

# **DEMON CREEK.**

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FADE IN:

EXT. DEMON CREEK - DAY

A rolling creek snakes through rugged wilderness, flanked by towering pines.

Three weather-worn prospectors -- FRANK (50s), PETE (30s), and BURT (50s) stand knee-deep in the creek, panning for gold. Sweat-streaked and dust-covered, their souls hollowed by failure.

Nearby, a tattered awning droops over a well-patched tent. A black kettle dangles over a small, low-burning fire. Thin smoke curls into the sky.

A deep, distant RUMBLE.

KA-BOOM!

A violent EXPLOSION shudders the earth. Pebbles tremble in the creek. Ripples scatter.

Frank jerks upright, fists clenching.

FRANK

Damn it!

Burt exhales slow, staring out at the horizon.

BURT

They get closer every day.

Frank hurls his pan to the dirt and marches to the tent.

FRANK

This is my claim, you bastards!  
Stay the hell away from it!

He grabs a whiskey bottle, pulls the cork with his teeth, and gulps hard.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Sons of bitches!

PETE

They're two miles off, Frank.

Frank turns -- eyes wild, spit glistening in his beard.

FRANK

And what if the gold in my claim  
runs straight into a motherlode  
where they's blastin'!?

Pete kneels, sifting water through his pan. Nothing. Just  
grit and false hope.

PETE

We ain't found no gold yet.

Frank lunges, grabs him by the shirt.

FRANK

We're gonna! We're goddamn gonna!

Pete yanks free. Burt watches, wary.

BURT

We'll talk to 'em in town Saturday  
night. See how far they plan on  
blastin'.

Frank laughs bitterly, shakes his head.

FRANK

I'll tell ya how far -- they'll  
blast till they're right up our  
ass.

Pete softens his tone.

PETE

Your claim's legal. Nothin' to  
worry about.

FRANK

What the hell you know, Pete?  
That's Rockhead Mining over there.  
They got more money than the damn  
bank!

Burt shrugs.

FRANK (CONT'D)

All they got to do is pay off that  
crooked mayor and guess what? They  
take my claim by immigrant domain.

PETE

Eminent Domain.

FRANK

Don't correct me when I'm pissed off!

Frank stares, inhales deep.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Ain't just the mine. It's this place. Bad ground. Always felt it.

Pete scoffs.

PETE

Here we go.

FRANK

It's called Demon Creek for a reason.

BURT

It's called that 'cause there's rapids five miles down. Kill ya, sure as hell.

Frank takes another pull from the bottle and turns toward the valley. The distant black smoke drifts, haunting.

EXT. A VALLEY - DAY

Majestic mountains loom over an endless sea of trees. A dynamite BLAST rips into the rock face --

KA-BOOM!

Black smoke billows as stone and dirt rain down.

EXT. DEMON CREEK - DAY

The blast's echo rolls through the camp like distant thunder. The ground settles.

Frank wipes his mouth with his sleeve.

FRANK

Son of a bitch!

Burt nods to the creek.

BURT

Come on. Keep pannin'. Once we strike, nobody'll touch your claim.

Frank glares him, silent.

FRANK  
Yeah? Why not?

Burt smiles, wry.

BURT  
'Cause you'll have enough to bribe  
the Mayor, too.

Frank exhales. His knuckles whiten around the bottle.

A single PINE CONE drops from a tree. It lands soft in  
the dirt.

Pete notices. Looks up. The branches above sway gently.  
No wind.

Frank doesn't see. Just stares at the lingering smoke.

FRANK  
Son of a bitch.

HOLD ON THE WOODS.

Dark. Deep. Unmoving.

Something watches.

EXT. TOWN OF "NO CHANCE" - DAY

A warped, weather-beaten wooden sign leans crooked at the  
town's entrance:

"NO CHANCE. 1874. POPULATION - 125."

The "5" is X'd out. A sloppily painted 4 sits beside it,  
the paint still fresh.

Beyond it -- a dead-end town baked in dust. Dry timber  
buildings huddle together like a camp of stragglers.

A ghostly PIANO drifts on the wind -- from somewhere  
unseen. Melancholic. Hollow.

A wooden door creaks in the breeze. A dust devil swirls  
down the empty street and dissipates into nothing.

The creek runs miles away. The mountains loom behind it.

No Chance. And damn well named.

INT. SALOON - DAY

The air stagnant with rotgut and regret. Dust drifts in shafts of light through crooked shutters.

A dead-eyed drunk slumps at the bar -- NOLAN WEATHERBEE (50s). Gaunt. Sunken cheeks. Bloodshot eyes.

A whiskey bottle drained dry in front of him. His fingers barely hold an empty glass.

NOLAN

Del -- put a head on this, will ya?

DEL GIVENS (40s) wipes the bar with a rag older than the town. Balding, arm garters stretched to their limits.

DEL

You got the bottle in front of you, Nolan.

Nolan tilts it. Not a drop.

NOLAN

That's dead, too.

Del lifts the bottle. Weighs it.

DEL

That was full half hour ago!

Nolan blinks slow.

DEL (CONT'D)

Damn it, Nolan. You tryin' to kill yourself?

NOLAN

Ain't tryin'... but this rotgut of yours is.

Del furrows his brow. Turns to the bottles lined up on the back shelf.

DEL

One of these days you're going to be sitting there and just drop dead.

He SLAMS a new bottle down.

NOLAN

Won't I be the lucky one?

The SALOON DOORS CREAK.

A shadow stretches across the floor.

MAYOR SULLIVAN (60s) struts inside. Portly, mustachioed, dressed too fine for a town this ragged.

MAYOR  
Good morning, Mister Givens.

DEL  
Good morning, Mayor Sullivan.

MAYOR  
My usual morning libation, if you please.

Del disappears behind the bar.

The Mayor side-glances Nolan.

MAYOR (CONT'D)  
Bit early in the morning for  
rotgut and self-pity, ain't it,  
Weatherbee?

Nolan stirs. Barely.

NOLAN  
It's morning?

MAYOR  
You are a sorry case, sir.  
Whiskey's got the better of you.

Del reappears with a cup of coffee. Takes a bottle from the shelf and splashes a shot in.

MAYOR (CONT'D)  
Much obliged.

A DEEP RUMBLE from outside.

KA-BOOM!

The walls TREMBLE. Dust falls from the ceiling.

The Mayor pauses mid-sip.

MAYOR (CONT'D)  
The sound of progress.

DEL

They keep blastin', there won't be  
a Bearhat Mountain left.

The Mayor smirks.

MAYOR

You enjoy their business every  
weekend, don't you, Givens?

DEL

Ten of 'em came in last night. Got  
into a fight, busted a few chairs,  
cracked two of my best tables.

The Mayor glances around. Sees no damage.

MAYOR

Place looks fine to me.

DEL

Because my busted tables and  
chairs is out back, waitin' to be  
chopped into kindlin'!

MAYOR

Nothing wasted.

DEL

They're drinkin' me out of  
business. You know how long it  
takes to get a shipment of whiskey  
from Billin's? And they gotta  
order it from Chicago!

MAYOR

Order more at a time.

DEL

I can't front that kind of money!  
And you and me both know there  
ain't no gold up there.

The Mayor traces his finger over a burn mark on the bar.

MAYOR

Not for a fact, we don't.

Del leans in. Lowers his voice.

DEL

I need to make my stock last. So I  
cut the whiskey with turpentine  
and gunpowder.



The Mayor doesn't blink. Raises his cup. Takes a sip.

MAYOR

Well... whatever's in it, it makes  
your coffee bearable.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NO CHANCE - DAY

Sunlight glares down. A few townsfolk drift about, faces  
weathered and unhurried.

A horse tied too long to a post swishes its tail against  
persistent flies.

Across the street, a lean stray dog laps at a puddle of  
whiskey outside the saloon.

A hot wind kicks dust into the air -- then dies.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

A small, sparse room. One cell. A few wanted posters  
nailed up, edges curling from age.

Behind the desk -- SHERIFF JIM HOLDEN (45). Square-jawed,  
grizzled but steady. Boots kicked up. Hat tipped low.

Eyes closed. Not quite asleep.

The door CREAKS open. A flicker of soft light against  
hard wood.

EMILY HOLDEN (40s). Graceful, but made of steel. A woman  
built to endure.

A picnic basket in hand.

Clears her throat.

HOLDEN

Just resting my eyes.

Emily crosses the room, unhurried. Sets the basket down.

EMILY

Did you sleep in that chair all  
night?

HOLDEN

The cot.

(beat)

Hard as the floor, but less dusty.

He reaches for her. She leans in, a brief, familiar kiss.  
A pause. Not enough.

EMILY  
I thought you would come home.

HOLDEN  
Trouble at the saloon.

Emily doesn't blink.

EMILY  
There's always trouble at the  
saloon.

HOLDEN  
It's that kind of a saloon.

EMILY  
Weren't we happier in San Antonio?

Holden lifts his hat. Meets her gaze.

HOLDEN  
I don't know. Were we?

EMILY  
Well, until you...  
(beat)  
At least there were people to be  
miserable with.

Holden laughs. She doesn't.

HOLDEN  
You're not miserable... are you?

Emily tilts her head. Maybe she is.

EMILY  
A little lonely, perhaps.

Holden touches her cheek. A small, careful caress.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
You should have retired, Jim.

HOLDEN  
And do what? Ain't no farmer.

EMILY  
There's other things besides  
farming.

HOLDEN

Ranch hand? Cattle? That's not for me, Emily.

She studies him.

EMILY

There must be something.

HOLDEN

I've been a lawman since I was seventeen. It's all I know how to do.

EMILY

Every night you don't come home, I lie awake... waitin'. Thinkin' maybe tonight's the night someone put a bullet in you.

HOLDEN

In No Chance?

(grins)

Nothin' ever happens here except drunks gettin' rowdy.

Emily opens her mouth --

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

That's why we came here, remember? So you wouldn't have any worry.

She hardens.

EMILY

You were shot in San Antonio! You almost died!

HOLDEN

San Antonio is a tough town with a lot more people. The population of No Chance couldn't even fill a church.

EMILY

That's supposed to make me feel better?

HOLDEN

It's a good, easy job. We make enough to live on, there's no shoot-outs or robberies.

(beat)

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
Hell, most of the territory don't  
even know we exist.

Emily looks at him. At the cell. At the wanted posters.

Disbelief etched in her face.

She inhales. Exhales. Then, a small, almost-forced smile.

EMILY  
Brought lunch. For you and Cal.

She moves to the potbellied stove.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Where is your deputy?

Emily pours two cups of coffee.

HOLDEN  
Don't know. Haven't seen him.  
Told him there's no need to patrol  
as much as he does.

Emily hands him a cup.

EMILY  
Even quiet towns have lots of  
shadows.

A beat.

HOLDEN  
Looks can be deceiving.

EMILY  
Exactly.

HOLDEN  
(he sips, thinks)  
Not in this town.

EXT. THICK WOODS ON OVERLOOK - DAY

Heavy FOOTSTEPS. Branches CRACK.

Leaves TREMBLE as something huge pushes forward.

A distant EXPLOSION --

KA-BOOM!

A low, guttural GRUNT answers the blast.

INT. SALOON - DAY

The Mayor finishes his coffee. Givens approaches with the pot -- the Mayor raises a hand.

MAYOR  
No, no. Three is all I allow  
myself. I thank you.

The swinging doors CREAK.

DEPUTY CAL RUSSELL (21) strides in. Handsome, confident,  
eager for more than he has.

CAL  
Mornin', Givens.

DEL  
Deputy.

Cal brushes past the Mayor, straight to Nolan Weatherbee.

The Mayor bristles -- the snub is noted.

CAL  
Mister Weatherbee -- I didn't  
expect to see you still sitting  
up.

He turns to Cal.

NOLAN  
You're early.

CAL  
Saw you here two hours ago.  
Thought you might need some help  
getting home.

NOLAN  
Might wanna stay at the jail  
tonight. Save me the walk.

CAL  
Think you'll make it there?

NOLAN  
If not, I'll be in the street  
somewhere.

Cal suppresses a sigh, turns for the door --

MAYOR  
Ahem!

Cal stops, half-turns.

CAL

Mayor Sullivan. Didn't see you there.

MAYOR

The hell you didn't!

(beat)

I am sick and tired of your attitude.

CAL

I was deputy under Sheriff Olan for two years. I should've been sheriff when he retired.

MAYOR

The town voted and you lost. That's not my fault.

CAL

I was the only one interested -- until you sent for Holden in San Antonio!

MAYOR

Not having this discussion again. He has more experience. Accept it.

Cal stares him down -- the tension thick -- then shoves through the doors.

The Mayor exhales sharply, adjusts his vest.

Givens suppresses a smirk.

EXT. NEAR DEMON CREEK - DAY

Somewhere in the dense, dead-silent woods, thick brush trembles as something pushes through.

Heavy, labored BREATHING fills the air.

KA-BOOM!

Another blast shakes the trees.

The breathing stops.

Stillness.

From the distance --

FRANK (O.S.)  
Son of a bitch!

The movement resumes. Faster. Breath quicker. Leaves and undergrowth snap as it pushes forward.

Ahead, the trees break open -- a view of Demon Creek.

The prospectors sift through the water, oblivious.

EXT. DEMON CREEK - DAY

Frank tosses the grit from his pan onto the bank.

FRANK  
No luck. No luck. We need  
dynamite.

The men work in silence. The creek gurgles.

Out of nowhere --

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK.

Three heavy wood knocks echo through the silence.

Like something slamming a thick branch against a tree.

A beat.

A sharp, high-pitched WHOOP! WHOOP!

The prospectors freeze. They scan the thick woods.

PETE  
What the hell was that?

WHOOP! WHOOP! Echoes from the trees.

BURT  
(low, uneasy)  
Jesus. Injuns.

FRANK  
Get the guns.

Pete and Burt drop their pans and scramble for the tent.

Frank keeps his eyes glued to the trees -- and his blood runs cold.

A treetop SWAYS. Something shakes it.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What the hell...

Through the dense brush, a dark, hulking figure.

Barely visible. Watching.

Frank's breath catches.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Gimme the rifle! Gimme the rifle!

Pete rushes back, hands Frank the Winchester.

PETE

Wait! It ain't doin' nothin'!

Frank ignores him -- raises the rifle --

BANG!

The dark shape HOWLS -- a guttural, blood-curdling SCREAM that rips through the trees.

The men stiffen.

PETE (CONT'D)

(quiet dread)

You didn't kill it, Frank.

Something charges --

THUMP-THUMP-THUMP-THUMP

Heavy FOOTSTEPS -- racing away.

The ground shudders. Leaves shake.

Gone.

A tense silence.

BURT

We goin' after it?

FRANK

Are you loco?

PETE

(shaken)

That weren't no bear, and now it's  
pissed off.

He turns to Burt.



PETE (CONT'D)  
You wanna chase that thing?

Burt stays fixed on the woodline.

BURT  
Yeah... maybe not.

Frank glares ahead. His fingers twitch on the Winchester.

Pete, hushed --

PETE  
What the hell was that?

FRANK  
You sure this place is called  
"Demon Creek" 'cause of them  
rapids?

EXT. PORTER HOME - NIGHT

An isolated, simple homestead nestled in a clearing. The windows radiate a soft, flickering, orange glow.

The door opens and IDA PORTER (17) emerges onto the porch. Dressed in gingham, she's a plain girl, but with a fresh face and laughing eyes.

LEE NORMAN (18) follows her out, closing the door behind him. Dressed in his Sunday best with slicked-back hair, hat in hand, he is all manners.

IDA  
I had a lovely evening, Lee.

Lee reaches to take her waist, when the door opens to reveal SILAS PORTER (40s), pleasant face and a pipe in his mouth. He looks to the sky.

SILAS  
Looks like rain. Best get back to town before you get soaked.

Lee glances at the star-filled sky.

LEE  
There ain't a cloud in the sky!

He catches the icy glare of Mister Porter.

MRS. JANE PORTER (40s), wearing her best dress and hair in a bun, rushes to the door.

JANE

Now, Silas, you get in here and  
leave them alone.

As she ushers Silas back into the house --

SILAS

Ida, you don't stay out there too  
long!

Jane SLAMS the door shut.

Ida sees Lee's nervous expression.

IDA

Don't worry about Papa.

Lee manages a smile. He spies Silas at the window.

LEE

Well, goodnight, Ida.

He unhitches his horse.

She hurries up to him and leans in close.

IDA

You're leaving!?

Lee glances at the window.

Ida shoots a look at the window.

IDA (CONT'D)

Papa!

JANE (O.S.)

Silas! Get away from that window  
and give your daughter some  
privacy!

Lee extends his arm.

LEE

Walk a spell?

She puts her arm in his, and they stroll... the horse  
lags carelessly behind them.

The door CREAKS open as Silas watches them depart. Jane  
pulls him back in and closes the door.

EXT. WOODS AT PROPERTY'S EDGE - NIGHT

The horse is hitched to a low branch.

Ida and Lee embrace for a long kiss. Ida lingers, then breaks off.

IDA  
I should get back home.

LEE  
Just a little longer.

They kiss again. Ida melts into his arms. They can't get enough of each other.

The passionate kiss is interrupted.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK!

They pull apart with alarm.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK!

IDA  
What is that?

They listen. The woods are silent. No night sounds.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK!

His agitated horse WHINNIES and kicks.

LEE  
Wait here.

IDA  
Let's get back to the house!

LEE  
In a minute. I want to see who that is.

He disappears into the woods.

IDA  
Lee!

The horse continues to WHINNY and kick.

She stares into the quiet, darkness.

A long wait.

A distant branch SNAPS -- wood SPLINTERS!

The night air cracks with a blood-curdling, inhuman ROAR followed by Lee SCREAMING in death throes.

Ida rushes towards Lee's cry.

EXT. A CLEARING - NIGHT

Ida races through the dark. She trips and tumbles to the ground.

She lifts herself to see Lee's body in a pool of blood. His chest has been torn apart and his throat ripped open.

Ida SCREAMS!

An animalistic GRUNT and a GROWL drown out her cry as a dark figure looms over her. A tremendous THUD -- sickening and final -- silences her.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Nolan is slumped on the bar with an empty bottle before him. Del Givens wipes down the countertop.

TWO DRUNK MEN stumble out the door with a wave to Givens.

Cal enters.

DEL

I ain't never seen a man drink as much as he does. Why do you help him every night?

CAL

I feel sorry for him.

DEL

So do I... but that Injun attack was twenty years ago.

Cal pulls Nolan up, slings the nearly unconscious man's arm over his shoulder, and hauls him to his feet.

CAL

I think there's some things you can never let go, Del.

With effort, he heads for the door.

CAL (CONT'D)  
See you tomorrow.

They exit.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NO CHANCE - NIGHT

The street is dark, still.

Cal drags the deadweight of Nolan Weatherbee, his boots scraping through the dirt.

CAL  
You're staying in the cell  
tonight, Nolan... I can't do this  
all the way to your house...

Up ahead, Holden sits outside the office. He rises and heads toward them.

HOLDEN  
Need a hand?

CAL  
I'd welcome it.

Holden takes Nolan's other side.

CAL (CONT'D)  
I've seen him drunk, but tonight  
he topped himself.

HOLDEN  
Taking him home?

CAL  
Too far.

HOLDEN  
He can sleep it off in the cell.

They heave Nolan up the steps and inside.

EXT. PORTER HOME - DAY

Jane paces in front of the house, wringing her hands.

A horse GALLOPS into view.

Silas reins in hard, dismounts fast.

SILAS  
Rode to Lee's house -- he never  
came home neither. Searched the  
creek, the valley... No sign.

Jane stiffens, holds back tears.

JANE  
Oh, my God.

SILAS  
I'll head toward Bearhat Mountain.  
Maybe they went berry-pickin'.

A faint CLOP-CLOP-CLOP.

Jane turns -- her face drains of color.

JANE  
Silas...

Lee's horse wanders into the clearing, riderless.

SILAS  
That's Lee's horse....

The animal's flanks are streaked with sweat. The reins  
drag in the dirt.

A silent, awful beat.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NO CHANCE - DAY

Holden and Emily drive their wagon down the quiet street,  
past the Sheriff's office.

They turn into the alley.

EXT. ALLEY NEXT TO SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Holden pulls the reins -- the wagon jerks to a stop.

He jumps down, crosses to Emily's side, helps her down.

HOLDEN  
Ladies' meeting?

EMILY  
Not for another half hour.

Holden tethers the horse.

HOLDEN

Cal should have the coffee on.

They enter the building.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Holden and Emily enter.

Nolan Weatherbee snores on the cot, cell door wide open,  
dead to the world.

Emily pauses, uneasy.

HOLDEN

He's just sleeping one off.

Holden checks the coffee pot. Ice cold.

He swings open the stove door -- no fire.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Didn't even start one...

Emily takes over.

EMILY

I'll take care of it.

Holden frowns.

HOLDEN

Where the hell is Cal?

The door swings open -- Cal walks in.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Where have you been?

CAL

Schoolhouse. Mrs. Porter never  
showed up. Never sent word.

Emily's brow furrows.

EMILY

That's not like Jane. She'd have  
sent Ida to take her place.

CAL

Mayor had me watch the kids. When  
she didn't show, told me to send  
'em home.

He shrugs -- but there's an edge to it.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Brothers MARTIN (10) and ANDY (11) CLARK amble along, schoolbooks under their arms.

MARTIN

Let's cut a switch and go fishin'!

ANDY

Nah.

MARTIN

We got the whole day! We gotta do somethin'!

ANDY

I just wanna go home.

MARTIN

For extra chores!?

WHOOOP! WHOOOP!

A strange, whooping call from the woods.

The boys freeze.

Silence.

No birds. No wind. No insects.

Distant branches tremble.

ANDY

Probably some of the kids from school tryin' to spook us.

Andy grins -- and runs into the trees.

Martin doesn't move.

A SCREECH tears through the forest -- feral, piercing, unnatural -- terrifying.

Andy's SCREAM follows.

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

Martin! Run!

Another SCREAM.



Martin snaps his head around --

No one in sight. No one coming.

He swallows hard.

MARTIN

Andy!?

A beat.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Andy!?

His fear cracks wide open --

He charges back toward his brother.

EXT. IN THE WOODS - DAY

Martin heads toward his brother's cries --

Something moves with him.

Something massive moves between the trees -- a hulking shadow, too fast, too big, keeping pace.

Branches SNAP.

Brush SWOOSHES.

The THUD-THUD-THUD of something heavy charging through the undergrowth.

Martin skids to a stop.

The dark shape stops, too.

For one awful moment... silence.

Then Martin spins and RUNS for the road.

Behind him --

THUD-THUD-THUD-THUD.

EXT. NO CHANCE - MAIN STREET - DAY

A few ladies and men are busy about the town. Several school kids play in the street.

BEN WAINWRIGHT (60s), a wiry, bespectacled shopkeeper, makes his way across the street -- his face grave with concern that draws the attention of the townspeople.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Cal pours himself some coffee as Ben enters. He shakes as if he has seen a ghost.

BEN  
Sheriff...

HOLDEN  
Ben? What's wrong?

Ben tries to form words -- nothing comes out.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
What is it?

BEN  
I... I can't... never seen the  
like. Never...

CAL  
Seen what?

Ben shakes as he scrapes his hand through his hair.

HOLDEN  
What's wrong, Ben?

BEN  
Come... quick.

Holden, Cal, and Emily follow Ben and exit.

EXT. BEHIND THE GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

A dead man. Torn apart. Face gone. Arm missing. Ribs glint through shredded flesh.

A pistol lies near the severed arm.

Holden arrives and stiffens -- but quickly buries his reaction. Cal looks queasy, and Emily turns away.

EMILY  
Oh, dear God.

CAL  
I ain't never seen a man torn up  
like that.

Ben swallows hard, his voice shaking.

BEN  
When I unlocked the back door...  
there he was.

CAL  
(squinting at the  
body)  
I can't tell who it is.

Holden kneels beside the corpse. Reaching into the coat pocket, he pulls out a blood-soaked billfold.

HOLDEN  
It wasn't a robbery.

EMILY  
Who could have done this?

HOLDEN  
(offhand, but unsure)  
A bear... or a mountain lion.

CAL  
Damn.

Holden examines the ground around the area.

CAL (CONT'D)  
Mountain lion'd have to be the  
size of a damn horse.

Holden scans the ground -- no clear tracks. He frowns.

The dead man's hand is clenched -- Holden pries the fingers apart and finds a clump of black fur.

CAL (CONT'D)  
A bear?

HOLDEN  
(beat)  
Can't make out any tracks. Looks  
like he put up a fight.

CAL  
(to Ben)  
Did you hear anything?

BEN

No... and I sleep right upstairs.

Gestures to a second-floor window.

Holden picks up the pistol, flips open the chamber. It's fully loaded.

HOLDEN

(puzzled, to himself)  
Didn't even get a shot off.

He turns to Cal.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Get Doc Tyler.

CAL

You don't mean the undertaker?

HOLDEN

The doctor. Tell him to bring his wagon and a tarp... we don't need folks seeing this.

Cal nods, heads off.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

And see if he can tell what left those claw marks.

CAL

Yes, Sir.

HOLDEN

(to Emily)  
I'm riding out to check on Mrs. Porter.

She doesn't hesitate.

EMILY

I'm going with you.

Holden nods. They move.

EXT. A RIVER - DAY

Silas rides, rifle in hand, as he scans his surroundings. A short distance from the river is the woodline.

Something massive lingers in the trees.

Watching. Waiting.

Silas rides along the riverbank, rifle in hand. His voice echoes --

SILAS

Ida! Ida!

The watcher does not move. It listens.

Silas FIRES his rifle into the air.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Ida! Lee!

A long, drawn-out terrifying SCREAM booms from the woods.

Silas's horse becomes impatient.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Steady, boy! Steady!

EXT. PORTER HOME - DAY

A horse and wagon wait next to the house. Holden's horse is hitched to the post.

Jane, confused and shocked, is seated next to the front door. Emily is next to her, holding her friend's hand.

Holden listens to Jane's trance-like reply.

JANE

...when he returned the first time... that's when Lee's horse walked up to the house...

(points)

Silas rode off into that direction...

HOLDEN

How long ago, Jane?

JANE

I'm not sure... three, maybe four hours.

She turns to Emily.

JANE (CONT'D)

Ida and Lee... never returned. They never came back, Emily.

Emily gives a compassionate nod.

HOLDEN  
I'll have a look.

JANE  
You'll find them?

HOLDEN  
I'll try.

EMILY  
Be careful, Jim.

HOLDEN  
Stay with her, Emily.

He mounts his horse.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
Which direction, Jane?

JANE  
He said... Bear Mountain.

Holden spurs his horse and departs.

JANE (CONT'D)  
He'll find them -- won't he,  
Emily?

The ladies watch until he disappears into the woods.

EMILY  
How about I make us some tea?

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Cal waits uncomfortably in the sparse office, his attention drifting to the medicine bottles.

A framed diploma rests at a crooked angle over a cluttered rolltop desk.

The examination room door opens and out steps DOC TYLER (70s), a refined, respected, likable gentleman. His silver hair neatly combed.

Shaken, he rolls his shirt sleeves down as he takes a seat and regains composure.

CAL  
Well, Doc?

DOC

I think... I'm pretty certain...  
it's Del Givens.

CAL

What!?

DOC

(collecting himself)  
Had a gold tooth, way in the back.  
Filled it myself years ago. Only  
one I ever filled with gold.

CAL

Del Givens. He would lock up the  
saloon at night and leave out of  
the back door. He'd walk home  
behind the buildings.

DOC

Behind them?

CAL

So he wouldn't run into drunks  
wanting a last drink.

DOC

I see. Well, last night he ran  
into something. It wasn't a bear.  
Wasn't a mountain lion.

(beat)

Claw marks don't match either.

CAL

So... a man?

Doc hesitates. Then shakes his head.

DOC

From what I can determine, he was  
clawed apart with bare hands...  
but a man couldn't do it.

CAL

So what are we looking for?

He hesitates --

DOC

I don't know.

Cal swallows hard. His jaw tightens. He nods, but tension  
flickers in his face.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

Holden rides at a walk as he studies the ground. He sees a spot of blood and dismounts.

Taking a few steps forward, he sees more blood splatters.

Reins in hand, he leads his horse forward.

EXT. PORTER HOME - DAY

Seated outside, Emily sips from her teacup.

Jane remains quiet in her chair -- a cup of tea on the table next to her.

EMILY

Jane, you should try and take a sip.

JANE

I can't.

She turns to Emily.

JANE (CONT'D)

Did you know I was superstitious?

Emily smiles.

EMILY

No.

JANE

Very much so. But... I think that's changed. I don't believe superstitions are real anymore.

EMILY

Why not?

JANE

When we moved here, I told Silas I wouldn't live in a town called "No Chance."

EMILY

Oh, that's just a silly name the gold seekers gave it years ago. I bet they didn't think the town would last -- that's why they called it "No Chance."



JANE

You live in a town called "No Chance," and that's just what you end up with. So, we built this house... a few miles from town. I thought we'd be safe. Now the town is safe, and my family is gone.

EMILY

They're not gone, Jane. Jim will bring them back.

From deep in the woods --

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

Jane and Emily freeze. Listening.

Again --

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A sign over door reads: DR. L. TYLER - PHYSICIAN & SURGEON. The door opens and Cal emerges.

He closes the door and makes his way across Main Street. A quick glance and he sees a stationary RIDER a distance outside of the town.

He is WICASA (30s), a Lakota warrior turned Army scout. Wearing buckskin trousers and a US Cavalry jacket, at this distance, his features cannot be seen.

The horse stands sideways -- the rider's head turned toward the town.

Cal stops and looks at the mysterious man.

MAYOR (O.S.)

Russell! Deputy Russell!

Cal turns away from the rider to see the Mayor hobble towards him.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Russell!

The Mayor comes face-to-face and speaks in a quiet tone.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Is Sheriff Holden in his office? I have to see him right away.

CAL

He's not in town, sir.

MAYOR

Where the hell is he?

CAL

He rode out to the Porter place to make sure everything is all right.

MAYOR

Yes, of course. The minute he returns, send him to my office.

CAL

Is it something I can help you with, Mayor?

The Mayor leaves the deputy as he found him.

Cal has another look at the rider outside of town -- but he's gone. A slight expression of befuddlement, and he continues on his way.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

Holden continues to lead his horse as he follows the blood drops.

The BUZZ of flies grows louder with each step.

He flinches into a sudden stop. As his face winces, his lips curl into a grimace.

Holden stares at the remains of the headless Lee Norman. The clothes around his torso are ripped to shreds. One of his legs has been broken and pulled back to his shoulder.

His other leg and one of his arms have been severed and lie close by.

A distance away, he sees the head -- the face turned away from him.

All of the remains are covered with flies and ants.

With the reins of his horse in hand, he walks towards a clump of bushes.

Two badly clawed legs, under a blood-soaked dress,  
protrude from behind a fallen log.

Holden backs away. He scans the area for the tracks of  
the killer, until --

A distant knocking of wood hitting wood --

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

The horse WHINNIES.

Holden is alert! He listens...

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

The woods are silent of noise and animal activity.

Another call from far away...

WHOO! WHOOP!

It bounces off of every tree in every direction.

The horse grows restless and claws at the ground.

Holden pats the animal's head.

He mounts, draws his pistol, turns the horse, and rides  
back in the direction he came from.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Jane, emotionless near the desk. Emily is next to her as  
Holden takes two ammo boxes from a drawer.

Cal waits at the door.

JANE

I want to go back home.

HOLDEN

Later, Jane.

JANE

Why did we come here?

HOLDEN

It's not safe at your house right  
now.

EMILY

Why the extra ammunition?

HOLDEN

I'm going after the man or animal,  
or whatever it is that's out  
there.

EMILY

Man?

They lock eyes.

HOLDEN

Yes. You and Jane check into the  
hotel. You'll be safer there.

EMILY

No.

Holden is caught off guard as Emily stands.

EMILY (CONT'D)

We're not staying in that hotel. I  
hear it has fleas. Jane will stay  
at our home this evening.

HOLDEN

I'm going to be out on the trail.  
You're not staying there alone  
tonight.

EMILY

Nonsense. Whatever was "whooping"  
and "tree knocking" in the woods  
had their eyes on the Porter home.  
Not ours. And we won't be alone.

Emily takes a rifle from the rack.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Don't argue with me, Jim.

She holds out her hand.

HOLDEN

All right.

Holden hands her the boxes of ammo.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Just be sure you don't shoot me if  
I come back early.

Cal chuckles until he catches an icy glare from Holden.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
I want to see you outside.

CAL  
Yes, Sir.

Cal exits.

HOLDEN  
Have another cup of tea. We'll be  
leaving soon.

Emily smiles.

Holden exits, closing the door behind him.

Emily loads her rifle.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Cal leans on the hitching post as Holden joins him.

HOLDEN  
I didn't want to ask in front of  
the ladies. What did Doc Tyler  
have to say?

CAL  
It was Del Givens.

HOLDEN  
Could he tell what killed him?

CAL  
He didn't know. Did you find Silas  
Porter?

HOLDEN  
Not yet.

MAYOR (O.S.)  
Sheriff!

The Mayor approaches.

CAL  
I forgot to tell you, the Mayor  
wanted to see you when you got  
back.

MAYOR

Deputy. I see you informed the Sheriff that I wanted to see him immediately --

CAL

I'm sorry. I didn't have time, Mayor Sullivan --

MAYOR

For the Mayor, you make time, son.

HOLDEN

I've had my hands full since I got back.

MAYOR

So have I. The town is on edge about the murder. What are you doing about it?

HOLDEN

I'm getting ready to head out now.

MAYOR

Out where? The murder was here in town!

HOLDEN

The Porter girl and Lee Norman were killed the same way, about three miles out.

MAYOR

Oh, dear God. Three murders? You're telling me three murders!? I expect you --

KA-BOOM!

A thunderous EXPLOSION rattles through the sky.

The three men snap their heads toward the sound.

The Mayor flinches. Staggered back. Holds his chest like his heart just gave out.

Holden doesn't even react. Just stares at the black smoke curling in the distance.

HOLDEN

You ought to be used to those blasts by now, Mayor.

MAYOR

Yes, but not when I have murder  
and missing people all over the  
place!

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Emily peers out the window.

JANE

Emily. Do you think Silas is  
alive?

A hesitation --

EMILY

Yes.

JANE

I have hope... but inside, I know  
he's dead.

EMILY

Jane, you've been through a lot.

JANE

I can feel it. I can't explain  
how, but I can.

EXT. A RIVER - DAY

Silas lies on the ground, his head bloodied and a gash in  
his chest. His horse is gone.

The rifle lies a short distance from his grasp.

A far-off EXPLOSION -- KA-BOOM -- crashes like thunder.

The primal SCREAM of the Creature in response!

In agony, Silas moans and tries to move his legs.

SILAS

Goddamn! My legs are broken! You  
damned hairy bastard!

Heavy FOOTSTEPS approach.

SILAS (CONT'D)

You goddamn hairy bastard!

Two black-furred legs step into view -- thick, powerful, human... but not.

Loud, brutish GRUNTS and heavy breathing cause Silas' body to tremble... he's frozen in terror.

In a broken voice --

SILAS (CONT'D)  
God damn... hairy... bastard...

In a desperate attempt, he rolls onto his side and reaches for the rifle... his hands grasp the stock.

The Creature lets out a hideous, earth-shaking SCREAM!

Silas tries to pull the rifle closer to him as the Creature's legs STOMP forward.

A large foot slams Silas' arm into the ground.

A hairy hand reaches and grabs his arm at the shoulder -- and pulls!

Silas SCREAMS as his arm is torn from his body.

Two giant hairy hands clamp down on his skull.

Silas chokes on a sob. His fingers claw at the dirt.

SILAS (CONT'D)  
(breathless)  
Goddamn... hairy... bastard...

CRACK!

The neck snaps. His body spasms once, then goes limp.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

The Mayor continues to lecture Holden.

MAYOR  
It's an election year, Sheriff Holden.

HOLDEN  
I don't think you have anything to worry about. It's a small town and no one else wants to be mayor.



MAYOR

Well... be that as it may. The bottom line is, I run this town fairly and honestly, and I believe in the law. Now, you bring him in for a hanging or shoot him on the trail, I don't care which -- just get the bastard.

HOLDEN

Fairly and honestly.

MAYOR

Precisely. See to it.

The Mayor departs.

HOLDEN

Cal, bring the wagon up, will you?

Cal turns and exits.

EXT. ALLEY NEXT TO SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Cal comes around the corner of the building and sees GRACE OLSON (20), a pretty girl with beguiling eyes and a smile that captivates... and self-fortitude that is to be reckoned with.

CAL

Grace!

She throws her arms around his neck and they kiss -- an intense kiss -- Cal pulls away.

CAL (CONT'D)

The sheriff is waiting. I have to bring the wagon around.

GRACE

Are you still coming by this evening?

He hesitates.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Chicken and dumplings.

CAL

I'm not sure.

Cal holds back.

GRACE

What's wrong?

CAL

Three murders. Del Givens, Lee Norman, and Ida Porter.

GRACE

Oh, God!

CAL

Grace, I don't want you out at night... and make sure you have a gun at all times.

With a cunning smile she reaches into a dress pocket, and lifts a Colt pistol out halfway, and calmly slips it back into her pocket.

He smiles, a quick kiss, and he climbs onto the wagon.

GRACE

What about you?!

CAL

We're going to find the killer.

GRACE

In a wagon?!

CAL

We're bringing Mrs. Holden back home. Miss Porter is staying with her... then we hunt down the killer.

He flicks the reins and the horse pulls the wagon.

She watches as he departs.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Holden escorts the two ladies from the office as Cal steers the wagon around the corner.

Doc Tyler hails him as he hastens across the street.

DOC

Sheriff!

HOLDEN

Doc.

Cal hops down from the wagon and helps the ladies climb into the flatbed as Holden takes a few steps to meet the Doctor out of earshot.

DOC

The Mayor just came to see me.  
He told me you found two more  
victims.

HOLDEN

That's right.

DOC

I'd like to examine the bodies --  
make sure it's the same killer.

HOLDEN

I was on horseback, Doc. I  
couldn't bring them in without a  
wagon... they were torn up pretty  
bad. Partially eaten.

DOC

I see.

HOLDEN

Once I drop the women folk at my  
house, I'll take the wagon and  
retrieve what I can.

DOC

(quiet, rattled)  
You said... partially eaten?

Holden gives a slow nod.

The Doc exhales. Nods back, but his fingers twitch.

Cal climbs into the driver's seat.

Holden turns away, climbs onto the wagon.

HOLDEN

'Afternoon, Doc.

DOC

Yes. Of course.

Cal flicks the reins, and the wagon lurches forward as  
the small group departs.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF TOWN - DAY

With the town behind them, Cal notices a figure a distance away watching them -- the scout, Wicasa.

Holden catches a glimpse and remains silent as they continue on their way.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - DAY

A plain one-story building with few windows.

Cal steers the wagon toward the side of the house.

HOLDEN

Whoa...

Cal pulls on the brake. He and Cal both climb down to assist the ladies.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Emily, I want you to reconsider.

EMILY

I'm not staying in town. That's the end of it, Jim. I'll be perfectly safe here.

She picks up the rifle from the wagon bed.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You know I'm a pretty good shot. Stop worrying.

He walks them to the front door.

HOLDEN

Stay inside. Don't venture out no matter what.

EMILY

Mm-hm.

HOLDEN

Keep the door bolted.

EMILY

I will.

HOLDEN

And keep the curtains drawn.

EMILY

Yes.

Cal opens the front door and enters with Jane.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Now you promise me...

They kiss.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Be careful.

They kiss again.

Holden speaks quietly.

HOLDEN

We're going to collect Ida and Lee  
-- take them into town. I'll be  
back as soon as I can.

Emily nods in agreement, and they kiss once more -- a long, loving kiss.

Cal appears in the doorway -- CLEARS his throat.

The kiss ends.

Cal tips the brim of his hat as he passes them.

CAL

Mrs. Holden.

Emily smiles, touches her husband's cheek, and enters the house. Holden waits and listens until the bolt slides into place, and he heads for the wagon.

EXT. DEMON CREEK - DAY

The three prospectors pan for gold in the creek. Their guns close by.

PETE

I don't know, Frank. I think it  
might be time to try further down  
the creek.

FRANK

I'm all for gettin' the hell out  
of here.

Burt gestures to the far side of the creek.

BURT

But we ain't panned next to them  
large rocks.

Burt takes several steps across the creek.

FRANK

Let's pack up.

BURT

Gold likes to gather under rocks.

Wood knocks on trees --

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Frank hears it first and looks toward the sound.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Burt freezes mid-stream as Pete shoots up straight and  
drops his pan. It floats downstream.

A high-pitched WHOOP WHOOP rings out.

The men make their way to their guns.

FRANK

I'll go take a look.

PETE

What if it's that big thing we saw  
yesterday?

BURT

Frank killed it.

PETE

We don't know that.

BURT

Let's say he wounded it. You think  
it would come back for more?

FRANK

You two stay here and keep an eye  
on the tent. Might be a  
distraction for someone to come in  
and rob us. Bastards.

Frank crosses the creek and disappears into the thick  
woods. Pete and Burt keep a watchful eye, their rifles  
clutched in their fists.

They wait... and they wait.

In the distance --

Frank SCREAMS!

A gunshot -- BANG!

The long, guttural SHRIEK of the Creature.

PETE

Jesus...

Pete and Burt shake -- their legs tremble, ready to bolt.

BURT

Take cover!

Pete scrambles behind a large rock. Burt kneels in firing position next to a barrel outside the tent.

The unseen Creature lets out with an ear-piercing SHRIEK!

Pete and Burt are terrified.

PETE

Son of a bitch!

Heavy FOOTSTEPS shake the ground, with a THUD-THUD-THUD, as they draw close to the creek.

The men see the blur of a huge Creature through the dense brush and branches.

Pete fires! BANG!

Rifle smoke curls in the air. The ground trembles as the heavy footsteps slow -- for a moment.

Without warning --

A shockwave of sound surges from the trees.

Trees SNAP. The earth SHUDDERS.

Pete fumbles his reload. His fingers won't work.

BANG! Burt fires wildly into the blur of motion.

BANG! BANG!

THUD-THUD-THUD -- massive footsteps pound the earth.

A living wall of force barrels toward them.

Burt turns to run -- stumbles -- crashes to the ground.

The men CRY OUT for help!

BURT

Ahhh! My arm! Oh, Christ -- it's broken!

The huge, dark mass of the Creature blots out the sun.

Pete SCREAMS -- high pitched, raw -- terror and pain.

CRACK! CRUNCH! A wet, tearing RIP.

Burt is drenched in a spray of blood.

He gasps, choking on it.

The SCREAM cuts off.

A horrible, thick chewing sound takes its place.

Burt scrambles backward, sobbing.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The wagon CREAKS over the uneven ground as Holden and Cal ride through the woods.

CAL

Doc's been known to tip a few at the saloon.

HOLDEN

Everyone tips a few in the saloon.

CAL

Yes... but... Doc tips a lot.

Holden gives him a blank look.

CAL (CONT'D)

A lot.

HOLDEN

You're two-steppin' around a stump, Deputy.

CAL

Doc says an animal didn't kill Del Givens. A man didn't kill him either. So...



HOLDEN

You think all that rotgut's  
clouding his judgement?

CAL

I like Doc. Hate to say anything  
against him... but maybe.

HOLDEN

Whoa...

Holden pulls the reins and stops the wagon.

He jumps down, Cal follows.

Books litter the dirt road.

Schoolbooks.

Cal kneels, picks one up. Holden tracks small shoe prints  
leading into the trees.

A bush RUSTLES.

They both turn.

Partially hidden -- a small, motionless figure.

Holden brushes leaves aside.

Martin Clark.

Catatonic. Wide-eyed. Frozen. Scratched. Blood-spattered.

CAL

Hey, Martin.

(nudging Holden)

That's Martin Clark. I saw him  
this morning at the school with  
his...

Martin doesn't react.

CAL (CONT'D)

Martin, where's Andy?

Nothing.

Cal kneels, lays a hand on the boy's shoulder.

Martin explodes.

SCREAMS. SHRIEKS.

Arms flailing, he thrashes wildly, kicking up dirt. His face twists in raw terror.

CAL (CONT'D)

Whoa, hey! What's wrong with him!?

Holden grabs Martin's arms, holds him tight.

HOLDEN

Settle down, son!

Martin fights like an animal. A high, ragged WAIL -- his mind snapped, trapped in horror.

Holden shakes him once, firm.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Martin!

Still SCREAMING. Wild. Mindless.

Holden hesitates -- then SLAPS him.

Just enough to snap him out of it.

Martin jerks still.

For one long second -- just breathing.

He collapses into Holden's arms.

A trembling, sobbing heap.

Holden softens. He holds the boy close, steady.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

(quiet)

Alright now... you're alright...

Cal watches, shaken.

CAL

(quietly)

My God, Marshal... what did he see?

Holden exhales, low and dark.

HOLDEN

Stay with him.

Holden heads back to the tracks.

The forest floor turns red.

Blood splatters.

Becomes streaks.

Then drag marks.

EXT. THE KILLING SITE - DAY

Dark, wet stains soak the earth.

Flies swarm, thick and buzzing.

A crimson sheen glistens on the leaves.

A torn, bloodied shirt. A single shoe. A severed arm.

Holden stops cold.

A few feet away -- Andy's remains.

The brush is thick, but Holden can see enough. Too much.

His jaw tightens as he whispers.

HOLDEN

Oh, my God.

His hand instinctively drops to his gun.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Who the hell did this...

WICASA (O.S.)

Chiye Tanka.

Holden whirls --

Wicasa stands behind him. Tall. Still. His face unreadable beneath the brim of a slouched hat.

A buffalo rifle rests easy in his grip -- like he's carried it forever.

WICASA (CONT'D)

And he is angry.

Holden exhales, steadying himself.

HOLDEN

Wicasa. I thought you were scouting for the cavalry.

WICASA  
They left. I stayed.  
(beat)  
This is my people's land.

HOLDEN  
What is "Chiye Tanka?"

WICASA  
A legend. "Big Elder Brother." A  
spirit.

HOLDEN  
A spirit.

WICASA  
He appears as a warning.

HOLDEN  
Warning of what?

WICASA  
Evil. A message from the  
Creator... because of our  
disregard for what is sacred.

HOLDEN  
This wasn't the work of a spirit.  
(beat)  
Have you seen him before?

WICASA  
Never.

HOLDEN  
What's he supposed to look like?

WICASA  
Taller than any man. Covered in  
hair. Eyes red as fire.

HOLDEN  
Whatever it is, I'm getting a  
posse together and tracking it  
down.

WICASA  
That would not be wise.

HOLDEN  
It needs to be stopped. That's the  
only idea I've got.

WICASA  
You cannot kill a spirit.

EXT. TOWN OF NO CHANCE - DAY

The sun blazes high, drowning the town in harsh light.  
Heat shimmers off the dirt road.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Sparse. Plain. The schoolbook sits on the desk.

MAYOR  
You stay away from that damn  
Injun! Never heard such nonsense.

HOLDEN  
I don't believe in Big Elder  
Brother either. But that doesn't  
mean something isn't out there.

MAYOR  
That makes no sense.

HOLDEN  
You should see the Clark boy.  
Shocked stiff. Won't speak. What  
could do that?

MAYOR  
How the hell would I know?

HOLDEN  
What if it's some kind of animal  
we've never seen?

MAYOR  
What are you suggesting?

HOLDEN  
The Lakota think it's a spirit.  
What if it's real? Something flesh  
and blood?

MAYOR  
A monster?  
(scoffs)  
You're getting superstitious,  
Sheriff.

HOLDEN  
Those people weren't killed by  
superstition, Mayor.

A KNOCK on the door.

MAYOR  
Yes? Come in!

MR. and MRS. CLARK (late 30s) enter. Tired. Disheveled.

MAYOR (CONT'D)  
Ah! Mr. and Mrs. Clark.

MRS. CLARK  
We were looking for the sheriff.

HOLDEN  
What can I do for you?

MRS. CLARK  
Our children are missing. Andy and  
Martin.

A quiet beat.

MRS. CLARK (CONT'D)  
School let out late this morning.  
(voice cracks)  
They never came home.

MR. CLARK  
Been out searching all day. Been  
everywhere...

Their fear fills the room.

Holden remains still.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Doc Tyler and Holden watch as Mrs. Clark clutches Martin  
in a tight embrace. The boy remains catatonic, focused on  
something unseen.

The schoolbook sits untouched on the desk.

Across the room, Mr. Clark fixes his gaze on Mayor  
Sullivan and Holden -- his face carved from grief.

MR. CLARK  
Andrew?

HOLDEN

I'm sorry.

Mrs. Clark lets out a gut-wrenching WAIL. Mr. Clark, tears brimming, drops to his knees beside her.

MRS. CLARK

No! No! My baby... my baby...

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Holden shuts the door behind him, stepping into the heat of Main Street.

The muffled sobs still seep through the walls.

He exhales sharply and heads across the street, fast.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Cal leans against the desk, sipping coffee.

Holden storms in, yanks open a drawer, and grabs two boxes of ammo.

CAL

What did the Mayor say?

HOLDEN

Gonna be sundown in an hour. Get two rifles.

Cal stiffens. He tosses his coffee aside and strides to the gun rack.

CAL

Where are we going?

HOLDEN

Hunting.

EXT. THE KILLING SITE - SUNSET

The woods sink into shadow as night creeps in.

Holden and Cal lead their horses through the blood-soaked brush where the boys were found.

Holden scans beyond the carnage.

HOLDEN

There have to be tracks.

He moves ahead, methodical -- searching.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Wicasa was here before us. He was  
looking, too.

Cal keeps close. Their boots crunch through dried leaves.

Holden stops. Something catches his eye.

He hands his reins to Cal.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Wait here.

He pushes deeper into the trees.

EXT. A SMALL CLEARING - SUNSET

Where dirt cuts through the underbrush --

A massive footprint.

Holden steps closer... at least twenty inches long.

He crouches -- sees more tracks ahead in thick brush.

Leaves RUSTLE.

Cal approaches, leading the horses.

CAL

Find anything?

Then he sees the print.

CAL (CONT'D)

What the hell!?

HOLDEN

Headed north.

Cal follows his gaze toward the darkening woods.

CAL

Demon Creek's a mile ahead.

Reins in hand, they lead their horses toward the creek.



EXT. HOLDEN HOME - SUNSET

Grace Olson approaches the front door with a small stewpot in hand.

She knocks.

Inside, a heavy wooden bolt slides back.

The door opens. Emily stands there, surprised.

EMILY

Grace! What a surprise!

She glances back inside -- Jane sits in a chair, staring into the fire.

EMILY (CONT'D)

It's Grace Olson.

GRACE

I made some chicken and dumplings  
and thought Mrs. Porter might like  
some.

EMILY

That's very kind of you, Grace.

The trees answer --

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Deep. Ominous.

A high-pitched WHOOP! WHOOP! echoes through the twilight.

Emily tenses. Inside, Jane lurches upright, terrified.

JANE

Oh, God!

GRACE

(startled)  
What is that?

EMILY

Come inside, Grace.

Grace hesitates, confused -- then steps inside.

The door bolt slams into place.

EXT. DEMON CREEK - NIGHT

Holden and Cal lead their horses, moving slow.

Something glints in the fading light -- Holden spots a tin panning plate half-buried in the creek bank.

He picks it up. Turns upstream.

HOLDEN

Mount up.

They swing into their saddles and press on.

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

A cozy, rustic glow from kerosene lamps. The room feels safe -- except for the tension thick in the air.

Jane grips the chair arms, knuckles white.

Emily peeks through the curtains.

Grace watches, unsettled.

GRACE

Mrs. Holden... what is it?

JANE

(whispers)

The wood knocks. The whooping sound... it's the thing that killed my Ida.

EMILY

I didn't think it would come here...

She turns to Grace.

EMILY (CONT'D)

We thought it would return to Jane's house. At least we have the rifle.

Grace reaches into her dress pocket.

Withdraws a Colt .45.

Emily stiffens.

GRACE

Cal told me I should carry a  
pistol.

EMILY

Know how to use it?

A blood-curdling SCREAM splits the night outside.

The walls muffle the sound, but not enough.

EMILY (CONT'D)

It's all right... we're safe in  
here.

JANE

(soft, haunted)  
How do you know?

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

The forest sinks into silence.

A THUMP... THUMP... THUMP

Heavy footsteps crush the earth.

A massive dark figure drifts past the house -- its  
hulking form momentarily blots out the moonlight.

A low, grunting exhale.

Leaves rustle.

A PRIMAL SCREAM!

EXT. DEMON CREEK - NIGHT

Holden and Cal ride into the ruined prospector camp,  
pistols drawn.

The place is wrecked.

The tent is shredded, its canvas streaked black with  
blood.

A dreadful silence.

HOLDEN

Hello!?

Nothing.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Hello!?

Silence.

They dismount.

Cal steps forward -- almost trips over something.

CAL

What the hell...

He squints in the darkness.

Holden finds a lantern among the wreckage.

Strikes a match.

The flame flickers, casting eerie shadows.

He raises the lantern --

The tent walls are soaked in blood.

Cal backs up.

Holden makes his way to Cal.

CAL (CONT'D)

Careful, Sheriff. There's some big  
rocks around here.

Holden lowers the lantern --

The dead face of Pete stares up from the dirt. Eyes  
frozen in terror.

His mouth gapes open in a silent scream.

But -- there's no body.

CAL (CONT'D)

Jesus!

Holden moves carefully through the wreckage.

The lantern flickers over --

A headless body, its clothes torn and blood-soaked.

A horse's severed leg.

A crushed skull.

CAL (CONT'D)  
Any idea who they were?

HOLDEN  
I don't think their own mothers  
would recognize them.

Cal squints -- sees something in the dirt.

CAL  
What's that?

Holden lifts the lantern.

A rifle, snapped in half.

Cal picks it up -- the barrel is split in half.

CAL (CONT'D)  
That's impossible...

He hands it to Holden.

Holden opens the chamber.

Still loaded.

He steps toward the destroyed tent.

HOLDEN  
Three cots... we're missing a man.

CAL  
Sheriff... I think we should go.

Holden studies the scene.

HOLDEN  
Scared, Cal?

CAL  
Scared? No. Me? Scared? You bet  
your ass I'm scared!

Holden steps toward the creek.

CAL (CONT'D)  
These men were armed! And look  
what happened!

Holden kneels.

HOLDEN  
Tracks.

Cal stiffens.

CAL  
What?

HOLDEN  
Look.

Cal moves closer -- sees the huge footprints.

CAL  
What the -- looks like they came  
outta the creek.

Holden follows them to the water's edge.

He steps in, crosses to the other side.

The tracks continue -- three heavy prints in the mud  
before disappearing into the tall grass.

HOLDEN  
The third man was carried off.

Cal stares into the dark forest.

CAL  
We're not going to follow, are we?

Holden turns to him.

CAL (CONT'D)  
I mean... we can't track in the  
dark. Right?

Holden holds his gaze.

He doesn't blink.

HOLDEN  
I know someone who can.

EXT. WICASA'S HOME - NIGHT

A small shack, weathered and forgotten, swallowed by the  
creeping dark.

Holden and Cal rein up at the door.

HOLDEN  
Wicasa? It's Sheriff Holden.

The door creaks open.

Wicasa stands in the frame, still as stone.

WICASA  
More killings?

HOLDEN  
Three prospectors. Demon Creek.  
Same tracks.

WICASA  
Chiye Tanka.

HOLDEN  
I need your help.

WICASA  
I told you, Holden. You cannot  
kill the Big Elder Brother. He is  
a spirit.

CAL  
Spirits don't leave footprints  
twice the size of a man's.

Holden exhales slow.

HOLDEN  
You just leave that part of it to  
me.

WICASA  
The best time to hunt Chiye Tanka  
is at night.

CAL  
How the hell do you track in the  
dark?

WICASA  
We leave now.

Cal turns to Holden, his face says it all -- what the  
hell are we doing?

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

Jane hasn't moved from her rocker. The fire flickers low.

Emily watches the window, curtain drawn.

Grace tightens her shawl.

GRACE

I should be getting home. My folks  
will worry.

EMILY

Not a good idea, Grace. It's out  
there.

GRACE

I'm a good rider. My horse can  
outrun anything.

Emily hesitates. Turns to Jane.

EMILY

She's right. It's been quiet for a  
while.

Jane doesn't respond.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I suppose we can have a look.

Jane stares.

Emily sighs. Steps toward the door.

EMILY (CONT'D)

We'll take a look.

She lifts the heavy wooden bar that spans the door.

Grace waits as the door CREAKS open.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

Grace steps out. Emily lingers in the doorway.

The silence is unnatural. No wind. No insects.

No night sounds.

Grace squints into the dark.

Two tiny, glowing red specks in the woods.

Her voice drops to a whisper.

GRACE

Emily... do you see that?

Emily follows her gaze.



GRACE (CONT'D)  
It looks like... red eyes.

A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM tears through the dark.

Emily grabs Grace -- yanks her inside!

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

They slam the door, throw the wooden bar into place.

GRACE  
What was that!?

EMILY  
Jane -- the lamps!

Jane darts to the kerosene lamps, snuffing them out,  
plunging the room into darkness.

GRACE  
That wasn't a bear. Bears don't  
sound like that.

Emily grabs the rifle.

Jane starts shaking.

EMILY  
It's not going to kill us, Jane.  
We're armed.

She eases a corner of the curtain back.

JANE  
Emily, don't!

Outside --

A massive shadow moves.

It steps from the treeline.

It's huge. Tall. Features lost in the dark.

It arches its back --

And SCREAMS.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

It charges. Fast. Heavy.

EMILY  
(low, tense)  
It's coming straight for us.

JANE  
Get away from the window, Emily!

BAM! BAM!

The house shakes!

A picture falls from the wall.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

The Creature SLAMS its fists against the house.

BAM! BAM! BAM!

It lets out a deep, guttural GRUNT and SCREAMS!

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

Jane SCREAMS!

Emily keeps the rifle trained on the door.

Suddenly, the BANGING stops.

Silence creeps in -- louder than the noise.

Jane gasps for air.

BAM! BAM! BAM!

The side wall EXPLODES with sound.

EXT. ON A TRAIL - NIGHT

Wicasa rides a few paces ahead of Holden and Cal.

Suddenly, he reins in his horse.

HOLDEN  
Why'd you stop?

Wicasa listens to the night -- crickets, the constant rustle of leaves.

WICASA  
Chiye Tanka is not here.

CAL  
How do you know?

WICASA  
The woods speak. They are silent  
when Chiye Tanka is near.

Cal glances around -- the woods aren't silent.

WICASA (CONT'D)  
We follow his trail. But he is far  
from here.

Wicasa turns his horse. Looks to Holden.

WICASA (CONT'D)  
He is leading us away.

CAL  
Away from what?

Cal grips the reins tighter, uneasy --

CAL (CONT'D)  
An animal doesn't think like that.

WICASA  
Chiye Tanka knows we follow. Knows  
we have rifles.  
(beat)  
He will strike elsewhere. When we  
are far away.

Holden's jaw tightens. He pulls his rifle from the saddle  
holster and grips it tight.

Pondering. Calculating.

He spurs his horse.

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

In darkness, the women are huddled in a corner. Emily  
aims the rifle at the door.

EMILY  
I think it's gone.

GRACE  
It's been quiet for a while.

JANE  
What if it comes back?

Grace turns to Emily.

GRACE  
My horse is saddled.

EMILY  
Don't you give it a thought.

GRACE  
I can get help.

EMILY  
It's too dangerous, Grace! I won't allow it!

GRACE  
Scout's the fastest horse in town.  
I can outrun that thing if it's still out there.

EMILY  
Jim and Cal will be here soon.

GRACE  
We don't know that.

Emily contemplates.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
We need help.

Emily breathes a SIGH of surrender with a gentle nod, yes. Grace heads for the door. Emily follows.

They trade a tense look.

EMILY  
You're sure about this?

Grace nods yes.

Emily puts the rifle down and takes hold of the door bar, along with Grace.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
As quiet as you can.

With care, they lift and remove the bar.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
I won't put the bar back in place until I hear you ride away.

Grace gives an acknowledged nod.

Emily opens the door -- a slow CREAK.

Grace feigns a brave smile and steps into the night.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

The door closes behind her. There are no night sounds.

She waits... listens... bites her lips... and careful to make no noise, takes slow, measured steps.

She arrives at the corner of the house -- exhales -- barely dares to breathe.

A twig SNAPS somewhere in the dark.

Her gaze shifts to see two red dots in the darkness.

Grace stops cold.

The red dots blink.

THUD-THUD-THUD-THUD... footsteps run -- crushing the ground like bones. The red dots come closer and closer.

The trance is broken!

GRACE

Emily!

She races for the front door -- BANGS her hand on it as the door swings open.

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

Grace spills into the house as she sees the Creature closing in. Emily SLAMS the door shut!

GRACE

(panting, shaking)

Oh, God! It was waiting for me! It knew we would try to escape!

In a panic they fumble with the bar and drop it into place as the Creature CRASHES into the door.

Jane SCREAMS!

The Creature BANGS on the door.

Emily raises the rifle.

The BANGING stops.

Silence.

Grace rushes to a window in the kitchen.

She lifts a corner of the curtain and peeks through.

SMASH! Glass SHATTERS as a huge, muscular, hair-covered arm crashes through!

The hand grabs her by the neck as the Creature blasts out a long, high-pitched CRY.

Grace SCREAMS as Emily raises the gun. Grace struggles and blocks Emily from firing a shot.

Grace's hand flies to the counter -- fingers curl around a jagged shard of glass.

With a desperate SCREAM, she DRIVES IT DEEP into the Creature's arm.

A guttural, inhuman SHRIEK!

The arm YANKS BACK, spraying dark blood across the floor.

Emily lunges forward, rifle leveled.

THUD-THUD-THUD

Heavy FOOTSTEPS TEAR AWAY, crashing through the trees.

Gone.

Emily fires again --

BANG!

The muzzle flash splits the dark.

Emily and Jane haul Grace to her feet. Red marks streak her neck.

They ease her into a chair.

Emily whirls back to the window, raises the rifle --

BANG!

Another shot into the abyss.

The last shot hangs in the silence.

Grace, trembling --

GRACE (CONT'D)  
It was waiting for me... it was  
waiting...

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

A huge rock CRASHES into the side of the house -- BAM!

The unseen Creature SCREAMS!

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

Jane hugs herself, rocking slightly.

JANE  
Oh, dear God...

Another BAM!

Dust trickles from the ceiling.

BAM! Another rock hurls into the wall.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

The Creature trudges up to the house, GRUNTS and POUNDS where the rock just hit.

The Creature turns and heads back into the dark.

A rock HURLS toward the house.

BAM! It batters against the wall.

Silence.

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

Grace and Emily tighten their grip on their weapons. Jane clutches a fireplace poker.

Outside --

A deep, rattling SCREAM!

BAM! A rock HITS AGAIN.

Emily rushes to a side window, rips the curtain aside, throws it open.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

The Creature charges the house.

Emily raises the rifle -- BANG!

Blood bursts from the Creature's shoulder.

Emily slams the window shut!

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

A sickening CRACK -- the same window EXPLODES inward as a rock crashes through! The curtain rips loose, tumbling to the floor.

Grace spins -- FIRES!

BANG!

A SHRIEK outside -- deep, ragged, furious.

POUNDING on the front door --

BAM! BAM! BAM!

Jane SCREAMS --

JANE

Stop it! Stop it! Go away!

The door RATTLES, the wooden bar SHAKES in its brackets.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

The Creature backs up.

Breathes hard --

and SCREAMS.

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

The women press into a corner.

Emily steadies the rifle.



EMILY

It's wounded. It can't stay out there much longer.

GRACE

Where did you hit it?

EMILY

In the shoulder, I think.

JANE

The size of that thing -- a bullet probably made it angrier!

Tension boils over.

EMILY

What would you have done, Jane!? Tell me!

JANE

You can't kill something like that with a gun! It was a stupid thing to do, and when that door gives out, we're all dead!

GRACE

It's not getting in here, and we're not gonna die.

JANE

You made it worse when you went for your horse!

EMILY

Enough, Jane! That Creature was going to attack us no matter what.

Grace stiffens.

GRACE

Wait!

A stillness.

EMILY

What?

GRACE

Shhh...

Silence.

They hold their breath.

The doorknob RATTLES.

A jolt -- a collective flinch.

Then, from the door --

A KNOCK.

HOLDEN (O.S.)

Emily?

A GASP of relief.

Emily yanks the bar loose, flings the door open.

Holden and Cal stand in the doorway.

Grace rushes past Holden, throws her arms around Cal's neck, and holds him tight.

Emily falls into Holden's arms.

He notices the broken window.

Glass crunches under his boot.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

What happened?

EMILY

That -- thing attacked the house.

GRACE

It was tall and covered with hair!

CAL

You saw it!?

GRACE

Yes!

Jane returns to her chair and lays the fireplace poker across her lap.

HOLDEN

(softens)

Are you all right?

EMILY

We're not hurt -- just shaken.

Cal kneels next to Grace. Holds her hand.

CAL

(gently)

Grace... I love you... and I'm  
glad you're not hurt... but what  
the hell are you doing here?

GRACE

Brought Mrs. Porter some food.

CAL

We agreed you were going to stay  
home tonight.

GRACE

No, Cal. You agreed I was going to  
stay home tonight.

Cal scoffs. Shakes his head.

Grace tilts her chin up.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Well... I did bring my father's  
pistol.

A small grin.

They kiss.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

Wicasa stands still, watching the dark woodline.

Not a single night sound. Not even the wind.

The front door opens -- Holden steps out. He approaches.

HOLDEN

We were out looking for this  
thing, and it attacked my home.

WICASA

Was anyone hurt?

HOLDEN

No, thank God.

A tense beat. Holden moves to the side of the house.

A few small boulders lie beneath the wall -- he tries to  
roll one with his boot. It doesn't budge.

He kneels, runs a hand along the wooden siding -- then flinches back as if it burned him.

He returns to Wicasa, shaking his head.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
That thing dented my walls with  
boulders. Is that something you've  
heard before?

Beat. No answer.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
Do they throw rocks?

No response.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
Wicasa.

A slow inhale from Wicasa. He stares at the trees.

WICASA  
We are being watched.

HOLDEN  
How do you know?

A long, dreadful pause.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Holden tenses. His hand slides to the grip of his pistol.

A heavy wooden thud echoes across the night.

Cal and Grace exit the house.

A sharp, piercing --

WHOO! WHOOP!

GRACE  
What's that sound?

Another KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

WICASA  
(softly)  
Communication. A signal.

HOLDEN  
A signal to who?

No answer.

The woods feel deeper now. The darkness heavier.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Wicasa glances at the women -- then at Holden.

WICASA  
We should leave. Now.

HOLDEN  
Keep an eye on the treeline.  
(to Emily)  
Go inside.

EMILY  
What are you doing?

HOLDEN  
Hitching up the wagon. Go on.

Emily hesitates, but takes Grace's arm. They retreat inside. The door closes.

Holden turns to Wicasa --

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
Anything steps out of that  
woodline -- shoot it.

WICASA  
Chiye Tanka can not be killed.

Holden looks him dead in the eye.

HOLDEN  
Try. You might be surprised.

He turns to Cal --

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
With me.

They head for the barn.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - NIGHT

Heavy footsteps THUD-THUD through the undergrowth, shaking the earth. Tree branches bend and SNAP as something enormous moves through the darkness.

Ahead, through the trees -- Holden's wagon rolls toward the house. Cal walks beside it, rifle in hand.

A deep, guttural GRUNT.

A cloud of breath rolls out into the cold -- hot, Heavy.

Watching.

The THUD-THUD of huge footsteps booms -- tree branches are pushed aside as the home is seen a distance away.

Another GRUNT.

Breath clouds the air.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

The wagon stands hitched and waiting. Holden swings down as Cal hurries to the front door.

The women emerge -- Grace glances toward the barn, scanning the darkness.

Wicasa strides out from the shadows, leading Grace's horse by the reins.

No one speaks.

Cal lifts Jane into the wagon. Holden helps Emily on the other side.

HOLDEN

We'll be riding right next to you.

Emily takes the reins, her hands tense around the leather.

Grace swings onto her saddle with a quick, uneasy glance at the treeline.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Whatever you do -- don't stop.

A hush over the land. No crickets. No wind.

Holden, Cal, and Wicasa mount their horses without a word, rifles in hand.

The wagon lurches forward -- hooves and wheels grind into the night.

EXT. ROAD TO TOWN - NIGHT

Holden and Wicasa ride in front, rifles at the ready. Cal and Grace follow behind, watching every direction.

The silence is thick.

Something shifts in the dark.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

A deep, resonant THUMP from the trees on Holden's side.

Stillness.

WHOO! WHOOP! WHOOP!

A shrill call echoes through the dark.

Holden doesn't flinch, rifle butt steady on his thigh.

THUD-THUD-THUD --

Heavy FOOTSTEPS crunch the ground, running AHEAD --

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

A branch SLAMS against a trunk -- same direction.

A SHUFFLE in the undergrowth --

THUD-THUD-THUD!

Massive FOOTSTEPS keeping pace alongside them.

Holden and Wicasa track the movement -- shadows SHIFT between the trees.

A BONE-RATTLING SCREAM.

SWOOSH! A rock WHISTLES through the air --

BAM! It SMASHES into the wagon's side.

The riders don't break stride.

The wagon doesn't stop.

EXT. TOWN OF NO CHANCE - NIGHT

The wagon and riders approach the edge of town. The familiar upright piano bangs out a song.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

The swinging doors part, and Mayor Sullivan steps out -- sober, but carrying a slight glow.

He straightens his vest, exhales, then freezes.

Across the street, the wagon and riders pull up to the Sheriff's Office.

Something about them stops him cold.

Their faces.

Tense. Silent. Guns still in hand.

The town feels... wrong.

The piano clanks on inside the saloon, oblivious.

The Mayor swallows hard, then starts across the street.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Emily and Jane climb down from the wagon. Holden lends an arm for support. Wicasa tethers the horses.

Cal dismounts. Grace stays mounted.

The Mayor hurries towards them.

MAYOR

You're back! Where's the body!?

HOLDEN

'evening, Sheriff.

MAYOR

The body. Where is it?

Holden gestures vaguely toward the dark wilderness.

HOLDEN

Out there -- still walking around.

The Mayor blanches.

MAYOR

You didn't kill it!?

HOLDEN

Not yet. It also killed three prospectors up at the creek.



The color drains from the Mayor's face.

MAYOR  
Oh, God. Oh, my God.

HOLDEN  
And attacked my house.

The Mayor flicks a look at the women.

MAYOR  
Well, what *is* it?

JANE  
The Devil.

Jane's voice is hollow. Her face -- haunted.

The Mayor swallows hard. His bluster fades.

MAYOR  
It's got to be a grizzly.

HOLDEN  
Grizzlies don't throw boulders at houses.

Silence.

MAYOR  
You're going back after it?

HOLDEN  
Yes.

CAL  
We headed out now, or in the morning?

WICASA  
Now.

Cal hesitates, glances at Holden -- who gives a firm nod.

HOLDEN  
Mayor, would you walk my wife and Mrs. Porter over to the hotel?

MAYOR  
Of course... yes, of course.

EMILY  
Jane, you go. I'll be along in a few minutes.

Jane nods.

She follows the Mayor toward the hotel.

Holden and Emily step inside the Sheriff's Office.

Grace dismounts. She and Cal step a few paces away from Wicasa, voices low.

GRACE

You'll come and see me tomorrow...  
after you kill that thing?

CAL

I will.

GRACE

I'm being serious, Cal. I want you  
to promise me.

Cal hesitates, then softens.

CAL

I promise.

GRACE

Don't get killed.

Cal exhales, studying her.

CAL

I ain't planning on it, Grace.

A long pause.

The words between them are unspoken -- but understood.

GRACE

If anything happened to you... I'd  
die inside.

CAL

You would?

They kiss.

CAL (CONT'D)

I'll be all right. Don't worry.

GRACE

That's a stupid thing to say. Of  
course I'm going to worry.

She pulls away, mounts her horse.

CAL  
You all right ridin' home alone?

She points.

GRACE  
Cal. My house is at the end of  
Main Street.

A flick of the reins -- she gallops off as she calls over  
her shoulder.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Tomorrow. Don't forget.

Cal watches until she's gone.

Behind him, Wicasa speaks.

WICASA  
She's a good woman. Marry her.

CAL  
'tend to.

A small, knowing smile.

He climbs onto the wagon.

CAL (CONT'D)  
I'll get this in the barn and  
unhitch the horses.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Holden opens a desk drawer and pulls out a small whiskey  
bottle and shot glass. He fills the shot glass.

Emily raises an eyebrow.

HOLDEN  
Medicinal.

He hands her the glass and bottle in hand.

They toast and drink. Emily puckers and winces.

EMILY  
Medicinal? That will kill you!

HOLDEN  
Rumor is, it's cut with turpentine  
and gunpowder.

EMILY

Oh, dear Lord!

He caps the bottle and shoves it into his coat pocket.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Jim... don't go. Send for help.

HOLDEN

No time.

NOLAN (O.S.)

You've seen him.

They both turn to see Nolan Weatherbee, sober, seated on the cot in the open jail cell.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

I can tell. I know that look...  
when you see something that don't  
make sense, but you know damn well  
it's real.

They step toward the cell.

Nolan is calm and speaks with no emotion. He is somewhere else... he is in another place.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

It ain't the devil. Ain't no Injun  
spirit neither. It's a monster.  
Plain and simple.  
Sounds crazy. But people never  
believe till it's staring 'em  
down.  
October seventeenth... twenty  
years ago. A cold night. Sky real  
heavy, like just before rain. You  
could feel it pressing down.  
We were sittin' for supper. Fried  
chicken -- my wife's was so good,  
a chicken would've hopped in the  
oven just to be part of it...

A small, distant smile -- then it fades.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

I just made that part up for my  
kids... they always laughed at  
that. So, there we were... me, my  
wife, my boy and my girl...  
Then the wind picked up.  
WHOO! WHOO!  
Twisted my gut.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Still does when I think on it.  
Thought it was a Sioux war party,  
so I grabbed my rifle. Looked out  
the window.  
It wasn't Sioux. It was big --  
black as the night, standing at  
the tree line. And its eyes...  
red. Burning like coals. And they  
got bigger. 'Cause it was coming.  
I raised my rifle. Misfire.  
Goddamn thing never worked right --  
plenty of turkeys lived 'cause of  
that rifle.

A moment -- he's reliving it

NOLAN (CONT'D)

And then it hit the door.  
Not knocked. Not pounded. Hit it.  
CRACK -- wood flew, and it was  
inside. Teeth, long and jagged.  
Hands like supper plates. Skin  
like old leather under all that  
hair. And the strength...  
It hit me once -- right under the  
chin. Broke my damn jaw. Whole  
world went hazy. That fog you get  
when your body knows it's about to  
shut down. And in that fog... I  
saw it rip my family apart.  
Not kill. Rip.  
Couple months later, when I could  
talk again, I told folks it was  
Injuns. What else could I say?  
Tell the truth, they'd say I lost  
my mind. Lock me up somewhere.  
But I know what I saw.  
And I'll tell you this, Sheriff...

Looks at Holden dead in the eye.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

You'll need more than rifles out  
there; You'll need the hand of God  
on your shoulder.

Silence.

Emily looks away, arms crossed tight -- like she's  
holding something in.

Holden, jaw clenched, studies Nolan. The Sheriff has seen  
a lot in his time... but not this.

The wind moans outside. The lantern flickers.

Finally -- Holden nods. A small, grim nod.

EXT. THE EDGE OF TOWN - NIGHT

Alone, Wicasa rides out from the town.

He reins in and looks out over the open land to the trees in the distance.

A far-off KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! rings out.

The distant SCREAM of the Creature.

WICASA

Are you no longer a friend... or  
are you not Chiye Tanka?

Holden and Cal ride up behind him and rein in.

Wicasa spurs his horse forward. Holden and Cal follow.

EXT. CLOSE TO THE WOODS - NIGHT

About to enter wooded terrain, the riders stop.

HOLDEN

What is it?

WICASA

The night sounds have returned.

HOLDEN

The creature isn't around?

WICASA

He wants to draw us in.

CAL

You act as if it thinks like  
humans. It may be intelligent, but  
it's still an animal.

Holden turns to Cal.

CAL (CONT'D)

I just think we're putting too  
much stock in its intelligence.  
Track 'em and kill 'em.

WICASA

When eyes do not see, they walk  
into a trap.

CAL

All due respect, there's no trap.  
It followed us here, knocked on a  
few trees, got bored, and left.

Wicasa doesn't respond.

A kick of the heels and his horse advances.

HOLDEN

You might be right.

CAL

Thanks, Sheriff.

Holden adjusts his rifle in the saddle, alert to the  
dark.

A long pause.

HOLDEN

But I'm not sure you are.

He heels his horse forward, following Wicasa into the  
trees. Cal watches them go, shifts in his saddle.

He takes a breath -- and rides after them.

EXT. SPARSE WOODED AREA - NIGHT

The terrain is smooth. The woods grow thicker ahead.

Wicasa reins in and dismounts.

HOLDEN

See something?

WICASA

Wait here.

Leading his horse, Wicasa moves toward the trees.

CAL

(low)  
I don't know how he can track at  
night.

HOLDEN

The moon's bright enough for him.  
It's something he's good at.

CAL

Sheriff, will these rifles kill  
that thing?

HOLDEN

Of course.

CAL

But those bodies... the way they  
were torn up... that takes  
incredible strength.

HOLDEN

Are you starting to think this  
monster is a spirit... like Wicasa  
does?

CAL

No. But... them prospectors had  
rifles. Didn't do them any good.

HOLDEN

I don't think they had time to use  
them.

CAL

Like they was ambushed?

HOLDEN

Maybe.

Wicasa returns.

WICASA

The Chiye Tanka could be near the  
lake ahead.

HOLDEN

Lead on.

Wicasa mounts. They depart.

EXT. LAKE FRONT - NIGHT

They ride past a lake. Moonlight ripples on the water.

HOLDEN

You gonna marry that girl?



CAL

I want to. Been courtin' two years.

HOLDEN

What's holding you back?

CAL

I was hopin' to earn more money when I got elected Sheriff... but then you came to No Chance.

HOLDEN

Sorry to hear that.

WICASA

Nerves.

CAL

What?

WICASA

Money isn't holding you back. It's your nerves.

CAL

That's not true.

WICASA

It is -- otherwise, you'd already be married.

CAL

What do you know about it?

HOLDEN

Wicasa is wise.

WICASA

Damn right, I am.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The horses are tethered. A fire CRACKLES. Cal tosses another log into the flames.

Nearby, Holden wraps a cloth around a thick wooden stick, tying it tight with a strip of rawhide.

Cal watches as Holden pulls a whiskey bottle from his coat, SOAKS the cloth, then reaches into his pocket and sprinkles a handful of gunpowder onto the damp fabric.

CAL

What are you fixin' to do with that?

HOLDEN

Maybe it's afraid of fire... or maybe we'll need it if we have to chase it into the woods.

CAL

Or if it chases us, you mean.

Wicasa stands at the edge of the firelight, where the glow fades into pitch darkness. He listens.

The night sounds -- crickets, owls, rustling leaves -- fill the air.

CAL (CONT'D)

Are we supposed to get some sleep in this camp, or are we bait?

HOLDEN

You could sleep?

CAL

Hell, no.

Holden lights a cheroot, takes a slow drag.

CAL (CONT'D)

So we're just gonna sit here and hope it attacks? That's the plan?

HOLDEN

Best get the rifles. Keep 'em close.

CAL

Already planned on it.

Holden rises, approaches Wicasa.

HOLDEN

Why here?

WICASA

Fresh tracks near the lake. He'll smell the smoke.

HOLDEN

I know you believe this thing is Big Elder Brother... but I plan to kill it.

WICASA

If he dies, then I was wrong.

A sharp, distant KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

A WHOOPING CRY that slices through the night air.

The woods fall silent.

Holden and Wicasa turn toward the sound.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

The horses stir -- WHINNY, STOMP, restless.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Suddenly --

A huge rock WHISTLES from the darkness... It SLAMS into the fire!

Sparks erupt, flames jump --

Cal stumbles back --

THUD-THUD-THUD!

A massive, hair-covered figure explodes from the trees.

It BARRELS into Cal, SLAMS him into the fire!

Cal YELLS, rolls out fast, smoke rising from his clothes.

The Creature is already gone.

Holden and Wicasa whirl and raise their weapons --

BANG! Holden fires.

The Creature SCREAMS from the shadows.

Cal clutches his arm, blood seeps through his sleeve.

CAL

I think he got a claw into me...

HOLDEN

He did.

From the darkness --

A deafening SCREAM.

The horses rear up, SNAPPING their tethers --  
They bolt into the trees, WHINNYING in terror.  
Holden rushes after them -- stops. Listens.  
The horses' SCREAMS turn into tormented DEATH CRIES.  
A heavy silence.  
Holden turns back.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
The horses are gone.

CAL  
Worse. Our rifles were in the  
saddle holsters.

Before that can sink in --

A huge rock flies from the woods -- SLAMS into the dirt  
inches from them.

Wicasa ducks -- FIRES into the dark -- BANG!

CAL (CONT'D)  
Look at the size of that rock.  
Would take two men just to lift  
it.

He removes his neckerchief and wraps it around the wound.

A larger rock flies out of the woods, SMASHES into the  
ground, inches from Holden and Cal.

Wicasa ducks and fires -- BANG!

The Creature SHRIEKS.

Rocks begin to pelt the camp -- fist-sized, raining from  
all sides.

Holden and Cal duck, shielding their heads.

HOLDEN  
Hold your fire! Conserve your  
ammo!

Another rock WHIZZES past.

Wicasa tosses his rifle aside, snatches the torch,  
thrusts it into the fire.

The torch ignites -- flames curl around the whiskey-soaked cloth.

Holding the torch high, pistol in the other hand --

Wicasa charges into the woods.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
Wicasa! Get back here!

EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT

The torch casts flickering light, barely piercing the darkness. Wicasa moves quickly, scanning the trees.

WICASA  
Chiye Tanka! Chiye Tanka!

A monstrous, ape-like face looms from the shadows -- half-man, half-beast, its thick fur illuminated by the torch.

Red eyes lock onto Wicasa.

The mouth opens -- teeth jagged and yellow --

A primal SCREAM!

The creature lunges!

It snatches Wicasa and lifts him like a rag doll!

Wicasa FIRES -- BANG!

The Creature HOWLS!

It sinks its teeth into Wicasa's shoulder!

Wicasa SCREAMS.

HOLDEN (O.S.)  
Hey!

BANG! BANG!

The Creature ROARS, drops Wicasa, and vanishes into the black, its heavy FOOTSTEPS fading fast.

Holden rushes in and hauls Wicasa to his feet.

WICASA  
How could you miss that close?

HOLDEN  
I fired over its head.

WICASA  
Why would you do that?

HOLDEN  
It's pitch dark -- I didn't want  
to hit you.

WICASA  
That was a good idea.

He leans against Holden as they cautiously back away,  
guns up.

WICASA (CONT'D)  
I got a shot off before it grabbed  
me -- think I hit its arm.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Cal builds up the fire best he can with one arm, as  
Holden and Wicasa appear out of the dark.

Wicasa lets go of Holden's shoulder and is able to walk  
on his own.

HOLDEN  
We should have a look at that  
shoulder.

Wicasa pulls a rag from his pocket and sticks it under  
his coat at his shoulder.

WICASA  
My coat is very thick. I am not in  
much pain.

CAL  
What happened?

HOLDEN  
He got bit. You sure you don't  
want me to take a look?

WICASA  
We have other things to worry  
about.

CAL  
The shots... did you kill it?

WICASA

No.

A distant WHOOP! WHOOP!

HOLDEN

We need to move -- someplace with  
more shelter.

EXT. ROUGH TERRAIN - NIGHT

Holden, Wicasa, and Cal make their way along uneven  
ground strewn with large boulders and trees.

They stop to survey the surroundings.

THUD-THUD-THUD -- heavy FOOTSTEPS close in on them.

Wicasa continues forward, Holden and Cal follow -- they  
watch their flanks with pistols in hand.

EXT. NEAR ROUGH TERRAIN - NIGHT

In the dark, something moves -- massive, deliberate.

THUD-THUD-THUD.

Each FOOTSTEP pounds the earth, heavy and measured.

Branches shudder. Leaves tremble.

It closes in.

EXT. A RIVER - NIGHT

Wicasa raises a hand -- stop.

The ground ahead is slick with blood.

He squints into the darkness. A lumpy shadow sprawls  
across the ground, half-hidden by reeds and stone.

WICASA

Something is there.

They advance -- slow, cautious.

With each step, the shadow takes shape -- a mangled  
corpse. Torn open, limbs at unnatural angles.

They stop where the earth is painted red.

CAL  
(softly)  
God...

Holden sees another dark object a few yards away. He heads towards it.

A young tree, snapped in half. Something is jammed onto the broken top.

Silas Porter's head.

HOLDEN  
We found Silas Porter.

Cal approaches, his breath slow and measured. He stares.

CAL  
His horse and rifle are gone.

WICASA  
This is different -- the others  
were kills.  
(a beat)  
This is a message.

HOLDEN  
Then what's it saying?

Wicasa gestures toward the severed head.

WICASA  
This requires thought. Purpose. It  
was meant to deliver fear.

CAL  
And it's working.

HOLDEN  
Doesn't matter if it's intelligent  
or not. It's killed. We stop it.

CAL  
We're low on rounds. Maybe we go  
back to town, re-supply, bring a  
posse.

HOLDEN  
You think it'll let us leave?

Cal hesitates.

CAL  
If it wanted us dead, why warn us?



Holden doesn't answer. Tension holds.

HOLDEN  
We're at least twenty miles from  
town. We find high ground and make  
a stand.

Cal exhales, glances at the head one last time.

CAL  
Yeah.

Holden moves on. Wicasa follows.

Cal lingers -- a final glance at Silas. Then, he follows.

EXT. NATURAL DEFENSE SITE - NIGHT

Holden, Cal, and Wicasa come across a cluster of boulders  
and fallen tree trunks that create a fort-like setting.

HOLDEN  
This will do.

Suddenly -- A GUTTURAL ROAR!

The Creature EXPLODES from the darkness -- its massive  
hands grab Cal!

Cal struggles, gasping --

The Creature SCREAMS!

Holden fires -- BANG!

A HOWL! The Creature reels as blood sprays from its leg.

BANG! Another shot rips into its shoulder.

The Creature drops Cal and vanishes into the dark.

Cal collapses, sucking air. Holden hauls him up, dragging  
him behind the barricade.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
You all right?

CAL  
(knocked breathless)  
Son of a bitch...

Wicasa kneels, rifle poised.

He searches the shadows.

Nothing.

CAL (CONT'D)

I sure do wish we had our rifles.

They hold their breath, listening. Every branch, every rustle, could be it.

The quiet stretches.

CAL (CONT'D)

The silence is worse.

Cal loads two rounds into his revolver -- snaps the cylinder shut.

CAL (CONT'D)

My last six shots. How many you got, Sheriff?

HOLDEN

Three. Wicasa?

WICASA

Two for my rifle. Seven for my Colt.

Holden furrows his brow.

BAM! A rock SMASHES into the barricade!

Another! Then another!

BAM! BAM! BAM! Stones RICOCHET off the logs and boulders, raining down.

CAL

Damn!

They duck, shielding their heads.

Holden risks a glance -- nothing.

Everything goes still.

A SCREAM rips through the trees -- farther away.

HOLDEN

That was distant.

CAL

It's leaving?

HOLDEN

Maybe.

CAL

Let's go.

WICASA

To leave now would give the  
creature the advantage of  
darkness.

HOLDEN

It won't hurt to wait.

Cal leans back, gripping his wounded arm, listening.

Wicasa steps over the barricade, sits on a fallen tree  
trunk, scanning the woods. Holden joins him.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

I don't know how a creature like  
this goes undetected for so many  
years.

WICASA

Maybe it didn't...

(beat)

Maybe the ones who saw it never  
lived to tell.

Holden studies him.

HOLDEN

You know Nolan Weatherbee?

WICASA

The drunk?

HOLDEN

Yeah.

WICASA

I know the Sioux killed his family  
years ago.

HOLDEN

Before we left, he told me it  
wasn't the Sioux.

(beat)

Said it was this creature.

Wicasa turns, his expression unreadable.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)  
Described it pretty damn well.

WICASA  
Easier to blame the Sioux than  
tell the truth.

HOLDEN  
Probably figured people wouldn't  
believe the truth.

Wicasa says nothing. Just stares into the trees.

EXT. THE SKY - SUNRISE

A thin sliver of orange-yellow cuts through the dark blue  
as the night dies away.

EXT. NATURAL DEFENSE SITE - SUNRISE

Before the sun gains any strength -- when everything is  
gray, ugly and cold.

Cal lies dirty and bloody, asleep behind the barricade.

Holden and Wicasa continue to watch the woods.

HOLDEN  
It's quiet. I say we head out.

WICASA  
Once we leave here, we will be  
exposed on open ground with very  
little ammunition.

HOLDEN  
It's the only way back to town.

WICASA  
It's a great risk.

HOLDEN  
You got a better idea, now's the  
time.

WICASA  
The creature killed the horses not  
far from here. I will scout the  
area, and retrieve the rifles and  
ammunition.

HOLDEN

Why don't we all go? Safety in numbers.

WICASA

If he is still nearby, he will hear three of us. He will not hear me alone.

Holden contemplates as he studies the woodline.

HOLDEN

All right.

Wicasa tightens his grip on his rifle.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Be careful.

Wicasa steps over the barricade, crouches low, and sprints forward.

Holden watches as he disappears into the morning mist of the woods.

CAL

In case we don't make it out of here... I was pissed off to no end when you were elected sheriff.

HOLDEN

So you said... in so many words.

CAL

Well... I think they ended up with the best man for the job.

Holden shows a hint of a smile.

HOLDEN

I appreciate that. But the job ain't what it's cracked up to be.

Cal is puzzled.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

I came to No Chance for some peace and quiet.

Cal chuckles, just a little.

BANG!

Wicasa's buffalo gun cracks through the stillness.

Holden and Cal snap to full alert.

A long, dead pause.

No second shot.

No footsteps.

Just... nothing.

Cal shifts, uneasy.

CAL  
Should we go see?

HOLDEN  
No.

The quiet presses in.

CAL  
What if he needs help?

HOLDEN  
Stay put.

A branch SNAPS somewhere out there.

Something darts between the trees -- fast and low.

Holden slowly rises, peering over the barricade --

A massive object flies straight at him.

He ducks -- it sails past and CRASHES behind them.

Holden turns. Sees it.

Wicasa's severed head.

Lifeless -- fixed on him.

Cal stiffens, sucking in a breath.

A WHISTLING WHOOSH --

Rocks. Flying from the darkness.

CAL  
Son of a bitch!

Holden grabs his gun.

They open FIRE into the trees.

EXT. THE WOODS - DAY

Bullets SLAM into trees.

Bullets whistle past, and into oblivion.

EXT. THE NATURAL DEFENSE SITE - DAY

Cal fires -- CLICK.

His face sinks with despair.

CAL

I'm out.

A dull, heavy THUD-THUD-THUD.

Holden digs into his coat, pulls out the whiskey bottle.

He rips a strip from Cal's torn sleeve and jams it into the bottle.

CAL (CONT'D)

What are you doing!?

Holden grabs a match, strikes it. The cloth fuse ignites.

Holden springs up just as the Creature lunges -- and hurls the bottle.

SMASH! WHOOOSH!

The Creature bursts into flames.

It SCREAMS -- a hellish, guttural ROAR of agony.

Arms flailing, it spins wildly -- crashing into trees, igniting brush.

Still burning, the Creature turns toward them.

HOLDEN

Oh, hell!

It sprints toward them, on fire.

At the last second, it veers away -- SCREECHES past the barricade and tears off into the woods, leaving a burning path behind it.

Holden and Cal watch in shock as the Creature THUNDERS downhill, racing toward the river.

EXT. A RIVER - DAY

The Creature hurtles from the treeline, SLAMS into the water with a massive SPLASH!

Steam HISSES as the flames are snuffed out.

For a moment, the surface is still.

Bubbles appear.

Ripples spread.

Holden and Cal arrive at the riverbank, pistols raised.

Nothing.

Just silent, black water.

They wait.

No movement.

No sound.

HOLDEN

Son of a bitch. Givens really did cut that stuff with gunpowder and turpentine.

EXT. TOWN OF NO CHANCE - DUSK

Emily waits at the edge of town, looking at the distant woods. A soft wind blows as she pulls the shawl over her shoulders tighter.

Grace approaches.

GRACE

Mrs. Holden?

EMILY

Grace. All last night and all of today... not a word.

GRACE

They may have tracked it quite a distance.

EMILY

That's what I keep telling myself. I didn't think it would take this long.



GRACE

Wicasa is the best tracker, and Sheriff Holden is pretty good himself. Hunts like this take time.

EMILY

I suppose you're right.

She turns to Grace.

EMILY (CONT'D)

What happened at the house... is anyone going to believe us?

GRACE

Would you?

EMILY

Probably not.

Emily smiles.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Happier things... is Cal going to ask you to marry him?

GRACE

He better!

EMILY

You're not sure?

GRACE

So many times I thought he was about to propose... and then he didn't.

EMILY

Why?

GRACE

He has a bad case of nerves when it comes to marriage.

EMILY

Maybe it will be different this time.

GRACE

Maybe.

A beat.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
But I don't think so.

They both snicker in amusement.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
I think I'll have to propose to  
him.

Emily feigns shock.

EMILY  
It just isn't done!

They laugh.

Emily is distracted as she looks towards the distant  
woods -- straining to see in the failing twilight.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF TOWN - DUSK

Two figures have emerged from the woods and walk with  
tired, uneven steps toward the town.

EXT. TOWN OF NO CHANCE - DUSK

Emily's eyes sparkle and gleam.

Grace's lips curl into a smile.

They rush forward.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF TOWN - NIGHT

Emily and Grace hurry past the weather-beaten NO CHANCE  
sign as they race toward the woods.

Holden and Cal see them.

EMILY  
Jim! Jim!

GRACE  
Cal!

An exhausted Holden and Cal quicken their pace.

CAL  
Grace!

The men look a mess. Cal's arm soaked with dried blood and a torn sleeve, and Holden covered with dirt mixed with sweat.

The ladies fall into their arms -- hugs, kisses, happy tears, shining cheeks, tighter hugs, and more kisses.

EMILY

My Lord, Jim. What happened?

GRACE

Where's Wicasa?

The expressions of Holden and Cal give the answer.

EMILY

Oh, no...

GRACE

Did you kill the creature?

HOLDEN

It's dead.

Another embrace.

From the woods behind them KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! -- echoes over the night air.

Holden turns to the woods. Cal is shocked. Emily and Grace lean in close to each other -- afraid.

In the distance - KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

WHOO! WHOOP! WHOOP!

The night sounds dissipate.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! -- from another direction.

Further away -- KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! -- a feral SCREAM!

EXT. MAIN STREET - NO CHANCE - NIGHT

- The Mayor exits the saloon -- drink in hand.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! -- from a distance.

Doc Tyler steps out of his office -- brow tight with confused worry.

WHOO! WHOOP! WHOOP! -- from the side of town.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Inside the cell, Nolan Weatherbee wells up. He pulls the door shut and backs away until he drops onto the cot. He clutches the pillow with trembling hands.

EXT. OUTSKIRT OF TOWN - NIGHT

Holden and Cal draw their ladies close and hold them -- their heads turn in all directions as the WHOOPS and KNOCKS surround them.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Another SCREAM -- distant, echoing.

More KNOCKS join in -- dozens now.

A thunderous rumble, low and violent.

Holden doesn't move.

A ROAR -- deep. Low, raw -- closer than before.

Then ANOTHER. And ANOTHER.

The KNOCKS continue deep and distant -- like war drums.

Each beat hums through bone and earth.

The silence is torn open and the night shatters.

A CHORUS OF HOWLS, SHRIEKS, and WHOOPS explodes from the dark -- overlapping in a rising frenzy.

A wilderness orchestra of madness.

What hell must sound like.

Holden tightens his grip around Emily.

Cal and Grace do the same.

No one speaks.

They just listen...

BLACK OUT