straightening his cap.

STOPPER

Is there another way in or out?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLARKE

Not any more. That entrance was stopped up because people were continually getting lost. You may have seen it on the east face. Part-way up?

EXT. JAIL - DAY

STOPPER

Nothing.

Beat.

STOPPER

Still. I think you're right to question his guilt.

EVERS

What makes you say that?

STOPPER

Something Tracy said about the fancy hat.

EVERS

I saw no such luxuries with her. Even that pin was too fancy for someone like her. She didn't even have a wedding band.

STOPPER

Exactly.

EVERS

You're not making any sense.

STOPPER

Either he's lying about meeting her - and we know he's not because others witnessed him offering to help her with her trunk. Or.

EVERS

Or what?

STOPPER

Or her husband's lying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVERS

Maybe Tracy doesn't recall. Or made that up to get under your skin.

STOPPER

Maybe. He does seem to be all talk from the safety of that bird cage.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

JUDGE RONALD at heavy wooden teacher's desk.

Stopper, Clarke up front. Evers as Prosecutor. A CROWD of TOWNSPEOPLE fill the room.

JAN AT THE WITNESS TABLE - looking down, jaw tense, fist clenching.

JAN

I work all night. I come home and she was just - lying there.

Beat.

JAN

I think maybe she fell. But then I see marks on her neck. And I know.

ON MADDIE LOUIS - at the witness table.

MADDIE

He was quite regular. If you don't consider how many times he tried to - stiff me - as they say.

Snickering, gasps and a shocked murmur arise. Judge Ronald silences the courtroom.

EVERS

What kinds of things did you and Mr. Tracy do while he was in your, uh, company?

MADDIE

A lady does not talk about such things in public.

The Judge looking down his nose at her as hushed whispers erupt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADDIE

Are there are ladies present?

Maddie motions around as the Judge hushes the Crowd.

EVERS

How many times would you say Mr. Tracy came to call at your, uh, home?

MADDIE

Monsieur Tracy visited me in my salon at least once a week.

ON CLARKE - at the witness table.

EVERS

What kind of items started going missing at the mine?

CLARKE

Equipment, tools, dry goods, emergency supplies.

EVERS

Did Mr. Tracy ever hang around the mine when he wasn't working?

CLARKE

Frequently. He'd join some of the men on break to play cards, or the like, but he was nearly always there.

ON JAN - at the witness table.

JAN

Many complaints about Mar- I mean, Mr. Tracy. Going through people's tents and personal belongings. Lots of theft in the camp since he arrived.

EVERS

And when was that, exactly.

JAN

Just over a month.

EVERS

On the same day as your wife, correct?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jan looks down at his hands before stealing a glance around.

EVERS

Did you happen see or hear of a time when Mr. Tracy was at your home, talking with your wife?

JAN

Birgitta told me he came by the house once or twice looking for me. And before he got hired, he came to ask about working at the mine.

Tracy jumping to his feet.

TRACY

That's a downright lie! I never been within a hunderd yard of yer place.

JUDGE

Sit down Mr. Tracy. You'll get your chance.

Tracy grumbling, dropping into his chair.

EVERS (O.S.)

He came to your house, to ask about working at the mine?

Jan nods.

EVERS

Didn't that strike you as odd? How did he even know you worked at the mine?

Jan sputters but cannot answer.

EVERS

Nevermind. Did Mrs. Kanty own any jewelry of any kind?

JAN

No. That money would have been better spent on dishes. Such frivolities are wasteful.

ON TRACY - defiant at the witness table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EVERS

Mr. Tracy, we know you're a thief.  
Why should we trust anything you  
have to say here today?  
Especially, when you're only  
trying to save yourself from  
swinging?

Loud grumbling as the Judge silences the Crowd.

TRACY

Sure, I was there. The day after I  
arrived in town. I stopped to ask  
for a glass of water, cuz it was  
real hot out.

EVERS

In March? With the spring run-off  
just starting?

Tracy shrugging indifferently, blows Maddie an air kiss.  
The room erupting into fits of yelling and people rushing  
the witness table.

The Judge restores calm as Stopper whispers to Evers.

EVERS

What about this silver brooch we  
found in your tent? How can you  
explain it?

Tracy gives him nothing.

JUDGE

You will respond to the question,  
Mr. Tracy.

TRACY

It belonged to my mother.

EVERS

Your mother was in the habit of  
keeping poison on hand?

TRACY

She found that on a dead whore!

He glares at Maddie.

JUDGE

Mr. Tracy, I have heard, and seen,  
enough.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

I find you guilty and sentence you  
to hang in the morning.

TRACY

You'll all be real sorry when  
Butch shows up! He'll blow this  
place off'n the map!

Court is adjourned. Sid Choquette trying to get to front  
as Stopper and Evers escort Tracy out.

Jan Kanty passing in front of Sid, Tipping his hat to him  
as Sid steps back. Eyes following Jan.

Sid slips out.

EXT. LIVERY - DAY

A simple gallows under construction nearby. HAMMERING and  
SAWING echo.

Jan smoking a cigarette, watching as Stopper joins him.  
Solemn silence.

JAN

She was good cook, your wife?

Stopper gives him nothing.

JAN

Gitta was good. Maddie asked her  
to cook for her. But I would not  
hear of it.

Jan chokes up.

JAN

I still have not written her  
mother and father. How can I tell  
them this?

Awkward silence.

STOPPER

When my wife and daughter died, I  
didn't know how I make it without  
them.

Jan snapping to look at Stopper, wipes a worn hanky over  
his brow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

Thought I'd lost everything. My world fell apart.

JAN

Did you? Lose everything?

Stopper gives him nothing.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

A CROWD gathering at newly constructed gallows. Jeering, angry. Hungry for justice. Thirsty for blood.

Maddie among them. Bedecked in her jewels and lovely new hat.

Sid Choquette spotting her in the crowd, begins looking for someone. Seeing Stopper, he attempts to make his way over but is thwarted by the crowd.

Evers and Stopper escorting Tracy from the jail to the gallows.

Evers stops short of the wooden stairs.

EVERS

I can't. Not in good conscience.

He hands Stopper the rope secured to Harry's wrists.

Knowing beat.

Stopper takes the rope.

STOPPER

It's still justice. Just not for Mrs. Kanty. He ain't a good man.

Stopper leads a defiant Harry up the narrow steps to the gallows.

The noose is placed around his neck by the HANGMAN. Harry's eyes scanning the crowd for his gang - any sign of rescue. Nothing but jeering Townspeople. A hush falls over them.

HANGMAN

Any last words?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACY

Where you at Butch? Can't see ya!  
Now's as good a time as any.

He frantically scans the CROWD. Sweat beads up and drips from his forehead.

The floor SMACKS open beneath him and he drops like a sack - the noose snapping his neck with an audible CRACK.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

Evers sits on the stoop reading a Bible as Stopper approaches. He closes it, looks up.

Beat.

EVERS

I couldn't watch.

Stopper, sullen, gives a half-hearted nod.

EVERS

Any plans to continue looking for  
Holland?

STOPPER

You giving up on finding the  
truth?

EVERS

Truth doesn't matter here. These  
folks will go back to feeling like  
they're safe, and I'll go back to  
pretending it's because of me.

(beat)

Until the thing happens. And we'll  
start this dance all over again.

A COUPLE walks past them up into the boarding house restaurant.

Beat.

STOPPER

Suppose I'll head west to Sparwood  
at sunrise. Maybe they've seen him  
there.

EVERS

Not today? You could still make a  
good go of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

Nah. I'll hang on til morning. Get a decent supper and a good night's rest in a soft bed before I head back out.

Stopper stretches as if stiff.

STOPPER

Kinda hard to come by on the trail.

INT. CLARKE HOME - AFTERNOON

Lillian scurrying around, getting ready for work while helping her mother settles her siblings into homework.

ARLENE

What time shall we expect you this evening? Should I set aside your dinner?

LILLIAN

I won't be finished until past ten-thirty.

Lillian pours a glass of water for her young brother.

LILLIAN

Mr. Leitch asked if might remain overnight. He's leaving for Calgary and wondered if I might help Mrs. Leitch with the baby before school.

ARLENE

And what about your chores? Your father works all night and I need help getting the children prepared for school in the morning.

LILLIAN

Sorry, Ma'am. I know you need me. I just thought ...

ARLENE

They've brought that man to justice.

(beat)

Still. It did bring out the ugliness in some of our neighbors.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Arlene handing her a toddler.

ARLENE

Give him a fresh nappie, would you?

Lillian obliges.

ARLENE

Still, I suppose it would be safer if you didn't have to return in the middle of the night. All this business, what it is. Did that Mr. Kanty walk with you again?

LILLIAN

No Ma'am.

ARLENE

Good. Something about that man I don't trust.

LILLIAN

Yes, Ma'am.

(beat)

I could promise to do extra upon my return. Give you a break. Perhaps you might put your feet up while I prepare tea?

ARLENE

That does sound rather tempting.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Stopper eating. This time, Jan is with him. The men eat in almost reverent silence.

JAN

Maybe this, Pinkerton thing is not for you.

STOPPER

How's that?

JAN

Considering that you were wrong about this, Tracy.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

How's that?

JAN

You think he was innocent.

STOPPER

What makes you so sure?

JAN

Why are you not convinced? It's over.

STOPPER

The way I figure it. There are only two people who will know for sure. Birgitta and her killer.

JAN

Isn't it enough he's been held accountable for his crimes? He cannot hurt anyone else?

Stopper wipes his mouth with a napkin and leans back.

JAN

And you have not been able to track this other fellow all these months you have been looking.

STOPPER

He's a slippery one, that's for sure. But, I will find him. They don't call me "Stopper" for nothing.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

Stopper performing his 'goodnight ritual': holding the small silver locket to the lamp, to see the fading photograph in the dim light. He looks lost, small.

STOPPER

I wish you were here. There's so many things I'd say. I have so much to make up for. If only I'd -

Beat.

FLASHBACK TO

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A WRECKED CARRIAGE - dangling into a narrow river gorge. Sunset blazing purple, pink, red, orange and yellow across the sky.

Two injured horses struggle to drag the carriage back over the rocky ledge. Rocks and stones, kicked free, tumble over.

STOPPER

Abby? Are you hurt? Oh God! Talk to me Honey.

A delicate pale lifeless hand dangles from the carriage. A thin trail of dark blood trailing from cuff to fingertip and drips away.

STOPPER

Hold on Abby! Don't move. I'm going to try to pull it up. But I need you to stay still.

Stopper pulling with all his might to keep the carriage from going over. A stone loosens and the carriage slips an inch.

Panicked horses GROANING, straining. A leather strap snaps. The carriage slips farther. More stones fall into the gorge.

STOPPER

Abby? Can you hear me? Abigail?

Stopper stretching, reaches out for the lifeless hand. It's too far.

STOPPER

Abby? Sweetheart? I need you to reach up. Take my hand.

A loud SNAP and CRACKING of wood.

The horses break free and drag themselves from the edge as the carriage tumbles into the gorge, SHATTERING and exploding as it hits the jagged walls on the way down. The horses WHIMPER and SQUEAL in pain.

A SHOT rings out. Then another.

Stopper dropping to his knees, hollering in anguish. Pounding the earth with bare fists.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A short, broken piece of stay chain with a gnarled hook lays in the dirt. He picks it up and clenches it in his fist.

His face, contorted in grief, sweaty, dirty turns to the gorge.

FLASH FORWARD TO

ON A FIST - Clenched around the stay chain.

STOPPER

I couldn't.

(chokes up)

Please take care of her. Of them.

Kissing the photo, rubbing the lock of dark hair and brushing it against his cheek. Tucking neatly back into the locket and closing it.

EXT. MINE ENTRY - PRE-DAWN

Clarke lights a cigarette, watching nearly 2-dozen weary miners file into the mine. Each issues some form of acknowledgement/greeting to Clarke as they pass. Jan stops on his way in.

CLARKE

Didn't realize you were working today, Jan.

Clarke offers him a drag of the cigarette, which Jan accepts.

JAN

I need to keep busy.

CLARKE

Nasty business yesterday.

Jan side-eyes him. Clarke pretends not to notice. The tension between the men is awkward, uncomfortable.

Clarke breaks it when he motions to a small pile of loose gravel and rocks on one side of the mine entry.

CLARKE

Looks like we've had another minor slide during the night.

The town coming to life in the darkness as the two pass the cigarette between them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLARKE  
Freight train on time, today?

JAN  
First time this month. Just about  
to pull out.

CLARKE  
Jolly good.

Jan takes a final drag before heading into the mine.

CLARKE  
Send a couple of men out to clear  
up the path when it arrives, will  
you?

INT. LEITCH HOME - PRE-DAWN

ON LILLIAN - carrying breakfast and tea to Mrs. Leitch  
nursing her baby in bed.

LILLIAN  
I've set on some water to boil for  
the laundry and set the nappies to  
soak.

MRS. LEITCH  
Thank you Lillian. You're such a  
God-send. I can't think what we'd  
do without you.

Lillian taking the baby as Mrs. Leitch gets up, dons a  
dressing gown.

LILLIAN  
I'll be at the boarding house this  
morning if you require my  
assistance.

Handing the baby back, Lillian leaves Mrs. Leitch  
cradling, bouncing her cooing baby.

EXT. LIVERY - CONTINUOUS

ON A SADDLE - placed on a horse's back. Cinch tightened.

Stopper at the livery, securing his carpet-bag, bed-roll  
to the saddle. Chester grows agitated.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

Easy Chester-boy. You and me  
again. Just like old times.

Hearing voices he looks around, but can't trace them.

INT. MINE-SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

Miner's digging, shovelling coal into carts.

EXT. MINE ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

Clarke looks on as two men work at removing the debris.

EXT. BLACKSMITH SHOP - CONTINUOUS

ON A RED-HOT METAL ROD - stoking a fire.

The lone BLACKSMITH readying shoes for repair.

INT. LEITCH HOME - CONTINUOUS

ON LEITCH BABY - being placed in the bassinet by Mrs.  
Leitch.

EXT. FRANK TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

TWO SMALL POINTS OF YELLOW LANTERN LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS -  
Gently swaying side to side. A RUSTLE of unseen leaves in  
a gentle breeze.

FOOTSTEPS ON GRAVEL - Worn, but polished shoes under a  
hem of black trousers. TWO MEN walking along railway  
tracks.

Soft HUMMING of some hymnal.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ON A LANTERN - being lighted in the boarding house  
kitchen.

Lillian moving onto another and then another. Opening  
draperies and smoothing table cloths as she goes.

EXT. MERCANTILE - CONTINUOUS

ON A BROOM - sweeping the wooden boardwalk. Orenthal chases a dog away with the broom before casually leaning into the open door.

ORENTHAL

Henrietta, don't forget I need those baked goods moved. We're getting in a new batch of eggs today.

EXT. LIVERY - CONTINUOUS

Stopper taking a step toward the Mercantile, studying Orenthal's face in the lantern light seeping out from the mercantile doorway.

A splinter of dawn. A faint pillar of smoke cuts across it. A TRAIN WHISTLE somewhere in the darkness.

Stopper resumes securing agitated Chester to a hitching post. Trying to calm him.

A SUDDEN gale-force gust of WIND blasts across town / hurling loose debris / knocking everyone/thing off their feet.

Stunned silence. Chester jumping to his feet and bolting, dragging the hitching post behind him. Corral fencing damaged.

Stopper lays on his back on the ground looks around dazed/confused. A thick shroud of DUST blankets the town.

Covering his face. Coughing. Choking for air. Squinting to see. Panicked yelling somewhere nearby.

VOICE (O.S.)

Christ Almighty! What the hell was that?

A low RUMBLE arises.

INT. MINE-SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

Everything begins to shake and rumble. The men look around at each other as if trying to make out what to do. A miner named DANIEL takes charge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL  
Head for the shelter! Run!

The miners drop tools and run through the shaking mine shaft.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

Sid and RICHARD, confused, struggle to their feet in the darkness. Scooping fallen lanterns, holding them aloft, trying to make sense of what is going on.

The ground begins trembling, SHAKING.

SID CHOQUETTE  
Rich? You okay?

RICHARD  
Shaken up a bit. You?

SID CHOQUETTE  
You ever felt anything like that before?

RICHARD  
No sir-ee! Felt like the hand of -

The TRAIN WHISTLE bellows. The terrified men lock eyes in the glow of the lanterns.

SID CHOQUETTE  
We gotta stop that train!

The RUMBLE rising to THUNDERING.

Sid and Richard sprinting along tracks, frantically waving lanterns.

CRASHING. One dim light vanishes. Snuffed out by darkness. A lone pair of shoes runs.

EXT. LIVERY - CONTINUOUS

ON STOPPER - Straining to see through the darkness and dense dust. The earth shaking. Deafening RUMBLING.

Boulders and rock of all sizes are raining down all around Stopper, but he can't see them in the darkness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

All he can feel is the earth convulsing uncontrollably until - a BOULDER the size of an elephant lands next to his head.

His head snaps to look. It takes him a second to realize what it is, then leap to his feet as another WHIZZES past, and start running - SPRINTING.

INT. MINE-SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

The men tumble over one another into the shelter. Walls and ceiling fortified with heavy beams.

DANIEL

Hunker down, men. Wait for it to pass.

The men huddle as the rumbling and shaking continues.

EXT. LIVERY - CONTINUOUS

Stopper choking on dust-filled air, he puts a hand up to cover his mouth. He hears nothing but the deafening crashing and thundering of stone on stone death.

He barely dodges and ducks to avoid the downpour of bone-crushing, house-smashing boulders and debris as he runs. It's chaos. No step is planned or guaranteed, just taken even though it might be his last, until -

He TUMBLES over Orenthal. Stopper grabs him and pulls him up with him before Orenthal stumbles away and disappears into the dust and darkness.

Stopper fumbles around looking for safety, anything even though no where is safe, until - he falls over a hitching post onto a boardwalk. Finding the side of the building, he follows it. Falling to the ground he stumbles back into the open.

DEAFENING SILENCE.

He looks up and finds himself in front of ...

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Stopper, in shock, staring into space. His expression empty. He squints, just able to make out its shape in the gray early morning light trying to cut the darkness. The house, thick with dust, unscathed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stopper, turning ...

staring blankly in the direction of the mountain.

The DUST CLOUD slowly dissipates, settles.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS OUTSIDE FRANK - CONTINUOUS

ON A PASSENGER TRAIN - stopped, steam rising from it in the dim light of it's windows.

Exhausted, Sid Choquette nearly collapsing as the CONDUCTOR and ENGINEER climb down from the train and approach.

Bending down to help him, Sid can only point toward town.

The Conductor and Engineer take up the lantern and walk toward Frank. It doesn't take long.

Shadows ahead, illuminated by the lantern, the tracks become ...

A MASSIVE GRANITE BOULDER - severing the link.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ears RINGING, Stopper gasps for air and removes his dust-covered bandana. Gagging and puking up thick dust. Wiping his mouth with the filthy cloth.

Stopper stares in horror as a scene of devastation emerges from the darkness as the sliver of dawn grows to reveal - a SEA OF GREY GRANITE BOULDERS covering much of the TOWN.

INT. MINE-SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

DANIEL

Feng, take count.

A Chinese miner steps into the midst of the group and begins to count the men.

FENG

Seventeen.

DANIEL

You sure? We had twenty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FENG

Donghai and Lars went to help Mr. Clarke.

SCRAGGLY MINER

What about Mr. Kanty? I saw him coming in with us.

DANIEL

I don't think he was actually working so he must have left.

DANIEL

Well, they must be safe then.

FENG

Is it a cave-in?

DANIEL

Must be. We won't know how bad until we can ensure it's safe. For now, just sit tight til they come get us.

EXT. PASSENGER TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

Passengers disembarking to investigate. Following the Conductor. Panic rising when they see the boulder.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SCREAMS erupt and rise. Frantic, wounded, dishevelled people running around, dazed, searching.

Tattered Mrs. Leitch running to Stopper, tugging his shirt, saying something.

MRS. LEITCH

(distorted)

My baby! Where's my baby? Help me find my baby!

Stopper staring into her wild eyes.

MRS. LEITCH

I can't find my baby! I put her down and she's just - GONE!!

Stopper pulling her hands free as Lillian rushes from the boarding house in a night-dress to comfort her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER  
 (to Lillian)  
 You seen Evers?

Shaking her head as she leads Mrs. Leitch away.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

PEOPLE in various stages of morning routines, emerging from rubble/remaining buildings. Dirty, wounded or both.

A frantic dust-covered WOMAN in a nightdress running from PERSON to PERSON asking questions.

She grabs Stopper's arm. Imploring. Her dusty face tear-streaked.

WOMAN  
 Have you seen my husband? He was on his way to work in the mine. I can't find him.

Stopper mutely shakes his head.

MRS. LEITCH  
 Have you seen my baby? I just put her back down, and I can't find her anywhere.

WOMAN IN COAT (O.S.)  
 Please, can you help me?

Stopper turning to see a WOMAN in a coat, speaking at Lillian on the boarding house steps. Lillian staring in horror at the mountain.

He follows her gaze. The face of the mountain sheared off.

He looks around. PEOPLE pleading with him to help move a boulder pinning a MAN below the knees.

Stopper rushing over, attempts to help.

STOPPER  
 Has anyone seen Evers?

Men solemnly shake their head, continue shoving the immoveable boulder. The Man beneath screaming with each shift. The Man passes out and Stopper relinquishes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He glances around before grabbing one of the Men by his arm. It's Harold.

HAROLD  
Evers will have to wait. We need  
to help Jack first.

Stopper glances down at the Man under the boulder.

STOPPER  
That rock isn't moving.

HAROLD  
There's got to be something we can  
do.

Stopper gives him nothing.

STOPPER  
Where's his house?

HAROLD  
(pointing to rubble)  
Under there.

Stopper glancing at the rubble.

IVAN  
We're going to have to cut them  
off.

Jack resumes screaming in protest as Ivan heads to the livery.

A WOMAN in an apron grabbing Stopper's arm and tugging it. He's still focused on the man under the boulder.

WOMAN IN APRON  
Please, Mr. Stopper. Help! My  
children are trapped in my house.  
I can't get to them.

Stopper's head snaps in her direction, he looks into her pleading eyes. A flicker of anguish, he follows the Woman to ...

INT. DESTROYED CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Stopper working his way through the shattered cabin.

Stopper edges into the broken doorway and the Woman attempts to follow him. He stops her and bars her way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN IN APRON

It's my house! My children!

STOPPER

It's not safe. I can't be looking for them and you in all this. You just be ready to take them out.

She nods hopefully, as tears stream down her cheeks.

He climbs over rocks and a broken table. Shards of dishware and a pot of what might have been porridge lay next to it.

A small dusty and bloodied SHOE sticks out from under a large boulder. He puts a hand up to his mouth, biting his fist. Tears welling up, he chokes down a sob.

WOMAN IN APRON (O.S.)

Can you see them?

The center beam of the cabin snapped, resting over a pile of debris. A sofa or chairs maybe.

He makes his way to the remains of a doorway with a shredded curtain hanging down over it. The fabric tears easily as he rips it to free it from the boulder just to peer inside.

The remains a large bed and a crib. Sunlight just beginning to peek through large open sections of broken walls, filters through the dust-laden air.

No movement. He turns, wading his way out. No sign that anyone was in here. He exhales.

Faint COUGHING.

Straining to hear, he clamors back over the rubble.

CHILD

Mama?

He searches for the tiny voice.

STOPPER

I hear you. Where are you?

CHILD

I - I don't know. I can't see.

TEEN

Help! We're trapped.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The broken beam. Stopper makes his way to it and begins pulling away debris. He frantically lifts and throws aside the remains of a chair ...

Revealing two dirt-encrusted CHILDREN bruised, terrified. Alive.

EXT. DEBRIS FIELD - LATER

Stopper standing tall amid the chaos puts a hand on Burt's shoulder.

STOPPER

Bring everyone you can find to the boarding house.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

The building is covered in a heavy layer of dust and littered with small stones and debris. Windows are broken, and the walls and columns are now pock-marked like bullet-wounds.

Stopper stands on the steps, addressing a small CROWD.

STOPPER

We've got to search for your families. Your friends.

A murmur arises from the Crowd.

STOPPER

I know you're anxious for us to get your place and try to find your loved ones. But everyone needs help. We've got wounded and missing people.

ORENTHAL

My Henrietta's missing.

STOPPER

We'll find her. But right now, everyone needs help. We're in this together.

INT. MINE SHELTER

The Miners are huddled together in the light of a couple of lanterns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FENG

How long do you think it will be?

DANIEL

I don't know. This is the worst one yet. We'll have to see what emergency supplies are in the boxes. Is anyone hurt?

The battered Men look to each other for the answer.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

Stopper points to Harold, Orenthal and Ivan.

STOPPER

You three, take the east side of town, toward the train station. If you find any survivors, get them to pitch in. Bring the wounded here.

The Men take off running as he points to a cluster of women.

STOPPER

We need food, blankets and anything you can find. Bring it back here and we'll make this a hospital.

The Women scatter as Stopper looks back at Lillian sitting in a chair on the porch.

STOPPER

Lillian, I need you to get beds ready. Boil water. We need clean sheets. As many as you got.

Lillian's unresponsive. Staring off without blinking. Stopper shakes her.

STOPPER

Did you hear me girl? We need you to get the beds ready. There's gonna be a lot of wounded people that need help.

Lillian looks up at him for a beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILLIAN

(weakly)

My father was working today.

Stopping short, he glances at the mountain.

STOPPER

We'll find him. But right now, I  
need you to focus.

Nodding meekly, she rises, drifts into boarding house.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

Stopper pointing to a cluster of Miners.

STOPPER

We need someone to ride to  
Blairmore to get help.

A MAN volunteers and rushes off as soon as Stopper nods  
in his direction. Stopper calls after him.

STOPPER

Tell them, we need everyone able-  
bodied person they have!

He returns his focus to the survivors in front of him.

STOPPER

You men, break into two groups.  
One group take the west side, and  
the other takes the center.

A beat.

STOPPER

(solemnly)

The center's probably the worst of  
it. So prepare yourselves for what  
you might see.

Stopper joins the men heading to the west.

EXT. LIVERY - LATER

Debris littering broken corrals. A dead horse, livestock,  
chickens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stopper and the Blacksmith combing through rubble alongside the stable when a pile of HAY moves. Stopper moves toward it ...

A BABY'S CRIES. Stopper and the Blacksmith rush forward.

Stopper gently but quickly picks apart the hay. Hands trembling ...

Mrs. Leitch's baby. Scraped up. Stopper picks him up. Gently checking for broken bones.

None. He hugs the baby tightly to his chest, tears streaming down his cheeks.

INT. MINE SHELTER - LATER

The Miners are clustered around a pile of shovels, pick-axes and lanterns.

DANIEL

We'll have to make our way to the mine entry. We don't know the condition of any of the shafts, so we need be very careful.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

As Stopper approaches carrying the baby, a piercing SHRIEK rings out.

Mrs. Leitch rushes toward him. He hands her the baby. Sobbing, she hugs her infant tightly, drops to her knees.

FOLLOW Stopper to Harold.

STOPPER

Has anyone gone up to the mine?

HAROLD

There is no mine.

He looks up the mountain. There is no sign of the mine.

EXT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - LATER

The house is unscathed, outside the debris field.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stopper, Harold and Burt approach. They take in the sight of the cabin. Not a broken window. Nothing but a layer of fine dust.

BURT

Strange that nothing here has been touched.

STOPPER

And no one's seen Maddie? She could have been missed in the chaos.

Burt shakes his head.

HAROLD

It isn't like her. She'd be there if people are in need.

Stopper bangs a fist on Maddie's door.

A beat.

He bangs again.

Burt tries peering into a window.

STOPPER

Anything?

BURT

Draperies are closed.

HAROLD

Something is off. It doesn't feel right.

BURT

Nothing about today feels right.

STOPPER

Maddie Louis! You in there?

A beat.

HAROLD

Maddie! It's just us. We're worried about you is all.

A beat.

INT. MINE-SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

The Miners are slowly making their way through the shaft, picking over rocks and debris from fallen beams.

EXT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Stopper, Burt and Harold listen intently at the cabin door. Nothing.

STOPPER

We'll have to kick it in.

BURT

Madeline, will not happy when she returns.

STOPPER

I think she'll understand.

They kick the door.

INT. MINE-SHAFT

A pair of Miners sitting atop a pile of rubble partially blocking the shaft kick at the remains of a heavy wooden beam.

The beam shifts slightly before receiving another kick.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The front door buckles inward from a heavy booted kick near the handle. Stopper nearly trips inside, followed by Harold and Burt.

The house has been ransacked.

Grimacing, the men cover their mouths/noses. Harold vomits.

BURT

(French)

Mon dieu Christ! What a smell!

(English)

What is it?

STOPPER

Death.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The men search room to room for Maddie.

INT. MINE-SHAFT

Miners watch in anticipation as a broken beam is passed down the pile and handed off to them.

DANIEL

What's it look like on the other side?

MINER

Same.

DANIEL

Let's keep going.

The Men shove more debris aside.

INT. MADDIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Harold calling out from the back room. Stopper, followed closely by Burt, joins him in ...

MADDIE'S BEDROOM

Maddie sprawled across her bed. Nude.

Dried blood staining the white sheets around her unrecognizable face.

Her bare throat slashed from ear to ear.

A knife juts out of her chest.

Stopper putting a finger to the thick layer of dried blood at her neck.

Burt gags and flees.

STOPPER

She's been like this a day or so.

HAROLD

I've never seen her without them.

STOPPER

Without what?

HAROLD

Her jewels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

Looks like she was caught sleeping.

HAROLD

She wore them on a four-day ride to Calgary. You would have thought she was the queen herself.

Stopper looks around.

STOPPER

Where did she keep them?

HAROLD

On. She never went without them. Not even to sleep.

Stopper scowled at him.

HAROLD

I've been here a time or two. No man in town that hasn't.

STOPPER

What about the agreement?

Harold scoffs.

HAROLD

Wives don't have to know everything.

STOPPER

I wasn't.

HAROLD

You weren't here long enough.

Harold reaches under the pillow, retrieves a small purple velvet purse, hands it to Stopper.

Opening it, he reaches in ...

Turns it inside out. EMPTY.

HAROLD

You're going to need to talk to Jing.

STOPPER

Who's Jing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAROLD

Her cook. She knew Maddie better than anyone. Been with her for years. They came here together. Kept her secrets.

STOPPER

So she wasn't looking to hire a new cook?

Harold scoffs at the idea.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

PARLOUR

Makeshift beds holding WOUNDED around the room. Women tending them.

Stopper enters and stops a Woman passing by. The Woman points to the back door.

KITCHEN

JING working over a hot stove, cooking, making coffee, boiling water.

Stopper enters.

STOPPER

You Maddie Louis' cook, Jing?

Jing half-turning, nods and continues her work.

JING

You look like death.

Rubbing his face, he points to the pump at the sink.

STOPPER

May I?

ELYSA

Help yourself.

ON CUPPED HANDS - filling with water. Stopper washes his face and neck.

STOPPER

When was the last time you saw Maddie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jing offers him a steaming cup of coffee as he dries his face and hands on a towel. Studying him for a beat.

JING

The trial.

STOPPER

I thought you were her cook.

JING

I am.

STOPPER

She doesn't eat everyday?

JING

I went to Vancouver to visit my friend and her new baby. Got back last night on the last train and haven't had a chance to get over there, for obvious reasons.

STOPPER

How much do you know about her, business?

JING

So inquisitive. Why do you ask me so many questions? Why not ask her yourself?

Beat.

STOPPER

You better sit down.

Jing and Stopper lock eyes. Beat. She pulls a chair from the table and sits.

STOPPER

We found Maddie in her bed this morning.

JING

What do you mean found? Was it the rocks?

STOPPER

She's been dead a while. Murdered.

Jing stifles a sob, wipes a tear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JING

Don't ask me about who came and went. I don't recall. Never could. Short memory. Probably why she hired me.

Stopper savors a swig of coffee as Jing rises and resumes stirring a pot.

STOPPER

How much money did she have on her?

Jing muses for a beat.

JING

By my count, she would have about two-hundred dollar. It's about a week's worth of time.

STOPPER

How much did Mr. Kanty spend on his visits? If you had to guess?

JING

Let's just say, I'm surprised he had any money left.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

Harold gives directions to a group of Searchers, sends them off as Stopper approaches.

STOPPER

You're doing a fine job Harold.

Harold side-eyes him before accepting, nodding thanks.

STOPPER

Look, I don't know how else to say this, but you need to take over as deputy.

HAROLD

Evers -

STOPPER

Evers is gone. We have to accept that. We're still searching. But so far -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

We'll find him.

Stopper half-heartedly nodding.

STOPPER

Look people need us to step up  
until that happens.

HAROLD

I guess that makes you Constable?

STOPPER

I still have a job to do.

HAROLD

Does that even matter at this  
point? Look around you! People are  
dead. Missing. More dying by the  
minute. And all you can think  
about is your case?

Stopper gives him nothing.

HAROLD

You sure you want me for that job?

Beat.

STOPPER

People here trust you. Besides,  
what have I got to lose, at this  
point?

(beat)

Just don't go stringing anybody  
up.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - MID-DAY

A somber Group eating a meal anywhere they've found room  
to sit on the porch, steps and ground.

Stopper among them, examining their faces.

A murmur rises from the Group. Stopper looks up to see  
...

Sid Choquette walking toward them. He's followed by the  
train's Passengers, Conductor and Engineer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Screams of joy, running, tears from those finding loved ones. Others searching faces, wandering through the crowd and into the boarding house looking for survivors.

Stopper watching the reunions play out, looks up the mountain.

STOPPER

Has anyone seen Jan?

People mutter, look at each other, puzzled, and shaking their heads.

A hush returns to the Crowd. Some whimpering.

STOPPER

They could still be alive.

BURT

There is nothing left up there. We must accept this.

A Woman next to Burt bursts into tears. He consoles her.

INT. MINE-SHAFT

The Men stop moving and Daniel makes his way to the head of the group to join Feng.

DANIEL

Why are we stopped? We can't afford another break.

Feng solemnly points and Daniel's gaze follows. He grabs a nearby lantern and raises it in the darkness ahead,

REVEALING ...

A wall of debris.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE

Sid Choquette weaves his way through the crowd to Stopper.

SID CHOQUETTE

I'm glad I caught you. She was wearing it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

What? Who are you talking about?  
Wearing what?

SID CHOQUETTE

The fancy fascinator.

STOPPER

You already told me about that.

SID CHOQUETTE

I mean Maddie.

STOPPER

Maddie? Are you saying you were  
confused about the lady's bonnet?

SID CHOQUETTE

No. Maddie was wearing Mrs.  
Kanty's fascinator. The day of the  
hanging. Also, that brooch you  
found -

STOPPER

The one Tracy claimed belonged to  
his mother?

SID CHOQUETTE

It's - was Mrs. Kanty's.

STOPPER

Why didn't you say any of this at  
the trial?

SID CHOQUETTE

And what? Watch him walk away free  
after all his other crimes? Don't  
they get justice too? He was a  
wanted man, after all. Dead or  
alive.

Beat.

STOPPER

You think she stole them?

SID CHOQUETTE

Never knew her to be a thief.

STOPPER

Then how'd she get'em?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SID CHOQUETTE  
I'm not one to ruin a man's  
reputation.

STOPPER  
Now he's gone, we may never know  
what happened.

SID CHOQUETTE  
Fair enough. It's possible that  
they were gifts from Mr. Kanty.  
Possibly to settle a debt.

STOPPER  
He owed her money?

SID CHOQUETTE  
Word is he owed a lot of people  
money. Especially Maddie.

STOPPER  
No one said anything about it to  
me.

SID CHOQUETTE  
Can you blame them? You didn't  
exactly win them over with  
kindness. I expect you might get a  
lot more help after today, though.

INT. MINE-SHAFT - LATER

The Miners continue to dig and move the debris away,  
hoping for a break-through in the shaft.

DANIEL  
Stop work men.

A hush falls over them and as they all stop to listen -  
straining in the shaft.

SCRAGGLY MINER  
I don't hear anything.

MINER  
They are coming aren't they?

DANIEL  
Of course they are. It is just  
taking longer to get to us, that  
is all. We have to keep working.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FENG

We have been digging for hours now. No end in sight. We have to consider, it might be more damage than a simple cave-in.

DANIEL

Got any other ideas?

MINER

There's coal seam that stretches to the outside. We could tunnel through that.

DANIEL

Too risky. We should consider the old shaft.

SCRAGGLY MINER

It's blocked off.

FENG

At least we know how much there is to dig through.

MINER

The coal is softer. It'll be easier to dig.

EXT. LIVERY - LATER

Burt washes his face and torso in a water trough.

Stopper approaches.

STOPPER

What about the old shaft?

BURT

What about it?

STOPPER

I need you to take me up there.

BURT

And why would I do that?  
Certainly, you've been helpful today. But before that?

(beat)

You did not exactly earn your place.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

You would have killed an innocent man.

BURT

That man was a killer.

STOPPER

You didn't know that when you fellas were busy tying off the rope.

BURT

It worked out.

STOPPER

And what if he hadn't been wanted?

BURT

But he was.

STOPPER

He was innocent of that crime.

BURT

How can you be so sure?

STOPPER

The fact that we found Maddie cut up like that isn't enough for you?

(beat)

You know damn well, she was in court and in town while he was in custody.

Burt casts an uneasy glance up the mountain. He shakes his head.

BURT

It is no use.

STOPPER

Your mind's made up? You're so hell bent on justifying your own actions, you don't care about logic and facts?

BURT

No one is up there. The mine is gone.

STOPPER

You don't know that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BURT

Face it. We need you more down here.

STOPPER

There's another entrance. They could have made it there.

BURT

That entrance has been sealed off for years. The trail is overgrown. Almost impassable.

STOPPER

I'll go alone, if I have to. But I'm getting into that mine.

BURT

What makes you so determined?

FLASHBACK TO

EXT. GORGE

Stopper dropping to his knees, hollering in anguish. Pounding the earth with bare fists.

A short, broken piece of stay chain with a gnarled hook lays in the dirt. He picks it up and clenches it in his fist.

His face, contorted in grief, sweaty, dirty turns to the gorge, crawls to it.

Stopper hangs over the edge sobbing. In the bottom, something moves. A faint cry echoes up.

STOPPER

Abby!

ABBY

John. I'm hurt real bad, John.

STOPPER

Can you move?

A pained moan.

ABBY

No. I'm pinned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

Hold still. I'm coming.

ABBY

The baby? Where's the baby?

A small white bundle in the dirt. Blood splattered, a smeared hand-print. He scrambles to it.

Yanking it to his chest, he sobs, stops mid-sob. Looks at it. Gingerly, he pulls back the thin flap of blanket...

A baby. Sleeping? He listens.

Beat.

A RAGGED LITTLE BREATH. A SOFT PAINED CRY.

STOPPER

I found him!

ABBY

Is - is he okay?

STOPPER

I think so. But I'm not sure. His breathing is funny.

Silence.

STOPPER

Abby? Stay with me Abby! I'm coming down.

ABBY

No. Take the baby to town first. Get the doctor and bring help. You' won't be able to move this on your own.

Stopper stifles his anguish.

STOPPER

I'll be right back. I - I promise. I need you to hang on for me. Promise me.

ABBY

(weakly)  
I promise.

Pulling the bundle close, he jumps to his feet, bolts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Leather BOOTS under hemmed wool trousers running along a stony wagon trail kicking up dust against the sunset.

The sky now inky blue-black tinged with blood-red and a faint glimmer of yellow-orange light on the horizon.

FLASH FORWARD TO

INT. LIVERY

Stopper saddling a horse.

Stopper collecting rope, shovels and gear from the livery and loading it onto the horse.

BLACKSMITH

Better take the mule. She'll help carry the gear.

A beat.

BLACKSMITH

And any bodies you might come across.

Stopper considers this for a beat.

STOPPER

That will take too long. I'll let everyone know if I find any and we can go up to collect them tomorrow.

A somber beat.

STOPPER

Sure you won't show me the trail?

BLACKSMITH

Can't. Trail I knew is gone, and someone's got to stay and help. You're gonna have to go around this mess and come back from the east.

Stopper mounting the horse as Lillian walks over. She peers up at him. Eyes red, puffy. Hands raw. Dress filthy.

LILLIAN

Mr. Stopper? I was - that is - could you...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

(voice cracking)

My father Clarke. - He was working today. I haven't had a chance to go and check on my mother and I know he'd want me to. But I -

STOPPER

I'll keep an eye out, Lillian.

LILLIAN

Are you heading East?

STOPPER

Seems to be the best way to get to the old trail.

LILLIAN

My home is out that way. Just on the edge of town. Could you?

He glances East. Afraid he already knows the answer.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

It's just my brothers and sisters would have been doing my chores this morning. And...

STOPPER

I'll let them know you're okay.

EXT. PASSENGER TRAIN - LATER

Several passengers scattered about killing time as Stopper rides up.

WOMAN

Have you come from Frank?

Stopper nods solemnly.

WOMAN

What's it like over there?

STOPPER

Not pretty.

MAN

Should we risk it?

STOPPER

They could use all the help they can get.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A curvy woman (GENTILLA) pushes past the man.

GENTILLA

My daughter. Is she okay? Please tell me if she's okay. I travelled all the way from Halifax to see the new baby. I just couldn't take it if they aren't alright.

STOPPER

Calm down, Ma'am. What's your daughter's name? I'll share what I know.

GENTILLA

Myra.

STOPPER

I'm sorry, I don't know any -

GENTILLA

Myra Leitch.

STOPPER

She's doing fine.

Gentilla breathes a sigh of relief and stops short.

GENTILLA

And the baby? Is she safe?

STOPPER

Baby's safe and sound.

The relieved woman rushes to collect her things. The Man follows close behind her.

MAN

Gentilla, you can't just go off like that. It's dangerous. The rest of it could come down at any minute.

GENTILLA

I'm going. And there's nothing you can do to stop me. My daughter needs me.

STOPPER

It's a long walk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAN

Don't bother. There'll be no stopping her, once she's made her mind up.

A crowd gathers around Stopper.

STOPPER

If there's anyone here with medical experience, supplies, they could use it. Gather up all the clean sheets and white linens you can find. There's a lot of wounded that need bandages.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

Is it safe?

STOPPER

As safe as it can be. There's still some rocks falling now and then, but the worst of it is over.

WOMAN

How much - that is - how much of the town got hit.

STOPPER

Quite a lot. There's a lot of folks still missing. They need good, strong men to help with the rescue effort.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

What about you?

STOPPER

I'm headed up to the mine. See if there's any survivors up there.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

I'll go with you.

STOPPER

They need you in town. All of you. Make your way around the debris to the north, back the way I came, and into town. Make yourselves useful.

Stopper urges the mule onward as the remaining passengers begin collecting suitcases and supplies from the train.

EXT. MINING CAMP REMNANTS - LATER

Tatters jut out beneath boulders and rocks. Tent shreds.  
A crushed coffee pot. A miner's cap. A bloodied boot.

Stopper removes his hat and passes in reverent silence.

Stopping, he strains to listen.

CHAO

(faint)

Help! Can anyone hear me? Help!

STOPPER

Where are you?

CHAO

(faint)

Help! Please! I-I'm trapped.

Stopper dismounting, searching for the voice.

STOPPER

Keep talking. I can't find you if  
I can't hear you.

CHAO

(faint)

Why? Is it bad?

Thoughtful beat.

STOPPER

Just keep talking. What's your  
name?

CHAO

(faint)

Chaoxiang.

STOPPER

That's a mouthful.

CHAO

(faint)

Everyone calls me Chao.

STOPPER

Okay Chao. Tell me something about  
yourself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHAO

(louder)  
You sound closer.

STOPPER

Good. Keep talking. Where are you from?

CHAO

Wuxi China.

STOPPER

A world traveller.

No response.

STOPPER

Are you married Chao?

No response. Stopper's searching accelerates.

STOPPER

Chao? Stay with me. I'm going as fast as I can. Chao? Come on Chao. Don't give up.

CHAO

I'm still here. (cough) What's - what's your name?

STOPPER

John Stopf. But they call me Stopper.

CHAO

(coughing) W-why?

STOPPER

Because I don't give up.

CHAO

Mr. Stopper -

STOPPER

Just Stopper.

CHAO

(louder)  
Stopper? I'm going to die aren't I?

STOPPER

Not if I can help it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHAO  
You sound really close.

STOPPER  
I think I found you.

CLOSE ON A SMALL OPENING.

STOPPER  
Do you see any light?

CHAO  
Only a little. It's very small.

Stopper digging furiously with his hands. Stops leaving his hat as a marker, he rushes back to the mule for a shovel. Digging until he finds large rock he cannot budge.

STOPPER  
Hold on Chao. I have to go get some help.

CHAO  
Don't leave!

FOLLOW Stopper as he rushes back to the mule, mounts and rides back toward the train.

INT. MINE-SHAFT COAL SEAM

A narrow seam of coal just wide enough to fit a man sideways runs nearly the height of the shaft.

Two of the Miners are digging at it while others rest. Their nose and mouths covered by makeshift masks of torn fabric and handkerchiefs.

They stop and step away as two more Miners pull themselves to their feet and wearily take their place.

EXT. PASSENGER TRAIN

Only a couple of Men remain as Stopper rides up. One another Engineer.

STOPPER  
You two, come with me.

ENGINEER 2  
I have to stay with the train.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

I think your boss will understand.

The Men follow Stopper on foot - running as fast as they can until they reach ...

EXT. MINING CAMP REMNANTS

Stopper stops the mule and dismounts. Tossing the winded Men another shovel.

STOPPER

You see where that shovel is sticking out of the ground?

The Men look and nod.

STOPPER

Get over there and see if you can move that boulder.

The men look confused.

STOPPER

There's a man trapped beneath it. We have to try to get him out.

The men rush over, followed by Stopper.

STOPPER

I'm back Chao. I brought some help.

MAN

Aww shit! He's a China-man?

STOPPER

I don't care if he's purple! He's a human being and needs our help.

Stopper pushes the Man who begrudgingly relents and helps. The boulder is too much for them.

STOPPER

Hang on Chao! We're trying.

INT. MINE-SHAFT COAL SEAM

Two men work inside the narrow seam as a third removes the debris.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Others sit inside the shaft coughing, unconscious, trying to stay awake.

Daniel lays on the ground watching over the work.

DANIEL  
Stay low. The air is toxic.  
Conserve your strength.

EXT. MINING CAMP REMNANTS

Pushing. Shoving. Prying. Heaving. Nothing.

STOPPER  
Chao? Can you hear me?

MAN  
He's dead.

STOPPER  
No he's not!

Stopper continues working the boulder. Nothing. Frustrated yelling.

STOPPER  
Chao!

Stopper breaks down, dropping into the rubble. The Engineer comforts him.

ENGINEER 2  
You go on. We'll keep trying.

Stopper crushed, pushes him away.

ENGINEER 2  
Come on. There's more people in  
the mine. They need you.

Stopper yells out in anguish. Getting to his feet, drags himself back to the mule, climbs up, pushes on.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - LATER

A steep goat trail winds its way through the windless trees on the side of the mountain.

Stopper exhausted, guides the mule up.

EXT. ORIGINAL MINE SHAFT

The old shaft has been deliberately blocked with logs, rocks and dirt. It looks more like a cave-in than a deliberate barricade.

Stopper sets himself to work with the mule and the meager tools he brought.

A crashing, crunching of breaking trees from above him catches his attention. He looks up and dodges to the side just in time to see a large boulder crash down and ricochet to the valley floor below.

INT. MINE-SHAFT COAL SEAM

Two Miners force themselves to continue digging in the narrow seam. It's now deep enough to fit all 17 single-file.

EXT. ORIGINAL MINE SHAFT

The shaft's original opening of log beams and joists peeks through an opening near the top.

The logs and some of the rocks are piled outside the shaft's opening. A wall of dirt and large boulders remain.

Stopper has made some headway. He pauses to wipe the sweat from his brow and neck.

He swings the pick-axe and it CRACKS against a rock.

He stops mid-swing. Pauses to listen. Strains.

FAINT SCRATCHING - no. DIGGING.

A familiar CRASHING from above and another large boulder whizzes past him.

INT. MINE-SHAFT COAL SEAM

A RUMBLE followed by a FAINT CRASH. The Miners look at each other in terror.

FENG  
Is it starting again?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MINER

I don't think so.

The Miner strikes the seam with his pick-axe and it sticks. He struggles to free it from the wall.

He finally wrestles it free as bits of shattered coal crumble to the ground at his feet.

A glimmer of light streams in.

MINER

We made it! Wake everybody.

EXT. ORIGINAL MINE SHAFT - LATER

Stopper has made more progress. He pulls out another rock and the loose dirt at the top of the shaft create a narrow opening.

He stops cold. Strains to listen. He leans into the shaft.

A faint SHOUTING comes from nearby.

Stopper climbs down and steps away from the shaft to locate the noise.

STOPPER

Can you hear me?

MALE VOICES

Help!! Help!

Stopper looks frantically for the source of the shouts.

He finds a narrow crag a few hundred feet away just as another boulder crashes down and stops in front of the old shaft.

INT. MINE-SHAFT COAL SEAM

Cheers rise up from the Miners.

MINER

They found us!

The two Miners hack away at the coal, creating a larger opening and bringing in fresh air.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Many take deep breaths and rouse, though most are still too exhausted.

EXT. NARROW CRAG

Stopper is reinvigorated. He works furiously on the seam and picks away more coal that shatters and cascades down the slope.

STOPPER

Dig! I'm working as hard as I can.

MINER

We need water. Can you find a way to pass some through?

Stopper retrieves his canteen, scrambles to the narrow crag and thrusts the it shoulder-deep into the opening.

INT. MINE-SHAFT COAL SEAM

The Miners pass the canteen around taking precious sips and savoring each one.

EXT. NARROW CRAG

He resumes excavating. He works like a desperate man.

It doesn't take long before the crag is large enough for a man to fit through.

As one of the Miner begins to exit, a CRUNCH and WOOD SPLINTERING rings out from above.

STOPPER

Take cover!

He jumps back to the ledge just as a large rock whizzes past his head.

STOPPER

It's too dangerous. We have get you out another way.

The Miner leans his head out and scans the terrain. Stopper points him to the ledge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOPPER

Can you dig lower? The ledge might give you some protection from falling rocks.

MINER

It took hours to get this far.

STOPPER

It'd be a shame to die now.

Somberly, the Miner nods.

STOPPER

Looks like the seam runs down there too. Least it won't be granite.

EXT. LOWER COAL SEAM - LATER

Stopper hacks away at the rock and coal under the ledge. He's exhausted and drenched in sweat.

Suddenly, his pick-axe breaks through to the other side where the Miners are digging.

STOPPER

Keep going! We're through.

A soot-covered hand reaches out into the light.

Stopper grabs it. He bows his head and weeps for a beat.

The remainder of the coal is thin and shatters wider with each new strike.

A few more blows and it's large enough for a man to crawl through.

INT. LOWER COAL SEAM

A few rocks tumble down the as weary Miners struggle to their feet and help each other to the opening.

EXT. LOWER COAL SEAM

SEVENTEEN MINERS, elated and utterly exhausted, pull themselves and each other out one at a time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL

Where is everyone?

Stopper inhales deeply. Beat.

STOPPER

It's just me.

FENG

Are they still digging at the other entrance? We have to tell them we're safe and they can stop now.

STOPPER

They aren't coming.

MINER

But, they know we're alive right?

Stopper drops his head and his shoulders sag. He looks dejected.

A beat.

One of the Miners turns to look down to the valley floor and the town.

STOPPER

Look. There's no easy way to tell you this --

The Miner lets out an loud shout and drops to his knees. The others come to his side to see why he is upset.

They are all aghast. Many of them drop to their knees in anguish and sob openly. Others cannot breathe.

We see the full devastation of rubble covering the east side of town. Nothing left of the CPR tents or the Transient settlement.

Two Miners turn and sprint toward the goat trail. The others begin to follow suit.

Stopper halts Feng as he passes.

STOPPER

Has anyone seen Jan? Was he with you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FENG

No. He wasn't working. But he was  
in the mine this morning.

Only Stopper remains.

He fills his pockets with white pebbles and marble-sized  
stones.

INT. MINE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

The tunnel stretches into the darkness, away from the  
narrow opening.

Stopper raises a lantern in front of him.

STOPPER

Jan!

The name echoes across the tunnel and disappears.

INT. MINE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

The only light in the dark tunnel is from the small  
lantern.

He makes his way carefully along the wall, testing each  
step before he fully takes it.

A wooden supply cabinet is built into the wall.

He opens it. Empty, save for a disused rat's nest.

Stopper continues his methodical plod until he comes to a  
fork in the tunnel.

A beat.

He marks an arrow on the wall with a rock, then takes the  
one to the right.

INT. MINE SHAFT - LATER

OLD STORAGE ROOM

The disused room is dimly lit by the lantern in the  
doorway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stopper enters, holding it up to illuminate as much as possible. He steps in. Moves the light around the room, illuminating objects as it goes.

An old chest. Broken pick-axe handles. A leather satchel. A shovel. A faded carpet-bag.

The light returns to the LEATHER SATCHEL and CARPET-BAG.

They are CLEANER than everything else.

Stopper investigates. He is hunched over the satchel when he hears a footstep in the dirt behind him.

He spins around and holding up the lantern.

Jan stands in the doorway, a pick-axe over his shoulder.

JAN

I will take that from you now.

A beat.

Stopper shoots a look at the satchel then back to Jan.

A beat.

STOPPER

Looks like you're planning a trip.

JAN

I needed to get away. From the memories.

(a beat)

You understand.

Stopper grabbing the SATCHEL. Maddie's jewels. Stopper TOSSING the half-open satchel toward Jan.

It flies through the air. Contents spew out. Stopper kicking them away.

They GLINT in the light of the lantern.

The two men lock eyes.

Jan's eyes dart to the stash on the floor.

Stopper seizes the moment and rushes him. Jan, taken by surprise, drops the pick-axe. Stopper tackles him through the doorway into ...

INT. MINE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

A dim glow emanates from the storage room.

FIGHT SEQUENCE:

Jan lands an upper-cut and Stopper goes down. He's stunned, but not out. Jan kicks dirt into Stopper's face.

JAN

I couldn't have asked for better timing. What are the odds that God would answer your prayers with a cave-in?

Jan retrieves the pick-axe.

JAN

With you gone, no one will ever know I wasn't just another casualty.

He holds it over Stopper and swings it up over his head. Stopper thoroughly exhausted now, summons the strength to tackle his legs like a line-backer and Jan tumbles to the ground.

The pick-axe flies into the darkness.

JAN scrambles to his feet and the men fist-fight like boxers down the narrow tunnel before - JAN lands a blow on the side of STOPPER'S nose. Stopper's nasal bones CRUNCH as he flies backward into the dirt.

A glint of light shines off Stopper's locket as it flies out and hits the ground.

JAN stands over him before he deliberately stomps on it, grinding it into the dirt floor. JAN has the upper hand now. STOPPER'S reactions are slowing.

Both Men are tiring now.

STOPPER, enraged, charges JAN and sends him flying backward.

A thud and some falling gravel emanates from the near dark tunnel. A holler rises from Jan.

Stopper pulls out a handful of pebbles and tosses into the darkness toward Jan. The pebbles rattle across the dirt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It sounds as if the pebbles are tumbling and fades.

Stopper crouches low to the ground and inches his way forward.

Jan is clinging to the rim of a shaft. He frantically claws at the dirt as he tries to pull himself back up.

Stopper has the upper hand now. Jan is finished and he knows it. Stopper has won.

Stopper drops to his belly and reaches out an arm. He's not close enough.

Jan stretches his arm as long as he can. It's not enough.

JAN

Pull me up!

Jan claws at the dirt.

Stopper reaches out once more. Jan reaches for it.

Jan falls. His screams fade as he drops down the old shaft.

Stopper, exhausted, beaten, slumps onto this haunches.

INT. LOWER COAL SEAM - SUNSET

Pink-blue light peeks through the hole in the shaft.

EXT. LOWER COAL SEAM - CONTINUOUS

Stopper breaches the mouth of the tunnel. He is carrying the leather bag over his shoulder and the lantern in his hand.

The sun sets over the town as he makes his way back down the narrow goat path.

THE END.

FADE TO BLACK.

Text-over PHOTO GALLERY - FRANK - BEFORE & AFTER:

April 29, 1903, 4:10 AM: the peak of Turtle Mountain broke off, showering the town of Frank, Alberta with 82 million tons of limestone rock.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In less than 100 seconds the bustling mining town was devastated.

The slide destroyed: Seven cottages, several businesses, the cemetery, 1.2 miles of road and railroad tracks, as well as all of the mine's buildings.

About 100 people lived in the section between the CPR railway tracks and the river. An estimated 70 to 90 people were killed, including: 12 men who worked for the CPR, and between 58 to 78 of the town's residents.

The fate of nearly 128 CPR employees scheduled to arrive on April 28th, and the roughly 50 transients looking for work, were contested and they were not counted among the deceased.

20 men worked in the mine at the time of the slide. 3 men, including Lillian Clarke's father Robert, had stepped out for a break when the rock slide occurred.

The remaining 17 miners believed it was a cave-in and after waiting for help, dug their way out and discovered the truth.

15 year-old Lillian Clarke was the only remaining member of her family because she stayed overnight at the boarding house. Her mother and 6 siblings were buried in their home.

Only 12 bodies were recovered.

CPR brakeman Sid Choquette, was one of two men who ran to warn a passenger train in-bound from Lethbridge. Unable to see through the cloud of dust, and dodging falling rocks, Choquette ran 1.2 miles. The CPR awarded him a letter of commendation and \$25 for his heroism.

May 30: When workers opened tunnels to the old mine 1 of 3 horses who worked in the mine, (Charlie), greeted them. He survived for over a month by eating bark off timber supports and drinking from pools of water created by the river. Charlie died when his rescuers fed him too much oats and brandy.

1907: Montie Lewis, local madam renowned for her love of extravagant jewelry, was murdered by her married lover Mike Phillips (Maxime Polypczuk). Three years later, he murdered his wife at their home in Pakan, Alberta.

1924: Road crews uncovered the remains of 6 more victims.