

# **EDGE**

PILOT

"A TOWN CALLED HATE"

Teleplay by

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Story by Fred Dekker and Shane Black

Based on the "Edge" books by George G. Gilman

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The very first EDGE novel published in the USA bore this disclaimer on its splash page:

***Warning: This is not a story for the faint-hearted reader.***

For our purposes, replace "reader" with "viewer."

OVER A BLACK SCREEN

A stentorian VOICE:

SENATOR HARKNETT (OVER)  
The war is over, my friends...

CUT TO:

1 A SQUASHED LIZARD 1

Entrails exposed. Caked with dried blood. Splayed flat in the dirt inches from the bumper stop of an unfinished RAILROAD TRACK; clearly -- under construction.

THE SENATOR (O.S.)  
And, in a few short months, the Union and Central Pacific railroads will meet -- not far from where we stand.

BOOM UP TO... a CABOOSE at the end of the line, festooned with bunting. And a BANNER:

*C.A. HARKNETT - UNION SENATOR OF MISSOURI*

The speaker? Late 50s, well-fed, standing on the rear platform and addressing a paltry crowd of MISSOURIANS.

2 EXT. MISSOURI PLAINS - 1865 - DAY 2

As the Senator orates, we note a YOUNGER MAN on the platform behind him. Handsome but sullen, he wears the uniform of a Sergeant in the Union infantry.

This is MERRITT HARKNETT, 30s.

THE SENATOR  
(to the crowd)  
What better harbinger than this, I ask you -- what clearer writ, for the people of this nation to come together. Differences, behind us. I ask for your vote. God bless you, and God bless these 37 United States.

A smattering of polite APPLAUSE. The Senator waves at the crowd as the Union soldier stifles a yawn.

HARKNETT  
Hell of a speech, Calvin.

The Senator keeps waving, but his smile turns sour; forced. A last wave, then he turns --

THE SENATOR

(sotto; to Harknett)

I'll have none of your disrespect today, boy.

HARKNETT

Okay. Just know that it's there if you want some.

(beat)

Where's mother?

THE SENATOR

Lying down. She was going through your childhood things and found one of your art projects.

-- the Senator PUSHES HIS WAY in to the caboose.

3

INT. OPULENT TRAIN CAR - DAY

3

Built-in Davenports upholstered in pin-tucked velvet. Remember "Richie Rich" comics? Along those lines.

And seated around the room, drinking expensive whiskey or playing darts, are FIVE UNION SOLDIERS:

COBB -- Heavy-lidded eyes. Spencer carbine.

GRAVES -- Stocky. Mustached. 44 Remington.

CORDNER -- Short. Silver hair. Smith & Wesson No. 2.

ROOT -- Young, vain. A pretty boy. Colt Dragon.

And finally, crucially:

LITTLE BILL -- Impetuous, easily led; a tad dim, even.

He sips from a Sterling silver FLASK. Instinctively hides it as THE SENATOR bustles in, his son Harknett in tow.

The others SNAP TO ATTENTION, take their boots off the tables, remove their hats respectfully.

ROOT

Mister Harknett.

(Cobb elbows him)

I mean, Senator.

The Senator acknowledges them with a nod, goes to a humidor for a cigar.

LITTLE BILL  
'Preciate the ride, sir.

THE SENATOR  
(scowls at Harknett)  
How long is this "brief" stop-over of  
yours gonna take?

HARKNETT  
We're just nippin' across the border to  
see a friend. Shouldn't be more'n an  
hour...  
(adding:)  
... *sir*.

OFF the Senator, not buying a word he says -- SMASH TO:

4 THE SIX RIDERS 4

Gallop away from the train, as we HEAR:

HARKNETT (V.O.)  
Wish I coulda seen my mother's face.

WIDEN, TO REVEAL: we're seeing through the WINDOW of a  
train car. In foreground rests a child's "art project."

A lovely diorama of cowboys and Indians... all the  
principals are impaled RATS. CUT TO:

5 EXT. FARMSTEAD - MISSOURI PLAINS - 1865 5

A YOUNG BOY

Sees THE RIDERS. Stands, eyes alight with excitement.  
Wipes his hands, then -- physically MOVES HIS LEG with  
his hands to walk forward with a pathetic limp.

THE RIDERS slow, reining in just shy of the gate.

HARKNETT  
Am I addressing Jamie Hedges?

JAMIE  
Yes, sir.

Harknett smiles and nods, acknowledging the respect.

HARKNETT  
Sergeant Harknett. We served with your  
brother, Josiah.

JAMIE  
 (hopeful)  
 Seen you comin', I -- I figgered he'd be  
 with you.

Harknett trades long glances with the others, then  
 dismounts. Heaves a sigh.

HARKNETT  
 Well, son, I...  
 (takes off his hat)  
 I'm afraid he's not with anyone on this  
 mortal plain. If you take my meaning.

Jamie looks away, ashamed of the hot tears that come.  
 Harknett claps a hand on his shoulder.

HARKNETT (CONT'D)  
 My condolences.

JAMIE  
 Reckon I... 'preciate you comin' all the  
 way out here just to tell me.

HARKNETT  
 Well, son... your brother's demise isn't  
 the only reason we're here.

He glances at the men -- and they ALL DISMOUNT  
 simultaneously. It's a little unnerving.

The mangy DOG stands firm in the front path, GROWLING.

LITTLE BILL puts his hand on his rifle.

LITTLE BILL  
 Call off your dog, boy, or I'll do it for  
 ya.

HARKNETT  
 (ignoring this; to Jamie)  
 Fine a man as he was, Josiah was also  
 what we might colloquially refer to as a  
 piss poor poker player. Night before he  
 died, he racked up a five hundred dollar  
 debt to me. Next hand he said "Double or  
 nothing," and -- well, three aces don't  
 beat a flush. Not where I come from.

Jamie looks up, disbelieving. Harknett grins disarmingly:

HARKNETT (CONT'D)  
 It's likely in a gilt jewel box.

(MORE)

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

(mimes)

'Bout this size? You rustle that up, and we'll leave you to mourn your brother.

JAMIE

Sad to say, ain't no cash box here.

HARKNETT

No?

JAMIE

No. But then, I reckon that don't really matter, does it?

HARKNETT

And why's that?

JAMIE

(shrugs)

Because it ain't cash you're looking for. You're lying, mister.

HARKNETT

Say again?

JAMIE

The son of Senator Calvin Harknett? Ridin' all this way for a thousand dollars? I hardly think so.

HARKNETT

How's this, then: just find us a fucking metal box... Or we'll go lookin' ourselves.

Now the dog BARKS. Starts forward. But Little Bill's Springfield comes clear of its boot in one fluid motion --

BLAMM--! A .58 Caliber bullet LIFTS the dog in the air before depositing him in the dirt.

Jamie stands trembling. Speechless. Casts an unconscious glance at the porch eave, where:

A HOLSTERED .36 CALIBER BURNSIDE REVOLVER

Hangs on a peg, unseen by Harknett's men. It's ten paces from Jamie. Ten too many. He LIMPS to his dog. Kneels.

JAMIE

... bastards. Get the hell off our land before I --

LITTLE BILL  
 Before you what? Cry on us?  
 (to Harknett)  
 You gonna let a gimpy kid talk to you  
 like that, Merritt?

Harknett looks at Jamie. Any civility has vanished.

HARKNETT  
 Stand up.

Jamie doesn't budge. Harknett draws the army issue Colt  
 .44 from his holster.

HARKNETT (CONT'D)  
 I said stand up.

Jamie does. He's trembling.

HARKNETT (CONT'D)  
 I've tried to do this thing in a manner  
 befitting my upbringing. But if you wanna  
 keep that bum knee of yours, you'd best  
 tell me where the box is.

JAMIE  
 You go to hell.

BLAMM--! The report is deafening. The color drains from  
 Jamie's face as he looks down at his exploded knee cap.  
 He CORKSCREWS. Collapses into the dirt.

Little Bill pulls an engraved FLASK from his duster,  
 swigs --

LITTLE BILL  
 I think that was the good one, Merritt.

Jamie COUGHS and sputters, pain blasting through him,  
 white-hot. But amazingly, he... starts... CRAWLING.

CLAWING through the dirt toward the porch. Wheezes,  
 breathless with pain:

JAMIE  
 I'll... show you...

HARKNETT  
 That'd be right nice of you.

He walks behind as Jamie slowly, painfully SCRABBLES up  
 the steps. Reaches for the hidden pistol, and...

He SPINS. Gets off ONE SHOT -- BLAMM! -- before Harknett PARRIES and returns fire with the COLT -- Jamie's OTHER kneecap explodes and he goes down hard as --

LITTLE BILL

Looks down at the smoking bullet hole in his duster. He feels for what he thinks will be a flesh wound. Instead... HE PULLS OUT THE FLASK.

Then DROPS it. Hot! Sees liquor oozing into the dirt from the bullet puncture. Fucking thing saved his life.

Now, the other four of Harknett's men SPREAD OUT -- In seconds, we can hear them inside, TOSSING THE PLACE: THUDS, CRASHES, breaking glass--!

LITTLE BILL

Say we do find the box, sir... what about Josiah? Long as he's out there, alive... he's a liability.

(beat)

How we gonna find him, you reckon?

Harknett's eyes settle on the FLASK IN THE DIRT... and he smiles coldly.

HARKNETT

Private Seward. I think with some prompting... we can get him to find us.

He eyes JAMIE's writhing form.

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

Get a rope. And some kerosene. This thing ain't near done yet.

OFF his dead eyes -- SMASH TO BLACK. Then... FADE IN:

6

THE MIDDLE OF FUCKING NOWHERE

6

A LONE RIDER emerges from the heat haze. On his back, a .44 rimfire HENRY RIFLE.

You'd peg him for Mexican -- if not for the hooded, ice-chip-blue EYES. A gift from his Scandinavian mother.

JOSIAH HEDGES (aka "Edge"). Age: indeterminate. Weight: 190 pounds. Some of it bone, mostly muscle.

The meanest-looking man in any room he chooses to enter.

SUPER:

**TWO MONTHS LATER**

Up ahead, Edge catches sight of:

A HAND-PAINTED SIGN nailed to a leaning post. It used to read:

SEWARD, KS  
POPULATION: 422

But now the word "SEWARD" has been x'd out with whitewash and replaced by the word "HATE." EDGE reacts stoically. SEES the town looming ahead... CUT TO:

7 EXT. CORNFIELD OUTSIDE TOWN 7

THREE CHILDREN, playing beneath a SCARECROW in Confederate uniform. They wield sticks, pretending to have cornered the Greyback.

They see Edge -- and turn their "guns" on him.

8 EXT. SEWARD, KANSAS - DAY 8

Edge rides into town... looks up at a wooden CHURCH at the mouth of the main street. Three stories high. STEEPLE, with bell. But most notable:

The CHARRED EXTERIOR, ravaged by fire but never repaired.

And in the shadow of the bell tower -- a GRAVEYARD.

No neat rows. Instead, the graves seem randomly arranged, many unmarked. Like gopher holes.

And near the cemetery gates, a FRESHLY DUG GRAVE, the spade used to dig it still impaled in the soil. Edge takes all this in, then RIDES up the

9 WIDE, EMPTY MAIN STREET 9

PAST a square, windowless brick structure. A LONE GUARD in a Union Army frock coat stands lazily at the door.

Unlike the church..? Everything else on Main Street, eerily immaculate: fresh paint. A big posted sign:

CHECK YOUR GUNS  
-- by order of Sheriff W. Seward

Edge's eyes thin at the name. He looks down. SEES A DOG with one cataract-clouded eye LIMPING ALONG beside him. No other soul in sight, save for:

A PREACHER -- 60s, cadaverous -- sweltering in his tunic as he shaves the sides of a new-built coffin.

As Edge rides up, the guy reacts, startled -- then scowls. Waves Edge off, like he can't be bothered.

EDGE

Fresh dug grave. Empty town. Gotta confess, reverend... Not exactly a warm welcome.

He HEARS a CLANG--! and looks down, SEEING:

A BUCKBOARD WAGON, canted on a broken wheel. An unseen figure grunts, slides out from under --

A WOMAN. In a chaste, high-collared smock. Hands blotchy with grease -- regardless, a stunner.

EDGE (CONT'D)

Mighta spoke too soon.

She looks surprised to see him; quickly feigns scorn. Meet BETH, mid-20s.

BETH

Too much, is more like it.  
(sits up)  
Silence is golden. Says so in the Bible.

EDGE

Also says a feller turned to salt, but I have my doubts.  
(frowns at broken wheel)  
New in town?

BETH

Just got in. Heard they run a nice, upright place.

At this, the Preacher utters an involuntary snort.

EDGE

Need a hand?

BETH

Thanks. I can grease my own axle.

EDGE

Okay, then.  
(looking round)  
For bein' upright, these folks're kinda hard to spot.

She nods to the Sheriff's Office. And a HAND-LETTERED NOTE on the closed door: "*Gone to hanging.*"

EDGE (CONT'D)  
(touches his hat brim)  
Obligated.

A final appraisal from the woman.

BETH  
You got a name?

EDGE  
(ignoring the bait)  
Yup.

He urges his gelding forward. Our prim, high-necked BETH watches with more than passing interest...

10

EXT. COURTHOUSE SQUARE - DAY

10

THE GALLOWS is as perfectly-built and well-maintained as everything else in this town.

On the platform, THE CONDEMNED stands near a hanging noose, in restraints. A HANGMAN by the trapdoor lever. And, at the base of the gallows:

*THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF THE TOWN* stands watching the proceedings like a crowd at a carnival.

A BIG MAN, 50-ish, faces them. Leans on a walking stick with a pistol grip for a handle. READS from a Bible:

Silver haired, complexion tanned and pocked, this is WILLIAM "BIG BILL" SEWARD. Do not fuck with him.

BIG BILL  
"Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness; according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences."

EDGE appears. Dismounts quietly, so as not to disrupt the proceedings. As he secures his horse, he notices:

A ONE-ARMED YOUNG MAN

Black. Dull-witted. His left arm missing at the elbow. This is BENNY, mid-20s but with the mind of a child.

He has a nub of charcoal -- uses it with his good hand to SKETCH the scene. Edge eyes the sketch pad. Kid's good.

IN THE CROWD - TWO DEPUTIES

Have taken note of Edge's arrival. They trade glances, start toward him as:

BIG BILL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and  
 in sin hath my mother conceived me."

WITH EDGE

As the two deputies approach. One seems calm, the other jumpy. BEAN and TRICKETT, respectively.

TRICKETT  
 S'matter, stranger, didn't you see the  
 sign? You're s'posed to check your rifle  
 with the sheriff's office.

EDGE  
 Sheriff's busy. I'll wait.

AT THE GALLOWS -- Big Bill finishes his oratory:

BIG BILL  
 "Turn thy face from my sins. Amen."

He closes the Bible, nods to the hangman.

TRICKETT, meanwhile, couldn't care less. He draws his gun on Edge. Quiet but firm.

TRICKETT  
 Maybe you're not seein' this deputy badge  
 same as you didn't see that sign.  
 (holds his hand out)  
 Now hand it over.

The hangman loops the noose around the condemned man's neck, then tightens the knot so it's snug. He retreats to the lever and waits for the signal.

EDGE  
 (to Bean)  
 Tell your friend I'll stow my rifle soon  
 as I reckon I won't need it.

Big Bill gives the signal -- the hangman YANKS THE LEVER. The trap SPRINGS OPEN, the condemned man PLUMMETS.

But instead of his neck breaking, the rope is short -- and WE SEE him choke helplessly as he JERKS and DANGLES.

The jumpy deputy is undaunted. Says to Edge:

TRICKETT

I ain't gonna ask twice.

Edge all but ignores the jumpy deputy.

EDGE

(to Bean)

Tell your friend... Got me a rule about folks pointin' guns at me. First time? I let 'em off with a warning. Only ever give one.

(beat)

After that...

The hanged man continues to KICK and swing, struggling to put himself out of his misery. The crowd, breathless.

Trickett, meanwhile, has been pushed far enough. He advances on Edge. Edge reaches for the HENRY on his back.

EDGE (CONT'D)

You want this?

TRICKETT

That's right.

He grips it by the breech block as Trickett makes his last mistake of the day: LEVELS HIS COLT at Edge.

TRICKETT (CONT'D)

And I want it right fuckin' now.

Edge sighs, allows:

EDGE

Well, you bein' so nice and all... I'll make you a deal. Can't see lettin' go of all of it --

(beat)

But you're sure welcome to a percentage.

Edge's left arm SHOOTS FORWARD, GRABBING the Deputy's shirt. With his right, he UNSHEATHES the Henry, SPIN-COCKS IT, ONE-HANDED --

RAMS the BARREL into Trickett's GUT. Drops -- whips the deputy IN THE AIR. Like a jackrabbit pinned on a bayonet.

BAM--! The bullet drills through Trickett and EXITS skyward. Edge SLAMS him to the dust.

Second shot: he pegs the rifle to one slitted EYE. BAM--!

THE HANGMAN'S ROPE, CUT CLEAN. Hemp UNRAVELING, as --

## THE CONDEMNED MAN

Hits the ground with an ugly *WHOMP*--! Begins sobbing. Edge cants the gun to his shoulder. Stands up slowly. Unreadable. All eyes immediately swivel to:

BIG BILL -- as he registers what's just happened.

He regards the stranger, and his eyes narrow. If you haven't noticed, we should probably mention:

*There's a SILVER STAR pinned to his breast pocket.*

He walks slowly. Deliberately. A limp to his gait as he leans on his pistol-grip cane. A HUSH has fallen over the crowd. No sound but the distant cry of a hawk.

Big Bill takes out a cigar. Chews the tip off. Deputy Bean lights it for him as Bill appraises Edge. Finally:

BIG BILL

(re: gallows)

Any reason you shouldn't be next?

EDGE

Fella pulled a gun on me.

BIG BILL

Self defense. That what you want to tell the judge?

EDGE

When I see him.

BIG BILL

You're seein' him right now.

EDGE

Judge and Sheriff. Havin' the town named after you wasn't enough?

BIG BILL

(tightly)

Town's named after my father.

EDGE

That so? Funny, your pa being named "Hate."

There's no actual sound from the crowd of on-lookers, but Edge can sense the collective intake of breath. A brittle silence as Big Bill's eyes flash with anger.

Then... he grins. Gotta admire the balls on this guy.

BIG BILL  
What's yours?

EDGE  
Hedges.

BIG BILL  
Make you a deal, Hedges. You accept my offer, I'll forget what you just said and accept your plea.

EDGE  
What offer?

BIG BILL  
Be my new deputy.

EDGE  
Why me?

BIG BILL  
'Cause you just shot the last one.

EDGE  
(after a beat)  
I gotta make a living, I'll give you that.

Big Bill nods to SOME MEN to remove Trickett's body.

BIG BILL  
All right, then.  
(frowns)  
Oh, and Hedges..? There IS a sign.  
Gently remindin' folks to check their guns at city limits.

EDGE  
Musta missed that one.

BIG BILL  
It's large.

EDGE  
So's the sun, but I tend not to stare at it.

Pause. MEN file past Big Bill to remove Trickett's body.  
Edge shrugs, indicates the corpse:

EDGE (CONT'D)  
I did warn him.

BIG BILL

Fair enough.

Big Bill removes the dead man's badge, tosses it to Edge.

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

Bean here'll show you the ropes.

(re: gallows)

Speakin' of which --

Big Bill turns to the gallows, where the CONDEMNED MAN huddles, weeping. Shakes his head:

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

Do it over. And this time, make the drop shorter. Rope's dear, no sense wastin' it.

At his signal, the sobbing man is dragged back up the steps. Edge watches -- stone gaze, unwavering.

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

Not a bad town if you play by the rules. We understand each other, Mr. Hedges?

Edge favors Big Bill with a look of fathomless COLD... then nods once, slowly. Turns -- heads off with Bean. He'll play it the Sheriff's way... for now.

11 EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

11

Tour-guide BEAN ambles alongside Edge, as the town resumes its workaday rhythm. They pass the graveyard --

EDGE

Might wanna hire a new grave digger. I've seen gopher holes neater.

BEAN

Sheriff does it himself. Likes to think he takes care of folks before and after they walk these streets.

Edge looks up at the blackened House of God. Frowns. The deputy sees this.

BEAN (CONT'D)

'Spect you're thinkin' somebody took all that church talk 'bout hellfire a might too far.

EDGE

Didn't say nothin'.

BEAN

Didn't have to. I won't lie to you, Mr. Hedges, every town's got its black marks. Just ours are in plain sight.

(explaining)

Underground railroad used to run through here. Nigras'd pay in gold to get transport. One day, fella runnin' the underground realized he wasn't gonna turn a profit on the deal. So he took their gold, locked 'em in, tried to burn the place down. Mostly, he just burned them slaves.

(beat)

Like I said, every town's got its secret. That's ours.

Suddenly, one of the KIDS we saw outside town leaps from a doorway, aims a STICK GUN at Edge. Bean says to Edge:

BEAN (CONT'D)

Whoops. Best give junior here the rundown. 'Bout pointin' guns at you.

CLOSE ON EDGE -- He doesn't answer. Squints at the kid.

12

MEMORY FLASH: EXT. FARMSTEAD - MISSOURI

12

*Somehow we know we're looking at EDGE, even at the tender age of 12. He and his brother JAMIE, 9, huddle in the CORNFIELD. Josiah brandishes a shiny ARMY MODEL COLT.*

JOSIAH

*What, you scared..? Don't be.*

*(points it at Jamie)*

*Only scary when it's loaded... and this here ain't loa--*

*As if on cue, it GOES OFF. An accident -- Jamie's LEG shatters. Josiah STARES, dumbstruck, as --*

13

EXT. MAIN STREET (BACK TO SCENE)

13

EDGE watches the boy with the stick RUN OFF, boot laces flapping. Eyes far away...

BEAN

(to Edge)

You okay?

Edge shrugs off the memory, starts to roll a cigarette.

EDGE

Ridin' awhile is all. Like to see about  
gettin' a room.

The one-armed BENNY appears beside him, art box in hand.  
He seems eager; a hint of hero worship.

BENNY

I'll show you.

BEAN

This is Benny. He works at the Last Drop.

EDGE

Hope the name don't mean they ran out of  
beer.

BENNY

Follow me, Mister Edge.

For the first time, the closest thing to a grin appears  
on Edge's face (and thus, his NAME is born). They're  
about to go, when -- something catches his eye:

A GORGEOUS LATINA

Crossing the street. She wears a purple crepe dress,  
promenade hat, and a parasol. This is PILAR, late 20s.

Her dark eyes are on Edge, his on her, as we CUT TO --

14

INT. HOTEL ROOM (THE LAST DROP) - DAY

14

A KEY rattles the lock -- Edge enters, BENNY at his  
heels. Sheds his haversack. Tugs it open. Pulls out his  
gear -- inadvertently jars loose something else:

A Sterling silver FLASK. Heat-seared. Marred by a  
telltale BULLET HOLE --

*Little Bill's flask.*

BENNY

(fingers the hole)  
Can't hold your liquor? Ha, ha.

EDGE

Ain't mine. Belongs to a feller I'm  
looking for.

Nods to Benny's sketchbook, snug under his arm.

EDGE (CONT'D)

Can I see?

Benny hands it to him. Edge opens the sketchbook to: a RENDERING OF HIMSELF, in action. Taking out the jumpy deputy with the gallows in b.g. He flips pages:

A beautiful portrait of PILAR. Edge looks at Benny, who blushes. He pulls out some money, hands it over.

BENNY

(eyes wide)

That's a big tip, Mister Edge.

EDGE

Fifty cents for you. Dollar for the livery man to take care of my horse.

BENNY

Can't remember the last time I was given any money. I work for room and board.

EDGE

Just remember to fix up my horse.

Benny nods, exits. Edge surveys his new home. CUT TO:

15 EXT. ROOFTOP - HOTEL - AFTERNOON

15

EDGE, all business. Emerges into the crisp air of waning day. Crosses to the edge of the rooftop. Looks down to

THE ALLEY BELOW

He sees his reflection in a discarded STANDING MIRROR.

Chipped and tarnished, earning its place amongst the alley refuse, along with bent wheels, a rusted BACKHOE --

And, incongruously..? Remnants of a RECENT CELEBRATION.

POV EDGE: Bunting. Wrapped FIREWORKS. He can just discern a tattered, partially unrolled banner: *WELCOME HOME, BIL--*

He frowns. Crosses to the lip of the building, sits. Produces a brass cylinder: a RECON TELESCOPE. He scans...

16 MEMORY FLASH: SPYGLASS POV

16

*And suddenly, WE AREN'T LOOKING AT THE TOWN OF SEWARD ANYMORE. Instead, through morning mists, WE SEE:*

*CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS* in cadet grey field uniforms. Kepi hats. Gold stars.

Sergeant *JOSIAH HEDGES* peers through the same telescope. Two years younger. Close-cropped hair. Looking smart in navy blue frock coat and forage cap.

Several other *UNION OFFICERS* laying low in the brush around him, including one we immediately recognize:

*LITTLE BILL SEWARD*, nervously sipping from his familiar flask.

*EDGE'S POV:*

A *BATTLEFIELD*. Fraught with the littered dead. Among them, like the Reaper, prowls *HARKNETT*...

*LITTLE BILL*  
What the hell's Merritt doin' out there,  
Sergeant?

*Edge* blinks, unnerved: *Harknett* is collecting *EARS*. Slicing them from the dead and wounded.

One *WOUNDED MAN* tries to stagger erect, *RUN* -- *Harknett* catches him, drives the knife deep. *Edge* says:

*EDGE*  
Little Bill, all I can say is... he sure  
knows how to cut a dashing figure.

17

EXT. HOTEL ROOFTOP - BACK TO SCENE

17

*Edge* lowers the spyglass. Absently takes a *RAZOR* from a *LEATHER THONG* around his neck... Strops it. Whispers:

*EDGE*  
Real soon now, Jamie...  
(beat)  
I reckon there's six, all told. I'll send  
'em your way. One by one or all in a  
bunch, don't much matter to me.  
(spits)  
I'm sorry I wasn't there. I shoulda'  
knowed they'd come.  
(beat)  
Soon now...

*Edge's* appearance in *Hate, Kansas* is no random stop. *He's* come for blood vengeance.

SMASH TO BLACK.

Then FADE UP ON:

18 INT. HOTEL ROOM (THE LAST DROP) - NIGHT 18

Edge is naked in the clawfoot tub, shaving with his straight razor. A sharp RAP on the door.

He quickly replaces the razor in its leather pouch around his neck. Reaches for the Henry, and --

19 INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - A MOMENT LATER 19

Edge OPENS the door, wearing a towel and holding the Henry at waist level. His caller is Deputy Bean.

BEAN

Ready to work? There's a couple of beers downstairs with your name on 'em.

Edge lowers the rifle barrel.

EDGE

My kind of work.

20 INT. THE LAST DROP SALOON - NIGHT 20

Edge and Bean push through batwing doors into the large, well-lit saloon. Ceiling frescoes. Venetian glass.

On a balustrade, a few DANCE HALL GIRLS eye Edge appreciatively. Some Latina, one Asian, one black.

EDGE

There's some whores of a different color.

A stunning HOOKER blocks his path. Silk corset, short bustle skirt, white lace gloves. But the face? Familiar.

It's BETH, the "lady" he saw when he entered town. For the first time in our story, Edge looks... stymied.

BETH

Pot calling the kettle, coming from a paid gunman. Wouldn't you say, Mister... Hedges?

Edge frowns. Why's his name so important to her?

EDGE

And here I thought you was a good Christian woman.

BETH

You never know -- I bare my chest, who's to say you won't see a big gold crucifix dangling?

EDGE

Be your cross to bare, then.

(beat)

Your turn, name-wise.

BETH

Beth. Or Lady Bethany, depending.

(looking around)

Like I said -- nice, upright town. Always good for my line of work. Five bucks?

EDGE

Lady, I only make two-fifty a day.

BETH

(hint of a smile)

See you tomorrow, then.

An electric moment between them.

ACROSS THE ROOM -- Benny is bussing tables with his good arm. Sees Edge, and WAVES.

Edge tips his hat to Beth, follows Bean as the latter signals the bartender (CYRUS) for two beers.

EDGE

'Bout that... feller today. One they hanged.

BEAN

Spittin' in the street.

(off Edge's look)

You wanna know what they hanged him for. Spittin' in the street.

EDGE

Capital offense around here, is it?

BEAN

It is if you spit when the sheriff's passing by.

Cyrus sets two foaming glasses on the bar.

CYRUS

On the house, deputies.

Edge frowns. Fishes out coins, drops them on the bar.

EDGE  
 I pay my own way.  
 (to Bean)  
 If you don't mind an observation, seems  
 like there's only two kinds of folks in  
 this town. Scared and dead.

Bean's expression tells him he's not wrong. Edge sips his  
 beer. SEES a large painting on the wall:

A portrait of SHERIFF SEWARD, years younger.

Also in the picture, a sallow BOY in a fancy suit: *school  
 age Little Bill.*

EDGE (CONT'D)  
 Thinks a lot of himself, don't he?

BEAN  
 Owns damn near everything you see. Bank,  
 livery... this place. Upside is, it's one  
 of the safest towns in the state. Ain't  
 been a shot fired in public here in nine  
 months.  
 (raises his glass)  
 'Till you, I mean.

EDGE  
 (re: portrait)  
 Who's the boy?

BEAN  
 Little Bill. All grown up now. War hero.

EDGE  
 That so?

Bean eyes him. Decides it was an innocent question.

BEAN  
 Expectin' him home any day.

EDGE  
 Planning a big homecoming, are you..?

BEAN  
 Like I said, war hero. Big deal, town  
 this size.

Something catches his attention:

PILAR enters. The beautiful Latina Edge saw on main  
 street. Bean reacts with a tight expression.

BEAN (CONT'D)  
 Speak of the devil.  
 (off Edge's look)  
 Little Bill's wife. Pilar. Hands off.

EDGE  
 That a warning?

BEAN  
 It's our job.

Pilar locks eyes with Edge as she crosses the room.

Benny sees her, and lights up. Excitedly pulls a SKETCH from his pocket and gives it to her, clearly smitten.

She takes it, pats his head. Then approaches Cyrus at the bar. Deputy Bean "narrates" what we're watching.

BEAN (CONT'D)  
 Every night, just like clockwork.

Pilar asks for a drink, but Cyrus can only shrug. A rote quality to it; like they've done it a million times.

BEAN (CONT'D)  
 Cyrus is under orders not to serve the lady. So she makes eyes with any out-of-towners. Things get ugly, that's where we come in.

She moves to a POKER TABLE, and several MEN, mid-game. TWO find Pilar more interesting than their cards -- they fold, get up to socialize.

BEAN (CONT'D)  
 You should handle it.

EDGE  
 Don't look ugly to me.

BEAN  
 Not yet.

Edge shrugs, and heads over to THE POKER TABLE. Addresses the TWO MEN who are chatting up Pilar.

EDGE  
 Lady's spoken for.

The men just stare at him. Beat. Beat.

EDGE (CONT'D)  
 Okay, then.

He turns -- and GOES BACK TO BEAN and his waiting beer.  
Bean is nonplussed.

BEAN

Sure you weren't a little hard on 'em?

EDGE

They'll get over it.

And that's when he notices:

THAT ONE-EYED DOG

Nipping at the heels of one of Pilar's suitors.  
Distracted, he nudges it with his shoe. But the dog keeps  
at him.

Finally, the man KICKS the dog, who YELPS, scurries under  
a table for cover. Edge's eyes thin to slits, and --

EDGE (CONT'D)

'Scuse me.

He rises. Bee-lines back to:

THE POKER TABLE. Pilar and the suitors, mid-conversation.  
Edge interrupts:

EDGE (CONT'D)

Maybe I wasn't clear. The lady ain't  
interested.

FIRST POKER PLAYER

That so? How about we ask her, let her  
decide. How about that?

(turns to PILAR)

What do you say, Mex?

Edge's eyes narrow again. Now the OTHER POKER PLAYERS  
have noticed the conflict. They get up from their seats.

THIRD POKER PLAYER

Is there a problem?

FIRST POKER PLAYER

Nothing we can't handle.

(eyes locked with Edge's)

Why don't we take this outside, mister?

EDGE

Let's take it here.

Time to remember that straight razor; the one he keeps tucked into his neck thong. Because suddenly -- HIS HAND'S A BLUR as it SHOOTS behind his neck, AND --

QUICK CUTS:

The players try to GRAB HIM, but he DUCKS -- PARRIES -- four BLINDING SLASHES -- A STREAK OF BLOOD on a shirt front -- a throat GASH, AND --

TWO SEVERED FINGERS

LAND in the pot of POKER CHIPS on the table.

The FOUR MEN MOAN and cradle their wounds. One of them clutches his gut. Another grips his bloody hand.

EDGE (CONT'D)

Just to let you fellers know -- certain nomenclature I take umbrage at... on account of my pa bein' Mexican.

THE DOG emerges from hiding, pads over to Edge... who holds out the bloody razor. The dog LICKS IT CLEAN.

Edge re-folds the blade. A gentlemanly nod to Pilar:

EDGE (CONT'D)

Ma'am.

He calmly ambles back to a slack-jawed Deputy Bean. Picks up his beer, spies BETH watching him across the room.

BEAN

Maybe I shoulda handled it.

Edge's gaze alights upon something knocked to the FLOOR during the dust-up:

BENNY'S DRAWING

The one he gifted to Pilar -- a likeness of her husband: *Little Bill.*

Edge watches PILAR as she crosses to the batwing doors, and exits in a huff past

BIG BILL

who stands puffing on his cigar, watching Edge... CUT TO:

21 EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT (LATER) 21

BENNY emerges from the livery, his sketch pad under one arm. Scurries off toward the hotel, as --

EDGE

GRABS him roughly. Hauls him into the shadows behind a millinery store. Benny, spluttering, fearful:

BENNY

Mr. Edge -- ?

EDGE

Figger it's time we had us a chat, Benny.  
About Little Bill.

BENNY

I... I done fixed up your horse --

EDGE

That picture you gave the lady -- you did a swell job with the scar, runs east-west acrost' Little Bill's chin. Just one problem -- I was there when he GOT that scar. Battle of Manassas. I don't recall seein' YOU there. That sketch is only a couple days old, now I'll say it again, Benny -- WHERE IS HE?

His gaze bores into Benny's... no contest. CUT TO:

22 EXT. WESTERN UNION OFFICE - NIGHT 22

A 'CLOSED' sign hangs on the door, but a CLERK can be seen within. A manicured hand raps on the glass:

REVEAL BETH, long cape and hat covering her courtesan wardrobe. The clerk looks up, ill-tempered; points at the sign. Undaunted, Beth flashes an ID we don't see.

The clerk squints at it. Abashed, unlatches the door.

23 INT. WESTERN UNION OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER 23

Beth dictates by gaslight. Utterly different demeanor than we've seen; all business.

BETH

Pinkerton National Detective Agency, 10  
Washington Street, Chicago, Illinois.

(MORE)

BETH (CONT'D)  
 Message as follows: "Apprise Mr.  
 Harknett, Hedges alive and in Seward.  
 Last Drop Hotel."

She hesitates, frowning at a ragged sheet of Pinkerton letterhead in her hand -- and on it, a DRAWING of an ornate CAMEO JEWEL BOX.

BETH (CONT'D)  
 (looking at the drawing)  
 Will continue to monitor for item in  
 question."  
 (lights a cigarette)  
 That's all.

As she exhales a plume of smoke -- CUT TO:

24 EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT 24

The fire-ravaged building looms spectral in the moonlight as EDGE, all business, creeps among the graves. He sees a broken stained-glass window, silently climbs in.

25 INT. CHURCH - NIGHT 25

Edge pads silently up the center aisle past black and crumbling pews. He frowns, seeing a dim glow from

THE SIDE VESTIBULE

Where a kerosene lamp casts a feeble glow. He peers in. Blinks: standing before him, a bronze FOUR-POSTER BED.

A FIGURE beneath the covers. Edge pads forward, steels himself. YANKS the covers back, and --

It's PILAR!

PILAR  
*¿Puedo ayudarte?*

She looks up at him. Unreadable. We instantly see that she's naked. Except for one thing:

*An ornate steel CHASTITY BELT, complete with padlock.*

EDGE  
 Lordy. I've seen flimsier locks at Camp Sumter. Somebody must reckon you got gold in there.

PILAR

I wouldn't give you the key if you were  
the last man on earth.

Edge smiles wryly. Taps the Henry:

EDGE

I'm whittlin' 'em down, Ma'am.

Then, the glow of a cigar directly behind Edge.

BIG BILL

Evenin', Sergeant Hedges.

Edge turns and -- THERE'S BIG BILL, aiming a .42 Caliber  
LeMat percussion pistol. Edge's jaw tightens.

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

That Henry's a fine rifle. Why don't you  
just set it on the floor, nice and easy?

(Edge does)

You an' I both know why you're here. My  
boy sent me a wire, said you might come  
lookin' for him. Unfortunately, he ain't  
here. But his pretty little wife is.

(looks at her lasciviously)

So why don't you accept her warm  
hospitality.

He holds out a neck chain with a KEY dangling from it.

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

I don't mind telling you, be well worth  
your while. I'll just sit an' watch... if  
it's all the same to you.

He TOSSES the key to Edge, who doesn't bother to catch  
it, just lets it land on the floor.

EDGE

You do this for all your deputies?

BIG BILL

Call it a peace offering.

EDGE

Not my style. Trail beckons, you know?

BIG BILL

Tail beckons -- and it's a mite closer.

EDGE still makes no move to pick up the key. Standoff.

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

Huh. Well, there's gratitude. I gave you a *job* today. Hell, I coulda put three rounds in your heart.

EDGE

Your generosity knows no rounds, I get it.

BIG BILL

Pilar.

He nods curtly: she scoops up her clothes, exits.

EDGE

Regular *pee-lar* of the community.

(beat)

So, Sheriff. What was that all about?

Big Bill stops beside Edge. Surveys the MURALS adorning the walls. ANGELS over a land ravaged by war and disease.

BIG BILL

Them bootlips, when they weren't hidin' in the cellar, they'd paint and paint...

He notices a lone CANDLE... casually snuffs it. Smiles --

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

Pilar. Every day, she lights a candle for 'em. And every night, I snuff it out. Her way of bein' rebellious, I suppose.

He takes a puff of cigar:

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

Somethin' special about you, son. Most folks are evil. You're evil, but you got principles. I like that.

EDGE

When that yap a' yers is in danger of makin' a point, wake me.

BIG BILL

Fine, then. I'm comin' up on somethin', Hedges. Gonna be transportin' valuable cargo. Never mind what.

EDGE

You need a hired gun?

BIG BILL

A bodyguard, let's call it.

He stubs out his CIGAR against the MURAL.

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

What I'm saying... if you can find it in your heart to forgive my boy for whatever he done... I can sure use a man like you.

The two face off squarely. The tension draws tight... as

SUDDENLY, FROM OUTSIDE

*Bang--! Bang--!* GUNSHOTS split the night air. Big Bill reacts. EDGE, his gun already out and cocked -- CUT TO:

26

EXT. CHURCH - MAIN STREET - NIGHT

26

Big Bill and Edge come out, see CITIZENS trying to flag down some ERRANT HORSES, panicked and running free.

BIG BILL

Who fired those shots?!

CITIZEN

Came from the livery! Horses loose!

Big Bill LIMPS on his cane at full speed down the street. Edge follows, but as he passes a storefront alcove --

PILAR REACHES from the shadows and pulls him into the alcove. WHISPERS urgently:

PILAR

It was Benny fired the shots. I asked him to -- so we can talk without Bill knowing. You... you have to help me!

EDGE

Help you what?

PILAR

Get away from here. Away from him.

Edge spits. No time for this --

PILAR (CONT'D)

He cuts me, he burns me with *cigarettes...!*

EDGE

Yeah, yeah. Lady, no offense, I came here to kill your husband -- and whatever's on between you and Poppa Bill...

PILAR  
PLEASE, signor --

EDGE  
Whatever it's about, you can forg--

PILAR  
(sudden vehemence)  
Even if it's about gold, *tarado*?

Edge blinks, thrown -- she presses the advantage:

PILAR (CONT'D)  
You know about the underground railroad.  
There's talk that gold never left -- that  
it's *hidden, somewhere near the church*.  
He's been looking for years now.

From her bag, she produces a KEY. The chastity belt key?

PILAR (CONT'D)  
I think Benny knows where it is. Last  
summer, I asked him to make keys for me.  
He gave me this.

She opens her palm to reveal that the key is SCRATCHED,  
paint flaking -- underneath, FLECKS OF GOLD. Edge digests  
all this, wheels turning:

EDGE  
I'll be damned... That's why he hangs  
people for spittin' -- he needs bodies to  
bury, so he can dig for gold --

PILAR  
Without anyone knowing. Yes.

Pilar locks eyes with him. A subtle nod:

PILAR (CONT'D)  
We find it, we leave. Simple. NOW will  
you help me?  
(softening)  
The deputy you killed. I saw what you did  
-- put him against the sky so no one in  
the crowd would get hit. You changed your  
aim.

EDGE  
Just how it panned out.

PILAR  
I don't believe that. I know there's good  
in you. I can see it.

EDGE

Get some glasses, sister.

Pilar's look hardens; *she'll need another tack*. Just then, a new COMMOTION. They turn to SEE:

OUT IN THE STREET

Benny ZIG-ZAGS up the sidewalk, terrified. DODGING citizens calling "Get him!" "Get that simpleton!"

And there, at the mouth of the alley -- none other than BIG BILL and his DEPUTIES. Staring in at them.

They are well and truly CAUGHT.

At which point, Pilar shows a gift for improvisation: Whirls round, SLUGS Edge full in the face --

PILAR

You take what you can have for free?  
CULERO! *Kill him, Big Bill!*

She turns toward her father-in-law, eyes wild --

PILAR (CONT'D)

Bastard dragged me into the fucking alley!

Big Bill, face a stone mask. Licks his lips:

BIG BILL

Well... this is a conundrum, isn't it?

PILAR lunges to GRAB Edge by the balls -- unseen, SHOVES the key we saw in the alcove into his pants.

EDGE

(a quiet HISS:)  
What are you pullin', lady? You want him to string me up?

Pilar leans in, covertly whispers:

PILAR

You will think of something. Something which frees us both, eh, *carino..?*

She meets Edge's eye -- then withdraws. The DEPUTIES GRAB Edge. DRAG him out of the alley -- as Big Bill says:

BIG BILL

I have no words, boy. No words.

(beat)

In fact... much as I'd like to, I'm  
thinkin' I may not be the right one to  
pass judgment for such a heinous crime.

(grins)

What d'you think, son?

A familiar, younger man walks into the light. Sallow.  
Oily. Last we saw him, he was an accomplice to KILLING  
JAMIE HEDGES:

LITTLE BILL

Why, I think we should hang 'im, pa.

SMASH TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

THE GALLOWS

Loom ominously against a pre-dawn sky -- seen through the  
barred window of a JAIL CELL.

27

INT. CELL - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

27

Edge looks at the hangman's platform. Stoic.

Outside the cell, TWO DEPUTIES. ONE sits with his back to  
Edge, trying to nap...

The SECOND examines Edge's Henry rifle with admiration.

SECOND DEPUTY

(to Edge; re: rifle)

Twenty-eight rounds a minute, I heard.  
Sheriff'll be happy to add it to his  
collection.

He carefully places it in an upright gun case; takes out  
a COLT DOUBLE-BARREL and sets it on the desk. (NOTE: the  
gun butt is over the edge a few inches.)

Second Deputy scoops a tobacco pouch from his belt, heads  
outside. Once the door's closed --

EDGE stands. Reaches into his pants...

Produces THE KEY Pilar gave him. He quietly goes to the  
lock on the cell, reaches through the bars, and --

Just as he thought. A turn, a CLICK, and just like that, he's pushing the cell door OPEN.

He creeps up behind the sleeping deputy. *Reaches for his hidden straight razor, and --*

The deputy WAKES suddenly. SPINS in his chair. His arm KNOCKS Edge's razor SKITTERING across the floor --

Edge doesn't miss a beat: GRABS the spittoon, TOSSES it at the other desk. It HITS the butt of the Colt, CATAPULTING it into the air -- !

Edge GRABS it with one hand, SNATCHES the Deputy's pillow with the other, and JAMS BOTH BARRELS IN HIS FACE. He SHOVES the muzzle into the pillow --

The BOOM! of the shotgun is MUFFLED by the pillow, but --

28 EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - THAT MOMENT 28

At this close range, the SECOND DEPUTY hears it. FLINGS the door open --

Shocked, he SEES the cell door open and his fellow deputy dead in his chair. EDGE RISES behind Deputy #2, and off the glint of the straight razor, we (and Edge) CUT TO:

29 INT. PILAR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 29

Pilar sleeps fitfully in the moonlight. Blinks awake:

THE BARREL OF THE HENRY is pressed against her throat. And there, in the shadows, is Edge.

PILAR

Hedges -- !

EDGE

Benny calls me "Edge."

(sly grin)

I'm startin' to cotton to it.

He looks round: Boots, hat, EVIDENCE of a male occupant.

EDGE (CONT'D)

Where is he?

PILAR

Little Bill? Laying low.

(smiles)

Because of you.

She reaches to cover herself --

EDGE

Hands where I can see 'em.

She recoils. He skins back his lips, a mordant grin:

EDGE (CONT'D)

Lady, I ain't no fiddle, so why are you playing me?

(spits)

Deputy said you're in that saloon every night like clockwork. Odd, that... seein' as how Benny works there and he was so happy to see you he gave you a picture.

He PRESSES the muzzle harder against her throat.

EDGE (CONT'D)

I don't buy this "peace offering" crap. Why's it so important to Big Bill I rape you?

She locks eyes with him. Fierce.

PILAR

Why..? Because... Because HE did. That's why.

Pause... as this sets in. Edge nods slowly:

EDGE

So -- that's the bump you're trying to hide inside that... thing.

She looks away again. Ashamed.

EDGE (CONT'D)

Why pin it on me? Little Bill's been back, why not just say it's his?

PILAR

Because Little Bill, he cannot... you know.

EDGE

(incredulous)

And everybody knows that?

She locks eyes with him again. Shrugs:

PILAR

Small town.

Edge sighs. After a beat, lowers the gun barrel -- as PILAR, now, her eyes fastened on the half-breed's, reaches under the covers to her chastity belt.

Edge, momentarily thrown... until she withdraws tiny, cached flecks of GOLD. Shining in the night-lamp.

EDGE  
Gift from Benny?

PILAR  
(nods)  
There's more, Edge. If we find it, we can leave. Go anywhere.

EDGE  
Lady... you ain't listenin'.  
(steely gaze)  
I just GOT here.

At the window, he looks out over the dark town... CUT TO:

30 INT. BENNY'S QUARTERS/PANTRY - THE LAST DROP - NIGHT 30

Benny looks up from his bed (a meager mattress on the floor) to SEE: PILAR, silhouetted in the doorway.

PILAR  
Benny. We have to talk.

The light from outside the room illuminates several of Benny's DRAWINGS OF PILAR, pinned to the walls.

Embarrassed, he quickly SNATCHES them from the wall, one by one. Conspicuously, he only leaves ONE affixed to a low portion of the wall, near the floor.

PILAR (CONT'D)  
Benny, listen to me. The gold you give me sometimes. Where do you get it?

BENNY  
It's -- it's mine.

PILAR  
I think it's the slaves' gold, Benny.  
The gold the sheriff wants. Little Bill told me he thinks your papa stole it.



EDGE (CONT'D)

She's right about your pa, though, isn't she? He melted it down and hid it, didn't he?

Benny's eyes, wide and unblinking. He nods slowly.

BENNY

Don't know where he hid it, I... I only got some...

EDGE

Some?

Edge eyes the wall behind Benny. Jutting nail heads. Bits of paper where he tore down the drawings of Pilar...

All but the one, still hanging conspicuously. He MOVES quickly for the picture --

BENNY

Nooooo--!

-- and SNATCHES IT OFF THE WALL to reveal the seam of a loose plank. He shoots a steely look at Benny... then PULLS the plank off.

In the dusty shadows, A BURLAP SACK. He pulls it free -- Opens it. REACTS with a dry CLUCK in his throat.

EDGE

No point to bein' ashamed, Benny. You got a right to bear arms.

In his hand is:

A SEVERED HUMAN ARM

Years old. Desiccated. Hand, a claw. But most surreal? Benny's lost arm is *liberally coated with GOLD*. CUT TO:

35 EXT. MAIN STREET - SEWARD - DAY

35

Morning activity as Big Bill walks on his cane toward the Sheriff's Office. Opens up, and --

36 INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

36

The color drains from his face as he SEES:

HIS TWO DEAD DEPUTIES

Both hung from the rafters, their pants around their ankles. One has a note pinned to his corpse -- the same note Seward left on the door in Act One:

*"Gone to hanging."*

On the desk, a bundle wrapped in butcher's paper. Bill frowns... UNWRAPS it. His eyes widen at what's inside:

FLECKS OF GOLD, and two dried-up, severed fingers. Underneath, a hand-scrawled NOTE:

*THIS SHOULD COVER CASKETS.*

*P.S. -- WANT THE REST?  
HAVE LITTLE BILL WHITEWASH  
THE HATE SIGN.*

CUT TO:

THE NOONDAY SUN

Beating down. Merciless. The CRY of a hawk.

37

EXT. BLUFF OVERLOOKING PLAINS - DAY

37

The edge of a high bluff. BENNY hovers, anxious... holding Edge's horse -- as EDGE himself stands

LOOKING DOWN ON THE TOWN OF SEWARD

A dark smudge on the plains. We see the trail into town, and the lone signpost. BENNY, uneasy --

BENNY

I oughtta be gettin' back, Mr. Edge.  
Liveryman gave me a nickel for licorice.  
Said there's another if I fetch his mail.

EDGE

(softly)

Stay here, Benny. Keep me company.

Below -- a SINGLE RIDER appears. EDGE puts his spyglass to his eye:

POV: It's LITTLE BILL -- a pot of paint sloshing and swinging from his saddle.

CLOSE ON EDGE -- he pockets the spyglass, hefts the Henry repeater. From off screen, a VOICE abruptly intrudes:

BIG BILL (O.S.)  
 Figured you'd be here.

Edge spins, GUN UP -- SEES Big Bill standing behind him.

BIG BILL (CONT'D)  
 (re: Little Bill)  
 Best place for a clean shot.

EDGE  
 I figured you'd figure.  
 (cocks the Henry)  
 That's why I got fifteen rounds.

Big Bill holds his hands up, compliant.

BIG BILL  
 I won't stop you. I held up my end.  
 (indicates Little Bill far  
 below)  
 He'll be at that the better part of the  
 day, the lazy bastard.

EDGE  
 (rueful)  
 Gold's more important than your own son?

BIG BILL  
 Man's gotta prioritize.

They trade looks -- he nods for Edge to get on with it.

Edge turns back around. Draws a bead on Little Bill in  
 the distance. Closes one eye, sights down the barrel.

Pause. Pause.

Then the eye opens. Something's wrong. He hefts the rifle  
 butt in his hands, gauging its weight.

EDGE  
 Weight's off.

Edge's jaw tightens. He spins toward Sheriff Seward, who  
 is unaccountably SMILING --

39

BACK TO SCENE: AS EDGE SWIVELS THE RIFLE TOWARD BIG BILL. 39

EDGE

Your man jimmied with it.

(beat)

I pull the trigger...?

BIG BILL

Life becomes interesting.

(points)

Oh -- same with your sidearm, 'case  
you're wonderin'.

Bill takes out a cigar, bites the top off and spits it.

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

Boys?

With that, THREE MEN emerge from the woods, guns leveled.  
Among them, DEPUTY BEAN. He tips his hat to Edge:

BEAN

Deputy.

They YANK Edge's arms back, pinion him. BEAN rips the  
RAZOR pouch from around the half-breed's neck -- as BIG  
BILL calmly ignites a match with his thumbnail.

Lights his cigar. Favors BENNY with a paternal look:

BIG BILL

He thinks you know where the gold is,  
Benny. Only reason you're here is he's  
trading you for a clean shot at my boy.  
Didn't you know that?

(beat)

He used you as bait, boy.

Benny blinks. His lower lip quivers, and he looks at Edge  
with disbelief.

BENNY

Is that true, Mr. Edge..?

Arms pinned, Edge says nothing.

BIG BILL

I owe you, mister. If this idjit WAS  
there when his Daddy was smeltin' slave  
gold..? If that's how he lost that arm of  
his... then he's the link I been missing.Edge's eyes are twin chips of ice. Smoke curls between  
Big Bill's teeth. He chuckles, shakes his head...

## BIG BILL (CONT'D)

You shoulda never rode into Hate, son.

Grips his cane with two hands -- and SWINGS IT into Edge's knee --CRACK! Edge starts to go down, but --

Bean HOLDS HIM UP, AS DEPUTY #2 slips his right hand into a pair of brass knuckles, AND --

FLURRY OF CUTS

as they PUMMEL him viciously. Ugly, vicious men meting out reprisal. Awkward. Brutal. Hard to watch.

OKAY. We commence, at this point, a series of fast-action reversals. Move/countermove, roughly as follows:

EDGE, being hammered. He SAGS, utter deadweight. His body cants sideways, a DEPUTY leans in to haul him upright --

REVERSAL: like a snake, EDGE lashes out a hand onto the GUN BUTT in the deputy's holster, gives a YANK --

Uh-uh, NO GO -- the deputy REACTS. Traps Edge's HAND before it can draw the gun. So the deputy wins, right..?

Wrong. Edge doesn't DRAW. He pulls the trigger INSIDE THE HOLSTER and sends a shot down *INTO THE DEPUTY'S FOOT!*

A blurt of RED spikes upward, then -- blood and leather and HUMAN TOES SPATTER the opposite boot. The guy YELPS and folds as Edge comes away with the gun.

He levels it at Big Bill and the deputies.

EDGE

Looks like the foot's on the other shoe.

Sadly, though, this fight's not settled, not yet. Because what Edge forgot -- never saw coming, is

BETRAYED BENNY

Red with anger, hefting a huge BRANCH -- he SWINGS it against the back of Edge's knees -- CRUNCH! Edge GOES DOWN, gun skittering away...

Everything changes.

Benny BOLTS. Jumps onto Edge's horse and KICKS it into action, RIDING AWAY full tilt.

What happens next, happens quickly:

BENNY'S the key to GOLD. Big Bill points frantically --

BIG BILL  
Get the fuck after him!

EDGE, UNARMED.

Sees his chance. Uses the distraction, LURCHES toward the fallen pistol, he's got seconds --

And you know what? *He's not gonna make it.*

THE GUNLESS DEPUTY SPOTS HIM. The foot-shot one, snatches up ANOTHER GUN, aims it STRAIGHT AT EDGE and pulls the TRIGGER, as --

BIG BILL (CONT'D)  
*No, DON'T--!!*

Reversal -- It's the SABOTAGED gun. Edge's revolver.

Flat, wrenching CRACK--! Burst of FLAME, as the gun FLIES TO PIECES in the deputy's face. Blows him back, as

EDGE NOW, STAGGERING.

Nears the edge of the cliff. Dives. Rolls. Comes up with the fallen PISTOL and doesn't stop there, LUNGES --

40 PROPELS HIMSELF OFF THE EDGE!

40

Bullets SPITTING dirt around him, he exits the earth, into open air, high above the town of Seward.

Touches down. Careens down the side of the bluff.

Goes ass over teacups. Bouncing, skipping. Pops into the air, describes a lazy arc... only to CRASH BACK DOWN, sending up geysers of DUST --

And then, just as quickly, he LURCHES to a HALT. The SKY pitches from side to side. Stabilizes...

WATER. Raging below. A hissing ROAR. He blinks.

41 WIDEN TO REVEAL

41

He's LANDED IN A TREE BRANCH jutting from the side of the cliff, thirty feet above the churning RIVER WATERS! Held there Christ-like. Half-conscious.

TOP OF CLIFF

Deputy Bean moves toward the lip of the cliff.

DEPUTY BEAN  
Let's see how dead he is.

He pokes his head over the edge. Looks down. Cautious.  
Leans out further, shielding his eyes --

BANG--! HIS HEAD VANISHES.

A PLUME of blood and gray matter... then -- the headless  
body TOPPLES over the side.

EDGE -- splayed in the tree, clutching the smoking gun.  
He shakily SALUTES BEAN'S CORPSE as it PLUMMETS past him--

EDGE  
(a croaking whisper)  
Deputy.

-- and SMACKS THE WATER before being carried away by the  
current. Edge blinks groggily up the cliffside, barely  
alive. Sees:

A SILHOUETTE, ATOP THE CLIFF

Blotting out the sun. Edge lifts the gun with a trembling  
hand, but doesn't pull the trigger. The remaining  
deputies limp to Big Bill's side.

BIG BILL  
(voice echoing down the  
cliff)  
Gonna be on our way, "Edge." Maybe you  
slow-broil out here... maybe you drown.  
I don't much care. But I like the  
simplicity. So --  
(tips his hat)  
I'll leave you to it.

Edge purses his dry lips, his sun-leathered face streaked  
with dried blood and darkening welts. One eye sealed  
shut, he falls back.

He can't move. Cradled by the branch. Lifeless.

CUT TO:

A BLOOD MOON

And the thrum of CICADAS. Scudding CLOUDS, as we REVEAL:

42 EXT. TREE BRANCH - NIGHT 42

AND EDGE, where we left him in the talon-like tree. A splayed rag doll bathed in the moonlight.

No telling how long he's been here.

A LIGHT RAIN begins to fall. Then harder. Spattering. EDGE jerks awake. Opens his mouth to let in the life-giving moisture. As he sputters and chokes -- CUT TO:

43 THE SUN AGAIN 43

Blinding. Blistering. And...

CLOSE ON EDGE -- as a SHADOW falls over him. He rouses groggily. Squints upward with his one good eye:

Standing on the cliff, looking down, is LITTLE BILL SEWARD. As seen through Edge's squinty POV, there's an eerie penumbra around him -- like an angel.

Little Bill takes off his hat, respectful.

LITTLE BILL

Josiah...

To our surprise, he exudes a general air of contrition.

LITTLE BILL (CONT'D)

Reckon I... came to make amends. I know I can't bring back your brother, but -- you gotta know it wasn't me, it was Harknett. He thinks you know something... what he's planning. Word is, him and the others are comin' in tomorrow to...

(shakes his head)

But don't you worry. I'll tell 'em I saw you dead. Least I can do.

(exhales)

Just wanted you to know it was an honor serving with you. And maybe... maybe in another life, we could be friends again.

He nods silently. Then, with a tip of his hat, he's gone.

Edge frowns with dry, blistered lips. He looks half-dead, the one sealed-shut eye festering with infection. Then... A NEW SHADOW flickers over him.

And a SECOND. He squints up, SEEING:

Blurry WINGED SHADOWS. Circling. Has time passed? We can't be sure. Suddenly, a FLAP OF WINGS, AND --

A BUZZARD

LANDS and cocks its ugly, unfeathered head, staring. It brazenly PECKS at Edge's face with its huge beak.

Edge FLINCHES, willing all his strength into the trigger finger of his gun hand. He shakily raises it... BLAM--!

The buzzard FLIES OFF with a disgusting FLAP and a flurry of dirty feathers. Edge chokes back bile, sees:

THE BRANCH'S DUSTY ROOT SYSTEM

Strands of root start to UNRAVEL LIKE TWINE. Edge realizes what's happening, levels another shot: BLAM--!

Bingo. The weight of the branch PULLS IT FREE. A dusty HEAVE, a deafening CRACK --

EDGE FALLS.

Down. Down. HITS the water, as --

44 EXT. RIVER - SERIES OF CUTS 44

The half-breed is CARRIED AWAY by the rapids. TOSSED and BUFFETED like a piece of flotsam, as:

45 MEMORY FLASH: EDGE ON HORSEBACK, NOT LONG AGO, FACE DAPPLIED BY ORANGE GLOW. HE DISMOUNTS, STARES AGAPE AT: 45

THE MISSOURI FARMSTEAD

*from our opening. Black smoke rises from lapping flames. The whole place BURNING against a darkening sky. And impaled to a tree, as if crucified:*

EDGE'S BROTHER JAMIE

*Dead. Face a mottled yellow-grey.*

ON EDGE

*as he looks on... and something behind his eyes changes forever, and the flames ROAR deafeningly and we CUT TO:*

DIFFERENT FLAMES

Spitting, CRACKLING. We're back in the present. A series of metallic SCRAPES and CLICKS as -- the familiar HENRY comes into frame, and we are --

46 INT. CAVE - NIGHT 46

By the light of a CAMPFIRE, Edge uses a pocket knife to tighten a screw on the breech block. Sparks SPIT from the fire as we DISSOLVE TO...

47 THE SUN 47

A blood-red disc on the horizon as --

FIVE RIDERS GALLOP TOWARD US. THE SAME RIDERS who besieged the Hedges farmstead. Minus Little Bill, of course. Inbound... to the town called Hate.

48 EXT. CORNFIELD OUTSIDE SEWARD - DUSK 48

The THREE CHILDREN WE SAW play in the shadow of the CONFEDERATE-UNIFORMED SCARECROW. A new, human SHADOW falls across them, and the kids freeze, AS --

EDGE shambles into view. Eyes hooded. Lifeless.

Riveted on the new arrivals.

49 EXT. ARMORY - DUSK 49

A man in a UNION UNIFORM. It's the lazy guard, standing watch in front of the square brick building.

A FIGURE APPEARS BEHIND HIM, and suddenly -- EDGE'S STRAIGHT RAZOR is pressed to the guard's throat.

EDGE

(a hiss)

Your throat or that door. Don't matter to me which opens first.

50 EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MAIN STREET - DUSK 50

Big Bill chomps his cigar as a group of his DEPUTIES cross the street, hoisting THE "HATE" SIGNPOST.

And tied to it like Christ to the cross, wriggling and spitting... is BENNY.

They proceed to HANG THE SIGN from the exterior wall of Big Bill's office. Benny, suspended. Helpless.

DEPUTY #1

Found him up at the north end of the valley, sheriff! Horse done died out from under him!

Big Bill limps forward on his walking stick. He takes a match stick from his vest pocket, looks up at Benny.

GAWKING TOWNSFOLK

Avert eyes in a way that suggests they've had practice.

BIG BILL

Don't have much luck with horses, do ya, Benny? Now...

(edges closer)

Are you gonna tell me where my gold's at?

He LIGHTS the match off his thumbnail. Holds the flame to Benny's hair.

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

(an icy whisper)

*Or do we need to burn some more nigger?*

A THUNDER OF HOOVES!! Everyone spins to see:

HARKNETT AND HIS MEN

GALLOP into town -- straight for Big Bill and the Deputies. CITIZENS look on, curious.

HARKNETT

(slowing his horse)

Big Bill Seward?

Big Bill blanches at the sight of Harknett. Takes a beat to gather his wits.

BIG BILL

Sheriff Seward to you.

HARKNETT

Sergeant Harknett, Union Infantry.

He nods to his men... who dismount, tie up their horses.

BIG BILL

Well, Sergeant, I respect your service, I surely do. But the war's over, last I checked.

There's a tinge of condescension in his voice. He trades amused looks with his Deputies.

HARKNETT

That it is, Sheriff. That it is.

(pointed)

'Spect that means Little Bill's around here somewhere...

BIG BILL

You know my son?

HARKNETT

You kidding? I rode through here -- recruited Little Bill when he was scarce 15. Before you had that cane a' yours, if I remember.

Big Bill is stymied for a beat.

O.S. VOICE

'Course he did, pa.

The men turn to SEE:

LITTLE BILL standing there, Pilar at his side. He looks at Harknett and the others with solidarity. A reunion.

LITTLE BILL

This here's my squad.

HARKNETT

Indeed we are. Save one of us -- Josiah Hedges. You heard of him, Sheriff?

Little Bill suddenly fidgets, uncomfortable --

BIG BILL

Heard of 'im? Seen him dead not four days ago. Laid out for the buzzards, good and proper.

He nods to the *Check Your Rifle* sign posted nearby.

BIG BILL (CONT'D)

You wanna abide by that sign, I'll be honored to buy you and your boys a round.

(re: Benny)

Once I finish my business here, I mean.

HARKNETT

Obliged, Sheriff.

(beat)

(MORE)

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

But we'll be keeping our firearms, if  
it's all the same to you.

Big Bill clenches his jaw. He tosses his cigar butt, and  
casually puts his hand on his holstered sidearm.

BIG BILL

What if I told you it ain't?

And that's when we HEAR a projectile WHISTLE through the  
air -- and LAND in the street.

Everything stops. THOSE CLOSEST stare dumbly at:

A STICK OF DYNAMITE

The fuse SPARKING: WHOMMM!! A deafening EXPLOSION. Tears  
a GOUGE in the street. DEBRIS RAINS DOWN --

ANOTHER BLAST. Citizens flee. Chaos. Spooked horses BREAK  
AND SCATTER. Running wild. Then -- a NEW SOUND:

51 SQUEAK--SQUEAK--SQUEAK.

51

Citizens squint toward the mouth of the street, engulfed  
in smoke. The SQUEAK becomes louder, rhythmic, until --

A HUMAN FIGURE

Emerges from the haze. It takes a moment for us to  
recognize the Confederate uniform... the BURLAP BAG FACE.

The legs don't so much walk as FLOP, like a marionette's.  
Inches above the ground. Oops, not a human at all.

IT'S THE SCARECROW.

The illusion of walking created by its dangling from a  
rope tied to a pole. Except it isn't a pole at all:

It's the long, vented GUN BARREL of a crank-operated  
GATLING GUN. It trundles forward, SQUEAK-SQUEAK..!

The MAN pushing it becomes visible, face still swollen,  
eye sealed shut from the beating. *EDGE*.

He's coming for them. Every last one who killed Jamie.

He turns the crank. BUDDA-BUDDA-BUDDA!!

A WITHERING FUSILLADE--!! Glass SHATTERS. Wood POPS and  
SPLINTERS into kindling as --

## HARKNETT DIVES

Behind a flatbed wagon. LITTLE BILL physically SHOVES PILAR behind a WATER TROUGH. Hits the dirt beside her --

The weapon RAKES THE MAIN STREET, SPITTING and CYCLING. Spent cartridges FLYING, hot and smoking.

And then... just as suddenly as it began... the Gatling gun is silent; smoke and blood. Settling dust.

Harknett peers from hiding. *Where's Edge?* Looks around with a tinge of unease. Then SEES:

## EDGE IN HIDING

In the alley beside the saloon.

Harknett allows himself a grin. Looks round: ROOT AND CORDNER (tall and short) are closest. He nods to them --

They dash, crouched low, to the saloon. Hug the wall. Pause. They count to three...

Then *spring round the corner*. UNLOAD on Edge, BLAZING. Shot after shot, bursting the half-breed into SHARDS.

That's right, shards. Because IT'S A MIRROR -- the one Edge scoped out earlier! Root and Cordner cease fire, gawking. Dumbfounded.

EDGE (O.S.)

Just when you think you got me pegged --

BEHIND THEM -- Edge stands from where he's been crouched behind a stack of metal BUCKETS, says:

EDGE (CONT'D)

I'm beyond the pail.

Edge's Henry BARKS ONCE.

Cordner dies first. The slug takes the SHORTER MAN in the neck. *Continues on through*, EXITS... burning a hole chest-high in the taller ROOT, standing behind him.

Two-for-one. ROOT staggers backward, in shock, as --

With a deafening RUMBLE, two SPOOKED HORSES gallop into view. Root, NO CHANCE. Pummeled into hamburger as

52

HARKNETT, MEANWHILE

52

Trades glances with his remaining squad: Little Bill... Cobb... Graves...

To say this is going well for them would be an error.

TWO HORSES STAGGER, wounded. Smoke, dust. Blood and carnage. Harknett CALLS:

HARKNETT

Hedges?!

No answer. The dying horses COLLAPSE, kicking... not far from yet ANOTHER struggling form, still hanging upright:

HALF-WITTED BENNY.

His legs shot up, writhing. Dangling from the now-splintered "Hate" crucifix. He WAILS, then suddenly --

CRACK! One of the suffering HORSES is HIT by a single RIFLE SHOT. It cants sideways and DIES. Mercy kill.

CRACK! A SECOND SHOT puts the second horse down. Pilar LOOKS UP in the direction the shots came from --

The HOTEL ROOFTOP

Smoke curls from the barrel as Edge lines up the Henry.

BENNY, IN MID SCREAM

When -- CRACK! His body JERKS once. Shudders. The kid, out of his misery. Edge, darting from view. WHIP TO:

A WINDOW in the hotel. And BETH, peering from behind a lace curtain at the unfolding retribution.

BELOW -- THE TOWNSFOLK, mute. Stunned into silence.

COBB AND GRAVES, already moving. Edge has revealed himself. Cobb calls up to the roof, voice ECHOING:

COBB

Josiah?

He darts into the alley beside the hotel. Gestures to Graves: *Do the same thing, OTHER side.*

Graves nods -- backtracks across the porch. Ducks round the opposite corner:

53

EXT. ALLEY

53

A thin wooden staircase to the roof... Nothing else. Just the vanity mirror... and the old BACKHOE, with its rusty metal scoop.

GRAVES

Forgot your training, Sergeant! Never take higher ground if you don't got a fallback!

From above, we hear:

EDGE'S VOICE

Well, you might wanna ask your buddy how you know if you got a fallback or not!

GRAVES

(taking the bait)

Yeah, an' how's that, Josiah?

EDGE'S VOICE

*Look behind you.*

GRAVES blinks. Without thinking, he turns. Squints...

It takes a second to register just what he's looking at. Dull red, cylindrical... Poised atop the rain barrel..?

A CLATTER in the DRAIN SPOUT, now

As one of Benny's WOODEN PENCILS drops into view from above. Tied to it, a flaming cloth STRIP --

Which promptly touches off the rain-barrel-based ROCKET.

It comes to us, now -- we SAW these in Act One: FIREWORKS. Stocked for Little Bill's HOMECOMING.

The fuse ignites, it LAUNCHES. Streaks across the intervening space..!

GRAVES HAS TIME TO LOOK DOWN

See the BLACK POWDER at his feet, at the base of the BACKHOE BLADE --

Then the ROCKET strikes the metal blade and DETONATES. Sets Graves on FIRE, a jittering, dancing AGONY, as

COLORS EXPLODE from his madly-dancing midpoint. Multi-colored CONTRAILS, arcing skyward..! Glorious.

The shells in his GUNBELT go off in a string. Discharging every which way, blowing holes in shit.

GRAVES collapses, flaming. Fireworks raining down. The next-door building, set afire, as

54

EXT. SALOON - WITH COBB

54

Face FLUSHED with anger, COBB bolts along the front porch. Except that's when EDGE LEAPS from above -- and

LANDS ON THE WOODEN PORCH AWNING!

Cobb sees this. Backtracks, as -- Edge tucks and rolls. Comes up, clutching the Henry. He RUNS. LEAPS again.

ACROSS THE ALLEY

To the awning of the next building, but --

BELOW

Cobb's vengefully tracking him as he cocks the carbine's hammer, FIRES UPWARD, then cocks the lever and repeats the sequence-- CLICK!BOOM!K-CHUK! CLICK!BOOM!K-CHUK!

ABOVE

EDGE RETURNS FIRE through the HOLES ERUPTING all around him--! Spent shells FLY. BOOM! K-CHUK! BOOM! KCHUK!

He sprawls headlong. Gets off ONE LAST SHOT --

*BLOWS Cobb dead.*

EDGE TUMBLES to the street below. Hits. Splayed flat. Coughs dust. Looks around... sees his handiwork.

Around him, dust and blood. Nickering horses. DEAD horses. Buildings, starting to burn... He spits, says:

EDGE

Harknett.

55

EXT. MAIN STREET (THAT MOMENT)

55

LITTLE BILL ducks behind a building, knowing full well he's on Edge's list. Then he notices:

ANOTHER GROUP OF TOWNSFOLK

Stand there, looking displeased to say the least. At the front is the cadaverous PREACHER we saw in the beginning.

PREACHER

Things were status quo 'round here until you come back from the war, Little Bill.

(gestures to the mob)

This here situation, we reckon it's a message from God.

LITTLE BILL

(false bravado)

That so? What's he advocatin'?

PREACHER

That we hang you and Big Bill -- so as to bring some PEACE back to this town.

(determined)

Don't move, son.

GUNS, pointed. OFF Little Bill, terrified -- CUT TO:

56

INT. BLACKENED CHURCH - SAME

56

BIG BILL, MEANTIME

FLINGS HIMSELF into the spiral stairway leading UP -- to the steeple... and *the bell tower*. High ground, as

DOWN BELOW - WITH EDGE, MOVING

Edge darts into the dim, roofless ruin that was the church. Pulls up short, ducks BACK --

As HARKNETT blows a shot in his direction, *BLAM--!* Kicks splinters from the wall.

EDGE, CROUCHED LOW

In the vestibule. Ducks his head out -- glimpses HARKNETT behind the fire-blackened ALTAR. Standoff. Harknett says:

HARKNETT

Toss out your gun, AND your pack.

(beat)

Do it -- or I kill the kid.

Edge, puzzled:

EDGE

What kid?

HARKNETT

This one.

Harknett gives a rough SHOVE: just enough to reveal he's not ALONE behind the altar --

PILAR is there with him.

Harknett's gun, pressed squarely to her ABDOMEN. Shit.

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah... Little Bill told me all about it. She'll likely bleed out, but hey -- I promise the snapper'll go quick.

(beat)

Five seconds, Josiah.

Edge grimaces, squints. Well, fuck. Every synapse says CHARGE, guns blazing; blood, chaos; his allies...

He heaves his gun and pack into the open.

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

Thanks. Mighty white a' you.

(beat)

You got somethin' I want, Josiah. Tell me where the box is -- and people keep breathin.'

EDGE

Don't know what you're talkin' bout.

HARKNETT

You shoulda heard Jamie holler. We put green wood under him. Burned real slow, it did. So did he.

EDGE creeping, hugging shadows... his hands steal to the RAZOR POUCH behind his neck... it's all really tense...

At which point, HARKNETT SEES BUT EDGE DOESN'T:

Through the missing ROOF, a clear view of the BELL TOWER, high overhead. And there, creeping in the belfry --

BIG BILL. Nearing the edge. A clear shot, down at Edge.

Harknett quickly averts his gaze --

Too late: PILAR has seen, she shouts:

PILAR

EDGE. LOOK OUT!

At which point, everything goes south in a hurry.

EDGE LOOKS UP

Dives, as *BLAM--!* Bill's round drills him in the shoulder, SPINS him. He tumbles, as

HARKNETT'S GUN GOES OFF

He actually SHOOTs PILAR in the abdomen, that's the terrible news; the GOOD NEWS is, *clang--!*

The bullet promptly DEFLECTS OFF THE CHASTITY BELT. A moment of incredulity --

Then Pilar acts. Grabs the now-sprung metal BELT, whips it upward --

Into HARKNETT'S FACE. Shatters his nose.

EDGE NOW, DIVES

Hits, rolls... comes up on one knee, a COMBAT CROUCH.

Along the way, nabs two items: a) his GUN; and b) a loose stick of DYNAMITE. He spins --

THE VOTIVE CANDLE. The one Pilar lit for the slaves.

It's what Edge was going for. He *lights the dynamite off the candle.*

Looses THREE BLASTS at the staggered HARKNETT, *blam-blam-blam--!* Spins, never breaks stride --

Heaves the dynamite UPWARD.

HARKNETT

Runs for the window, clutching his wounded face, as

57

UP ABOVE - BELL TOWER

57

*Ka-thunk--!* The DYNAMITE lands squarely before Big Bill.

And at this point let's take a moment to remember:

THAT GODDAMN ONE-EYED DOG

who greeted Edge when he first came to town. Because here he is. A feral GROWL -- Big Bill BACKS AWAY--!

Not a great idea in a bell tower.

He TUMBLES BACKWARD out the side of the turret...

But not before his booted foot is CAUGHT IN THE BELL ROPE, and the rope YANKS TAUT, and --

58

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

58

He JERKS in mid-fall, DANGLING upside down on the side of the church as the bell PEALS DEAFENINGLY above him.

He kicks and SWINGS in a desperate bid to right himself.

It's no use. The blood rushes to his head, as he desperately tries to AIM HIS GUN AT THE ROPE and shoot himself free. He fires: BLAM!! Misses.

The bullet RICOCHETS off the bell above -- and as it does, we catch a momentary *GLINT where the bullet hit.*

Bill FIRES a second shot, AGAIN HITTING THE BELL --

And again, a sparkly GLEAM, you see where this is going --

The sheriff's eyes widen. Fuck the rope. *NOW HE'S AIMING FOR THE BELL ITSELF.* K-PING! K-POW!! And now he gapes with disbelief at the gleaming bullet pocks --

Dawning realization: *the bell IS THE GOLD!*

At that moment - IN THE BELL TOWER

The dog picks up the dynamite in its teeth, pads to the edge... and DROPS IT out of the steeple, where:

59

EXT. BASE OF CHURCH - NIGHT

59

BIG BILL HANGS a few feet from where the dynamite LANDS.

He SCREAMS -- GRAPPLES for it desperately. But to no avail -- it's just out of reach. And as his fate sinks in, a last glance up at

THE BELL

*And the gleaming bullet holes revealing the gold beneath.*  
It's the last thing he sees before...

KABAM--! HE GOES UP IN A SPRAY

Of blood and bone. Flame, sky-high, SCORCHES the church bell. Lays it bare, SPATTERS IT with bits of Bill --

BLOOD AND GOLD, TOGETHER -- as it rings a DEATH KNELL for Sheriff Seward.

60

EXT. MAIN STREET - SAME

60

EDGE, up and running. After HARKNETT.

Sees him ahead, riding full gallop out of town.

Edge SLAMS the gun butt to his shoulder, sights... No dice. Too far away.

He bolts toward the CITIZENS' COMMITTEE, lunges atop one of their horses. The preacher shouts to him:

PREACHER

Too much lawlessness, son! Don't come back! Things gonna CHANGE around here!

Edge spurs the horse --

EDGE

Oh, I reckon there'll be some change --  
(indicates bloody carcass)  
On account of I just broke a Big Bill.

He rides out in pursuit of HARKNETT. CUT TO:

61

EXT. TOWN OUTSKIRTS - OPEN RANGE

61

Edge BLOWS BY CAMERA. Sees HARKNETT, far ahead. Spurs the horse, face contorted, a rictus of hate --

And at the end of the day? He tried.

See, he forgot, in all that commotion, he's been, well... shot.

Shock, blood loss... he topples from his horse. Hits. Breath knocked loose.

Raises his rifle, one-handed. Blasts three shots after the fleeing man. No dice. Tries to get up...

A VOICE, now -- firm. Stentorian:

BETH (O.S.)

Stay down.

BETH. Her buckboard piled high. She pushes Edge down.

BETH (CONT'D)

Easy. You're a fucking mess.

Edge struggles, but he can see Harknett, now... clearly out of range. Gone, baby, gone. He collapses back.

EDGE

You're not who... you say you are, are ya..?

(beat)

Pinkertons?

She says nothing. Starts tearing gauze strips.

EDGE (CONT'D)

Seen you at the telegraph office. Didn't figure you was wirin' your sweetie.

BETH

Say one thing, asshole... You sure put your foot in a bee hive.

(beat)

Harknett clan half-runs this country. Oil, coal. If they don't have it, they buy it.

EDGE

Did they buy you?

BETH

Fuck you. I'm helping you, aren't I?

He follows her gaze to the edge of town -- where BENNY's corpse is being lowered from the makeshift pillory.

BETH (CONT'D)

Tell me something, Hedges. Killing those horses... then Benny. Did it feel any different to you? Did it MATTER, one or the other?

Edge regards her for a long moment. Then spits... and struggles to his feet.

EDGE

Thanks for the TLC.

He swings astride his mount. She calls out:

BETH

Hey.

(he looks back)

You haven't seen a gilt jewelry box, have you? About... yay big?

She mimes its size and shape with her hands.

EDGE

Don't know about a box. Seen plenty of  
guilt, though.

She almost smiles.

BETH

We never did have that date.

62

EXT. STREET - THE GALLOWS - SAME

62

LITTLE BILL begins his walk with dignity; newly-appointed  
DEPUTIES gripping his arms. TOWNSFOLK line the sidewalks.  
Haughty. Self-righteous.

ATOP THE GALLOWS

Two figures take position. PREACHER. HANGMAN. Seeing  
them, Little Bill stiffens, but keeps moving. Head up...

Suddenly, a COMMOTION at the edge of the mob. A FIGURE  
appears. Gestures wildly:

CITIZEN

The stranger -- the stranger's comin'!  
An' he's got his rifle!

Little Bill's face promptly goes ASHEN. A hush  
descends... At which point, Bill proceeds to do something  
seldom seen in Western lore --

He begins hurrying toward the gallows.

LITTLE BILL

Let's get. Come on, hurry it up.

Face beaded with sudden sweat. Licking his lips. The  
DEPUTIES exchange incredulous looks. Reining him in --

LITTLE BILL (CONT'D)

Don't let him get me.

DEPUTY #1

Shut up.

Now THEY look nervous. 30 yards to the gallows. Little  
Bill, straining to get there. 20 yards...

LITTLE BILL

If you see him, shoot me before you try  
for him.

DEPUTY #1

I said shut up.

The deputies frog-march the captive up the steps of the GALLOWS. *Rushing*. The PREACHER opens his Bible --

DEPUTY #2

Skip it, padre.

Little Bill makes an almost *enthusiastic* attempt to put his head inside the noose. This is nuts. He succeeds --

Then, in the ensuing silence, a cry echoes:

EDGE (O.S.)

He's mine.

THERE, ATOP THE LIVERY BUILDING

The demon known as EDGE rises... Sights down the Henry:

EDGE (CONT'D)

I'm takin' Little Bill. I take a few more with him, no difference to me.

The HANGMAN steps out IN FRONT OF Little Bill. The confused DEPUTIES, drawing their weapons --

PILAR, IN THE STREET

Breaks from the crowd, YELLS upward:

PILAR

Please! You're better than them, you don't have to do this!

(beat)

HE'S STILL MY HUSBAND!!

He locks eyes with her. The TWO OF THEM, in tableau --

EDGE

And he's still my baby brother.

He slams the rifle to his shoulder.

CRACK--!

Edge's shot pierces the hangman, SPINS him. Holy shit.

Everything happens at once:

No hesitation: The two DEPUTIES jump ship. A leg-shattering LEAP from the high platform, as

WITHOUT MISSING A BEAT, Edge re-acquires Little Bill in his sights.

LITTLE BILL, frozen, eyes pleading with the figure silhouetted against the skyline.

THE PREACHER

Spins behind Bill. LUNGES for the TRAPDOOR lever --

Fuck that. Edge takes what's his.

*Squeeze, crack cock--! Squeeze, crack cock--!* The sounds and motions, repeated SEVENFOLD.

LITTLE BILL SHRIEKS, as his KNEE explodes. Then his groin, his belly --

THE FINAL FOUR SHOTS, blasting into his NECK, chewing SPLINTERS from the platform behind, as

TRAPDOOR, SPRUNG--!

Down he goes. PLUNGES FROM SIGHT, rope unfurling. Gurgling, choking on his own blood, as

THE ROPE SNAPS TAUT

And all those bullets musta taken a toll, because as he slams to a stop, a sickening SUCKING noise, and

HIS HEAD TEARS FREE

The neck-sputting carcass touches down, FLOPS AT CAMERA --

And as it strikes the ground, amid screaming broken-legged deputies and tears and blood and CHAOS, we --

SMASH TO THE WORD:

## **EDGE**

Pause... Over BLACK SCREEN, an officious-sounding VOICE:

VOICE

The South consists of 750,000 square miles... we didn't have to attack, all we had to do was DEFEND.

Then CLOPPING OF HOOVES on the hard ground, as:

63 EXT. GAS-LIT MANSION - ST. LOUIS - NIGHT (END SEQUENCE) 63

MERRITT HARKNETT's big bay shudders to a halt. He swings from the saddle, dismounts -- CUT INSIDE TO:

64 INT. POSH CLUB ROOM - NIGHT 64

A group of SOUTHERN POLITICIANS, all gathered. Smoking cigars, drinking. Two of them openly receiving oral sex -- one from a 20 year-old BOY, one from a 19 year-old GIRL.

Harknett slips in the back. Everyone fastens their gaze on the newcomer -- SWOLLEN-EYED, badly bruised. He grins:

HARKNETT

Sorry I'm late, gentlemen. I just got back from a very small town. I was there once, a long time ago... and I can't say as I liked the changes.

As he gets to the podium, the SPEAKER defers to him. Even offers Harknett an ENORMOUS brandy snifter --

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

Had a bath yesterday. Thanks.

Harknett steps up.

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

Yep. Shoulda seen it, folks. Nigras everywhere. In the stable. Serving food. One even drew pictures and sold 'em. It's a sad day for these 37 United States.

(beat)

But what better signal... what clearer sign... that it's time for the South to rise again. That's why I'm here with a proposition.

One of the pols clears his throat awkwardly:

SOUTHERN POLITICIAN #2

Look, we know you got a powerful Daddy, we all respect that, it's just...

(looking round)

Uh, correct me if I'm wrong, but -- didn't you wear a Union uniform?

Harknett stifles an angry retort. Smiles disarmingly:

HARKNETT

Sure. Same reason you wear a suit to church -- Thaddeus, is it..?

(MORE)

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

Or go out of town to fuck your mistress. Appearances. I got a family business to inherit.

(beat)

Not to mention, typically, I pick a winner -- and 'til now, the Confederacy was not it.

He pulls a note out of his pocket, brandishes it:

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

I have in my hand a letter, pledging money and allegiance to a new and methodical uprising of the former Confederate states, endorsed by 67 of the most wealthy, powerful, and influential individuals in this country. Pledging *the South will rise again*.

A collective intake of breath -- Harknett continues:

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

And, very soon, I will have in my possession a box, containing a certain artifact: call it a "sacred relic"... which will guarantee the cooperation of a new and unprecedented ally.

(beat)

Let's face it: you needed a no-rules approach. You needed SAVAGES.

(beat)

I can bring you savages.

SOUTHERN POLITICIAN

And who would that be, sir?

HARKNETT

Why, the Apache Nation, of course.

POLITICIAN #2

The Apache--*what??*

SOUTHERN POLITICIAN

Sergeant, with all due respect, aren't you perhaps being a tad... indiscreet?

(indicates the prostitutes)

We, uh... we're not *alone* in this room, if you take my meaning --

HARKNETT

(snaps his fingers)

Right. Thanks for reminding me.

Doesn't miss a beat. Draws BOTH SIDEARMS. Shoots both male and female hookers in the head --

WHILE THEY'RE GIVING IT. The shots go right on through. Two rich fat cats clutch, SCREAMING, at ruined organs --

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

No hookers at a strategy meeting.

A shocked silence. Harknett holsters the guns, smiles --

HARKNETT (CONT'D)

I just got back from a very small town. I was there once, long ago... and I assure you, it was a better place then.

65      MEMORY FLASH: WE'RE NO LONGER HERE, WE'RE BACK IN SEWARD.65

*Except it's a different town. A LONG-AGO town.*

*THE CHURCH is on fire. Terrible SCREAMS echo from within. And outside, brandishing a blazing TORCH --*

*Stands young MERRITT HARKNETT, in a Union Army uniform. Relishing his night's work.*

CUT TO BLACK.

ROLL CREDITS.