

**DEATH OF A LEGEND**

Screenplay by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CENTRAL TEXAS, 1882 - DAY

Dust swirls across a sun-baked landscape of scrub. Carried on the wind is a haunting melody from a music box.

A man on horseback emerges from a dust cloud -- BEN STROUD, 50s, rugged, with an air of self-assurance and quiet nobility. The Texas Ranger star pinned to his coat is as worn as he is.

Trailing behind, his son JAMIE, 20, listens to an ornate music box hanging from his saddle horn. His star looks newer.

Ben leans down to examine a trail of hoofprints being erased by the increasing winds.

BEN

Horse is lame. Won't be long now.

The melody slows, and Jamie winds the key.

BEN

Put that toy away and keep your eyes peeled.

Jamie scans the barren terrain.

JAMIE

Say, Pa, there a reward for this Comanche?

BEN

You a bounty hunter now?

He didn't mean to hurt his son with the rebuke, but the damage is done. Jamie puts the music box to his ear, seeking solace. Neither man notices a figure observing them from a nearby rise.

EXT. NARROW CANYON - DAY

Ben and Jamie push through a blinding dust storm. They pull up, staring at something disturbing ahead --

Sand drifts across a dead horse with a Comanche saddle blanket.

Ben surveys the barely-visible canyon walls. Pulling his Winchester from its scabbard, he dismounts. Jamie hops down. Ben ties the reins to some scrub, shouting over the wind --

BEN

I'll try to flush him. He'll make for the horses, so pick a spot with a clear shot.

Jamie unhooks his music box from his saddle.

BEN

You get bored, try remembering the faces of those women he killed.

Jamie puts back the music box and takes his Brass Henry rifle. But as Ben heads for the rocks, Jamie has second thoughts.

Jamie nestles into a nook overlooking the horses. He sets his music box on a rock and lays his rifle across his lap.

BEN

picks his way through boulders, searching for his quarry.

JAMIE

admires the intricate carving on his music box. He fails to notice the appearance of a Comanche on the bluff overhead.

BEN

climbs higher. Scrutinizes the area. Nothing. He looks back, straining to see Jamie through the storm.

The wind dies, and he spots Jamie in the nook -- and a Comanche in war paint on the bluff right above. Ben's rifle snaps to his cheek -- but a cloud of dust obscures his target.

JAMIE

spots the Comanche. Finding courage, Jamie leaps out, knocking his music box off the rock. He aims his rifle up at the bluff --

But the Comanche is gone.

Jamie squeezes back in the nook. He hears the haunting melody and realizes his music box is down the path, giving him away.

BEN

races desperately back along the bluff.

JAMIE

scurries down, grabs the music box and shuts it off. He turns back to his nook -- an arrow whizzes out of a dust cloud and thuds into his shoulder. He fires his rifle blindly. A second arrow whizzes from the storm and thuds into his back.

As Jamie struggles to raise his rifle, the Comanche materializes behind him. Jamie turns. A knife slashes open his throat.

BEN

scrambles over the rocky terrain.

JAMIE

falls backward onto the ground. He stares up, helpless, as the Comanche leaps on him, plunging his knife down.

Ben charges out of the storm, firing his Winchester.

A bullet rips through the Comanche's shoulder, spinning him. A second shot tears through his chest. He falls, jerking in the dust as Ben empties his rifle into him.

Ben drops to his knees by Jamie. He tries to dam the flow of blood, but it's hopeless. Jamie stares up with pleading eyes. Ben cradles Jamie's head, grief cutting into him. A silent prayer. The melody winds down as Jamie dies in his arms.

EXT. DESOLATE HILLSIDE - DAY

A shovel protrudes from a mound of fresh earth. Next to it, Jamie's body lies wrapped in a blood-stained saddle blanket.

Gathered are a handful of Texas Rangers with hard, weather-beaten faces, going through an all-too-familiar routine. The tired voice of an OLD RANGER breaks the stillness.

OLD RANGER

We stand here today to pay our last respects to one James Ethan Stroud, a devoted son, and a good friend to all who have gathered here today.

He nods to Ben, who opens his worn Bible.

BEN

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet...  
...yet shall he live.

(MORE)

BEN (cont'd)  
 And whosoever liveth and believeth  
 in me... shall never die."

OLD RANGER  
 Earth to earth, ashes to ashes,  
 dust to dust...  
 (choking up)  
 Hell, you know the rest. Plant him  
 easy, boys.

The men lower the body with ropes. Then Ben holds a handful of earth over the grave and lets it sift through his fingers.

Rangers fill in the grave, then pay their respects. Each time someone claps Ben on the shoulder it chips away his stoic shell.

The Rangers make their way down the hill to the horses picketed below. Alone, broken, Ben silently reads the wood grave marker.

HERE LIES JAMES ETHAN STROUD  
 KILLED BY AN INDIAN  
 JULY 12, 1882  
 ANOTHER LIFE FOR TEXAS

Despondent, he sticks his son's star into the marker. He plucks his own star from his vest, examines at it with reverence, then sticks it in the marker beside his son's.

It takes all his strength to turn and walk away.

EXT. TEXAS DESERT - DAY

Ben rides across the forsaken landscape, leading Jamie's horse.

He crests a hill. In the distance he sees a fort, planted in the middle of nowhere.

EXT. MILITARY FORT - DAY

At the fort entrance, a man counts gold coins into Ben's hand, then leads Ben's horses inside.

LATER

Resigned, Ben sits on a bench outside the main gate. His bedroll is tied to his saddle, and he's not wearing his gun. It's deathly quiet, save the buzz of an occasional fly.

He pulls out a shiny new gold pocket watch with an engraved Texas star. He opens it and checks the time.

SERGEANT (O.S.)  
Thought I recognized your horse,  
Mister Stroud.

Ben gives a tired smile to a seasoned SERGEANT at the gate.

BEN  
Henry.

SERGEANT  
Can't help notice you're travelling  
kinda light.

BEN  
Hung 'em up.

SERGEANT  
I'll be jiggered. How you gonna  
live?

BEN  
Thought I'd try my luck in  
California. Land of opportunity.

SERGEANT  
California? Sure is a long way  
from Texas.

BEN  
Long way.

The men fall silent. Ben struggles with his grief.

SERGEANT  
I knew a man once went to  
California.

Ben waits for the rest, but that's all there is. Approaching hoofbeats get his attention. Seeing a four-horse stagecoach barreling toward the fort, he picks up his saddle.

EXT. TEXAS DESERT - DAY

Ben's saddle and roll sit on the rack behind the DRIVER and shotgun rider as the stagecoach bounces along the rough terrain.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - DAY

The sun rises over a desert of giant cacti. With three day's growth on his chin, Ben stares out the stagecoach window at a weathered sign: WELCOME TO ARIZONA TERRITORY. The mother of all vultures is perched on top.

EXT. BUTTERFIELD STATION - DAY

The stage rumbles towards a remote cluster of buildings.

Ben watches out the window as they pass a cemetery. An assembly of men listen to a gaunt giant reading from his Bible. In his black frock coat, CLAYTON resembles the Grim Reaper.

The stage pulls up at the depot office, behind a stage that's having its horses unhitched. The driver climbs down.

DRIVER

All right folks, we're getting fresh horses. Stretch your limbs and grab a bite. Stage leaves in thirty minutes, with or without you.

INT. BUTTERFIELD STATION SALOON - DAY

Ben steps into the gloomy saloon. He has it all to himself.

LATER

As Ben tucks into a bowl of stew at the far end of the bar, a group of men from the funeral burst in and step to the bar --

PATCH, a killer with a big scar running up under his eye-patch.

Weathered buffalo-hunters JASPER, a bear in a buffalo hide coat, and IKE, his weasel-faced little brother.

TROOPER, a muscular blue-jacketed cavalry deserter.

Tough as they are, they all give a wide berth to RED CHILLUM as he moves to the bar. The cocky redhead sports a pair of Colt single-action .45s, silver-plated with ivory grips. He wears them low and loose. You can sense the leashed violence.

RED

Whiskeys. Six.

Red looks down the bar. Ben glances up -- they lock eyes. Red grabs for his Colts. Ben doesn't move. So Red doesn't draw. Keeping his hands on his gun butts, Red steps closer.

RED

Well, well. If it isn't Texas Ranger Ben Stroud. Come all the way to Arizona Territory to arrest me. Make's a man feel significant.

Ben slowly, deliberately, rises from his stool.

Red grins, itching to gun him down. The others back away.

RED

Show me what you got.

Ben opens his coat. Red is disappointed to see he's not heeled.

BEN

Aren't you the lucky one.

Red quick-draws. Ben doesn't flinch. Red holsters his gun. He draws again, then spins and twirls his guns, showing off. And being a real prick about trying to intimidate Ben.

Only Ben isn't intimidated. And that really pisses Red off.

Red gestures to Patch, who slides his Frontier .45 down the bar.

Never taking his eyes off Red, Ben calmly hooks his baby finger through the trigger guard and lifts the Frontier. He swings the cylinder open with his thumb and the bullets spill onto the bar.

Red steps closer.

RED

If you think that's gonna stop me  
drilling holes in you...

Ignoring him, Ben moves to slide the Frontier back to Patch -- but suddenly whips it into Red's face.

Red staggers back, drawing his Colts. Ben tackles him, then grabs the Frontier and bashes Red, splitting his forehead open.

The others draw down on Ben, but he jams one of the Colts into Red's mouth and cocks it. A stalemate. No one moves.

Then Patch draws a bead on Ben with his pocket revolver.

BEN

Better pray you finish the job with  
your first shot, because I'll shoot  
your eye out before you squeeze off  
a second.

Ben's absolute confidence makes Patch waver. Then a commanding voice from the doorway takes his decision away.

CLAYTON

Hold there!

Clayton strides into the room, exuding authority. The men back away, part out of respect, more out of fear. Finding himself standing alone, Patch's bravado withers.



CLAYTON

There'll be no gunplay. We just finished burying one man. That's all I have the stomach for today.

Still glaring at Ben, the men holster their guns. Clayton looks down at the bleeding, unconscious Red.

CLAYTON

Jesus. Mister, we've got laws here against beating a man to death.

BEN

Glad to hear it. Got a law against gunslicks shooting unarmed men?

Clayton turns to the Bartender, who nods verification.

CLAYTON

Don't just stand there. Get Mrs. Barnaby. And tell her to bring her sewing kit.

The Bartender hurries out. Clayton sizes Ben up.

CLAYTON

Got a name?

BEN

Ben Stroud.

A flicker of recognition from Clayton.

CLAYTON

You're far from home, Mr. Stroud. He must be some serious outlaw.

BEN

This matchstick? Never saw him before. Sure thinks highly of himself, though.

CLAYTON

An acquaintance of my grandson's. Goes by the handle of Red Chillum.

The name means nothing to Ben. He takes Red's ivory-handled Colts and gives them an expert twirl, checking the balance as he admires their beauty.

CLAYTON

I'll have those.

Ben is dubious, so Clayton opens his coat, revealing a heavy Colt-Paterson in a holster. But it's the UNITED STATES MARSHAL star pinned to his vest that persuades Ben to give him the guns.

BEN

I'd be tempted to hide those. He'll be right ornery when he comes to.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

If he comes to.

Ben returns to his meal. Joining him, Clayton pours two drinks.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

It appears I might be short a man. Would you be looking?

BEN

Heading to California.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Endeavor's on the way. I'm paying fifty dollars a deputy. That's near a month's salary for a Ranger.

BEN

I've had my fill. I'm sure some of these boys'd chomp at the bit for a chance to earn fifty dollars.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Already deputized them.

BEN

Five deputies? Who you hunting, Geronimo?

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Man named Sam Hawke.

The name triggers something inside Ben. Something dark.

BEN

Do you know if there's a woman with him?

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Ride with us and find out. We start for Endeavor at dawn. What do you say?

Ben downs the whiskey. He surveys the crew of hired guns.

BEN

I say you're gonna need more men.

He plunks the empty glass upside down on the bar and gets up.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

He shot my grandson in the back.

BEN

I'm truly sorry about your grandson. But I think I'll pass this hand, if it's all the same.

He walks to the door.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

These boys aren't afraid of him.

Ben stops.

BEN

Some of them might live just long enough to realize their mistake.

He walks out into the light.

EXT. BUTTERFIELD STATION SALOON - DAY

Ben steps outside. He looks at his stage... then at the stage in front of it. Fresh horses are being harnessed.

Ben considers his options.

INT. DEPOT OFFICE - DAY

A clerk slides a new BUTTERFIELD ticket to Ben.

CLERK

There you are, sir. This route takes you south to Endeavor and on to Douglas. You'll rejoin the westbound line there. All you'll lose is a day, but it's going to be a bumpy ride.

Ben nods thanks as he takes the ticket.

INT. STAGECOACH - DAY

In the southbound stage, Ben is deep in thought, oblivious to the beautiful scenery passing by.

LATER

Ben is resting his eyes.

DRIVER (O.S.)  
Stopping for water, folks.  
Endeavor.

His eyes open.

AT THE ENDEAVOR DEPOT

The stage pulls up at the depot. The driver hops down to unhitch the horses.

Ben stares at a sign creaking in the wind: ENDEAVOR: POP. 140. Someone has crossed out 140 and written 5 in black paint.

The driver opens the spigot in the rain barrel, and water gushes into the trough. The horses surge forward to drink.

Finally, Ben swings open the door and steps out.

The only evidence of life is a grizzled old man staring out from a ticket wicket -- BUTTERS. He watches Ben like a hawk.

As Ben approaches, Butters remains deadpan. But his trembling hand moves to a ten-gauge Greener under the counter.

BEN  
Afternoon.

Butters gives a slight nod.

BEN  
I'm looking for a woman named Kate Stroud.

BUTTERS  
Stroud? No, can't honestly say I've heard that name.

Ben is crestfallen.

BEN  
What about a fella named Sam Hawke?

Butters tenses, and Ben knows the lie is coming.

BUTTERS  
Hawke, you say? Hawke... Nope.  
Not 'round these parts.

He glances past Ben at the driver re-hitching the first horse, silently praying for him to hurry up.

BEN  
Old friend of mine. Heard he was  
in town.

BUTTERS  
I know everyone comes 'n goes.

BEN  
There another stage to Douglas  
tomorrow?

BUTTERS  
Noon, but --

Ben walks to the end of the platform, under an arrowed sign:  
LORDSBURG-90 MILES. TUCSON-50 MILES. DOUGLAS-40 MILES.  
A fourth arrow points straight down: HELL-1 MILE.

Ben takes in the street. The buildings all appear new.  
Inviting storefronts with big display windows. But not a soul  
in sight. Eerie silence.

His eyes are drawn to brightly-painted signs on the facades --  
HAWKE'S DRESS SHOP... HAWKE'S BARBER SHOP & TONSORIAL PARLOR...  
HAWKE'S DRY GOODS & HARDWARE...

He glares back at Butters, who shuts the wicket. Lying old  
coot. The driver whistles for Ben.

Ben takes a last look back at the street. A sign catches his  
eye -- KATE BASSETT'S HOTEL & SALOON.

It's what he was hoping for. And dreading.

He pulls his saddle and bedroll off the stage. The driver  
cracks his whip, and the horses surge forward.

Ben opens his bedroll, revealing his .44 Colt Peacemaker in a  
gun belt. He straps it on, then heads down the street.

He passes the wood frame of a church under construction.

He stops in front of KATE BASSETT'S HOTEL & SALOON. He lingers  
on the name, finding the nerve to go in. But then he notices  
the SHERIFF'S OFFICE & JAIL at the end of the street.

## IN THE JAILHOUSE

Ben steps in and is immediately impressed. It's a fortress -- steel bars on windows, wood shutters with gun slots, steel-plated doors, racks of Winchesters and Martinis.

He wanders into --

## THE BACK ROOM

with two steel-barred cells, each with a pair of cots.

Stretched out on a cot, reading "Moby Dick", is LEE WADE. He's flamboyantly dressed in a crimson shirt, silver-studded gun leather, and boots polished to a perfect shine. He has a winning smile, boyish charm and not a care in the world. It's impossible not to like this guy.

BEN

You the only guest?

WADE

Plenty of room. Pick yourself a cage. Lots to read, too.

He nudges a box of books. Mostly primary school textbooks.

BEN

Sheriff around?

WADE

Nope.

Ben spots the shiny Adams .44 Double Action in Wade's holster.

BEN

It customary here to let prisoners keep their weapons?

WADE

Well that was the agreement I struck with the Deputy.

BEN

Agreement?

WADE

For me to come peaceable.

BEN

What was the charge?

WADE

This town appears to have some fool ordinance against falling down.

BEN

A man oughta learn how to handle his liquor.

WADE

My Achilles heel, I must confess. But I can handle most other things.

With a hint of menace behind his smile, he looks straight into Ben. Even behind bars, he drips with confidence.

Ben stares back, evaluating him.

BEN

If the Sheriff shows, I'll be at the hotel.

A flicker of interest in Wade's eyes.

OUTSIDE

Ben exits the jailhouse and heads for the hotel.

Butters appears around the corner of the jailhouse with his Greener. He watches Ben apprehensively, not sure what to do.

IN THE JAILHOUSE

Wade puts down his book and gets up. He ties his holster snug against his thigh. With a push, his cell door swings open.

OUTSIDE

Wade steps out onto the boardwalk.

BUTTERS

Where ya think ye'r goin'?

WADE

I don't want to miss the action.

BUTTERS

There ain't gonna be no action. We can handle him. He's just one man.

WADE

Man like that? One's all it takes. Had that tenacious feel about him.

(MORE)

WADE (cont'd)

Did you notice how worn his holster was? I'll bet he's quick too.

BUTTERS

Did ya or did ya not give yer word ya'd stay in jail 'til five bells?

WADE

Why, sure, but --

BUTTERS

But nothin'! Ye'r a man o' yer word, ain't ya?

A flash of ire from Wade, then he's all smiles again. He takes a single deliberate step back through the doorway. His eyes are glued to Ben entering the hotel.

Butters finds his nerve and starts for the hotel.

WADE

You watch yourself now, old-timer. He's danger, that one.

IN THE BASSETT HOTEL

The lobby shades are pulled, but even in the dim light Ben sees it's well-decorated with ornate furniture and classy paintings.

He walks to the front desk near the stairs to the second level. He spins the registration ledger around -- the page is empty.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Looking for something?

Tensing, Ben makes out a man in the shadows. A meek runt in glasses, WILLIAM is delicate for a lawman. The scatter gun helps make up for it, but it's an effort to appear calm.

BEN

Just a room.

WILLIAM

All full up.

BEN

Registry doesn't bear that out.

WILLIAM

The Jorgensen outfit booked the entire establishment for the week.



BEN

Since they don't appear to be in town today, I'm sure they wouldn't mind if I borrowed a room.

He signs the registry.

WILLIAM

It wouldn't be right if they did come into town tonight and one of them hasn't got a bed. So perhaps you'd best keep moving.

BEN

I was hoping to surprise an old friend. Thought maybe you'd have him locked up after that trouble the other day. Name of Sam Hawke.

Ben watches closely for his reaction. Sees him tense up.

WILLIAM

There hasn't been any trouble here, and there isn't going to be, if you understand my meaning.

BEN

You're making yourself clear enough...

(checking his badge)

...Deputy. Maybe I'd best speak with your Sheriff.

WILLIAM

The Sheriff's away.

(catching his mistake)

But he'll be back soon. Any time now.

Ben notices a rack of numbered room keys. Key #5 is missing.

BEN

Well, when he does, tell him I'm waiting for him in room six.

He reaches for key #6. The click of the scatter gun hammer being drawn back freezes him. He leaves the key on the rack.

BEN

Maybe I'll take a stroll through town first.

WILLIAM

My advice would be to keep riding.

BEN  
Can't. Sold my horse.

William follows Ben to the door, scatter gun at the ready.

Ben opens the door, but stops -- Butters is approaching with his Greener. Forced into a play, Ben slams the door into William's face. He drops like a sack of potatoes.

Ben grabs the scatter gun, tosses it behind the front desk, and races up the stairs.

IN THE HOTEL HALLWAY

Ben hurries down the hall, checking numbers. He stops at #5.

IN HAWKE'S BEDROOM

The door bursts open. Ben moves in fast and low. His Peacemaker pans the room, stopping on a man in bed.

His sweat-covered face contorted in pain, unable to defend himself, the great SAM HAWKE is dying. There's fear in his eyes as Ben draws down on him. Hawke glances at the pistol on the bedside table -- should he risk it?

BEN  
Jesus, Sam, I've seen corpses in better health than you.

HAWKE  
Can't all age graceful, Ben.

BEN  
We don't have much time.

Ben holsters his gun and moves to help Hawke up.

HAWKE  
Don't. Took a bullet in the back. Haven't got it out yet.

BEN  
Gotta move. Pair of guns coming up.

HAWKE  
They're mine.

BEN  
They're protecting you?

He reevaluates the situation.

BEN

Well I hope you're not paying them.

Hawke manages a smile.

LATER

Sitting on Hawke's bed, William holds a raw steak against his cheek, resentful. Ben and Butters fill the chairs.

BEN

(to William)

I just assumed you were holding him until this Marshal Clayton and his men showed.

BUTTERS

We figgered he sent you to do the job.

BEN

Don't think I wasn't tempted.

A look passes between Ben and Hawke. Quite a history here.

HAWKE

How many, Ben?

BEN

He's bought himself five deputies.  
(a slight grin)  
Maybe four.

BUTTERS

Lord help us.

WILLIAM

How are we supposed to stop a Marshal and five hired guns?

BEN

Ask him. He got you into this.

Ben finally comes to what's really on his mind.

BEN

I need to find her, Sam.

HAWKE

What makes you think she's here?

BEN

You're here. That and the sign outside with her maiden name in six foot high letters.

HAWKE

I don't imagine she's too keen on being found by you.

BEN

James is dead.

Hawke is genuinely moved.

HAWKE

No! Little Jamie? I am sorry, Ben. He was a fine boy. A fine boy. I can't imagine sadder news. It's going to break Kate's heart. How'd it happen?

BEN

Where is she?

HAWKE

She rode off this morning, searching for the doc.

BEN

Don't think you've got the time. Best get that bullet out now.

Ben pulls out his skinning knife. The sight of the glinting blade puts Hawke on edge.

HAWKE

Oh, I don't mind waiting a while longer. Not a bit.

BEN

What's the matter, Sam? Wouldn't be the first bullet I've taken out of you.

(realizing Sam's concern)

Oh, that. Well don't you worry yourself. I've had three years to get over it. Three years and six weeks.

Ben twirls the knife, blade flashing, then stabs it into the table beside the whiskey bottle. He fills a small glass.

BEN

Start drinking.

Seeing the menace in Ben's eyes, Hawke is reluctant.

WILLIAM

Perhaps we should wait for the doctor.

BEN

You're right. He'll probably die before the doc shows, and your problems are over.

William looks to Hawke to see what he wants to do.

Hawke stares at Ben, trying to ascertain his intentions. Finally, Hawke reaches past the glass and grabs the bottle.

HAWKE

To old friends.

He gulps down the whiskey.

LATER

Hawke lies in a drunken stupor. William stands beside Ben, holding a pair of tongs. Ben cuts into the wound. Hawke moans. William turns away, not up to this. Butters steps forward and takes the tongs.

BEN

So how'd he manage to rope you two into this?

WILLIAM

He helped me out of a jam once.

BEN

What about you -- Butters, is it? Your reason any better?

BUTTERS

Don't need no reason. Sam's my friend.

Ben can't dismiss that so easily. The sound of hoofbeats draws William to the window.

WILLIAM

It's Kate. Alone.

Ben is lost in thought a moment. Then he takes the tongs and starts digging for the bullet. Hawke moans more deeply.

Footsteps hurry up the hall. Ben glances up as a woman enters -- KATE BASSETT, 40s, alluring as hell. Seeing someone standing over Hawke with a bloody knife, she raises her Winchester.

BEN  
Primed to finish me off, are you?

Stunned, she lowers her rifle.

KATE  
Ben? What...?

He holds up the bloody bullet, then plunks it into the glass of whiskey. Crimson blood swirls in the amber liquid.

LATER

William and Butters are gone. Hawke sleeps as Ben scrubs the blood off his hands in a basin of soapy water.

KATE  
I didn't think you could ever leave Texas. It was hard enough for me. But I just couldn't bear --

BEN  
You never saw him before, this fellow got shot?

KATE  
No. Just a couple of passing bucks who couldn't resist the temptation of cold beer and hot cards. Ben... I know it must be difficult for you to understand my reasons for --

BEN  
Boy's grandfather claims Sam shot him in the back.

KATE  
Bunk!

BEN  
You saw it play out?

KATE  
No, but you can't believe Sam is capable of something like that?

BEN  
I'm sometimes surprised at what Sam is capable of.

Stung, Kate turns away. She picks up a water jug to rinse the blood from Ben's hands.

KATE

You still haven't told me why Jamie didn't come with you.

He struggles to find the words. Can't meet her gaze.

KATE

No...

Ben looks up in anguish, confirming her worst fear. The jug slips from her hands and crashes on the floor. She's in agony. Ben wants desperately to explain, but the words don't come.

KATE

Damn you, Ben. Damn you to hell.

Her words cut Ben to the bone.

INT. KATE'S BEDROOM - DAY

In a second-story bedroom decorated with items of refinement, Kate sits on the edge of her bed, steeling herself against the grief. She won't allow herself to cry in front of Ben.

Ben stares out the window.

KATE

I always knew it would come to this. Ever since you encouraged him to join up. I did my mourning the day you pinned a star on him.

BEN

You should have been proud that day. And I didn't encourage him.

KATE

All he wanted was to earn your respect. You knew the danger he'd be in. You could have talked him out of it.

BEN

His mind was set for a long time. Nothing I could do to change it. I think his stubbornness comes from your side.

KATE

Don't! Don't you dare blame me...

BEN

There's no blame to be given.  
A man chooses his own path.

KATE

He wasn't a man. He was a boy.

BEN

If you'd stayed, you'd have seen  
how fast he grew up.

KATE

Was he shot? Did you let our son  
get shot down in the street,  
bringing law to Texas?

BEN

It wasn't outlaws. It was Comanche.

KATE

Oh God! Oh god, Ben. Did they...?

The question dies in her throat, too horrific to ask.

BEN

No. No, I was with him.

Struggling to regain her composure, she plucks a photo from the edge of her mirror -- Jamie as a boy. Next to it is a picture of Kate, Ben and Hawke taken twenty years ago. Best friends.

KATE

I sent him a music box for his  
birthday. Did he get it?

Ben fights back a surge of anger.

BEN

He did. It was a sentimental tune,  
but he was partial to it.

She begins humming it to herself. He can't bear to hear it.

BEN

I'm not staying, Kate. This isn't  
my fight.

His words don't register. She's withdrawn into her sorrow. Ben starts to leave, but he's surprised by something on her dresser --

A silver-framed wedding photograph. Ben, in a suit, sits in a chair. Kate stands beside him, in a wedding gown. So young.



INT. HOTEL KITCHEN - DAY

Wearing an apron, Butters hovers over five steaks sizzling on the long grill. Ben searches the cupboards for plates.

BEN

So what happened to this town?  
Where's everyone hiding?

BUTTERS

Oh, she went to boomin' a while  
back. Never seen a town spring up  
outta the dust like that.

BEN

Gold?

BUTTERS

Silver. Thought we was the next  
Virginia City. People throwin'  
money 'round like dust in a  
windstorm. Buildin' like termites.  
Even started us a school.

He glances at William sitting in the corner cleaning his glasses, trying not to let the fear take hold.

BEN

How long before it went bust?

BUTTERS

Played out quick, all right.  
Everyone picked up stakes 'n headed  
fer other strikes or bigger towns.

BEN

How is it you're all still here?

As Ben counts out five fancy china plates, Kate waltzes in, wearing a brave face.

KATE

Oh, there's still money to be made.  
Got a couple of big cattle spreads  
nearby, and homesteaders along the  
river. They all come for supplies.

She replaces the good china with the everyday plates.

WILLIAM

And drinking, and gambling. The  
town gets remarkably busy come  
Saturday.

Kate shoos Butters from the grill and takes over, trying to keep occupied.

BEN

Well, you're going to be right busy tomorrow. How many others in town will stand with you?

WILLIAM

You don't understand. This is the town.

BEN

Well, what about that Fancy Dan in the jailhouse?

BUTTERS

Why, that feller's Lee Wade.

BEN

That supposed to mean something?

BUTTERS

It will. Rode into town yesterday--

WILLIAM

-- had two glasses of beer, shot up the bison head over the bar, and passed out. I really don't think he's going to be much help.

BUTTERS

Wouldn't hurt none to ask. Sure even the odds a might.

KATE

He's fast, is he?

BUTTERS

Never seen faster.

That's enough to make Kate start scheming.

WILLIAM

He draws on a dead bison and you all think he's Wild Bill Hickok.

INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM - DAY

Kate leads the men into the fancy dining room with their meals. Ben notices a huge brass bell on the sideboard.

BEN

Mighty large dinner bell.

KATE

It was for the church. Things went sour before we finished building. It came all the way from New York.

They pass under a fancy crystal chandelier.

KATE

That's from Boston. Candlesticks are from Philadelphia. The buffalo head came from Omaha. I've got something in the hotel from every state and territory.

BEN

You've done pretty well for yourself, Kate. Finally got those finer things in life you always hankered for.

Kate detects a trace of bitterness. She gestures for everyone to sit at the table. Wade wanders in from the adjoining saloon.

WILLIAM

Well if it isn't the great bison hunter. Returning to finish the job?

Wade gives a sheepish grin. Seeing Butters glaring, he points to the clock -- it's past five. He turns to Kate, all charm.

WADE

No, I've come to apologize for my most egregious behavior yesterday. I don't know what to say, except the sight of a beautiful woman, a truly beautiful woman, has been known to bring out my wild side.

KATE

(an alluring smile)  
And here I was thinking it was just the beer. William, would you kindly throw on another steak?

As William reluctantly heads for the kitchen, Wade takes a seat. Ben and Butters tuck in, but Kate has no appetite.

BEN

That Deputy... Kind of green. Nervous type, too.

BUTTERS

That's 'cause he ain't no deputy.

KATE

William's a schoolteacher.  
He arrived just as everyone was  
pulling out. No pupils, no job.  
Now he just helps out with things.

BUTTERS

Sheriff lets 'm wear a badge 'cause  
he helps herd the drunks into jail  
Saturday nights.

BEN

Jesus.

WADE

He's a determined little fella.  
Got to give him that.

BEN

What about this Sheriff? He due  
back soon?

BUTTERS

Some homesteaders near San Carlos  
was gettin' jumpy 'cause of a  
couple a' Apaches turned renegade.  
Anyone fool 'nuff to plant stakes  
by a reservation deserves trouble.

KATE

He said he'd be back by tomorrow  
noon. Is that soon enough?

BEN

The posse is riding from the  
Butterfield Station at dawn. Be  
late afternoon before they reach  
here.

BUTTERS

Then we got us time to prepare.  
What d'ya reckon we should do?

BEN

You could finish building that  
church. Give you somewhere to  
pray.

Butters stops eating, appetite ruined. Ben questions Wade.

BEN

What about it? Got a stake in  
this?

WADE

Well, I try to avoid sticking my nose in where it doesn't belong. Besides, a man's got to have a good reason to risk getting himself killed.

Ben doesn't like the way Wade surveys Kate as he says this. And he especially doesn't like the coquettish way she looks back.

EXT. BUTTERFIELD STATION - NIGHT

As the sun sets, the wind kicks up swirls of dust.

INSIDE

At the bar, Jasper and Ike load a lethal assortment of Sharps Carbines and Remington Rolling Blocks. At a table, Patch and Trooper dig into boxes of cartridges and fill their gun belts.

Red polishes his silver Colts until they gleam. There's a nasty wound on his forehead held together by six big stitches.

Clayton walks the room, handing out DEPUTY MARSHAL badges.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

You're lawmen now. Remember that. This is a righteous act. There should be no need for gunplay.

RED

Well I'm just confused all to hell. I thought that's why you hired us?

MARSHAL CLAYTON

I need a show of force to prevent anyone from getting some fool idea about stopping me. That's all.

RED

Well I signed on thinking --

MARSHAL CLAYTON

We're going to hang Sam Hawke. Legal. Am I understood?

He locks eyes with Red. Red stares, then gives a little nod.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Good. We ride at sun-up. Get some sleep.

Clayton leads Patch and Trooper out. Staying behind with Jasper and Ike, Red rolls a cigarette from a wisp of paper and tobacco shaken from a small pouch.

RED

Don't suppose you boys happen to share in my disappointment?

JASPER

Not much living in buffalo-hunting these days. We don't mind making an easy fifty just to swing a man.

Jasper pulls a Sharps .50 caliber buffalo gun from its buckskin scabbard, then opens a box of cartridges. Red pulls one out. It's huge. He gives an admiring whistle.

IKE

It'll take down a buffalo at two hundred yards.

RED

What this'd do to a man.

JASPER

Marshal Clayton seems pretty set on a hanging.

Red takes the buffalo gun from him.

RED

Hell, I've seen men hanged before.

He aims the gun around the room.

RED

Never seen one shot with a buffalo gun.

He pulls the trigger -- click.

EXT. ENDEAVOR - NIGHT

Under a sky dripping with stars, the town seems insignificant. Lantern-light from the hotel windows spills into the street.

IN HAWKE'S BEDROOM

Hawke is propped up in bed, weak and pale, eyes shut. Sitting vigil, Kate holds his hand. Ben knocks softly at the open door.

BEN

How is he?

HAWKE

He's in pain, is how he is. What did you dig it out with, a trowel?

Uncomfortable, Kate leaves so the men can talk.

KATE

Don't you get him riled.

Ben takes her chair.

HAWKE

Didn't imagine I'd be thanking you for taking a bullet out of me. Putting another one in seemed a better bet.

BEN

There appears to be someone with an even more deserving claim.

HAWKE

Who? That Marshal? I hope you're not thinking I just up and shot his grandson in the back?

BEN

Well I haven't heard you defend yourself.

HAWKE

I shouldn't have to. Not to you.

BEN

You think because we were friends once...

HAWKE

That all you think we are? Friends once?

Ben doesn't respond, but Hawke's words really hit home.

HAWKE

Maybe if you knew the whole story. About me and Kate.

BEN

I don't need it spelled out! And we don't have a lot of time. There are men coming to kill you. So what I need to hear is how you shot that boy.

HAWKE

Suit yourself. Pull up a glass.

Ben pours himself three fingers of whiskey.

HAWKE

It was a hell of a streak I was riding that night. Lady Luck was smiling bright. The little pissant was well down when he deals himself a full house. Starts betting like a Frenchman. And there I am, sitting in the weeds with the whole royal family of spades.

Ben grabs the deck of cards from the table and starts dealing out two rummy hands on the bed.

HAWKE

All the years I've been playing stud, never been dealt a royal flush. When I laid down, he called me a cheat. A cheat. Me. You ever known me to cheat?

Ben lets the question hang, making Hawke uncomfortable.

BEN

He drew first?

HAWKE

Even stood up to give himself room. He barely cleared his holster when I had him in my sights. Should've burned him down right then.

BEN

Well why didn't you?

HAWKE

Something about the look on his face as he realized he was about to die. I just couldn't pull the trigger. Aw hell, I don't know. Must be getting soft in my old age.

BEN

That'll be the day.

HAWKE

The dog snuck back later and plugged me from the doorway. I threw a shot as I went down.

(MORE)



HAWKE (cont'd)  
 Guess he'd already turned to run.  
 Caught the coward in the back.

BEN  
 (not believing him)  
 Lucky shot.

HAWKE  
 Some nights Lady Luck's a  
 mean-spirited bitch.

Hawke picks a card from the deck to begin the game.

BEN  
 Royal flush? Never had one myself.  
 Clubs, you say?

HAWKE  
 Spades. You're not doubting my  
 word, are you, Ben?

BEN  
 I'm sure the other players will  
 back you. Who filled the chairs?

HAWKE  
 You interrogating me? 'Cause I  
 heard you gave up being a lawman.

BEN  
 Well I just never heard of a  
 gunfight where both men got shot in  
 the back. 'Course, you always did  
 like to do things a little  
 different.

HAWKE  
 Can't hold a candle to you, Ben.  
 Remember that time in El Dorado  
 when that ten-dollar whore stole  
 your horse? And you ran her down  
 buck naked, right through that  
 Fourth of July parade?

BEN  
 That was you, Sam.

HAWKE  
 Was it? Ha! So it was. By god,  
 we had some times, you and me.

BEN  
 We did at that.

Hawke winces in pain as he picks up his glass for a toast.

HAWKE

Old times.

Sensing Ben's lack of enthusiasm as he takes a sip, Hawke knows he still has some convincing to do.

HAWKE

When Kate said you turned in your star, I near fell out of bed. You're not one to quit on anything. A man like you might as well have the star tattooed on your behind.

Ben pulls out his gold pocket watch and hands it to Hawke.

BEN

Boys passed the hat. Got me this keepsake. I hear even Dan Kelly threw in.

HAWKE

All those years of putting your life on the line and this is all you get? Jesus. Glad I got out when I did.

(spots the inscription)

Oh hey, there's a sentiment. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice..."

His cynicism vanishes. He's moved. Finally, he hands it back.

HAWKE

You're a blessed man, Ben.

BEN

Well you best keep reminding me.

Ben pockets his watch.

BEN

This Sheriff returning tomorrow. What's he like?

HAWKE

He's a loathsome, hard-nosed son of a bitch, is what he's like.

BEN

Think he can talk Clayton out of his plans?

HAWKE

Well, he's not much of a talker.  
More a man of action. Won't back  
down from anyone, no matter what  
the odds. Reminds me of you.  
In your younger days, I mean.

Ben lets the dig slide.

BEN

So he'll help.

HAWKE

A bunch of gunmen ride into his  
town to string up an innocent  
poker chum? If you're looking for  
a fresh start, tomorrow might be a  
profitable time to get into the  
undertaking business.

But he sees Ben is in no mood for humor.

HAWKE

Aw, hell. You're right to fold  
your hand and get out while you  
can. That's the smart play.  
That'd be my move.

They both know it's a lie. An awkward silence falls over them  
as they play on. Finally, Ben can't hold it in any longer.

BEN

Why'd you do it, Sam?

HAWKE

What, Kate? I was surprised as  
Custer when she stepped off the  
stage. There was never anything  
between me and Kate.

BEN

I remember how you used to look at  
her.

HAWKE

And did you ever once see that same  
look returned?

BEN

You telling me you never shared her  
bed?

HAWKE

She was loyal to you 'til the day she left, which in my book qualifies her for sainthood.

BEN

Know a lot about sainthood, do you?

HAWKE

This town's been good for her, Ben. She's done wonders with the hotel. She's finally got an opportunity to make something of her life.

BEN

She had a life.

HAWKE

Did she? The only thing tougher than being a Ranger is being a Ranger's wife. Or a Ranger's mother. And you made her both.

The truth burns into Ben. He's lost his stomach for cards.

IN KATE'S BEDROOM

Kate clutches a photo to her bosom as she rocks back and forth on her bed, lost in thought. Forcing herself to face the world, she gets up and walks out, leaving behind the photo of Jamie.

IN THE HOTEL SALOON

Kate wanders into her elegant saloon. Green felt poker tables, a quality piano, an ornate mahogany bar. Nothing but the best. She spots Ben at the bar, huddled over a bottle and shot glass.

Ignoring him, she uses a rope-and-pulley system to lower one of the huge wagon wheels from the ceiling. One by one, she extinguishes the oil lanterns mounted on it.

Ben watches her with sad longing. He fills a second glass.

BEN

Have a drink, Kate. Imagine you could use one.

She glances over, but continues working.

BEN

We'll put him on a buckboard first thing. You can hide him out somewhere 'til this blows over.

KATE

Sam's not about to let someone run him out of his own town. I suppose you could try forcing him, but they'd track him down. That's if the ride didn't kill him first. No, his only real chance is to make a stand here. With us.

BEN

There is no us, Kate. You saw to that.

Ben sloshes more whiskey into his glass and tosses it back. Kate takes a stool beside him.

KATE

He's a proud man, Ben. He'll never come right out and ask for your help. So I'm asking for him.

BEN

Do you love him?

KATE

I owe him.

Not the answer he expected.

BEN

Well I don't.

KATE

You're just going to turn your back and ride away? After all your talk about how Texas Rangers never back down from trouble, no matter what the odds?

BEN

I'm not a Ranger any more.

KATE

Taking off that star doesn't change who you are.

BEN

It's not a bunch of outlaws coming after him this time, it's the law.

KATE

You'd pick the law over Sam's life? You believe in the law that much?

BEN

I used to believe in all kinds of things. Like the loyalty of friends... the sanctity of marriage... Yeah, I believe in the law. It's all I've got left.

KATE

Oh don't play the martyr card.

BEN

I've sacrificed everything to uphold the law. Everything. And I'm not about to cast aside my principles now. Not on the man who stole my wife.

KATE

He didn't steal me. You gave me away. Bit by bit.

He doesn't grasp her meaning.

KATE

Every time you left me and Jamie to go off hunting a wanted man across the state. Every time you put the star ahead of your family. You gave me up for Texas. No sacrifice was too great for her. Do you know how that felt? Knowing you were more devoted to Texas than to me?

BEN

Maybe Texas needed me more. You never did understand. Not really.

KATE

What, that you were trying to make a better world for our son to grow up in? Only while you were off doing that, you missed seeing him grow up. And once he did, you pinned a star on him and took him from me. And now he's dead. And the world's still no better than before.

BEN

Well thanks for pointing out the irony. It almost escaped me.

KATE

Time to call it a night.

She tries to take the bottle away, but he grabs her wrist.

BEN

You gave up the right to tell me  
what to do when you ran off to be  
with him.

KATE

I didn't run off to be with him.  
I ran off to get away from you.

She sees the hurt in his eyes and regrets saying it.  
He takes the bottle back, then lets go of her wrist.

BEN

I'm leaving on tomorrow's stage.  
And I don't give a damn what  
happens to Sam.

KATE

We both know that's not true. You  
were joined at the hip too long to  
give up on him now. You got off  
that stage --

BEN

To find you.

KATE

Then if you won't stay for him,  
stay for me.

BEN

You do have nerve, Kate.  
Always admired you for that.

She snatches the bottle and marches into the dining room.  
Brooding, Ben catches his reflection in the mirror. Doesn't  
like what he sees. He hurls his glass at it.

EXT. BUTTERFIELD STATION CORRAL - DAWN

The sun rises on the five deputies, gathered at the corral with  
their horses. Red looks disdainfully over at three dangerous  
MEXICANS standing off to one side. Two are bearded, the third  
is tall and in a gaudy green vest. They're all listening to --

Clayton, in his black frock coat, reading from his pocket Bible.  
His breath is visible in the cool air.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

"...defend us in battle; be our  
defense against the wickedness and  
snares of the devil."

As he closes his Bible, a meek little man in a bowler hat rides up with a big coil of rope -- HARVEY. The small .32 caliber pocket pistol tucked in his waist looks like a toy, and his horse is nothing to brag about.

HARVEY

Morning, Mr. Clayton. I calculated thirty feet should be enough.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Sounds about right. Thank you, Harvey.

Clayton takes the rope. Nervous, Harvey gathers his courage.

HARVEY

I was hoping maybe...

But Clayton has turned his attention to another man riding up -- SOUR BOB, mean and loaded heavy with guns, has the appearance of a man who has killed more than his share.

SOUR BOB

I hear you're paying fifty a man, Marshal.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Sour Bob. You understand it's a hanging I want, not a shooting. You think you can keep that temper of yours in check?

SOUR BOB

For fifty dollars I'd even sit with you in church.

Clayton nods consent, and Sour Bob joins the others.

HARVEY

Marshal, if you're still hiring...

Seeing he's about to say no, Harvey puffs himself up. There's hunger and determination in his eyes.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

If you're sure about this, Harvey, I can always use another good man.

Harvey isn't sure at all, but he's desperate for the money.

HARVEY

Thank you, Mr. Clayton. I won't let --



MARSHAL CLAYTON  
 (to the others)  
Saddle up!

He and the deputies mount. Clayton wheels his horse and leads the eleven-man posse away in a cloud of dust.

INT. HAWKE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ben puts a plate of breakfast on the table beside the sleeping Hawke. A gunshot outside. Ben ducks and scrambles to the window, drawing his gun. Another shot. Adrenaline pumping, he peers out at --

-- William shooting at targets set up by the jail.

Ben slumps to the floor, relieved.

HAWKE  
 You truly aren't much in the  
 mornings, are you?

It's almost enough to make Ben laugh.

INT. SALOON - DAY

Wade saunters in. Kate stops stocking the bar and offers him her best smile.

KATE  
 It's a might early to have a thirst  
 to quench.

WADE  
 It's a hunger I've come to satisfy.

He undresses her with his eyes.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Wade digs into an impressive breakfast. Across the table, Kate sips coffee, brazenly flirting.

KATE  
 Why, shame on you, Mr. Wade. I do  
 believe you could charm the horns  
 off a steer. I said to myself the  
 moment I saw you -- now there's a  
 man who could handle himself if  
 trouble came calling.

Knowing what she's up to, he decides to have some fun.

WADE

Why, I do have my own way of handling trouble.

KATE

Do tell, Mr. Wade. Just how does a man like you handle trouble?

WADE

I avoid it. Life's too much fun to go shortening it.

He enjoys the disappointment on her face.

KATE

You carry an awfully impressive weapon for someone who claims to avoid trouble. Is it just for decoration, or do you know how to use it?

WADE

Well a man can't keep his pistol holstered all the time. Needs a periodic oiling, else it'll go to rusting. Still, a man needs a mighty powerful reason to go risking his life.

His seductive glance evokes a smile.

KATE

I guess that all depends on how good you are, Mr. Wade.

He drains his coffee.

WADE

I haven't had any grievances so far. And I confess, there are times I'm ready to go to shooting at the drop of a hat.

KATE

Oh my.

Kate feigns embarrassment as she reaches for the coffee pot.

BEN (O.S.)

Yeah, I had you pegged for someone who shoots prematurely.

Ben strides up. Ever the gentleman, he takes the pot and warms up Kate's cup. He doesn't bother refilling Wade's.

BEN

The trouble with being all speed  
and flash is you end up shooting up  
a whole room trying to hit the  
target. Likely empty your cylinder  
before you get the job done.

Ben is getting under Wade's skin. And liking it.

BEN

No, the key is technique and  
timing.

He demonstrates his draw to Kate, making it erotic.

BEN

Gotta get the right motion going.  
Barrel's gotta slip in and out of  
the holster real smooth.

He performs a series of draws, adding some flourishes and  
getting a good rhythm going. Kate is thoroughly enjoying the  
show. This is the man she fell in love with.

BEN

And you gotta know when to pull the  
trigger. No sense in shooting  
before your target's popped up.

Kate's blush is genuine now.

BEN

My apologies, Katie. All this talk  
of violence is making you flush.

He pours a glass of water and holds it out. She grasps it, but  
he holds on, staring into her eyes. Then he turns to Wade.

BEN

But maybe it's a different strategy  
for a small-caliber weapon.  
(a meaningful stare)  
Either way, you'd best keep your  
pistol holstered.

Dismissing Wade, he turns to Kate. He misses the flash of rage  
in Wade's eyes.

BEN

(now solemn)  
Time to say goodbye, Kate.

KATE

Well, okay. Goodbye, Ben.

She still doesn't believe he'll leave. Ben was hoping for so much more. He stands there awkwardly.

BEN

Well... So long, Kate.

He heads out. Kate tries to incite Wade.

KATE

He's quite a man, isn't he?

WADE

Well he knows how to talk.

OUTSIDE

Ben steps from the hotel. Shielding his eyes from the sun, he checks out the action down the street --

-- where William practices drawing on a dress-makers' dummy and a half-dozen bottles set on a railing. Bang.

He's fairly fast, but the bottles are in no imminent danger. Ben checks his watch -- 11:35. He has time. He heads over.

William returns his six-gun to its holster, then draws again. Bang -- he misses. Ben steps up beside him.

BEN

You're firing before the barrel's steady. Draw fast, but take an extra tick to steady your aim.

William draws again -- bang -- and misses again.

BEN

Stop trying to shoot so fast. See, William, it's not a man's speed that wins out, it's his head. Judging what the other man's gonna do.

He realizes William isn't up to this.

BEN

But I guess that's a skill you don't have time to develop. Look, if your Sheriff doesn't get back in time to stop this madness, and you find yourself in a jam... Hell, you even think a man's going to pull iron, you shoot first.

WILLIAM

That hardly sounds fair.

BEN

Fair! That what you want on your marker? Here lies a fair man? Am I even making a dent? Oh hell, I suppose one less schoolteacher in the world isn't going to make a whit of difference.

That hits home.

BEN

And if you draw, you better be aiming to kill the man, because he's sure as hell aiming to kill you. So shoot twice -- you'll be shaking so much you're liable to miss with the first shot.

Ben draws fast, takes an extra split second to aim, and fires. A bottle explodes.

IN HAWKE'S BEDROOM

Hawke is in bed. Wade is at the window, watching Ben.

WADE

Kate's thinking he'll change his mind about staying. What's your view?

HAWKE

Once he sets his mind on something, he's not one to waver.

Ben draws and fires again. Bang -- another bottle explodes.

WADE

He's not as fast as I expected.

HAWKE

You just wait until his adrenal gland starts pumping. The man's a regular pinwheel.

WADE

Think that's a sight I'd like to see.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - DAY

Clayton and his posse are riding hard. Sweating leather. Hoofbeats pounding. It's a menacing sight.

EXT. ENDEAVOR DEPOT - DAY

The sun beats down on Ben on the bench, clutching his Butterfield ticket. Guilt eats into him. As he checks his pocket watch, Butters calls over from the ticket window.

BUTTERS  
T'aint usually this late.

Wade appears.

WADE  
I figured you were too smart for  
this mousetrap.

Ben ignores him.

WADE  
It makes no sense to get yourself  
killed helping someone who stole  
your wife. Doesn't matter how many  
times he saved your life.

Seeing he's getting under Ben's skin, he keeps pressing.

WADE  
Then again, the stage being late...  
You must be wondering if that's a  
sign you're meant to stay on a mite  
longer. You do believe in signs,  
don't you, Ben?

Ben's had enough. He gets up.

BEN  
Look --

But he spots something past Wade. Wade follows his gaze.

In the distance a rider slowly approaches. The image shimmers in the heat, hard to make out. Then the sun glints off a badge.

BUTTERS  
It's the Sheriff.

Ben is flooded with relief.

BEN  
 (to himself)  
 Deliverance on a horse.

AT THE JAILHOUSE

William stops practicing his draw, seeing the rider in the distance.

IN THE SALOON

Kate notices William stride past the window.

AT THE DEPOT

William and Kate join Ben, Wade and Butters, all eyes on the rider. As he nears, their expressions turn to horror.

WILLIAM  
 Mother of God.

The Sheriff's body is tied to two intersecting poles lashed to his saddle. Porcupined with arrows. The horse limps up to them and stops. Flies buzz all around.

KATE  
 Apache.

Wade scans the horizon.

BUTTERS  
 Relax, son. They got no reason to bother us here.

Butters pulls a U.S. MAIL saddlebag off the horse. He yanks out the arrow stuck in it, then examines the envelopes inside.

BUTTERS  
 They're all for folks in Douglas.

BEN  
 Douglas?

BUTTERS  
 This here's from the southbound stage.

Ben feels the noose tighten.

WADE  
 Guess you'll be staying now.

Ben clenches his fist, crumpling his Butterfield ticket.  
He lets it fall to the ground.

INT. HAWKE'S BEDROOM - DAY

The door bursts open. Hawke raises his scatter gun -- but relaxes when it's only Ben and William.

BEN  
Change of plans, Sam.

WILLIAM  
The Sheriff's dead!

A glimmer of fear escapes Hawke.

INT. JAILHOUSE - DAY

Ben and William carry Hawke in on a cot.

BEN  
I figure all those people who come  
into town Saturdays... you likely  
have friends among them.

They put him in a corner.

HAWKE  
Some. Kate's the popular one.

Kate bustles in with a crate of beer, followed by Butters carrying a case of tinned beans and the dead Sheriff's gun belt and bloodied silver TOWN MARSHAL badge. He puts them by Hawke.

HAWKE  
What's with all the beans?

BEN  
It's a near fortress in here.  
Should be easy enough to hold out  
for two days until your friends  
show.

Wade steps in.

WADE  
I hear that was their strategy at  
the Alamo.

BEN  
Make yourself useful or get out!

Wade just settles into a chair with "Moby Dick".



WILLIAM

Do you really think this Marshal  
and his hired guns will back down  
if we've got more people?

BEN

He's not looking for a bloodbath.  
(to Hawke)  
He'll at least take pause long  
enough to hear your side. A chance  
to change his mind might be the  
best you can hope for.

Hawke takes his fear out on Butters, who's stacking tins of  
beans.

HAWKE

It's only two days, Butters!  
That's enough beans for a month!

BUTTERS

Well I ain't takin' no chances!

HAWKE

How about some real food?

BUTTERS

If a man don't like beans, he's  
livin' in the wrong country.

KATE

Relax, Sam. We'll bring more  
supplies. I know what you like.

Butters and William follow her out.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The deputies huddle around a small fire, eating beans from tins  
as they watch Red's display of fancy gun-twirling. He ends with  
a quick-draw -- three quick shots blast apart a cactus.

Everyone is impressed. But Sour Bob doesn't want to give him  
the satisfaction.

SOUR BOB

Pretty sure you drew first there,  
Red.

The others stifle their laughs, afraid of angering Red.

Red turns on Sour Bob. Everyone tenses.

RED  
Yeah? Well, he had it comin'.

Everyone chuckles, relieved Red has a sense of humor. Red wanders over to Clayton, who sits apart reading his Bible.

RED  
Don't you fret, Marshal Clayton.  
We'll avenge Morgan's murder.

MARSHAL CLAYTON  
God forgive me, I wish you'd gunned  
that man down right then and there.

RED  
It's like I told you, he had too  
many friends backing his play.

Clayton snaps his Bible shut.

MARSHAL CLAYTON  
Saddle up!

INT. JAILHOUSE - DAY

Hawke polishes the dried blood off the TOWN MARSHAL badge and offers it to Ben.

BEN  
Save your breath.

Ben moves around the room putting a rifle and a shotgun, and boxes of ammo, next to each window.

HAWKE  
Peaceful town like this?  
(now serious)  
The Sheriff had three weeks pay  
coming. It's yours.

BEN  
Pass.

Wade glances up from his book.

WADE  
Say, how about me? I look good in  
silver.

HAWKE  
You going to be a help, or just sit  
there?

WADE

Well, I'd like to see how this story comes out.

HAWKE

They find the fucking whale, it sinks their ship and kills Captain Ahab! You busy now?

With a dramatic sigh, Wade closes the book.

WADE

Guess I'll go volunteer for sandwich duty.

He heads out the door. Ben follows.

HAWKE

Where you going?

BEN

California. Like I said.

HAWKE

Hell of a walk.

BEN

The Sheriff's horse might have just enough life to get me to Douglas.

HAWKE

God Damn! You're really going to abandon me? After all those times I saved your neck? In Abilene, and Laredo...

BEN

I don't need to be reminded.

HAWKE

I'm thinking you do! What if they storm the jail as soon as they hit town? You really think William and Butters can hold them off? You want their deaths on your hands?

Ben steps back in, unleashing his pent up anger.

BEN

They made their choice! I'm making mine!

HAWKE

And what about Kate?

BEN

You should've thought about her before you shot that boy in the back! Kate can do what she wants. But I'm not about to jeopardize my life defending you!

HAWKE

Why the hell not? What have you got left to lose?

The starch drains out of Ben, and he collapses into a chair.

HAWKE

What in the hell happened to you?

When Ben finally speaks, there's defeat in his voice.

BEN

"Here lies James Ethan Stroud. Killed by an Indian." Not much of an epitaph.

HAWKE

No, I suppose not.

BEN

You ever think what words you want on your marker?

HAWKE

What's it matter once you're gone?

BEN

It matters. Don't you want people to read your words and think "there's a man who made a difference"? Wasn't that why we became lawmen?

HAWKE

Hell, no. It was to impress them two curly-haired fillies. What were their names?

BEN

But Katie's right. With everything I sacrificed, the world's no better than before. It's a hard thing for a man, admitting a failed life.

Seeing how much pain his friend is in, Hawke is sympathetic.

HAWKE

You know, I think I prefer the Indian way. They don't carve words into headstones. It's the stories they tell after the man's gone to the spirit world. That's what tells what kind of man the departed was. So don't you fret, there'll be stories enough about you. Capturing Will Parker and the Freemont Brothers single-handed. Stopping that lynching in Beaumont. Hell, you're god-damned immortal.

Kate arrives at the door with a basket of food. They don't notice her, so she eavesdrops.

HAWKE

Not to mention the influence you had on other people.

Sensing there's deeper meaning to that comment, Ben stares at Hawke until --

HAWKE

Most times I rode without you, if the poster said "Dead or Alive" it just seemed easier to pick the first option.

The revelation shocks Ben.

HAWKE

There came a day in an El Paso bar where a bottle of tequila gave me the courage to recollect how many men I'd killed over the years.

Ben is calculating in his head.

HAWKE

Whatever number you come up with, double it.

Ben had no idea.

HAWKE

I quit while there was still some measure of disparity between me and the men on those posters.

BEN

Guess you got out just in time.

HAWKE

I'm sorry you didn't.

BEN

I tried. When I realized Kate wasn't happy. Planned to hand in my star, make a fresh go of it. Just couldn't do it. Not 'til I'd made my mark. Stubborn pride is what it was. It cost me Kate. And now Jamie.

Kate is moved by his words.

BEN

I've paid my dues, Sam. And then some. I've still got a few good years left. I'd like to live them.

HAWKE

(letting him off the hook)  
Hell, if you've lost your nerve, you're no good to me anyhow. Go make your mark in California.

Kate composes herself, then steps in.

KATE

You're needed outside.

OUTSIDE

Ben follows her out.

KATE

We can hold out just fine for two days without your help. I've got a chestnut in the livery. High-spirited, but goes like stink. Take her and get the hell away from here.

He wants her to come with him, but can't say it outright.

BEN

You're set on staying?

KATE

I walked out on a man who needed me once before. I'm not one to repeat my mistakes.

Her composure crumbles. Ben puts his hands on her shoulders. Before the tears start, before he can see through her noble act, she shakes him off and heads into the jail. Ben isn't sure what to make of it.

INT. STABLES - DAY

Ben carries his saddle down the stalls.

WADE (O.S.)  
Why hey, Ranger...

Ben draws as he spins. Perched on a stall wall, Wade raises his hands high in exaggeration.

WADE  
Don't shoot. It's my Sunday-go-to-meeting shirt.

Ben holsters his Peacemaker.

BEN  
Just what is it you want?

WADE  
Just making sure it wasn't my horse you were going to steal. We've grown right fond of one another over the years. There's a pretty chestnut in the end stall. She's built to run, that one. Just the horse for you.

Dangerous territory, but Ben lets it slide. Wade follows Ben to the last stall and talks as Ben saddles Kate's horse.

WADE  
Oh, I'm not judging. In fact, I think you're making the right call. It's just a shame things had to turn out this way, you and Hawke being so close once.

Ben jerks the cinch tight.

WADE  
I'd never let a woman come between us if we were close, Ben.

There's a longing that makes Ben uncomfortable.

BEN

No? What about a bullet in a boy's back?

WADE

You don't take him at his word?

BEN

We rode together a long time. If the kid went for his revolver like Sam said, he'd have shot him dead. No hesitation.

WADE

People change, Ben. Sometimes for the better. Usually for the worse.

His accusing words eat into Ben's conscience.

BEN

You think his account of the card game is accurate?

WADE

The way I heard it.

Ben stops saddling the horse. A glimmer of hope.

BEN

Heard it from who, exactly?

WADE

Couple of fellas I passed on my way here. Big strapping men. Hands at the Dunson spread. Said they'd never seen a shooting and a royal flush all in the same game. Exciting times.

BEN

That son of a bitch. He didn't tell me there were people who could back his story.

WADE

Maybe he felt his word to a friend should've been enough.

Wade enjoys seeing the sting on Ben's face.



WADE

I can draw a map, if you like.  
Course, if that posse storms the  
jail, the fun'd all be over by the  
time you got back. But maybe  
that's what you want.

BEN

Just what is your interest in  
having me stay? To save a man you  
hardly know? Or do you just want  
to see me killed?

WADE

I think what it is, you've piqued  
my curiosity. I'm anxious to see  
you in action. If you've got it in  
you.

Ben wants to punch him in the face. Ben turns back to the  
horse. His moment of decision.

He pulls off his saddle and shoves it into Wade's arms.

WADE

Hot damn!

INT. JAILHOUSE - DAY

Hawke looks up as the door flies open. Ben looms in the  
doorway.

HAWKE

Decide to stay for the fun, did  
you?

Too angry to speak, Ben leaves, slamming the door.

Hawke leans back, smiling in relief.

INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM - DAY

Ben steps into the dining room and stop dead, impressed.

The table is decked out like a holiday feast, with a fancy  
tablecloth, gleaming silverware, and steaming food on the good  
china plates. Wade, William, and Butters look up at him.

Kate flies in with a platter of steaks. She reacts at seeing  
Ben, but manages to hide her emotion.

BEN  
Got room for one more?

KATE  
Your place is already set.

She indicates the head of the table. Surprised, he takes his seat, next to Wade.

KATE  
Seeing as this might be our last good meal for a few days, I thought we'd make an occasion of it.

WADE  
Sort of a 'Last Supper'.

A grim silence falls over the group. Kate was about to serve the biggest steak to Wade, but now gives it to Ben instead.

Wade gets a much smaller one. His baked potato is a positive runt. He compares his helpings to Ben's, not happy.

Kate takes her seat. She offers the bread basket to Ben. Wade reaches for a roll as it goes by, but Kate's too fast for him.

Wade reaches for the coffee pot, but Kate snatches it away and fills Ben's cup, then Butters', William's and hers.

Wade finally gets the coffee pot, but there's only a dribble left. He plunks it down in frustration. He reaches for the potatoes -- Kate grabs the platter and serves the remainder to the others.

KATE  
Here, you men have to keep your strength up.

She sets the empty silver platter down in front of Wade.

WADE  
Why, a fellow could plum starve at this here banquet.

Ben is staring at the platter. His gaze moves to the pair of candlesticks in front of him. He picks one up.

KATE  
Beautiful workmanship, don't you think?

He hefts it, appreciating only the heaviness. He has a plan.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Kate pulls silverware from the soapy sink and hands them to Ben. He gives them a quick dry and dumps them into a canvas bag.

BEN

This should be enough to tempt a Judas or two. We'll hide it in the stable. You'll need to figure out who's the most likely candidate.

KATE

Yes, the concept of bribery isn't entirely foreign to me, thank you.

BEN

It'll only work if you can convince them you're neutral in all this.

KATE

I still say I should be in the jail with you and Sam. You know I'm a crack shot with a long gun.

They share a towel to dry their hands.

BEN

True, but you're also the most persuasive person I ever met. That might prove more helpful.

KATE

Persuasive? You think?

BEN

Well, you somehow talked me into marrying you.

Her temper flares. Then she sees his smirk.

KATE

Well I was too young to know any better, wasn't I.

BEN

There's a silver picture frame on your dresser we could add.

KATE

I'm rather attached to that one.

BEN

Sam doesn't object?

KATE

Sam? Sam's got no say. Not for a long time.

It's just what he needed to hear.

KATE

Look, I don't know how this is all going to turn out. So I want to thank you now for staying.

BEN

While I'm still alive, you mean.

KATE

You had plenty opportunities to die on me, Ben Stroud! There's no reason for you to go starting now!

BEN

I'll try to heed that advice.

KATE

After this, California's going to seem a might tame. Look, I don't know what's there for you, but...

Choking up, she can't find the words she wants.

BEN

I don't know what's here for me.

KATE

...I am.

He tenderly cups her cheek in his hands, lifting her face to his. She tears up. He gives her a tender kiss, then hugs her close, knowing it could be for the last time.

EXT. STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

The town is still as a cemetery.

IN THE SALOON

Kate, alone, watches out the window, waiting.

IN THE JAILHOUSE

William is a bundle of nerves as he scans the street from the open door.

Tired of watching Hawke and Butters play chess, Ben wanders into the back cells and lies on a cot to rest his eyes. Stretched out on another cot, Wade glances up from "Tom Sawyer".

WADE

What are you in for, pardner?

Ben's not in the mood.

William steps back inside, barely controlling his panic.

WILLIAM

Riders coming!

He closes the door and slides the heavy bar into place. Butters rushes to a window and opens it a crack to peek out. Wade ambles over for a look.

IN THE STREET

Clayton and his deputies fan out as they ride into town. Intimidating as hell. Grim-faced and alert, they scan the storefronts for signs of danger.

IN THE SALOON

Kate watches at the window. She ties on an apron.

IN THE JAILHOUSE

Hawke sits up with agonizing effort.

HAWKE

How many deputies did he bring?

BUTTERS

One... two... three...

WILLIAM

Ten.

Any confidence in the room just vanished.

WILLIAM

You said five!

BEN

Must've picked up a few strays  
along the way.

Undeterred, William pulls a scatter gun from the rack. Butters grabs his Greener.

BEN

Everybody relax. They're not going to do anything yet. Not until they know what they're up against.

HAWKE

And so it begins.

IN THE SALOON

Red comes in first, slow and lethal, and surveys the room. His predatory gaze fixes on Kate, who's trying to appear busy wiping glasses behind the bar.

Clayton follows him in. Seeing Kate, he removes his hat.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Afternoon, Ma'am. If the bar's open, my boys and I'd be grateful for a little something to wash the dust from our throats.

KATE

Gentlemen are always welcome in my establishment.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

We're obliged.

On Clayton's signal, the deputies pour in, itching for a drink. But they're taken aback at the sight of Kate behind the bar.

KATE

What's the matter, boys? Never had a woman quench your thirst before?

With a sly grin, she flips a bottle, slams it on the bar and pops the cork. The men surge forward.

Clayton hangs back at the door with Red and the three Mexicans.

RED

Whole town seems to be hiding.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

He'll be watching. So we let him think we're all having a drink. Meanwhile, you boys sneak out the back and sniff him out.

IN THE HOTEL LOBBY

The two bearded Mexicans head for the back door.

The Tall Mexican starts up the stairs, but Red pulls him back by his green vest. Red feels the material and snorts with derision, then takes the lead heading up.

IN THE BARBER SHOP

The bearded Mexicans edge along the boardwalk and slip inside. Empty. They see a doorway to the next store, and head into --

IN THE DRY GOODS & HARDWARE STORE

They survey the well-stocked room. There's another doorway to the next store -- they're all connected. They keep going.

IN THE HOTEL, UPSTAIRS

Red and the Tall Mexican move down opposite sides of the hall, opening doors one by one. All vacant. But as Red opens the last door, what he sees inside makes him hesitate.

IN KATE'S ROOM

Intrigued by Kate's elegant dresses hanging up, Red steps in. There's a man beside him. Red spins and draws, lightning fast -- but it's only his reflection in Kate's mirror. He laughs at himself as he holsters his gun.

He steps closer and checks the ugly wound on his forehead. His good humor vanishes.

He looks down at her atomizer. Curious, he sprays a cloud of perfume in the air. He leans into it, savoring the fragrance.

His face turns serious -- he's spotted the silver-framed wedding photograph of Kate and Ben. He picks it up, wondering how best to exploit this discovery.

BEHIND THE STORES

The bearded Mexicans peer around a corner. Nobody.

IN KATE'S ROOM

At the window, Red scans the street. Not a soul in sight.

Then he spots a wisp of smoke rising from the jailhouse chimney. He's found his quarry.

AT THE PARTLY-FINISHED CHURCH

As Clayton prepares to throw his rope over a beam, Red walks up.

RED

She's a ghost town. Only sign of life is in the jailhouse.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Good work. Put someone on the roof to watch it. I need to know how many men he's got in there before we decide our play. For now, let the others enjoy themselves.

He flings the rope over the beam. The noose dangles down.

INT. JAILHOUSE - NIGHT

Hawke watches William light the lanterns. Butters inhales the fragrance of pork and beans simmering on the potbellied stove.

At the door, Ben spins his cylinder and snaps it shut.

HAWKE

You sure you're up to this?

Ben tries to appear confident. Doesn't quite pull it off.

HAWKE

Listen...

BEN

Forget it. But if I get shot and you're left telling stories about me, best leave out that trip we took to Larado.

HAWKE

Well that's the best one!

Ben holsters his Peacemaker and opens the door.

Hawke's smile fades into concern for his friend.

OUTSIDE

Unseen on a roof across the street, the Tall Mexican trains his rifle on Ben as he steps out.



## IN THE JAILHOUSE

Through a partly-open shutter, Wade's eyes are glued to Ben heading for the saloon.

Butters slops some beans onto a plate and offers it to him.

WADE

Think I'd rather go see what Kate's cooking up.

He ties his holster snug against his thigh.

HAWKE

Think with your head, not your stomach. You go heeled, those boys are liable to mistake your intentions.

WADE

Why, they've got no quarrel with me. Not yet, anyhow.

His mischievous look worries Hawke. Wade limbers up his gun-arm and shakes his hand. Now ready, he swings open the door.

## OUTSIDE

The Tall Mexican loses Ben in the shadows. He aims his rifle this side of the shadows, waiting... but Ben doesn't appear. Light from the open jailhouse door draws the Mexican's attention to Wade. The Mexican covers him as he walks to the saloon.

Still no sign of Ben.

## OUTSIDE THE SALOON

The other two Mexicans lounge by the door. Their hands drift onto their gun butts as Wade strolls up, all smiles.

WADE

Evening.

They nod back, none too friendly. The sound of laughter and clinking glasses draws Wade inside.

## IN THE SALOON

Wade pushes boldly through the swinging doors. The room goes quiet, all eyes on the intruder. The doors squeak until they stop swinging.

Wade calmly takes in the scene.

At a large table under a hanging wagon wheel of lanterns, Red, Patch, Trooper, Sour Bob and Harvey are in a poker game.

Jasper and Ike are at the end of the bar, where Kate is an even bigger draw than the drinks.

In the adjoining dining room, Clayton plays solitaire.

Unfazed by the attention, Wade strides to the bar. He nods to the brothers as they size him up.

WADE

Evening.

They give a curt nod. Wade grins at a surprised Kate.

WADE

I was just strolling by when I  
heard a bottle of beer cry out my  
name.

She hands him a bottle.

KATE

You be on your best behavior, now.

He gives her a wink, then turns his attention to the card table.

The activity resumes. Only Red continues to stare at Wade, trying to judge how much of a threat he might be.

PATCH

Your bet, Red.

Red peels his eyes off Wade and bets a nickel.

IN THE HOTEL LOBBY

From the shadows, Ben scrutinizes the activity in the saloon. Then he spots Clayton alone in the dining room.

IN THE SALOON

Wade hovers by the poker table. But he's not watching the game. His eyes take in each man and their guns, evaluating them.

As Red examines his hand, he senses Wade behind him. He glances back to see Wade watching over his shoulder. Irritated, he looks back at his hand and tosses it in.

Harvey is thrilled to rake in the small pot, putting the coins in his bowler hat. Patch gathers up the cards and passes them to Red.

RED  
You keep hovering over me like that, I'm liable to mistake you for a buzzard.

HARVEY  
Pull up a chair, friend.

WADE  
I'm not much at it.

PATCH  
It's low stakes. Two dollar buy-in.

WADE  
Well, I guess it's worth risking two dollars to say I once played poker with Red Chillum.

Red discreetly slides his hand onto his gun butt.

RED  
I don't believe we've met.

Wade puts down his beer and takes a seat, all smiles.

WADE  
Big territory, Arizona. But I figured there can't be a profusion of red-heads sporting silver and ivory single-actions.

RED  
You figured right.

Wade pulls out his poke and counts out two dollars.

WADE  
I just hope you can't fill a straight as easy as you fill a cemetery, else these coins won't last the night.

The players tense, waiting on Red's reaction. But Wade's winning smile makes it hard to take offense.

Red lets the remark slide. As she shuffles, he scrutinizes Wade, trying to get a handle on him.

RED

And what do people call you?

WADE

Most people call me by my name --  
Lee Wade.

Red stops shuffling, suddenly on edge.

RED

From Flagstaff? I've heard of you  
too.

WADE

Thanks. 'Course, I don't get  
around as much as some.

Red slaps the deck in front of Wade and stares him in the eye.  
Red's other hand stays close to his six-gun.

RED

Your choice. Stud... or draw.

Wade stares back with an unwavering smile. He's loving this.

WADE

Why, let's start with stud, shall  
we?

Wade cuts the deck. Finally, Red smiles back and deals.  
Everyone breathes again.

IN THE DINING ROOM

Clayton takes time out from solitaire to light his pipe.

BEN (O.S.)

Black queen on the red king.

Ben grabs two glasses and a bottle of whiskey from the buffet  
and slides onto a chair, making sure he can't be seen from the  
saloon. Suppressing his surprise, Clayton continues playing.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Stage didn't take you far,  
Mr. Stroud. Could it be you've  
reconsidered my offer?

Ben fills both glasses, but neither man drinks yet.

BEN

Thought we'd better parley before  
things get out of hand.

(MORE)

BEN (cont'd)

It seems to me you'd want to be sure of the truth before you go hanging a man.

With the second deck, Ben starts building a house of cards.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Meaning what, precisely?

BEN

Meaning there's two conflicting versions on what happened in that card game -- Sam Hawke's, and what some other fellow must've told you.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

If you care to hear his version, it's your friend with the needlework.

Ben peers around the corner into the saloon -- and spots Red at the poker game, big stitches in his forehead.

BEN

He comes at me again, he'll look like a quilt.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

You think he lied about what happened?

BEN

I think you'd best ask the other men at the table how they saw it.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Friends of Hawke, no doubt.

BEN

Not after he took them for a month's wages. They work at a ranch just a half day's ride from here.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Ah. So while we ride off looking for them, Hawke gets on his horse and races for the Mexico border.

BEN

He's not going anywhere. I just took this out of his back.

Ben plunks the spent bullet in front of Clayton.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

What are you giving it to me for?

BEN

Apparently it belonged to your grandson.

Clayton resents the insinuation.

AT THE BAR

Kate captivates Jasper and Ike with her charm.

KATE

I've always admired a man with a star, and here I am with a pair of them.

(lowering her voice)

I have a confession for you boys...

They lean closer.

KATE

Ever since I was a little girl I dreamed of a man with a star sweeping me off my feet and carrying me away.

They're both ready to volunteer.

KATE

If only they weren't all so poor.

JASPER

We're makin' good coin.

KATE

You can't treat a lady right on twenty dollars a month.

JASPER

We're gettin' fifty, just for this one job.

KATE

Fifty dollars? My goodness, you'll have all the single women in the territory chasing after you. And probably a few married ones too.

They all laugh.

## AT THE POKER TABLE

Wade peers at his hand, pretending to be a novice player.

WADE

I forget now. Which is higher,  
a flush or a straight?

Everyone tosses in their hands. Wade feigns surprise as he rakes in the coins. He sneaks a glance to see how Kate's doing.

## AT THE BAR

Kate leans forward, conspiratorially.

KATE

So tell me, boys... What's your  
next paying job after you take this  
Hawke fella in?

Suddenly the brothers aren't so cheerful.

## IN THE DINING ROOM

Their drinks still untouched, Ben continues building his house of cards as Clayton plays solitaire.

BEN

Just because it was your grandson  
got killed, that doesn't give you  
the right to have a lynching.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

It's not a lynching. It's a legal  
hanging. Legal because of this.

He opens his jacket to show his gleaming Marshal star.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

It gives me license to avenge the  
deaths of the innocent. "I will  
avenge me of mine enemies." Isaiah  
1:24.

BEN

And Leviticus says "Thou shalt not  
avenge", so don't you sit there and  
quote chapter and verse to justify  
lynching a man.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Well maybe you'd be a mite less  
sanctimonious if you'd read over as  
many men as I have.

The wind is sucked from Ben's sails.

BEN

I read over my son a few days back.

Genuine empathy from Clayton.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

You have my deepest sympathies.

He slides Ben's glass to him, then clinks it with his.

MARSHAL CLAYTON (CONT'D)

To those who've passed before their  
time.

They toss back their drinks.

AT THE POKER TABLE

Red stares at Wade, trying to read him.

RED

I'll call.

WADE

Why, you caught me in a bluff.  
All I have are these three sixes.

Red throws down his hand in disgust. Again, Wade feigns  
surprise as he rakes in another pot. Red does a slow boil.

AT THE BAR

Kate continues to work on the brothers.

KATE

How about a round on the house?

They brighten at Kate's offer. But it's short-lived.

KATE

Otherwise your fifty dollars will  
disappear all too soon. Oh, but  
don't you go worrying that women  
only show interest in men with  
money...



As Kate reaches under the bar for the expensive whiskey, her eyes lock on the hidden ten-gauge Greener.

KATE

I'm sure you're both very deserving men.

She pulls out a fancy bottle and fills the brothers' glasses.

KATE

All the way from Denver. A man should taste the finest life has to offer before he goes facing death.

(a toast)

To looking the Reaper square in the eye!

The brothers raise their glasses. But their mood is now somber, and the expensive whiskey doesn't go down smoothly.

Kate places a silver serving spoon in front of them.

KATE

My silverware came from Denver, too. You'd be surprised at how much just this one spoon is worth.

Intrigued, Ike picks it up. Jasper reaches for it -- but Red shoves his way between them, gives Kate a lecherous stare, and grabs her bottle.

Heading back to the poker table, Red suddenly tenses. He puts the bottle on the piano and stares menacingly toward the dining room.

Wade realizes something's up. He discreetly unsnaps his holster-strap.

IN THE DINING ROOM

Clayton refills their glasses.

BEN

Look, all I'm asking is you hear these ranchers out. If it's still not clear, then let a judge decide.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

(spitting contempt)

A judge?

BEN

Wearing a star means we serve justice, we don't mete it out. That's not who we are.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Interesting perspective. But the way I see it, putting on a star can give a man a new identity. Wear it long enough, it can make a man forget who he really is. Make a man think he's better than he really is. Then one day some incident occurs, and the truth gets revealed.

BEN

I hope you won't be offended if I don't share your cynicism.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Tell me, Mr. Stroud, the man who took your son's life... Did you arrest him and bring him before a judge? Or did you mete out justice and kill the son of a bitch?

Ben resents being played.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

See, now that tells me who you really are. So for you to sit here and lecture me --

BEN

His blood is on my hands, that's true enough. But it'll be nothing compared to all the blood on your hands if you try to storm that jailhouse. Because you'll meet some considerable opposition. Men who put their faith in shotguns, not the law.

That gives Clayton pause. Ben holds his breath, waiting for Clayton's response.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Well, justice is a patient lady. I suppose she can wait one more day.

Ben manages to remain stoic as relief floods through him. Clayton downs his drink.

MARSHAL CLAYTON (CONT'D)

But I'm not riding anywhere. You are. Have those ranch hands back here by supper tomorrow, I'll listen to what they have to say.

(seeing Ben is leery)

I won't make my move until then. You have my word on that.

He offers his hand. Ben takes his measure, then shakes.

Red walks up, eyes on Ben's revolver.

RED

I see you brought a companion along this time. Maybe now we can finish that dance we started yesterday.

But Clayton holds up his hand.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

I've agreed to hear out the other witnesses to my grandson's murder. Mr. Stroud here is going to ride out to fetch them tomorrow.

A flicker of panic in Red's eyes.

RED

You calling me a liar?

Heads turn in the saloon.

Kate wraps her hands around the Greener under the bar.

Ben just stares back at Red.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

No, he's not. He just wants to do this right. As do I. And that means hearing from all the witnesses. Since the hanging's going to be delayed, you can stay up all night drinking and playing cards. You probably want to get back to your game right now.

It's more an order than a suggestion, but Red doesn't move.

BEN

Your chair's getting cold.

RED

We'll get to it eventually.

Seething, Red returns to the poker table. Wade senses Red is ready to erupt. It's what he's been waiting for.

WADE

Say, just to break the monotony,  
you fellas mind if I try out a card  
trick I learned the other day?

SOUR BOB

I like a good trick.

Red's mind isn't back on cards yet, but the others are all eager to see the trick. Wade fans out the deck in front of Sour Bob.

WADE

Pick one.

The three Mexicans amble over from the door to watch.

Sour Bob pores over the deck as if it were a life or death choice, then picks a card. He takes a peek. Red pulls his hand over to see the card -- it's the queen of hearts.

WADE

Okay, return it to its friends.

Sour Bob stuffs the card back in the deck. Wade squares the deck, then cuts it three times.

WADE

Pick a number under ten.

SOUR BOB

Six.

Wade starts flipping cards face up from the top of the deck.

WADE

One...two...three...

The queen of hearts is the third card turned up, but Wade keeps going. Sour Bob and Red exchange a knowing glance.

WADE

...four...five...

He gets ready to turn over the sixth card.

WADE

Why, I'll bet you the next card I  
turn over is the card you picked.  
A friendly wager. Say, two bits?

Sour Bob smirks, knowing Wade blew the trick. Easy money.

SOUR BOB

That's just a little too friendly.  
How 'bout, say, five dollars.

Sour Bob digs out a five dollar bill.

WADE

A whole five dollars? Well I hope  
I didn't learn this wrong. Okay  
then. Just remember, that was your  
choice.

Red slaps a five dollar bill on the table on top of Sour Bob's.

RED

Make it ten.

IN THE DINING ROOM

Ben watches Wade and Red with concern.

BEN

No good's going to come of this.

He gets up, bumping the table. His house of cards tumbles down.

AT THE POKER TABLE

Ben and Clayton wander up and take a position behind Red,  
watching the trick.

WADE

If you're sure, then...  
(adding his two fives)  
I'll bet a whole ten dollars the  
next card I turn over is yours.

Wade slowly reaches for the top card on the deck.

Red and Sour Bob trade a look, knowing they've each just made  
the easiest five dollars of their lives.

But Wade reaches past the deck to the face-up queen of hearts  
and turns it over.

Red's face drops.

SOUR BOB

That don't count, you scum-sucking  
swindler!

Wade gives Ben a wink. Patch and Trooper think it's hilarious that Red and Sour Bob got taken. Even Harvey chuckles. But the Mexicans are grim.

RED  
That's a cheat!

Red snatches up the bills.

WADE  
That appears to be my money you're holding.

RED  
You feel that way, you just come and take it.

Eyes gleaming, Red moves out from the table, daring Wade to draw. His free hand hovers over one of his Colts.

Everyone backs away from the table. Sour Bob moves his hand onto his gun butt. But Wade shows no interest in fighting.

WADE  
A man would have to be a fool to get himself shot over ten dollars.

Red is smug at Wade backing down.

WADE  
But if you want to be that fool, I'll oblige you. Because if there's one thing I can't abide, it's a welsher.

Wade rises, oozing confidence. Hand hovering over his gun.

WADE  
Hand back my money, you stinking rustler.

RED  
'Fraid you'll have to settle for a penny's worth of lead.

Ben's voice from behind freezes him.

BEN  
I've got a whole nickel's worth for you, matchstick.

Red's jaw clenches.

BEN  
Give it up.

Reluctantly, Red tosses the money onto the table.

Without taking his eyes off Red, Wade reaches for the money.

Sour Bob draws on him.

Wade's revolver is a blur. It spits fire -- Boom Boom -- and dives back into its holster.

Sour Bob thuds onto the floor, spurting blood, gasping for air.

IN THE JAILHOUSE

Butters spills the chess board as he leaps for his shotgun. William grabs his, and yanks open the door.

HAWKE

Where the hell you going?  
If they're in trouble, you're  
already too late.

They stop halfway out the door.

HAWKE

And they'll be waiting for you.

They stare down the street at the saloon, their courage waning.

HAWKE

Time to close up shop.

Reluctantly, they step back in. Butters bars the door.

IN THE SALOON

The room is thick with tension. All eyes are on Wade. All the deputies want to kill him, none dare to try.

WADE

He drew first.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

That he did. Now get on your horse  
and ride on out of town.

WADE

Think I'll linger a while.  
Things are starting to pick up.

The three Mexicans step forward.

BEARDED MEXICAN

You made a big mistake, señor.

WADE

I've got no friction with you gentlemen.

BEARDED MEXICAN

You wish to keep it that way, give back the money.

Wade sees they're itching to draw. He feeds off it.

WADE

Or what?

TALL MEXICAN

Or we take it from you when you're dead.

This is just what Wade wanted.

WADE

Now I'm not a church-going man myself, but I've read that heaven is a most wondrous place. Let's all go together, shall we? C'mon, you weevil-brained grease-balls! Make your play!

With Wade's crazed look, their confidence crumbles. They're too afraid to draw.

WADE

Just as I thought.

Disappointed, Wade turns his back and heads for the bar. But he watches the crowd closely in the big mirror.

As Wade approaches, Kate catches a glimpse of the vicious killer behind his facade. She backs away slightly.

Trooper lobs a glass into the corner -- crash. Wade spins and whips out his gun. With Wade's back to him now, Trooper draws. But Wade ducks as Trooper fires.

Ben quick-draws and blasts Trooper in the hip, dropping him to his knees.

Ike whacks Ben's wrist with a bottle, knocking his Peacemaker from his hand.

All the deputies pull their guns.

Boom-Boom-Boom -- Wade kills all three Mexicans before they get off a single shot.



With his left hand, Ben pulls Clayton's Paterson out of his holster, then blasts away as he dives for the bar.

Trooper is hit twice more in the arm and tumbles over.

Everyone dives for cover. Harvey fumbles his gun. It bounces under a table, and he scrambles after it.

Ducking behind the bar, Kate pulls out the Greener. Ben and Wade appear at her side, adrenaline pumping. Wade reloads, grinning at seeing Kate with the shotgun.

WADE

Jump on in, the water's fine!

Kate turns to Ben for instructions.

BEN

Stay down!

From behind overturned tables, the deputies let loose a barrage of bullets. Bottles shatter as the bar is shot to hell.

IN THE JAILHOUSE

William and Butters stare out a half-open shutter, agonizing over the relentless gunfire.

HAWKE

Just be grateful you're in here.

IN THE SALOON

There's a lull in the firing as the deputies reload.

BEN

Gotta move.

The hanging wagon wheel of lanterns gives him an idea. He grabs Kate's Greener and blasts the support rope, sending the wheel crashing down on some deputies.

Ben fires the second barrel at another wagon wheel.

The lanterns explode, pouring liquid fire onto Trooper below. Set ablaze, he staggers out the door, screaming.

FROM THE JAIL HOUSE

William and Butters watch in horror as Trooper rolls in the dirt, frantically trying to smother the flames.

WILLIAM  
Mother of God.

IN THE SALOON

Kate reloads the Greener as Ben and Wade fire at the deputies. They duck the return fire.

MARSHAL CLAYTON  
Hold it up!

Silence. A haze of gun smoke wafts through the room.

Clayton motions Red and Patch to opposite ends of the bar.

Guns ready, they wait for Clayton's signal. He gives a nod, and they peek around the bar. No one's there.

RED  
Where the hell'd they go?

OUTSIDE THE HOTEL

Ben, Kate and Wade burst out the back door and run. Kate shakes free of Ben's grip and stops. Ben turns back for her.

KATE  
Go!

He reaches for her hand, but she aims the Greener at him.

The deputies pile out the back door. No choice -- Ben turns and races away.

Kate aims and fires at him, deliberately wide.

KATE  
Shoot up my bar, will you!

The deputies join her and blast away at the two men disappearing into the darkness.

IN THE JAILHOUSE

Butters swings open the door. Wade and Ben pile in and slam it behind them.

HAWKE  
All settled, is it?

Ben gives him a nasty look. Wade pulses with exhilaration.

WADE

Hooo-wee! That was like jumping a canyon!

HAWKE

Where's Kate?

WADE

That play you made with the lantern wheels? Never would've thought of it myself!

Ben shoves Wade against a wall.

BEN

You fool! I had it squared! We all could've gotten out of this alive. But you had to go and show off. Had to prove how fast you were. All for ten dollars. Is that how much our lives are worth to you? Ten dollars? You just had to stick your nose in!

Wade shakes free.

WADE

I thought that's what you wanted all along. Don't be sore, Ben.

HAWKE

Where's Kate?

BEN

She had her own ideas.

HAWKE

You let her stay out there with those killers?

BEN

I didn't let her do anything!

WADE

I'll bet she thought she'd be more of a help staying on at the saloon. She's a brave one.

WILLIAM

What will they do to her?

BEN

I don't know!

Hawke looks worried that Ben is falling apart.

Ben grabs a whiskey bottle and pulls out the cork. Bang -- the bottle shatters. Ben spins and draws.

Hawke holds a smoking revolver.

HAWKE

No one gets drunk 'til this is over.

Ben just glares.

IN THE SALOON

Defiant, Kate holds out a broom to the menacing Patch.

KATE

I said no more drinks until this mess gets cleaned up.

Patch looks ready to hit her. But he sees she's not about to back down, so he grabs the broom from her.

As Red retrieves the bottle of fancy whiskey he put on the piano, Clayton and Jasper drag Sour Bob's body past, heading for the door. Red uses one finger to play the familiar dum-dum-da-dum that starts Chopin's Funeral March.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

There's work to be done, Red.

Defiant, Red sits and launches into a beautiful piece of classical music. He's surprisingly good. Tender and emotional. Kate and Patch stop sweeping and listen, captivated.

OUTSIDE THE SALOON

The music follows Clayton and Jasper onto the veranda as they lay Sour Bob beside the three dead Mexicans. Jasper strips off Sour Bob's gun belt and heads back inside.

Clayton stares down the street at the jailhouse. He makes out someone at the lone unshuttered window.

IN THE JAILHOUSE

Standing watch at the window, Ben tests the balance of Clayton's heavy Colt-Paterson.

HAWKE

Traded in your Peacemaker, did you?

Ben shoots him a look.

HAWKE

You mind stepping away from the window? You're giving me the jitters.

BEN

What have you got to be nervous about? We've got Wyatt Earp on our side.

Wade watches William finish printing names on a chalkboard:

- Marshal Clayton
- Red Chillum
- Trooper
- Sour Bob
- big brother
- little brother
- bowler hat (Harvey?)
- Mex 1
- Mex 2
- Mex 3

WADE

Don't remember catching any other handles, but there was one sporting an eye patch.

William adds 'Patch'. Wade takes the chalk and draws a line through Trooper... Sour Bob... and one-two-three Mexicans.

WADE

Leaving six. Odds sure are improving.

HAWKE

She might still catch a fish or two with your silver lure.

BEN

She knows better than to try now. They're out for vengeance. No one's leaving 'til this is over.

WADE

But we made out okay, you and me. Wouldn't you say, Ben?

BEN

You're damn lucky that Trooper didn't kill you.

WADE

Soldier-boy? I saw him in the mirror, clear as day. Why do you think I ducked?

He sees Ben doesn't believe him.

WADE

I knew they weren't going to let me just walk on out of there. But if you stood with me, I knew we could blaze our way out together. 'Course, I had to rely on my gut feeling that you wouldn't let a friend get shot in the back.

The horror of what Wade did slowly dawns on Ben.

BEN

You tricked me into shooting a man?

WADE

I forced your hand, is all.

Wade is surprised by the stares of condemnation.

WADE

Well I'm sure he wasn't the first man you ever shot. Now we're in this together. Two peas in a pod.

BEN

Anything happens to Kate, I'm holding you accountable!

IN THE SALOON

Red continues playing, absorbed in the music. Clayton suddenly appears and slams down the keyboard cover -- Red yanks his hands away just in time, and in the same motion stands up, ready to draw. Clayton glares back, fearless.

Others stop and watch, dreading the anticipated gunplay.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Much as I like a good tune, you'd be more use watching the jail. Make sure nobody sneaks out in the dark.

RED

You don't still think you're gonna have your little hanging tomorrow?  
(MORE)

RED (cont'd)  
 It's past that now. We should  
 finish it tonight!

Clayton leans in close, not wanting the deputies to hear.

MARSHAL CLAYTON  
 I make the calls, Red. You just  
 keep the others in line.

Red stares long enough to show he's not intimidated, then heads  
 for the door. He walks casually, but there's fury in his eyes.

He stops at Trooper's charred body propped against a chair.

RED  
 Why the hell'd you bring this back  
 in?

JASPER  
 He ain't dead yet.

Red draws his gun and coldly takes aim at Trooper's head.  
 Trooper looks up, pleading. Bang --

-- a chair leg explodes. The chair tips and Trooper flops down,  
 smouldering but alive.

RED  
 Drag him across the street.  
 He's stinking up the place.

#### IN THE JAILHOUSE

Reacting to the shot, Ben grabs a Winchester and opens the door.

HAWKE  
 You don't know what it means! And  
 you'll never even reach the hotel!

Ben knows he's right. He slams the door in frustration.

#### OUTSIDE THE SALOON

The door slam draws Patch's attention to the jailhouse. Seeing  
 no activity, he returns to rifling the pockets of Sour Bob and  
 the three Mexicans. He glances up as Red steps out.

PATCH  
 Any more of us get shot, we'll end  
 up outnumbered.

Unconcerned, Red rolls a cigarette. Inside, someone starts  
 playing the piano -- the melody from Jamie's music box.

## IN THE JAIL HOUSE

Piano music drifting over from the saloon draws Ben to the window. Recognizing the tune, he's puzzled for a moment... then flooded with relief.

HAWKE

That's a melancholy tune.

BEN

Not tonight, it's not. That's Kate, telling me she's okay.

HAWKE

Thank Christ.

Relieved, Wade takes "Tom Sawyer" to the back room. William and Butters, fears allayed, set up the chess board.

Ben listens to the music, caught in its spell.

## OUTSIDE THE SALOON

Patch counts the coins in his hand, disappointed at his haul.

PATCH

What irks me most is them just relaxin' in the jailhouse, cozy as a nest a' prairie dogs.

Red lights a match and brings it to his cigarette. He stares through the flame at the jailhouse... and gets an inspiration.

RED

Maybe it's time we improve the odds.

PATCH

We going to move on 'em now?

RED

I prefer to see my targets. Won't be long until sunup. First light, gather the boys in the kitchen.

PATCH

The kitchen?

RED

And don't wake the Marshal.

Red stares back at the jailhouse. He's going to enjoy this.



EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The sun peeks over the horizon, its light striking the noose hanging from the church beam.

IN THE HOTEL LOBBY

The sound of pots clanking draws Kate to the kitchen.

IN THE KITCHEN

From the doorway she sees Patch, Jasper, Ike, and Harvey assembling lanterns and cans of cooking oil. It takes a second to realize what they're planning. Horrified, she turns to go --  
-- and bumps right into Red.

RED

I think your husband's gonna have  
to manage without you this time,  
Mrs. Stroud.

IN THE JAILHOUSE

The shutters are closed. Ben is awake, but the others are dozing lightly. Glass smashes on the roof, jolting them awake.

Ben hurries to a gun slot and peers out. He sees unlit lanterns sailing through the air, and hears them smash on the roof.

ON THE DRY GOODS STORE ROOF

With glee, Red watches Patch and Harvey toss lanterns and cans of oil onto the jailhouse. The unlit oil pools on the roof.

Jasper and Ike cover the jailhouse door with their rifles.

IN THE JAILHOUSE

Everyone grabs their guns.

BUTTERS

They're gonna smoke us out!

HAWKE

Smoke, hell. They're going to burn  
us!

WILLIAM

I think we should make a dash for the Dry Goods store. One at a time, with the others covering.

BEN

That's just what they're expecting. It'd be a shooting gallery.  
(considers the options)  
We charge out together. Guns blazing. And we do it now, before they start the fire.

WADE

I'm a gamer, Ben.

HAWKE

Hate to be a fly in the ointment, but I don't think I'm quite up to snuff.

Ben realizes his plan has one serious flaw.

ON THE DRY GOODS STORE ROOF

Patch tosses the last lantern onto the jailhouse with a smash. He picks up a stick with an oily rag wrapped around one end, and holds it out for Red. Red strikes a match, about to light it. But someone grabs his wrist --

-- Clayton. He draws the match to his pipe and lights it.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Thanks, Red.

He blows out the match. Red looks like someone just broke his favorite toy. Clayton leans over the edge.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

In the jail!

IN THE JAILHOUSE

Propped up in bed, Hawke sneers.

HAWKE

Let me guess now. Step out with your arms high and no one gets shot. Well don't you fall for it, boys. They'll blow you down soon as you clear the door.

MARSHAL CLAYTON (O.S.)  
 You can either send out Hawke and  
 let us take care of our business.  
 Or you can all burn. Your choice.

BEN  
 (shouting out the window)  
 We're not giving him up. You know  
 that. But I'll wager you don't  
 want to burn an innocent old man  
 and a schoolteacher to death.

ON THE ROOF

Red mutters --

RED  
 I'll take that bet.

BEN (O.S.)  
 So I'm giving you two choices.  
 Either ride on out of town like the  
 cowardly dogs you are...

The deputies bristle at the insult.

IN THE JAILHOUSE

BEN  
 ...and live a long and happy life  
 romancing your horses...

A shot whistles down. Ben ducks.

WADE  
 Think you hit a nerve there.

BEN  
 ...Or you could pretend you're men,  
 just for today, and shoot it out.

Wade nods approval.

ON THE ROOF

The deputies are itching for a fight. All except Harvey.

BEN (O.S.)  
 What's it going to be? Matchsticks  
 or bullets?

RED  
Let's blow 'em all to hell!

PATCH  
Damn straight!

Clayton shouts over the edge --

MARSHAL CLAYTON  
If you manage to screw up the  
courage, we'll be waiting at the  
hotel.

OUTSIDE THE HOTEL - LATER

The sun is higher. Clayton and his deputies loiter on the veranda, losing patience. Ike sniffs something in the air.

IKE  
That's bacon! They's cookin'  
breakfast!

IN THE JAILHOUSE

Ben fries up a big pan of bacon.

WILLIAM  
I really don't think anyone has the  
stomach for eating.

BEN  
It's not for us.

BUTTERS  
How's that?

HAWKE  
He wants them to think we're all  
having a relaxing breakfast because  
we're so confident we're going to  
come out ahead in this.

BEN  
It should help fray their nerves a  
little more.

Wade pulls a strip of bacon from the pan and calmly nibbles it as he takes a peek out a rifle slot.

BEN  
(anxious)  
Any sign of Kate?

WADE

Nope. I count six clay pigeons, so it can't be a trap. Let's raise the curtain on this act.

WILLIAM

It's still four against six.

WADE

I'll change those numbers pretty quick, teacher. I'm pretty good at subtraction.

Ben sees how scared William has become.

BEN

It can't be much more frightening than your first day of school. Just close your eyes and take some deep breaths.

As William takes a deep breath, Ben shoots Hawke a despairing look. They see Butters is just as afraid. Time for a new plan.

HAWKE

No need to confront them head on. I've got something better in mind.

OUTSIDE THE HOTEL

Red paces, out of patience.

RED

Just how long we gonna wait?

JASPER

Don't know why you're in such a hurry to face the fastest draw in Arizona.

Red flicks his cigarette at him and heads for the saloon.

RED

I'm getting a drink.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Make it a glass, not a bottle.

Red's had enough of Clayton telling him what to do. He considers doing something about it... but continues on.

## IN THE SALOON

As Red grabs a bottle of whiskey, he spots Jasper's buffalo gun on the bar. Just what he needs.

## IN THE JAILHOUSE

The men finalize their plans.

HAWKE

They won't know all my stores are connected. So once you're in the Dry Goods store, you can travel right through the others to the hotel and catch them by surprise.

Ben is puzzled.

HAWKE

It's so people don't have to step out into the elements to go from store to store.

WILLIAM

The elements today being gunfire.

BEN

So we make as though we're heading up the street, then on my signal...  
 (to Wade)  
 ...you and I duck into the Dry Goods.

Wade nods, eager to team up with Ben.

BEN

Teacher, you and Butters run into the Assay Office opposite. Work your way up the street from inside, then take a position across from the hotel. We'll cut through the shops and flush 'em into the street. Pick them off with your long guns.

WILLIAM

What if they're just trying to lure us away from Hawke?

HAWKE

Don't you worry about me, now.  
 (lifting a scatter-gun)  
 The first two men through that door are ground chuck.

He pulls out the Town Marshal badge.

SAM HAWK

Seein' as how you're such a damn  
stickler for the law, best make  
this legal. I hereby appoint you  
Town Marshal, like it or not.

He tosses it to Ben. Ben hefts it... then pins it on.

Wade practices his draw. Greased lightning. He puts on a  
dazzling display of gun-twirling, then slaps his .44 back in his  
holster, grinning. Confidence spreads through the group.

OUTSIDE THE HOTEL

Jasper sees the jail door creak open.

JASPER

Here they come!

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Let's have at it.  
(shouts inside)  
Red!

The deputies step from the veranda into the street and fan out.

IN THE JAILHOUSE

Ben spins his cylinder to check it's full, then holsters his gun  
and prepares to lead them out. Wade steps in front of him.

WADE

Mind if I have the honors? This is  
one of those times where speed and  
flash might win out.

With a wink, Wade steps through the door before Ben can object.

OUTSIDE THE JAILHOUSE

Wade steps onto the boardwalk. He looks down the street at the  
line of waiting gunmen and grins, ready for some fun.

WADE

Exciting times, eh, Ben?

Blam -- his chest explodes as he's knocked flying back inside.  
He lands hard, a bewildered expression on his face.

## IN KATE'S BEDROOM

Red pulls the smoking buffalo gun back from the window and turns to Kate, gagged and bound on the bed.

RED

Now who's the fastest draw in Arizona?

Horrified, Kate struggles wildly against her bonds.

## IN THE JAILHOUSE

Ben slams the door shut. William presses his handkerchief over Wade's wound in a futile attempt to stem the gushing blood.

Wade stares up at Ben and tries to say something. As the blood pools around him, Wade shudders and dies.

William looks at his blood-soaked hands, then retches.

## OUTSIDE THE HOTEL

Red hauls the bound and gagged Kate onto the street. Clayton starts to object, but Red holds up the silver-framed wedding photo. Clayton realizes they now hold a winning hand. He yells down to the jail.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

All right, Mr. Stroud. It's time for a barter. Bring out Hawke, and you get your wife back unharmed. Then our business is concluded.

## IN THE JAILHOUSE

Hawke tries to get up, but the pain is too much.

Ben hurries to the window and opens the shutter to peek out. It kills him to see Kate in Red's hands.

HAWKE

Hope you don't think they're going to keep their word! You walk out with me, they'll gun us both down!

BEN

Shut up!

Ben is on a knife-edge, desperate to figure a way to save Kate.



## OUTSIDE THE HOTEL

Red loses patience with Clayton.

RED

He's not going to bite. Time to end this.

(shouting to the jail)

Hey, Ranger! You've got five seconds to bring him out, or I'm sending your woman straight to hell!

Standing behind her, he presses his Colt into Kate's side. Clayton is taken aback.

## IN THE JAILHOUSE

Ben is like a cornered animal. It's all happening too fast.

HAWKE

It's a bluff. Don't you fall for it.

RED (O.S.)

Four... Three...

Ben grabs a Winchester and aims down the street at Red. Kate is blocking him.

BEN

I've got no shot!

## OUTSIDE THE HOTEL

Red cocks his gun.

RED

Two... One...

The jail door stays shut. No sign of life.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

He knows we won't shoot her.

RED

Hey Ranger!

He sees Ben open the shutter wider.

Red puts his gun to Kate's temple. Blam! Her head explodes in a pink mist. Her body crumples to the ground.

## IN THE JAILHOUSE

Ben cries out in anguish.

Hawke struggles to get up.

## OUTSIDE

Red grins down at Kate's body, cackling.

Ben charges out the door, firing his rifle.

Puffs of dirt kick up around Red. The deputies scramble for cover and let loose a barrage of their own.

Red rushes back into the saloon.

Bullets whiz past Ben and smack into the jail. He keeps firing. William pulls him back inside before he gets killed. Butters kicks the door shut, then hops to the window and opens fire.

## IN THE JAILHOUSE

Ben slumps against the door, shattered.

Hawke uses a chair for support and makes it to the window.

He stares out at Kate's body, shaking with anger.

HAWKE

Oh, you sons of bitches!

## IN THE SALOON

Clayton pulls his gun out and grabs Red.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

That was cold-blooded murder!  
I'll see you hang for it!

RED

I somehow doubt that.

He looks past Clayton just as Jasper slams his rifle butt into Clayton's head, knocking him unconscious.

RED

Let's get this done.

## IN THE JAILHOUSE

From a window, Hawke spots Red scurrying along the rooftop with a lantern. Hawke draws his revolver -- blam.

The lantern explodes in Red's hand. He scampers back as more shots just miss.

HAWKE

Gotta move! Before they get the  
fire lit. Ben!

Ben snaps out of his daze.

## ON THE STREET

The jailhouse door swings open. Ben steps out, rapid-firing his Winchester.

Behind him, William and Butters carry out Hawke on his now-mattressless cot, hurrying for the Dry Goods store. Hawke blasts away with a pair of revolvers.

The posse returns fire. Bullets whistle all around them.

Butters cries out, hit in the calf. He stumbles and drops his end of the cot. Hawke tumbles onto the steps.

Ben and William drag Hawke inside.

Butters hobbles up the steps. A second hit knocks him flat.

William steps out to help. Ben yanks him back as bullets chunk into the door frame beside them. Ben fires back, but can't reach Butters without getting shot to pieces.

BEN

Crawl, damn you!

Spurred on, Butters crawls painfully up the stairs through a hail of bullets. Bullets smack into him, again and again.

William watches in shock as his friend is turned into a bloody pulp.

As Ben reloads, he sees the deputies change positions for a better line of fire.

## IN THE DRY GOODS &amp; HARDWARE STORE

Ben drags Hawke behind the counter and sits him up against a wide barrel full of tools and farm implements.

BEN

Stay quiet. I'll be back for you.

Hawke grabs him and stares him in the eye.

HAWKE

Kill them all. Every last one.

BEN

You have my word.

He turns to William, who's frozen in fear. His gun is shaking.

Ben smashes a glass display case and grabs a shotgun. He yanks open a drawer packed with boxes of shells. He breaks the shotgun, slides in two shells, and snaps it shut.

Ben takes William's pistol from him and presses the shotgun into his hands, then stuffs shells into his vest pockets.

BEN

Remember, William -- close range only.

William stares back with a blank expression.

BEN

Close range. Understand, Deputy?

William snaps out of it.

WILLIAM

Yes, sir.

He follows Ben through the door into the barbershop.

ON THE STREET

Ike edges cautiously along the boardwalk, looking in windows.

Patch and Jasper take positions on the other side of the street, preparing for Ben and the others to reveal themselves.

IN THE DRESS SHOP

Ike peers in the window. The shop is empty. He edges further along, his back to the window.

Ben and William enter. They spot Ike. Ben walks over and raps his gun on the glass.

Ike turns and sees Ben's gun aimed right at him. No choice, he raises his hands in surrender.

Ben's eyes turn cold.

Blam -- his .44 slug tears through Ike's chest. Glass and blood shower the boardwalk.

ACROSS THE STREET

Jasper sees Ike shot, and then yanked back inside through the broken window.

JASPER

Ike!

Gun up, Jasper hurries across the street.

IN THE DRESS SHOP

Ben plucks Ike's star and kneels over his body. William hears an odd thud, steps closer... and blanches.

ON THE STREET

Jasper creeps to the broken dress shop window and peeks in. He sees Ben and William scramble into the adjoining hotel lobby.

JASPER

They're in the hotel!

Then he sees his brother's body -- his star has been pounded halfway into his forehead. Jasper makes the sign of the cross.

IN THE HOTEL LOBBY

Ben and William rush in. They search for cover.

OUTSIDE THE HOTEL

Red and Patch struggle to hold Jasper back from charging in.

RED

Together! Spitting lead!

Jasper nods.

Across the street, Harvey hangs back.

## IN THE SALOON

Red moves swiftly in, twin Colts filling his fists. Patch and Jasper follow, stepping over Clayton's unconscious body. They spread out and advance on the doorway to the hotel lobby.

Ben and William pop up from behind the bar. William's shotgun booms and Ben fires just as the surprised deputies duck for cover. Jasper is hit in the arm. Patch takes some buckshot in the face and shoulder, but nothing fatal.

Red rapid-fires, missing Ben as he ducks down. Patch and Jasper open up, shooting what's left of the bar to pieces.

Red peers through the haze of gun smoke.

RED

You still breathing, Ranger?

Covered in glass, Ben and William reload. Ben glances at the shattered mirror and sees multiple Reds and Jaspers approaching.

## IN THE DRY GOODS &amp; HARDWARE STORE

Propped behind the counter, Hawke slides a shell into his scatter-gun. A second shell slips from his fingers and rolls away. He reaches for it --

A badly-burned hand grabs his wrist. It's the charred Trooper, sitting on the other side of the barrel. Hawke recoils.

He snaps his scatter-gun shut, but Trooper grabs it and points it away. His other massive hand wraps around Hawke's throat, squeezing the life out of him. The gun fires.

## IN THE STREET

The Dry Goods store window explodes outward, revealing Hawke's location to Harvey.

## IN THE DRY GOODS &amp; HARDWARE STORE

Still in Trooper's death grip, Hawke reaches up for the lip of the barrel. He finally tips it over and spills the tools.

Hawke struggles for breath as he stretches out for something to hit Trooper with. He wraps his hand around an axe.

A vicious swing -- the blade thuds into Trooper's skull.

## IN THE SALOON

William peeks out from the bar. Through the door to the lobby, he catches sight of Harvey walking past the window.

## WILLIAM

Draw their attention.

William makes a dash for it as Ben squeezes off a shot. William makes it into the lobby.

## IN THE LOBBY

William hurries to the window and aims his shotgun down the street at Harvey. Too far. He rushes into the dress shop.

## IN THE SALOON

Jasper runs and dives onto the bar, sliding on his stomach as he blasts away. But Ben is gone. Lying on the bar, Jasper scans for signs of him. A trickling gets his attention.

A gin bottle is on its side, emptying itself. It's by an open cupboard door under the bar. Jasper smiles as he cocks his gun.

Blam-blam -- two bullets rip up through the bar and out Jasper's back, killing him. Ben rolls out of the cupboard.

Blam -- a bullet blows a hole through the bar near his head. Ben scurries away. Blam -- another hole appears next to him.

Red fires both .45s, punching a row of holes through the bar.

Ben crawls faster, keeping just ahead of the bullets. But he's running out of bar.

Click. Click. Red pulls more cartridges from his belt.

Ben peers through a bullet hole and sees Red reloading. He jumps up, takes aim and... click. He's out too. He races for the doorway and into the lobby as Patch fires just wide.

## OUTSIDE THE DRY GOODS &amp; HARDWARE STORE

Harvey reaches the bottom of the steps, trying to muster the courage to go in.

## HARVEY

Fifty dollars... Fifty dollars...

He cocks his pocket revolver and heads nervously up.

## INSIDE

Slumped beside Trooper's body, Hawke hears a step creak. He reaches for the shell that rolled under the counter. It's a few agonizing inches from his fingertips.

## OUTSIDE

Harvey reaches the top step. It's his moment of truth. But --

William charges out the dress shop. Harvey spins and fires two panicked shots just as William's shotgun roars. Harvey's hip explodes, sending him tumbling down the steps in agony.

William goes down hard, shot in the leg. His shotgun lands a few yards away. He struggles frantically to reach it.

Harvey props himself on one elbow and cocks his pistol. He takes aim at William... and pulls the trigger. Click. He tries again. Click.

He hurries to reload before William reaches the shotgun. A race to the death between two wounded, panic-stricken men.

## IN THE DRESS SHOP

Ben reloads behind some mannequins.

## OUTSIDE

William finally grasps the shotgun -- but his heart sinks at the click of a hammer pulled back.

He stares into Harvey's pistol barrel. His life about to end, William falls apart.

## WILLIAM

I'm just a schoolteacher...  
I never wanted this...

Harvey's hand shakes as he tries to pull the trigger.

## WILLIAM

...just a schoolteacher...

A feeling of empathy comes over Harvey.

## HARVEY

I'm a grocer. Name's Harvey  
Bishop. My wife's with child.  
I need money for the doctor.



Two men out of their element, caught up in events they want nothing to do with.

HARVEY  
To hell with this.

Harvey uncocks his pistol. Relief floods through William. Ben steps out of the dress shop, his gun aimed at Harvey. As Harvey turns, his pistol swings toward Ben.

WILLIAM  
No!

Blam -- Ben's first shot rips through Harvey's arm.

WILLIAM  
No!

Another shot tears through Harvey's chest. He flops back, dead. William looks up at Ben through blood-splattered glasses. Ben holsters his gun and reaches down to help him up.

BEN  
Quickly, grab my hand!

RED  
Hold it, Ranger!

Red comes out of the dress shop with both Colt .45s trained on Ben. Patch trails behind, his gun aimed at Ben too.

RED  
Don't you so much as blink.

Grinning, Red stops ten yards away. Keeping one gun aimed at Ben, he aims the other down at William. Blam -- he shoots William through the glasses, snapping his head back. Dead.

Ben can't draw without being killed.

RED  
I don't care for distractions.  
Now, what say you and I do this the  
old fashioned way?

Red spins his guns, then holsters them. Patch keeps his gun trained on Ben, so Ben focuses on him.

BEN  
You want to die first or second?

Patch's confidence waivers.

RED  
Think I'm going to enjoy this.

He positions his hands over his guns, preparing to draw.

HAWKE (O.S.)  
Think again!

Patch turns to see Hawke leaning against the door frame, aiming his scatter-gun. Patch fires just as Hawke's scatter-gun blasts him off his feet. Patch twitches off another shot as he dies.

Red and Ben draw. Ben is a fraction faster, snapping off two shots that explode into Red's shoulders. His arms drop to his sides, useless. The Colts slip from his hands into the dirt. He looks at Ben in disbelief.

The Hawke drops his scatter-gun as he slides down the door frame to his knees.

BEN  
Hawke?

HAWKE  
Finish him!

Ben blasts Red's knee apart. He drops, screaming in agony. Ben holsters his gun, then goes and tosses Red's guns away.

BEN  
You think of Kate while you lie  
there bleeding out. Shouldn't take  
more than a day or two.

HAWKE  
Ben!

Ben turns --

Clayton is right there. He fires his gun over and over.

But he's pumping bullets into Red, not Ben. After shooting Red all to hell, Clayton is in anguish.

MARSHAL CLAYTON  
This isn't the way it was supposed  
to happen.

BEN  
It never is.

HAWKE

You killed my friends, you  
miserable prick!

But he's too weak to pick up his scatter-gun.

MARSHAL CLAYTON

You murdered my grandson! Shot him  
down like a dog in the street!

HAWKE

He died badly, but he deserved it.  
Your grandson was a treacherous  
coward.

He point to Red's body.

HAWKE

And because you were fool enough to  
take the word of that lying,  
murdering scum, all these people  
died needlessly.

Clayton's conviction wavers.

HAWKE

That's right. So take a good look.

Clayton surveys the carnage --

Butters, sprawled across the barber shop steps...

Ike by the store window...

Sour Bob and the three Mexicans laid out on the hotel veranda...

Red and Patch, blood pooling under their bodies...

William, a bullet through his glasses. Next to him, Harvey the  
grocer...

Kate, down the street...

MARSHAL CLAYTON

Oh Lord. What have I done?

Ben cocks his gun at Clayton. His hand shakes as he tries to  
pull the trigger. Just can't do it. He steps up and takes the  
gun from Clayton's hand -- it's his Peacemaker he lost in the  
saloon gunfight.

Clayton wearing a star is an affront to Ben. He yanks it off.

BEN

Get on your horse. Go back...  
go back and tell all your men's  
families why they're dead. That's  
your penance. And every day you're  
going to be haunted by their faces.  
Every last one of them. You try  
living with that the rest of your  
miserable life.

Clayton looks pleadingly at Ben, begging forgiveness. Ben aims his Peacemaker at Clayton's face and cocks it.

BEN

Before I change my mind.

A shell of the man he was, Clayton staggers to the horses tied up outside the hotel.

HAWKE

And so it ends.

BEN

You shot?

HAWKE

Got me in the arm.

Ben pulls out a handkerchief and ties it tightly around Hawke's bleeding arm. Ben pauses to watch Clayton riding out of town.

HAWKE

Help me up.

Ben starts to pull him up, but Hawke cries out and falls down.

HAWKE

Can't seem to stop shaking.

Puzzled, he lifts his injured arm... and sees blood seeping from his stomach.

HAWKE

I've been gut-shot.

In that instant they realize he's finished.

BEN

Jesus, Sam.

HAWKE

I've finally drawn the black ace.

Ben doesn't know what to say. Hawke fights through the pain to get his final words out.

HAWKE

Would've liked more time. But  
don't you feel sorry for me. I led  
the life I wanted. No regrets.  
Went down fighting with my best  
friend at my side. A man can't ask  
for more.

BEN

You save me a seat by the fire,  
hear?

Hawke gives a brave smile, then he's gone.

Ben takes a moment to compose himself. The wind picks up, and  
he starts the long, agonizing walk to Kate.

Ben plucks the badge from his coat and drops it in the dirt.

He falls to his knees beside Kate. Devastated.

BEN

Oh Katie...

He takes her hand in his. Pain so deep he can barely get the  
words out.

BEN

Blessed are they that hunger and  
thirst after justice,  
for they shall have their fill.  
Blessed are the merciful,  
for they shall obtain mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they shall see God.

He presses her hand against his cheek.

BEN

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they shall be called the  
children of God.  
And blessed are they that suffer  
persecution for justice's sake,  
for theirs is the kingdom of  
heaven.

Waves of dust blow across the badge, slowly burying it.

FADE OUT.

THE END