

THE SISTERS BROTHERS

Written for the Screen by
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Based on the Book by
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Black.

Insert: "Oregon 1851"

Distant detonations in the dark. Cries and shouts, distant as well.

1 EXT BLOUNT RANCH LANDSCAPE NIGHT:

A nightscape.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Hey! This is the Sisters brothers!
The Commodore sent us. He knows you
have Blount. Hand him over and the
rest of you will live.

In the background, at first very far away, flashes of gunfire and detonations. As we move in, we make out the shadow of a farm, at times briefly lit up by long 45- caliber flames. Screams.

1A EXT BLOUNT RANCH LANDSCAPE NIGHT:

The gunfire has ended.

Two men step out of the night in silence.

Eli Sisters, 40, his face heavy and gentle; Charlie Sisters 35, thin and juvenile. The Sisters Brothers.

They reload their guns. Spare, precise gestures. Eli covers Charlie. They reach the verandah. The house is silent.

There are two bodies sprawled out on the floor of the verandah. Charlie rolls them over, looks at them and shakes his head 'no'. He points to the door. Eli kicks it in. Charlie slips inside.

2 INT. BLOUNT RANCH NIGHT:

Gunfire lights up the room. Two guns fire back. A silhouette collapses.

Silence and darkness. Eli scratches a match and lights two lamps. He hands one to Charlie. They walk around the room, stepping over corpses. Four of them.

Lamp light on the corpses' faces. One man is still breathing. Charlie sits him up.

CHARLIE
Where's Blount?

Blood froths on the man's lips. Charlie shakes him.

CHARLIE
Blount?

The man coughs. Charlie finishes him off. Something on the ceiling catches Eli's attention: dust trickling from between the planks.

3 INT BLOUNT RANCH ATTIC NIGHT:

Up in the attic, dry and dark. A scared man cowers behind bales of hay. Blount.

His hands scratch at the wooden slats of the roof, ripping away straw and adobe.

He hears footsteps on the steps of the ladder.

He groans. In the hole of the roof, a chunk of sky appears, the moon...

Footsteps on the attic floor.

Blount slips through the opening...

4 EXT RANCH ROOF-NIGHT:

... rolls, falls from the roof...
... lies on the ground, the wind knocked out of him... He sits up...

CHARLIE
Blount?

Blount turns around. Charlie barely aims. Shoots.

Blount collapses.

Charlie shoots twice to finish him off, then turns to the ranch and reloads.

ELI (O.S.)
Charlie! Charlie!

Suddenly: Eli's voice is heard from above. Charlie steps away. He looks up and sees his brother in the hole in the roof, pointing to something.

ELI

The barn!

He hears something galloping behind him. He turns around, clutching his gun. A horse on fire gallops through the landscape.

5A EXT BARN BLOUNT'S RANCH-NIGHT:

The barn is on fire. Through the flames, we see the silhouettes of horses panicking.

Shielding their faces, the two brothers try to penetrate the inferno.

CHARLIE

What are you doing?

ELI

I'm not walking home !

CHARLIE

Eli ! Don't be fucking stupid,
let's go ! They're just fucking
horses !

On his last try, Eli comes running back out with his coat on fire. He rolls around on the ground to put out the flames. Charlie helps him.

Helpless, they hear their horses neigh in terror.

5B EXT BARN. BLOUNT FARM-NIGHT.

In the background, the barn is still burning.

ELI

How many you think we've killed?

CHARLIE

I don't know, six, seven?

ELI

Well, we fucked that up real good.

They disappear into the night.

6A EXT COMMODORE'S MANSION-DAY:

It is gray and cold. Hard to tell if it is dawn or dusk.

The dark silhouette of a huge Neo-Gothic building. On the gate, a sign with the owner's coat of arms: a sun shining on a globe, stamped with an anchor.

It is the Commodore's mansion.

On the other side of the white fence, Eli Sisters is waiting on a low-backed horse, slumped like a sagging sofa - "Tub". Eli is dressed sloppily, his stomach protrudes over his belt. He looks at the horse attached beside him: a superb Spanish Barb horse, large and muscled - "Nimble". He shakes his head in disbelief.

He looks back at the manor house. A silhouette appears at the first floor window. It is his brother Charlie, in the glow of oil-burning lamps.

Then another silhouette appears beside him, a smaller, white-haired man, dressed in black: the Commodore.

6B EXT. COMMODORE'S MANSION-DAY :

Charlie is coming back. He looks dirty and sloppy too, but thin and naturally elegant.

ELI

What did the Commodore say? Did you mention the horses?

CHARLIE

Let's go get a drink.

Eli tries to catch up with his brother.

7A INT. OREGON CITY - PIG KING SALOON-DAY:

The brothers are sitting in the back of a saloon. Not many customers at the bar.

Charlie is drinking brandy. Eli is drinking less. Charlie speaks softly.

CHARLIE

He said if there'd been a lead man, we wouldn't have had problems at the Blount ranch. He says for the next job, we need to have a lead man.

ELI
What's it mean about money?

CHARLIE
More for me.

ELI
No. My money, I mean. Same as
before?

CHARLIE
Well, no. Less, obviously.

Eli makes a face. Charlie pours him a glass to keep him calm.

ELI
The Commodore wants to pay for a
lead man, that's fine. But it's bad
business to short the man
underneath.

CHARLIE
You're not asking what the job is?

ELI
No.

CHARLIE
I'll tell you anyways. We have to
go South and find Morris.

ELI
The Commodore's John Morris?
...And why do we have to find this
Morris?

Charlie downs his glass, he leans over to Eli.

CHARLIE
He's after a prospector named
Hermann Kermit Warm.

ELI
Great. He can find him and kill
him. End of story.

CHARLIE
Morris is a scout, not a killer.
The mission is: Morris finds
Warm, he holds him, we come in and
finish the job. That's the mission.

Eli thinks it over.

ELI
What about the horses?

CHARLIE
What's your goddamn problem with
the horses?

ELI
The Commodore told us he would get
us new horses!

CHARLIE
Isn't that what he did?

ELI
No. For you he got a new horse. For
me, he made room in his stable and
got rid of some horse meat.

CHARLIE
Don't you think we can talk about
this later?

ELI
No, I don't need the horse later, I
need it now, for the job!

The bartender comes to take the bottle and get paid.

CHARLIE
The horse is fine, stop being a
baby.

ELI
Is it the words "go halves" that
you don't like?

To the bartender, seeing that Charlie isn't budging.

ELI
The lead's man paying

7B EXT. OREGON CITY SALOON STREET DAY:

They cross the street to their horses.

We discover the town: a prosperous, thriving western city.

8 EXT SISTERS HOUSE DAY:

In a prairie, a small log cabin. Their horses are tied in front

9 INT SISTERS HOUSE DAY:

The inside is rudimentary. Each brother is in what serves as his room, packing for the trip. Charlie's room looks like a sty, Eli's is clean and tidy.

On one of the "living room" walls is a framed landscape cut out of a newspaper. Charlie shifts the frame to uncover a hiding place. He gropes inside and pulls out a few bills, then a few gold pieces. He counts them and places them in a large wallet.

.../...

Eli cuts his hair in front of a dusty mirror. His long hair falls on the ground strand by strand. He calls for Charlie's help.

ELI

Hey, come cut the back of this for me. Just cut it off.

Charlie smiles at Eli's face in the mirror.

CHARLIE

You look funny like that.

.../...

Eli takes a red woolen shawl from the dresser drawer and folds it with particular care.

10 EXT SISTERS HOUSE DAY:

Eli mounts Tub, who seems to buck under his weight.

He digs his spurs in the horse's flank, the horse balks... He joins Charlie.

The two men leave the log cabin and prairie behind.

11 EXT RELAY STATION 1 DAY:

A relay station, further south.

Sitting at a small table in the shade of the verandah, a man is writing a letter. His clothes are elegant and understated. He is well groomed, fine-featured and strong. A handsome man. John Morris, 35.

MORRIS (V.O.)

*Dear solicitor, my friend,
My father had vowed to do two things. First, to do whatever it takes to ruin my life. And second, to disinherit me. He kept his word for the first. Not for the second. It surprises me, and I attribute it to his declining health. In any case, I want nothing of this inheritance: not the titles, the factory, the buildings or the Westwood property... I want nothing. I'll be back in Washington before winter. We will deal with all these details then.
I shake your hand.
Your friend, John Morris.*

Across from him, the landscape pulses under the sun. John folds his letter.

12 INT/EXT RELAY STATION 1 DAY:

The letter disappears into a big leather sack marked "Mail".

MORRIS

When did the last wagon train pass through?

OWNER

Yesterday.

MORRIS

I'm looking for a guy named Warm. Hermann Kermit Warm, 5 foot 6, lean, dark skin, no bags or gear. He's traveling in a wagon train.

The owner did not see Warm.

13 EXT RELAY STATION 1 DAY:

John Morris heads back to his curly horse, built to ride long and hard. They head down the trail.

The mare immediately launches into a perfect half-gallop.

Torso straight, feet in the stirrups, John Morris rides off like a Mongol horseman.

14 EXT OREGON COUNTRYSIDE DAY:

Tall grass blowing in the wind.

On their horses, side by side, the brothers slowly cross a large, sloping landscape.

CHARLIE

Gorgeous country, isn't it? Odd we haven't seen anyone since this morning.

ELI

If we'd stayed on the trail, we'd have come across more people.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but it's nothing like what they say. Supposedly the whole world is searching for gold! Honestly...

15A EXT COUNTRYSIDE CAMP SISTERS 1 NIGHT:

They set up camp and finish eating by the fire.

ELI

What did this Hermann Warm do?

CHARLIE

He stole something from the Commodore.

Eli thinks it over.

ELI

Don't you find it strange, all these men foolish enough to steal from such a dangerous man?

Charlie has no opinion.

ELI

How do they even steal anything at all? We know how cautious the Commodore is.

CHARLIE

Caution has nothing to do with it. He does business in every corner of the country, and even overseas. A man can't be everywhere at once. It stands to reason he'd be victimized.

ELI

Victimized?!?

CHARLIE

Yes, victimized.

ELI

The Commodore is «victimized»?

CHARLIE

What would you call it? If a man is forced to protect his fortune with the likes of us?

ELI

Not "victimized"...

CHARLIE

You're not going to start nitpicking over every word. What's your problem? Are you upset?

CHARLIE

You're upset that I'm the lead man? Is that it? If that's it, just say so. But stop splitting hairs...

ELI

I'm not splitting hairs! You're using a strange word and I'm making you take notice...

Charlie drops his tin pan and goes to his corner to spread open his blanket.

According to a well-established routine, Eli collects the tin pans and silverware, and then stokes the fire.

15B EXT COUNTRYSIDE. SISTERS CAMP 1:

Eli spreads out a first blanket, then lays a patchwork quilt on top. He winds his pocket watch, puts it next to his "pillow" and lies down.

Nearby, Charlie lets out a loud fart.

Eli checks his watch and moves the big hand up to the 9.

15C EXT MOUNTAIN RIDGE DAY:

They climb up a steep path, spurring the horses on. They stop at the top and let the horses catch their breath.

CHARLIE

Could it be Miss Emilia Patridge?

ELI

What are you talking about?

CHARLIE

It's the schoolteacher who gave you that silly red scarf...
(imitating him) The one you keep folding and unfolding in secret?

ELI

It's called a shawl. Am I not entitled to any privacy?

CHARLIE

Have you made plans with this Miss Emilia?

ELI

Plans?

CHARLIE

To marry her, start a family, have children... something like that.

ELI

I don't know. Why are you so interested all of a sudden?

CHARLIE

I was wondering about family. You remember how Pa was with Ma?

ELI

Yes, Charlie, I remember.

CHARLIE

Makes you think... You're not scared to reproduce yourself?

CHARLIE

You do realize that our father was
stark-raving mad
and that we got his foul blood in
our veins?

ELI

Our father drank, Charlie.

Charlie looks at him seriously, then smiles.

CHARLIE

That was his gift to us. That
blood. That's why we're good at
what we do.

16 EXT HILL WARM'S CARAVAN POV DAY:

TITLE: A FEW MILES AWAY FURTHER SOUTH

POV from a pair of binoculars: a caravan of three covered
wagons struggles up a hill.

We see the drivers whip their horses. The passengers get out
and push.

The binoculars remain on the wagons and men.

When they have reached the top of the hill, the passengers
climb back into the wagons.

The binoculars stop on the wagon bringing up the rear, and on
the man who just sat against the rear slat:

Hermann Kermit Warm.

16B EXT HILL WARM'S CARAVAN DAY:

John Morris puts away his binoculars.

He starts off, at a distance from the caravan.

17 EXT PIONEER TOWN DAY:

From the saloon door, Morris watches a house being built.
Warm is one of the workmen. He watches him saw planks,
assemble beams and direct the maneuver to hoist the facade.

18 INT/ EXT. FRONTIER TOWN DAY:

At the end of the day, Morris sees the owner of the house hand Warm some coins for his labor.

MORRIS (V.O.)

May 15th. Myrtle Creek, Oregon.
The gold rush has made the
detective's job much easier.
When you look for a woman, a man, a
horse or a dog, just follow the
gold.
And soon enough you'll find whom or
what you're after.
Hermann Kermit Warm, eats messily,
5 foot 6, lean, dark skin, no
friends, no baggage, no money.

19 EXT/INT. PIONEER TOWN 01/ TENT CAMP DAY:

Morris sees Warm back in the encampment, where he pays a bowl of soup, and lies for down on a cot.

He pulls up the cover over his head and lies still.

20 EXT PIONEER TOWN 01 DAWN:

A wagon train is about to depart. Hermann Kermit Warm climbs aboard the last wagon.

At the village outskirts, Morris waits for the caravan to disappear before setting off on his own.

21A INT PIONEER TOWN 02 TRADING POST DAY:

Charlie and Eli are covered in sweat and dust.

CHARLIE

Sisters.
S-I-S-T-E-R-S, like sisters.

Behind the counter, a storekeeper in an undershirt and an apron tenses up when he hears their name.

He stops looking through the mail left there to be picked up.

STOREKEEPER

No, nothing. I'd have remembered.

CHARLIE

No news is good news. What's the next town on the trail?

STOREKEEPER

Myrtle Creek.

CHARLIE

How far?

STOREKEEPER

Two days.

21B INT PIONEER TOWN 02 TRADING POST DAY:

Eli walks around the store. Every possible accoutrement for prospecting: pans, cradles, buckets, pickaxes, a dismantled model of Long Tom, oil lamps, clothing made of fabric, of leather... The store is dark and luminous at the same time. Eli is enthralled, curious..

He stops in front of a small metal box. Inside, a small brush with a wooden handle. He picks it up and studies it.

The storekeeper comes by.

STOREKEEPER

Interested?

ELI

What is it?

STOREKEEPER

A toothbrush, sir. To keep your teeth longer and your breath fresher. Look.

He opens a box of tooth powder and shoves it under his nose. He sniffs. Smells good.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

What kind of boots do you have?

STOREKEEPER

I'll be with you right away, sir!

22 EXT PIONEER TOWN 02 SALOON STREET EVENING:

A small town, but lively. The brothers walk down Main Street. Eli is carrying his small package from the store.

Charlie is freshly outfitted from head to toe. You can almost hear his clothes crinkling.

ELI

You know, when we stop, that's the kind of store I'd like to have.

CHARLIE

When we stop what?

ELI

Killing people! I believe I could settle into a life like that. Didn't it seem pleasant in there?

CHARLIE

I'd die of boredom.

ELI

It seemed peaceful enough to me. I bet that man sleeps very well at night.

CHARLIE

Because that's the point? To sleep well at night? You don't sleep well at night?

ELI

No, and neither do you.

CHARLIE

Me? You must be kidding. I sleep like a baby.

ELI

Says you! You grit your teeth, and sometimes you cry.

CHARLIE

I cry?!?

ELI

Yes, you cry.

Charlie stares at him, smirks.

CHARLIE

What are you talking about? Are you trying to tell me something?

ELI
We're talking... I'm just telling
you the truth.

CHARLIE
Yeah, right.
(he hands his saddlebags
to his brother)
Put this in the room. We'll meet up
later.

Eli crosses the street loaded down and heads for the saloon

23 INT PIONEER TOWN 02 HOTEL ROOM EVENING:

Naive black and white drawings illustrating how to use the
toothbrush.

A small hotel room.

Eli brushes his teeth according to the instructions. He is
diligent and excessive, as if inventing a style.

He sits in front of the window overlooking the street and the
entrance to the saloon.

Eli blows into his cupped hands to smell his new breath.

24 EXT PIONEER TOWN 02 SALOON STREET NIGHT:

Night has fallen.

Eli is in the street.

He finishes eating something, all the while looking out the
corner of his eye at the saloon.

Inside, Charlie is in the middle of a conversation with a man
in a suit and hat. They have both been drinking. Charlie
admires the revolver hanging from his belt. The man hands it
to him. Charlie weighs it in his hand. He likes its
proportions. When he hands it back, his mouth is smiling, but
not his eyes.

25 EXT PIONEER TOWN 02 / TENT ENCAMPMENT NIGHT:

Eli wanders through the tents at the town limits. There are
people in all kinds of attire, speaking all kinds of
languages, guttural and crystalline.

He notices Russian astrakhan hats and the strange pointy ones of Shtetl Jews.

Leaning over a cauldron, a woman sells soup for a few cents. She serves him a bowl. He eats.

ELI
It's good. Is it vegetables?

WOMAN
Bortsch.

ELI
I taste dill.

WOMAN
Bortsch !

The woman does not understand. He gives up.

He hears chanting from behind. He approaches. Finishing his soup, he watches a family observe the Sabbath ritual.

26 INT/EXT HOTEL ROOM NIGHT:

Eli is asleep. Shouts, gunshots coming from the street wake him up. He grabs his gun and runs to the window.

Down below, in the middle of the street, Charlie is teetering with a gun in each hand.

He shoots into the air.

CHARLIE
Five... Six... are you counting?
Seven, eight... Nine! Oh where did
you go? Where did you go ?

The saloon and the street empty. Silhouettes cautiously hug the facades. The street is now deserted.

CHARLIE
You fucking cowards... No one wants
to measure themselves up against
Charlie Sisters?!
No one really?

Eli goes back to bed.

ELI
Go home you fools...

27 INT HOTEL ROOM NIGHT:

The noise is coming closer. When the door opens, Eli turns to the wall and shuts his eyes. The room now echoes with Charlie's heavy breathing and groans.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

... And that idiot, fast asleep...
 What good are you?...
 Damn, if you weren't my brother,
 I'd have ditched you ages ago...
 Even the Commodore wanted to ...
 "Why do you carry around that dead
 weight?"... "Because he's my
 brother, I answered.
 We all have our fucking crosses to
 bear!"... He appreciated how loyal
 I am. "Faith will be repaid with
 faith," he said.

A beat. Then suddenly, right next to Eli's ear, the click of a revolver being cocked. Eli opens his eyes and looks at his brother. Above him, Charlie's revolver is aimed at him.

CHARLIE

... Tst-tst... It's not nice to
 fake it.

ELI

Go to sleep.

CHARLIE

Can I ask you a question, brother?
 Who can have faith in you?
 Real faith? Huh?

He lifts his hand sententiously and stumbles off to bed.

28 EXT WILLAMETTE VALLEY DAY:

They are riding their horses across the Willamette Valley.

Eli is sullen. Charlie is riding behind, slumped over Nimble's neck. All of a sudden, Eli hears a big thump. Jaded, he stops Tub...

He dismounts and steps toward Charlie, lying on the ground. He lifts him up, not gently. His new outfit is now dirty. Charlie feels nauseous. Eli turns around. He hears Charlie vomit. Eli grabs him roughly and helps him back into the saddle.

CHARLIE
Don't judge me, please. Some days
we're stronger than others.

29 EXT WILLAMETTE VALLEY DAY:

They are riding one behind the other.

Eli remains silent. Charlie is feeling a bit better.

CHARLIE
You okay?

Charlie catches up to ELI.

CHARLIE
Are you pouting?

No answer.

CHARLIE
Is it because I drank?

Eli feels Charlie staring at him. He stops Tub.

ELI
Listen, either ride in front or
ride in back, but I don't feel
like talking.

CHARLIE
It's just like I said: you're
pouting. You're ruining the
atmosphere on purpose. We could
have had a delightful day and you
took it on yourself to ruin it...
Oh, fuck it. Pout if you want to.

He spurs Nimble and takes the lead.

CHARLIE
Well, if you insist on pouting, you
should give it your all. Give
us a full pout, Eli. You must stew
and hate and revisit all the
slights I offered you in childhood.
Don't you forget a single one!

Eli smiles slightly.

CHARLIE
 No, you mustn't smile when pouting!
 It's wrong and you
 know it's wrong!

30 EXT PIONEER CITY 03 DAY:

Heavy fog. Another pioneer town on the trail. As usual, there is one main street, wood houses and store signs.

John Morris shakily crosses the muddy street on wooden planks that have been laid down.

31A INT PIONEER CITY 03 / SALOON DAY:

Morris is having dinner at a table in the back. Without having to look up from his notebook, he feels Warm's presence at the bar. Dirty, muddy, haggard.

MORRIS (V.O.)
 May 17th, Wolf Creek. I travel
 through places that didn't exist 3
 months ago. First there are tents,
 then houses, then 2 months later
 shops with women fiercely
 discussing the price of flour. I
 found this line by Thoreau. "This
 town too lies out"...

At one point, he senses Warm's shadow by his side.

WARM
 We've seen each other before?

MORRIS
 No I don't think so.

WARM
 You were in Myrtle Creek two days
 ago.

MORRIS
 Yes I was, like many other folk.

WARM
 Are you heading down to San
 Francisco?

MORRIS
 No, just to Jacksonville.

WARM
Work?

MORRIS
Yes, work.

Warm is now sitting two tables away.

MORRIS
And you, San Francisco? Gold?

WARM
Yes, like many other folk.

A beat. Warm looks at him with a strange smile. Morris is almost embarrassed.

WARM
May I tell you something, sir?

MORRIS
Of course.

WARM
Typically, when a man wishes another man good day, he smiles while facing the other person, but once he passes by, the smiles drops from his face. Not you. Your smile remains on your lips after you have turned away.

Warm's candor and good nature throw Morris for a loop.

MORRIS
(embarrassed)
Well I... I've hadn't noticed...
It's common courtesy.

WARM
It's not only that. You take a genuine pleasure in communing with others. Am I mistaken?

MORRIS
I honestly do not know. (a beat)
Would you like to join me for lunch?

WARM
I'd have loved to, but I am a bit hard up at the moment.

MORRIS
As my guest, of course.

31B INT FRONTIER CITY 03 / SALOON DAY:

The two men are having dinner.

A beat.

WARM
And what takes you to Jacksonville?

MORRIS
Business to settle. I'm meeting two of my associates there. How are you making your way south?

WARM
I have a seat in a covered wagon.

MORRIS
How long do you think till you reach Frisco?

WARM
The question is not how long before I get there, the question is what state will I be in when I do. If I do. To be honest with you, my faith in my hosts is very limited. They've rifled through my belongings several times and every time I take out my money, their eyes are like daggers.

MORRIS
Mr Warm. You ought to not endanger yourself in that way. You have to be more careful than that

WARM
What other choice do I have?

32 EXT PIONEER TOWN 03 / HORSE DEALER DAY:

A corral. Horses, mules and oxen.

The horse dealer shows Warm some mules. Morris examines them.

HORSE DEALER
50, horseshoes included.

MORRIS

35.

HORSE DEALER

35 is for a mule!

MORRIS

40, with the saddle, bag and shoes.

HORSE DEALER

Hey listen to me if you want to by a horse you pay the price for a horse.

Morris examines the mare's hooves.

MORRIS

You're never gonna sell this horse. Not at 50, not at 40... She's a bad hip, anyone'd see that with an eye. 40! 40.

HORSE DEALER

But...

MORRIS (O.S)

Gentlemen I have found him. I have managed to make an acquaintance and have arranged to travel with him. If all goes well we should be in Jacksonville...

33 EXT PIONEER TOWN 03 TRAIL DAWN:

Morris and Warm are riding side by side, chatting. They leave the slow covered wagons behind.

MORRIS (V.O.)

...in seven days... I will try to hold him until your arrival and find a secluded place to hand him over.

34 INT RELAY STATION 2 DAY:

A relay station on the trail, for horses and stagecoaches. Eli finishes reading the message from Morris:

ELI

«Make haste. John Morris.»

CHARLIE

One good point for Morris, even if
I don't like the... "Make haste."
Who does that asshole think he is?

He turns to the horse-dealer in charge of the place.

CHARLIE

When did they pass through?

HORSE DEALER

Four days ago.

CHARLIE

Is there a faster way to
Jacksonville, off trail?

HORSE DEALER

Well, it's rougher to go up the
mountains but you'll save a couple
of days.

35 EXT FOREST MOUNTAIN ROAD DAY:

They climb switchbacks up a mountain road.

A forest looms before them, like a dark green wall. Their
silhouettes disappear behind the line of trees.

36 EXT CAMP SISTERS 2 NIGHT:

Eli is woken by groaning. He turns toward Charlie. He stands
up and leans over him.

Tears are flowing from Charlie's closed eyes. He whimpers and
groans in his sleep.

Eli feels moved by his brother's pain. He wavers, then puts
out his hand to wake him. Charlie's eyes suddenly pop open.

CHARLIE

Peek-a-boo !

Eli jumps up. Charlie bursts out laughing.
He clutches his stomach. Eli looks peeved. Charlie imitates
Eli.

ELI

Fool!

CHARLIE
I thought you were going to kiss
me!

The blankets shake as they laugh uncontrollably.

37 EXT FOREST/BURN WAGON DAY:

They ride, tiny among the tall trees. Their voices and hoofbeats echo among the trunks. After a beat:

CHARLIE
The rain muddied it all up. I can't
see a thing. What do you think?

ELI
We must be able to pick up the
trail somewhere.

They split up.

Eli rides alone, looking for the trail. He turns back from time to time, but no longer sees his brother.

He is overtaken by a feeling of dread.
He spots some ruts, some hoof prints... He whistles:

ELI
Over here !

He continues onward and finds the remains of a wagon, an animal carcass... and human bones.

He dismounts. The wagon has obviously been plundered. He kicks at some pathetic scraps. A piece of paper catches his eye. He unfolds it, wipes it clean and tries to make out the writing. He hears Charlie arrive. He slips the paper into his jacket and gets back on Tub.

37B EXT. FOREST/INDIANS. DAY:

They are riding, Charlie in front, Eli behind deciphers the letter he found among the debris.

ELI (OFF)
"Dear Mother,
I feel lonely and the days are long
here. My horse has passed and he
was a close friend. I think of your
cooking and wonder what I'm doing
here. I believe I will come home
soon.

(MORE)

ELI (OFF) (CONT'D)
 I have almost 200 dollars in gold
 dust. It's not the pile I'd hoped
 for, but good enough for now.
 The smell of smoke in still my
 nostrils and I haven't had a
 laughed in such a long time.
 Mother! I think I will leave here
 very soon. With all my love,
 Your son"

38 EXT FOREST CAMP SISTERS 3 NIGHT :

Smoldering embers in the fire.

Eli is asleep, wrapped in his patchwork quilt. He half- opens his eyes and sees his brother by the light of the embers, his gun across his lap. A fine watchman.

He shuts his eyes, feeling reassured. Close on black.

Open on extreme CU: A hairy spider climbs up Eli's neck. It reaches his neck. It remains there for a beat, as if to get its bearings. When Eli's mouth opens, it disappears inside.

Close on black.

39 EXT CARAVAN CAMP WARM/MORRIS NIGHT 38A:

A starry sky.

Morris walks up to the horses. Behind him, a few dozen feet away, there's another campfire with a few prospectors having dinner.

Morris opens Warm's small bag and discovers some clothes, uninteresting artefacts, a conversion table, a slide rule, a chemistry handbook and a few notebooks with "This notebook belongs to H.K. Warm" written on the cover.

He opens of those: pages filled with calculations and formulas.

He hears footsteps behind him and goes back near the fire.

Warm comes up, he's holding some bowls and cups of coffee.

39B EXT CARAVAN CAMP WARM/MORRIS NIGHT:

They are eating.

MORRIS

I've only just noticed that's the only bag you have? I guess you're gonna have to buy gear when you get to San Francisco.

WARM

I don't need equipment.

MORRIS

You're going to look for gold in a river without a shovel, a pail, a cradle...

WARM

This is the great challenge all prospectors face. How do I get what's just beneath my feet? There's only two solutions of course: hard labour and good luck. I've been working on a third solution for many years. One that is simpler, faster, more certain. And I think today I found it.

Morris stares in disbelief.

WARM

You don't believe me.

MORRIS

No offence, Warm, frankly I'm having a hard time.

WARM

You know it's funny, people usually don't believe me, and then when they do, they want to kill me.

MORRIS

What is this idea?

Morris looks at him. Warm smiles.

After a beat.

WARM

Well I told you I'm a chemist. It's the idea of a chemist, it's a formula.

MORRIS

"Abracadabra"?

WARM

No, a divining substance.

MORRIS

A divining substance you... you mix
in the river water?

Warm nods.

MORRIS

This formula... this diviner...
call it what you may... as a man of
science, have you ever tested it?

40 EXT FOREST CAMP SISTERS 3 DAY:

The sun has trouble piercing through forest and mist.

Charlie is on his feet. Next to him, Eli's blanket doesn't
move. He gives his brother a kick.

CHARLIE

Eli wake up !

ELI

I don't feel good...

Charlie lifts up the blanket. Eli is hunched up, shivering.
His head has swollen to twice its size. It is a different
color.

CHARLIE

Oh shit what happened to your face?

Eli answers inaudibly.

ELI

I don't know.

CHARLIE

It's all swollen and your neck!
You look like... one of those dogs,
what is it, the... The Mastiff!

ELI

Fuck you! I'm sick.

CHARLIE

All right sit up. Let me look at
you.

Eli opens his mouth. Charlie looks inside and makes a face.

CHARLIE
 Got a gallon of blood sloshing
 around in there!

Charlie helps him sit up.

CHARLIE
 You think you can sit in a saddle?

ELI
 I don't know, I'm freezing.

Eli's head bobs.

41 EXT FOREST EVENING

Pouring rain. An occasional flash of lightning lights up the tree trunks. Charlie leads them on. Eli holds on, rocked back and forth.

Semi-unconscious, Eli hunches over Tub's neck. The horse trips. Eli's teeth clatter and he shouts in pain. Bloody spit trickles onto Tub's neck.

Charlie hands him a wad of tobacco.

CHARLIE
 Stick this between your teeth.
 It'll stop them from chattering.
 We're going to have to hurry if we
 want to outrun the storm.

He takes the reins of Eli's horse.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 You holding on?

Eli grabs onto the saddle knob.

42A EXT. FOREST/ SISTERS CAMP NIGHT:

Charlie struggles to open an oilcloth, like a sail slapping in the wind.

He stretches it between two trees then unfolds another one underneath...

He lays Eli down on it and covers him with blankets.

Eli shivers.

ELI
I'm tired, Charlie...

He closes his eyes. Black.

42B EXT. NIGHTMARE/ FOREST. NIGHT:

Wind roars, rain patters.

Open.

Eli's low-angle POV: In a sudden flash of lightning, the shadow of a man's face cuts out in the light of dawn.

FATHER
There you are my sweeties.

ELI (OFF)
Pa... Pa...

FATHER
I've looked all over for you.

The silhouette's man chopping wood with an axe.

We move in slowly, we hear choked breathing.

ELI (OFF)
Pa?!

FATHER
Come closer, let me take you in my arms.

ELI (OFF)
No... No!

We come nearer and find arms and legs on the chopping block, and his feet red with blood.

Black.

42C EXT FOREST CAMP SISTERS 4 NIGHT:

Eli opens his eyes.

He takes a moment to observe the trees: they slowly sway, water drips from their leaves, they straighten up. His head looks less swollen.

He sticks a finger in his mouth, retches and spits out bloody phlegm.

CHARLIE

You okay?

A beat.

ELI

I think so.

Charlie, naked, squats next to a dying fire, trying to warm up some beans. His clothes are stretched out around the fire.

Eli comes to. A huge brown clump between their camp and the horses catches his eye: the corpse of a grizzly bear.

He stands up.

ELI

What happened?

CHARLIE

Well, this gentleman wandered into the camp last night.

Eli goes over to look at the grizzly's cadaver in the mud.

CHARLIE

He got your horse real good. He went right for him.

Eli goes over to Tub, still shaking: The bear ripped away some of his nose. A damaged left eye under a bloody lid.

CHARLIE

It's the horses that woke me up. What a fucking night!

ELI

I had a dream about Pa' last night.

Charlie throws away the beans, stands up and gathers up his clothes.

CHARLIE

Well that's perfect !
I'm sick of this place. It reeks of death, everything is fucking soaked. Let's go!

43 INT JACKSONVILLE MORRI'S ROOM DAY:

Morris washes his hands and face at the basin.

He dries himself off and surprises his reflection in the mirror.

He looks at himself.

44 EXT JACKSONVILLE HOTEL DAY:

In front of the Motel, Morris asks a man for directions.

TITLE: JACKSONVILLE OREGON.

MAN:

Third house, on the right.

MORRIS

Thank you.

45A EXT JACKSONVILLE WAREHOUSE DAY:

Morris takes a walk around. Once he gets away from the trail, things become quiet. He checks out passersby as if counting them.

On the outskirts of town, behind a sort of hangar, he spots a shack.

45B EXT JACKSONVILLE WAREHOUSE DAY:

He pushes open the door: hay, not much light. Through the wood slats in the wall, the town, far enough away.

46 INT JACKSONVILLE HOTEL CORRIDOR DAY:

Morris opens the door to his room.

47 INT JACKSONVILLE HOTEL MORRIS'S ROOM DAY:

His saddle bags and knapsack are still on the floor. He puts his knapsack on the bed, opens it...

MORRIS

Shit...

He goes to the window and peers into the street. No one. He heads to the door and opens it:

Warm is on the landing, a pair of handcuffs dangling from one hand and, in the other, a Colt aimed at Morris's forehead.

WARM

Are you looking for this? Get back... Get back!

He points to Morris and closes the door behind him.

WARM

What's the matter? Are you not going to say "listen Hermann I can explain"? Huh?

Warm throws the handcuff on the floor.

WARM

Pick that up, face that way, put it on your left hand.

Morris obeys. The handcuff closes around his wrist.

WARM

Let me see your hand...
Good, now the other one.

Morris puts his hand behind his back. Just as Warm is about to cuff him, he pulls out his left hand, spins around and punches him in the face. Warm goes flying backwards. The Colt falls to the floor. Morris grabs it.

When Warm tries to get up, Morris pistol-whips him.

48A INT JACKSONVILLE HOTEL MORRIS'S ROOM NIGHT:

Night has fallen.

Warm is sitting bound and gagged on a chair. Morris is lying on the bed with his gun at his side.

Blood rolls down Warm's head. He moans. He moans harder. Morris understands and gets up.

MORRIS

(pointing to the gag)
If I take it off, will you keep quiet?

Warm nods. Morris removes the gag. Warm breathes. He looks dismayed.

WARM

Are we waiting for your friends?

No answer.

WARM

How could you be so two-faced? What taught you such duplicity? Is it greed? I hadn't noticed that in you... I really hadn't.

MORRIS

You keep quiet or I'll put this back in.

WARM

You think they'll kill me?
They won't kill me...
Not right away.

A beat. He looks at Morris.

WARM

What do you think your Commodore wants? He's the one who tried to rob me in Oregon City. He's after my Formula, my invention.

MORRIS

So what?

WARM

So your friends... Your friends are on their way here to torture me. To torture me, did you know that?

Morris didn't know that.

WARM

They'll cut off my fingers, burn my feet, gouge out my eyes...
They'll torture me till I talk.

WARM

Morris, can I ask you something?
...Are you gonna watch?
...Are you gonna write it down in your book of adventures?

Morris looks at him now.

MORRIS

Warm... I...

He searches for the words, but cannot find them.

WARM

It's this world...
It's an abomination.

Warm's face is now turned toward the window. He doesn't add anything.

MORRIS (OFF)
He stopped talking, didn't say another word. He watched the sun rise through the window.

48B INT JACKSONVILLE HOTEL MORRIS'S ROOM DAWN:

The sun is up.

Warm his waking up. He notices his hands are free, the handcuffs are gone.

He gets up and walks closer to Morris who's sleeping on the bed. He pushes him gently. Morris wakes up with a start, gun in his hand.

He sees Warm standing before him and lowers his gun. Morris slowly emerges.

They look at each other for a moment, then, as he straightens up:

MORRIS
Let's go.

WARM
You don't think you're making a mistake?

49 EXT COUNTRYSIDE BEFORE JACKSONVILLE DAY:

Charlie on Nimble, at breakneck speed.

Eli and Tub behind. Tub is galloping with his damaged head down at his side, as if drowning.

50 EXT HILLS OVER JACKSONVILLE DAY:

A hilltop. A town below.
Eli looks down at the town. Sitting behind him, Charlie has laid out a rag. He is cleaning and preparing his weapons assiduously.

ELI
How do we go about this Warm?

CHARLIE
Like we usually do.

ELI
Well usually there's no Morris

CHARLIE
Morris hands over Warm. We go some
place quiet and finish the job.
You done?

Eli nods.
Charlie stands up and gathers his effects.

51A EXT JACKSONVILLE DAY:

We recognize Main Street Jacksonville and Smith's hotel...
where Warm and Morris stayed.

Eli and Charlie approach the hotel.

CHARLIE
You go round back.

51B EXT JACKSONVILLE DAY

Eli gets off his horse and looks around behind the hotel:
windows, gallery, roof...

All of a sudden, a noise: Someone is trying to open an
upstairs window. Eli takes out his gun. He is about to shoot
when Charlie's head pops out...

ELI
Christ, Charlie, I almost shot!

Eli unlocks his gun. Charlie pops his head back out.

CHARLIE
They're not here!

ELI
Where are they?

CHARLIE
They left, four days ago! Morris
left a note. Shit!

52 INT SALOON JACKSONVILLE DAY:

They are in a saloon amid other customers. They both drink
while Charlie reads Morris' letter out loud:

ELI:

"Dear gentlemen, I'm sorry to inform you that Hermann Kermit Warm has made a precipitate departure. He must have hopped a wagon train and left town. I am going after him as of today. Good luck. Sincerely. John Morris"

CHARLIE

"Hermann Kermit Warm has made a precipitate departure"?!? Who the fuck is he kidding? Who the fuck is this pretentious asshole kidding!?"

He grabs the letter and crumples it. He flings it to the floor and tramples it.

ELI

What now?

Charlie finishes his glass and pours himself another.

CHARLIE

We keep on. We said between Jacksonville and Mayfield, and we're only in Jacksonville. And God damn it, the job isn't "Jacksonville" or "Mayfield", the job is to kill Warm!

ELI

(pointing to the barman)
Say it louder, I don't think he heard.

CHARLIE

(softer)
Wherever the fuck Warm is, Mayfield or wherever, we go there and get it over with!

ELI

When will we be back home?

CHARLIE

Once we're done with the job, Eli.

Eli picks up the letter and uncrumples it.

ELI

I get the feeling they're farther and farther ahead of us.
How long were we in that forest?

CHARLIE

Your spells and illnesses haven't saved us any time, that's for sure.

ELI

What do you mean, that it's my fault?

CHARLIE

Yeah, a little. Isn't it?

ELI

You want to talk about your constant drunkenness? Didn't it cost us any time?

Charlie finishes his glass, slams a coin on the bar and leaves.

ELI

Days when you can't even sit up in the saddle straight?? The other morning when you puked on yourself?... My spells! My ass!

Eli follows him out.

53 EXT BEFORE MAYFIELD:

Warm and Morris ride side by side, speaking like friends.

WARM

What we need to do is to put an end to all this barbarity. Put an end to all this violence, find a solution for it. By inventing a new society. A society...

54 EXT CAMP WARM/MORRIS 2 NIGHT:

Warm and Morris each sit to one side of the fire.

WARM

... where the relationships among men is governed by respect and the absence of profit. Thus a society without greed. Do you agree?

MORRIS

What's it have to do with your formula? You're looking for gold too, like everyone else.

WARM

For me the gold is just a stepping-stone. John I'm serious. To found a new society. One, one that will consecrate itself not to profit or gold, but its, its spiritual development, its own subsistence, nothing more, the education of its children...

MORRIS

And where do you intend to create this society?

WARM

Dallas, northern Texas. There are already many people waiting there. More are on the way from Europe.

Warm take a sip.

Morris remains silent. Troubled.

WARM

Well I can see I've lost you...
John?

MORRIS

One evening, you told me about your father that you left him because there was no place for you. As for me all I can say is that I left my family out of hatred and that my father was the person I despised most in this world I...despised everything about him. I sincerely thought I had been freed of all that until tonight, listening to you, what do I realize?
That most of the things that I thought I'd been doing, these past years, freely, the opinions that I thought I had of my own volition, were in fact dictated by my hatred towards that man.

A beat.

MORRIS

I'm 35 years old and my life is
like an empty cylinder.

Black.

55 EXT RELAY STATION 3 DAY:

Further south, in a relay station. Morris is writing a letter.

MORRIS (OFF)

"My dear solicitor, my dear friend,
After much thought, I've changed my
mind about the measures concerning
my finances related to you in my
last letter. I accept my father's
inheritance and ask you to wire
3,000 dollars to the Project Bank
in San Francisco. Finally, I will
not be in Washington until next
year. I send you my friendship and
I shake your hand. Yours, John
Morris."

John Morris joins Warm, sitting on the ground, drawing in one of his notebooks. Morris looks at him for a moment. He hands him the notebook, we can see an intricate drawing mixing the letter W and M.

WARM

It's us. W & M, Warm and Morris.
Our company's insignia. What do you
think?

He smiles and hands him back the notebook.

MORRIS

I like it.

56 EXT MAYFIELD MAIN STREET EVENING:

TITLE: MAYFIELD, CALIFORNIA.

The brothers walk through Mayfield. The town is just as drab and muddy.

On either side of Main Street, families wander among tents and wagons. All the signs bear the name Mayfield: Mayfield Supplies, Mayfield General Store, Mayfield Gold...

ELI

You think this man came here because it's called Mayfield or they started calling that once he got there?

CHARLIE

Maybe it all belongs to him.

ELI

They sure like that name.

Charlie heads for the saloon. Eli follows as best he can.

57 INT SALOON MAYFIELD SUNSET:

The saloon is crowded. The Sisters are at the bar.

The bartender comes. Charlie goes to speak to him, but suddenly feels exhausted and gives up.

ELI

(to the barman)

Hello, we're looking for a man named Warm. Short, dark skinned... We think he passed through here a few days ago.

BARTENDER

I can't help you, mister.

He starts to leave but Charlie grabs onto his sleeve.

CHARLIE

No ? What about a tall brown haired man of forty...

BARTENDER

I don't know, mister. I don't get mixed up in it

CHARLIE

"Oh You don't get mixed up in it do you?" Give us some whiskey.

BARTENDER

Normal or Mayfield's?

CHARLIE

Normal. Bottle, two glasses.

MAYFIELD

You're looking for someone?

A deep voice. Charlie turns to face Mayfield, a middle-age woman with a magnetic gaze and a tough look on her face.

MAYFIELD

Because usually I'm the one people ask for news in this town.

CHARLIE

And who are you?

MAYFIELD

Mayfield.

Charlie turns around to his brother.

CHARLIE

Ah! The great man himself!

Behind them, the bartender puts the bottle down and pours them drinks.

CHARLIE

My brother and I are looking for a man named Hermann Warm. Short, dark skinned? Probably passed through five or six days ago?

MAYFIELD

Warm?... No, I don't recall.

Charlie finishes his glass, making a noise with his tongue. From the one shot, he is already feeling happier.

MAYFIELD

Is this man a friend of yours?

Eli starts to answer but Charlie beats him to it.

CHARLIE

He ran out on a debt to our employer, The Commodore, in Oregon City.

Charlie watches for an effect. And the woman has tensed to hear the Commodore's name.

CHARLIE

We are the Sisters brothers.

And to his satisfaction, Mayfield is duly unsettled. Eli, on the other hand, is put off by this braggadocio.

MAYFIELD

Good to meet you men. You planning
on staying long?

Eli stares at his teeth, chomping at his cigar. Charlie turns around and looks at the clientele. A group of girls is coming down a staircase. His shoulders straighten up.

CHARLIE

Well that depends...

ELI

(sternly)

We'll be leaving first thing.

Charlie drains his glass. His eyes are glazed from booze.

58 INT HOTEL STAIRCASE EVENING:

The hotel is dilapidated, the staircase narrow. Eli and Charlie carry their bags up.

ELI

Why the hell you keep telling
everyone your life story? The
Commodore, the Sisters brothers...

CHARLIE

Don't you see how honored that
woman was to put us up?
And besides, I like to know if our
reputation has preceded us. Unlike
you, brother, I'm proud of what I
do.

Eli sighs.

CHARLIE

What does that mean?

ELI

It means it's going to be the same
as usual: you'll drink like a fish
tonight and be sick as a dog
tomorrow...

CHARLIE

You're forgetting something:
I'm going to fuck like a rabbit!

ELI

Another day up our ass.

Charlie runs Charlie runs up the stairs. We hear women's laughter.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Don't pay attention to him, he's
crabby, he's old!

59 INT SALOON MAYFIELD NIGHT

Charlie sits at a table, drinking. He has a cheap whore on his lap, and his hand under another one's skirt. She giggles into his shoulder.

Eli is at the bar, embarrassed. He looks away. Mayfield is a bit farther off, in discussion with a group of trappers.

Behind them, Eli notices a girl by the piano. They exchange glances.

Mayfield waves to the barman, who brings another bottle. She comes over and starts to pour Charlie a drink. Eli's hand stops her.

ELI
He can pour his own liquor.

MAYFIELD
Sure thing!

CHARLIE
Hey look who's awake? Look at that.
Big knife with the big boy.
Where are you going?!
Hey have you noticed how many
raccoons there are in this town?
Like dead raccoons? It's a shitty
town to be a raccoon in!

Mayfield puts the bottle back down. Eli goes over to the girl near the piano.

She forces a smile. He whispers into her ear.

ELI
How much just to talk?

60 INT ROOM MAYFIELD NIGHT:

They are sitting on the bed in a narrow room. Far apart. Hands in their laps. A moment of embarrassment.

ELI

We can act like you're giving me this shawl and you consider it a valuable object. You understand? With a kind word.

She takes the shawl and tries to think of something to say. She smiles.

WOMAN

Here.

Eli gives it back, frustrated.

ELI

No. With a kind, huh....

WOMAN

What... I don't know what...

ELI

Simple words:

« I thought it might get cold...»

WOMAN

I thought...

ELI

I'm leaving and you're giving me this.

WOMAN

I... I thought it might get cold...

He encourages her to improvise but she just repeats what he said, handing him the shawl.

WOMAN

This shawl...

ELI

"...is a little piece of me that's traveling with you."

WOMAN

This shawl is a little piece of me...

ELI

(frustrated)

You have to... with your eyes, you have to look at it! Like it means something.

The woman obeys, and speaks softly.

WOMAN

This shawl is like a little part of me is traveling with you... I put a drop of my perfume on it.

ELI

(softer)

Good. Now, can I steal a kiss from you?

She closes her eyes to get kissed.

WOMAN

Yes.

ELI

No, you say that.

Eli's lips touch hers. She takes his hand and suddenly turns away.

ELI

Are you not well?

No answer. He sees a tear roll down her cheek.

ELI

Did I hurt you?

WOMAN

No, not at all... you're just very kind and gentle, and I'm not used to it. Please let me go.

ELI

But... I'll pay.

He grabs onto her arm.

WOMAN

I need to go, please.

She runs to the door, starts to open it, turns back around.

WOMAN

Be careful.

ELI

About what?

The woman mouths something, pointing down. Eli reads her lips: "May-field!"

61 INT HOTEL SALOON MAYFIELD NIGHT:

Eli has gathered their belongings. He walks around the gallery of the saloon, hugging the walls. Down below, in a dark corner, he sees Mayfield speaking with a group of suspicious-looking trappers.

He climbs the stairs, passes by some whores in a hallway. He pushes open a door, then another. He sees men on top of women, women straddling men.

ELI
Charlie..? Charlie...?

Another door...

Eli finds Charlie slumped on a sofa, in a narrow red cabinet from which a half-dressed whore exits quickly. Charlie, almost passed-out, is slumped on a sofa.

ELI
There you are! Charlie. Charlie!
You have to wake up. They're
coming. You get up!

CHARLIE
I don't want to.

ELI
You get up! Mom says, Get up! Get
up!

CHARLIE
Ok...

ELI
Put your boots on. Come on.
Hey, Charlie, Charlie. Can you
shoot, can you shoot?

Eli puts Charlie's boots on. Charlie's head wobbles, with a stupid grin.

CHARLIE
I'm not at my best...

62 INT MAYFIELD STABLES NIGHT

ELI
Don't you puke on me.

The brothers reach the stables.

Charlie finishes getting dressed as best he can, while Eli readies the horses as quick as he can.

When a voice surprises them:

HEAD TRAPPER
Getting ready to leave Mayfield?

Eli stops dead.

The four trappers are there.

Eli looks at Charlie, hung over, his head burrowed in his horse's mane. He turns to the trappers:

ELI
Alright. Let's just calm down. We have money. Just tell us what Mayfield is paying you.

HEAD TRAPPER
I don't think you're going to live long enough to find that out.

CHARLIE
It's funny that there's so many few words to describe things here in Mayfield.

Charlie, who was out of it till now, slowly lets go of Nimble and seems to wake up.

CHARLIE
Mayfield's whiskey and Mayfield's hotel, Mayfield's Fucking Mayfield...

ELI
Please let me handle this. Look...

CHARLIE
Mayfield's racoon, Mayfield's Horses...

Eli is worried to see Charlie wobbling.

ELI
Why don't you just tell us how much you want?

CHARLIE
No, Eli, it's not about money... it's about reputation.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Being the guys that killed the
Sisters brothers.

Eli sees that something has changed in his brother's eyes. He feels reassured.

HEAD TRAPPER
You shut up now.

CHARLIE
Prestige.

Charlie throws up.

A beat. The trappers look at him in disgust.

And in a flash, the brothers draw simultaneously. Their cylinders spin, their barrels spit fire, flames light up the barn... Three trappers go flying into the hay... The fourth runs out of the barn and tries to escape...

Charlie whistles to Eli, who tosses him another gun, without even glancing at him...

Charlie catches it and, at the same time, aims and fires.

63 INT MAYFIELD'S OFFICE NIGHT:

Mayfield speaks expressionlessly. A rivulet of blood runs down from her forehead and drips off the tip of her nose.

MAYFIELD
... Warm said he needed an investor for some prospecting scheme. I couldn't make heads or tails of his story. I thought he was a clown, but when I saw Morris, I thought... if the Commodore's interested, it might be worthwhile.

CHARLIE
Did Morris leave a letter for us?

MAYFIELD
No. He was just traveling with Warm.

CHARLIE
Really? And why did you want to kill us?

Mayfield hesitates. Charlie raises the butt of his revolver.

CHARLIE

I'll repeat that, then I'll strike.

MAYFIELD

When I realized Warm had something of value, I sent some guys after them to bring him back.

ELI

So now there's more men on Warm's tail?

MAYFIELD

Yes.

Charlie raises the butt of his revolver.

CHARLIE

All right, Mayfield, you're not going to like what comes next, but it's the price to pay when you mess for messing with our business. Open your safe.

Mayfield's face freezes. She slowly shakes her head.

MAYFIELD

No. Never.

CUT TO:

64 INT. MAYFIELD'S OFFICE NIGHT:

Later.

Charlie is emptying a safe: bills, pieces of gold, pouches of gold dust.

The office has been turned upside down. Mayfield's body lies in the middle, in a puddle of blood.

65 INT/EXT MAYFIELD SALOON NIGHT:

Loaded down with their plunder, they see half the town outside, awoken by the gunfight. A group of poor people, some in nightclothes.

CHARLIE

(softly)

Think we should say something to them?

The silent crowd separates to let them through. Charlie looks at the curious townspeople, then up at Eli.

ELI

After a series of dramatic events that she only had herself to blame for... Mayfield is dead!

CHARLIE

No, not like that. Don't you have anything more positive?

Charlie mounts Nimble.

CHARLIE

My brother and I have some good news for you people!
You can change the name of your fucking town!

They spur their horses and gallop away. Behind them, a crowd of famished people invades the saloon.

66A EXT LOOT FOREST DAWN:

Their saddlebags, knapsacks and pockets are stuffed with the bills, coins and gold dust.
The horses gallop.

66B EXT LOOT FOREST DAY

Fifty yards off the trail, on a hillside, the brothers finish digging a hole behind trees and rocks.

ELI

Anyway, now we know one thing for sure. We know Morris has joined the enemy.

CHARLIE

I never liked that gentleman, but I must say this is the icing on the cake.

ELI

Warm have that's so interesting?
The Commodore sends men after him,
Mayfield sends men after him, and
now Morris falls into him.
What does he have?

CHARLIE

He has a formula. It's a chemical
product. Supposedly, you pour it in
the river, it lights up all the
gold, and you just bend down to
pick it up.

ELI

You don't believe that stuff
Charlie, come on! We've seen our
fair share of hucksters with
miracle products...

CHARLIE

Yes but the Commodore seemed to
believe in this one.

ELI

Why didn't you tell me about it
before?

CHARLIE

I had orders not to.

In the hole, they put their treasures, wrapped in oilskin.

ELI

Anything else you're hiding from
me?

Charlie looks embarrassed.

CHARLIE

The Commodore's orders are clear-
cut: before we kill Warm, we are to
extract from him by whatever
violent means necessary the recipe
for his formula.

ELI

In lay terms: torture him?

CHARLIE

More or less.

67 EXT LOOT FOREST DAY:

The brothers ride side by side, through plains and rivers.

ELI
How far ahead do you think
Mayfield's guys got?

CHARLIE
Well if they're as stupid as the
last guys we killed, I'd say we're
about even.

68 EXT LOOT FOREST EVENING:

CHARLIE
I like it here. There's a
fortuitous energy.

ELI
What the hell is a "fortuitous
energy"?

CHARLIE
You feel it, dummy!

69 EXT CLIFF DAY:

The path is climbing up through short vegetation.

CHARLIE
You know what, brother? I don't
think you and I have ever gone so
far.

ELI
You mean between us, in our
conversation?

CHARLIE
What are you talking about? I meant
in a straight line. You and I have
never gone so far in a straight
line!

The brothers can hear a distant, continuous rumbling. All of a sudden, here is it, wide and endless: the ocean.

They put their hands on their hats so they won't fly and gaze at the water. It's obvious they've never seen something like it.

70A EXT PACIFIC BEACH DAY:

At times, waves come crash on the horses' hooves. The brothers ride through the beach. There's no one to be seen for miles and miles.

70B EXT PACIFIC BEACH EVENING:

There are prints on the sand now - men, animals, carriages -, and sometimes a few objects people have left on the way: trunks, furniture, a bed...

71 EXT STREET SAN FRANCISCO NIGHT:

They ride up a street on horseback, into the fray: tents set up in the lanes, trappers, chained slaves, Chinese families sleeping in the streets.

TITLE: SAN FRANCISCO

CHARLIE
(eyes glittering, almost
moved)
Goddamn, this place is Babylon!

When they look up, they can see three-floor brick houses with brightly-lit windows.

ELI
You know, when we find Warm, it
won't be worth looking for a quiet
spot, there isn't one in this whole
place!

CHARLIE
More importantly nobody will care.
We can kill anyone we want here.
Fuck, everyone's mind is focused on
something else.

72 EXT STREET SAN FRANCISCO NIGHT:

Elsewhere.
They leave their saddles at a stable and continue on foot, their gear propped on their shoulders.

In front of them, they suddenly spot a warm and hospitable light, the lights of a "grand hotel", The Golden Pearl.

They look inside through a window. Like two kids in front of a Christmas window display.

73 INT HOTEL GOLDEN PEARL NIGHT:

A valet precedes them through an upstairs corridor with a kerosene lamp. He points to a door:

VALET

That's the water-closet in there...

... and then another door...

VALET

...that's the bathroom, with hot water.

... and yet another door.

VALET

And here is your room.

He opens the door, enters and begins to turn on the lamps. The room appears: a red velvet bijou, gold tassels, braided pompoms, beds in rococo copper...

They've never seen anything like it before.

74 INT BATHROOM GOLDEN PEARL NIGHT:

Red as a lobster and wrapped in a towel, Eli has just stepped out of a hot bath. He looks curiously at the dangling chain with a wood knob. He hesitates, pulls on it, and to his surprise a torrent of water gushes into the toilet bowl.

ELI

Charlie, come and look at this!

He walks out.

75A INT GOLDEN PEARL RESTAURANT NIGHT:

A restaurant in the same style as the rooms: European overkill.

The two brothers have no clue how to behave, or what to do with all the silverware set before them.

75B INT GOLDEN PEARL RESTAURANT NIGHT:

Eli and Charlie are eating and drinking. Especially Charlie.

CHARLIE

A bit of comfort in uncertain
times.

Eli nods. A Beat.

ELI

You know I was thinking... We could
just go back to Oregon City and say
we couldn't find them.

CHARLIE

And tell what to the Commodore?

ELI

The truth: Morris ran off with
Warm. Destination unknown. Can't be
expected to find them without a
single clue to guide us. And...

(lower)

We don't even know if Mayfield's
men have already found them...

CHARLIE

Ok, what are you getting at,
brother?

Eli lowers his voice and starts in:

ELI

Between what we made in Mayfield,
what we have at home and the rest,
we have enough to ditch the
Commodore for good.

CHARLIE

And why would we do that?

ELI

Didn't you ever think of stopping?

CHARLIE

And do what?

ELI

I don't know
(he hesitates)
We could open a store together.

CHARLIE
What store?

ELI
Look, we've had a good long run,
we're still alive, we've a bit of
our youth left. It's a chance to
get out.

Charlie turns beet-red. Alcohol mixed with pent-up anger.

CHARLIE
A store? A way out? Fucking
nonsense! What is this bullshit?

He is about to knock over the table or slap Eli who stares at him without backing down.

CHARLIE
...Well, we've established that you
want to quit, so quit!

Charlie finishes his glass and takes a deep breath. He starts eating again.

After a beat:

ELI
Meaning what? That if I stop, you'd
continue?

CHARLIE
Of course I'd continue. I'd just
need a new partner. Rex asked for
work in the past...

ELI
Rex? Rex is just a talking dog.

CHARLIE
He is obedient like a dog. I could
ask Sanchez.

Eli is stunned.

ELI
Sanchez...? You would really trust
Sanchez and that idiot Rex to
protect you?

Charlie looks him eye to eye.

CHARLIE

Because you protect me?
Is that what you have to tell
yourself to stay "nice guy Eli"?
But WE are the Sisters brothers.
The Sisters brothers, Eli you and
me!

Charlie straightens up and starts searching his pockets for money.

CHARLIE

You've made your decision, and it's
fine by me. It will be welcome news
to he Commodore also. We'll finish
this job, then part ways.

He throws a few bills on the table. Moved, Eli pays no attention and continues.

ELI

Why do you say it like that? "We'll
part ways"?

CHARLIE

How do you want me to say it? If I
stay with the Commodore and you
open your store...

ELI

So you're saying we won't see each
other any more?

CHARLIE

Yes, when I come into town.
Whenever I need a shirt, or some
underthings...

Eli watches Charlie light a cigar and stand up as if nothing were the matter.

ELI

Do you need to speak to me so
rudely? To choose those words? To
keep the level of the conversation
so low. Is it because you're drunk?

Charlie looks at his brother and slaps him.

Instinctively, Eli's hand grips the butt of his revolver. Customers around them freeze and watch Charlie put on his hat and leave the restaurant with the face and gait of a drunken man.

76 INT GOLDEN PEARL HOTEL ROOM NIGHT:

Fully clothed, Eli is lying on the bed in the dark, gaudy room. He stares at the shadows from the street played out the red velvet walls and the ceiling.

Charlie's bags and clothes are still sitting on his bed.

Eli stands up and starts packing.

77 INT STABLE DAY:

Eli is about to mount Tub when:

CHARLIE (OFF)
Hey, brother!

He turns around. Charlie is all rosy and dapper.

CHARLIE
What are you doing here?

Eli is speechless. Charlie continues, matter-of-factly.

CHARLIE
I've got some great fucking news,
brother. I know where they are!
What do you say to that?

Eli look at him without answering.

CHARLIE
Did you hear me?

ELI
Yes.

CHARLIE
You don't even care? What's wrong
with you?

ELI
Don't you remember what happened
last night?

CHARLIE
Yes. And?

ELI
Don't you remember that you hit me?

Charlie pretends to try to remember.

ELI

Stop pretending and spare me the
« I don't remember » routine.
You hit me in public Charlie, so as
sure as you're looking at me right
now, I'm leaving.

Charlie grabs Tub's bridle.

CHARLIE

All right, what do you want? This
is about slapping each other, isn't
it? I slap you, you slap me back
and we're even. So go on, hit me.
Hit me, I said.

Before he can even give Eli his cheek, he receives a stunning
that sends him flying backwards.

CHARLIE

Jesus fucking Christ! Are you out
of your goddamned mind? I gave you
a slap, and you whack me with a
fucking shovel!

ELI

See? You do remember!

Charlie gets back up, rubbing his cheek.

CUT TO:

CHARLIE

(facing camera)

This morning I woke up in a
whorehouse and figured I might as
well stop by the claims office. So
I went and asked if a certain
Herman Kermitt Warm had recently
staked a claim. Nothing! I was
about to give up, when boom, it hit
me. I asked if there was anything
in the name of John Morris... and
there: American River, Folson
Lake... bingo! Now we know where
they're heading.

78 EXT AMERICAN RIVER DAY:

CU: a crude map of American River.
Eli holds the map.

He tries to find his bearings in the landscape.

They ride on. First, a delta...

78B EXT AMERICAN RIVER PROSPECTORS TRAIL DAY:

... They ride the river upstream... They pass by men on foot with mules, loaded down with gear...

78C EXT AMERICAN RIVER PROSPECTORS TRAIL DAY:

... There are now prospectors at work on each of the riverbanks. Charlie takes a pair of binoculars, peers at the camps, the faces...

ELI

I'd like to see how they go about it.

CHARLIE

Oh another idea for a career change? First selling shirts, now prospecting? I'm gonna go on ahead, you do as you please.

78D EXT AMERICAN RIVER PROSPECTORS TRAIL DAY:

... Tub's eye has turned white and is surrounded by pus. Eli shoos away flies and tries to clean the wound. The horse shudders and peels.

79 EXT MOUNTAIN ROADS DAY:

Now it's all uphill. Tub is breathing hard. He drools spit and blood. His eye is now white, pus oozing around it.

A horse of the Apocalypse.

80 EXT MOUNTAIN DAY:

Charlie calls out to a prospector below:

CHARLIE

Folsom Lake?

The prospectors point upstream.

CHARLIE

How far?

PROSPECTOR

A day !

He rides back to Eli.

CHARLIE

We'll be there tomorrow.

81A EXT MOUNTAIN SISTERS CAMP 5 NIGHT:

Encampment. Remains of a fire. Under the covers, Charlie is already asleep. Eli tries to make Tub drink. He encourages him, speaking softly.

ELI

Come on Tub. Eat some grass. Oh
Tub, I'm sorry my friend.

Tub's white eye almost glows in the dark.

He takes the red shawl from his saddlebags. He carefully folds it into a pillow, breathes in its fragrance and goes to bed. He pulls up his blanket and begins to masturbate.

81B EXT MOUNTAIN SISTERS CAMP 5 NIGHT

Warm binocular POV: The silhouette of the sister brother, sleeping next to the fire.

WARM (O.S)

You think it's them?

MORRIS (O.S.)

Yes. They got here faster than I
thought.

81C EXT MOUNTAIN SISTERS CAMP 5 NIGHT:

The brothers are asleep.

The sound of the river below, the horses. Another noise.

Eli opens his eyes: a silhouette towers over him...

Nearby, Charlie straightens up... the toe of a boot violently
knocks him flat.

Black.

A blurry vision. Voices of men heard from afar:

WARM (O.S.)
No!... No, not like this!

Warm joins Morris.

MORRIS
Not like what?

WARM
This is no way to kill people.

MORRIS
We have to kill them, Hermann! We
kill them, bury them, no one finds
them. By the time it dawns on the
Commodore, we'll be far gone.

ELI (O.S.)
We don't work for the Commodore
anymore!

WARM
Then what are you doing here?

Warm and Morris turn around. Eli, in a daze, has stood up.

ELI
We...We don't work for him anymore.

82 EXT WARM'S ENCAMPMENT DAY

Charlie and Eli are handcuffed, sitting together on the ground. Charlie has a nasty black and blue mark on his cheek. Contrary to the specifics of their current situation, Charlie seems strangely happy:

CHARLIE
And it just came out?!?

ELI
... Yes.

CHARLIE
You're a genius, Eli, a goddamn
genius! How did that pop into your
head? Just out of the blue?

He nods, evasively.

Warm and Morris have set up camp on a wide strip of pebbles in the middle of the river.

Two tents, some gear, barrels, oilskin tarpaulins protecting their supplies. The horses are tied up on the banks.

They watch Warm and Morris gather the gear they need, load up the animals. Charlie yells at them:

CHARLIE

Hey, Morris, what you gonna do with us? Ask us to run and shoot us like rabbits? Dump us in the forest?

Charlie sniggers, Morris barely looks back.

83 INT MORRIS'S TENT DAY:

Morris is sitting at a small wood table, studying a map. Warm walks into the tent, Morris doesn't turn around.

WARM

What are we going to do about them?

MORRIS

We leave them here. They'll end up killing each other or getting eaten alive... I couldn't care less. We take the horses and the mules, we extract what we can from the river one last time and then we leave here without ever coming back.

WARM

And abandon all our gear?

MORRIS

We'll travel light, ride up to Sacramento, buy more gear, and ride up the river from there.

Suddenly, from further down the hill:

MAN (OS)

Anyone there?

84 EXT WARM'S ENCAMPMENT DAY:

MAN (O.S.)

Anyone there? Can you hear me?

Morris takes a few steps forward.

MORRIS

Yes, what do you want?

Another silhouette appears in the background.

MAN 2 (O.S.)

We're working the river downstream.
We're running out of supplies.
You've got any for sale?

Warm joins Morris.

WARM

They don't look like prospectors.

MORRIS

They're not prospectors.

MAN (O.S.)

I didn't hear your answer.

MORRIS

(To the man)

Because I didn't give one. Don't
you take one step closer!

(to Warm)

We're going to have to fight,
Hermann. Are your guns loaded?

WARM

Yes, I think so.

The silhouettes are creeping closer.

MORRIS

Well take it out goddammit !

(to the man)

I told you not to move and I won't
tell you again! We have nothing to
sell. Go back to where you came
from!

The man comes towards them. Morris shoots. The others shoot
right back. Flames, ricocheting bullets. Behind them, the
brothers shield themselves as best they can.

CHARLIE

Hey, what the hell? Do something!
Don't leave us here!

A bullet ricochets near Warm, who jumps away.

MORRIS

Hermann! Hermann?

WARM
 (reassuringly)
 I'm okay, I'm okay.

ELI
 Let us help you, Warm!

Another volley of bullets.

CHARLIE
 Give us the keys you fucking
 idiots! You don't stand a fucking
 chance, come on!

Warm and Morris look at each other. They hesitate.

85 EXT WARM'S ENCAMPMENT DAY:

The four men are hiding behind boulders. The brothers check the weapons that have been returned to them.

CHARLIE
 You think it's Mayfield's men?

ELI
 Sure looks like them.

Charlie signals Warm and Morris to stop shooting. He stands up, using his hands as a megaphone:

CHARLIE
 Hey guys, before things sour, we've
 got some news for you: Mayfield is
 dead! You'll never get paid!
 Do you think this is really worth
 it?

A beat, as if a discussion were going on over there. Then, more gunfire. Charlie makes his way to Warm and Morris, both busy shooting.

CHARLIE
 (To Morris and Warm)
 As long as you can see us, you
 shoot at them like crazy. We make
 it to the other side and you can't
 see us anymore, stop shooting. Get
 it?

Agreement.

The brothers come out of hiding and move along, each to one side of the river. Warm and Morris fire. When the brothers vanish into the forest, they stop shooting.

Suddenly, the sounds of long 45 caliber flames pierce the day. We hear screams... then nothing.

Eli reappears, dragging his feet, as if coming back from a chore.

When a trapper arises from behind a thicket. Morris cocks his revolver and shoots in a hurry.

The trapper collapses revealing Charlie, his arm outstretched, his gun still smoking.

The two men face each other. Frozen. And then slowly lower their arms.

A moment of unease.

86 EXT WARM'S ENCAMPMENT NIGHT:

They sit around the fire in heavy silence. They pass around a jug of liquor. Sizing one another up, eyeing one other. Eli notices that John Morris is scratching his legs.

Hermann Warm clears his throat, then:

WARM

If Morris agrees to it, this is what I suggest. You two keep half of what you pull from the river, with the remaining half going to the Company.

CHARLIE

The Company being you and Morris?

WARM

Yes, well, no... not exactly. The Company is our phalanstery project.

CHARLIE

Phalan-what?

MORRIS

Phalanstery...

WARM

...A community we're founding, in Texas.

(MORE)

WARM (CONT'D)

An ideal living space, ruled by the laws of true democracy and sharing.

CHARLIE

Whatever you say.

WARM

Does something bother you?

CHARLIE

That's your business.

WARM

So we agree: half of what you extract?

CHARLIE

Fine with me.

ELI

Me too.

His eyes turn to Morris.

WARM

Excellent. Morris?

After a beat.

MORRIS

Don't ask my opinion. I don't agree with what's going on here. I'm still in, of course, but I remain on my guard.

CHARLIE

Why don't you look at me when you say that?

Morris gets up.

CHARLIE

Look at me, you son of a bitch!

WARM

Gentlemen!

Morris turns to Charlie.

MORRIS

I'm looking at you, Charlie Sisters. Do you want me to tell you what I see?

WARM
That's enough!

Eli holds back Charlie.

WARM
Please...

The tension decrease.

MORRIS
I'm going to sleep.

WARM
Do your legs still hurt?

MORRIS
I'm all right. Goodnight, Hermann.

They watch him wander off towards one of the tents.

CHARLIE
He going to have to change.

Warm gives a resigned shrug of the shoulders.

WARM
He doesn't trust you and you can't blame him. He'll change. We all have to. We don't have any other choice.

His eyes are on them, a clear gaze, frank and disarmingly innocent. He scratches his legs nervously. Under the bottom of his pants, the brothers make out red skin that is starting to blister.

WARM
It's the Formula. It is very caustic in its purest form. I thought diluting it would make it harmless, but I was wrong. Next time, we'll have to grease our skins beforehand...

He gets up.

CHARLIE
Have you already prospected?

WARM
Two days ago.

CHARLIE
Did it work?

WARM
Better than I ever imagined.

He walks away.

87 EXT WARM'S ENCAMPMENT DAY:

Early morning. Eli washes at the river. A little further off, he sees Morris brushing his teeth. He waves. Morris barely reacts.

Off to one side, Charlie sits on the river bank, watches them from afar.

88 EXT MOUNTAIN FOREST RIVER BANK DAY:

The horses, men and loaded mules make their way along the mountainside.

Warm and Morris check the river's flow.

The brothers follow, pulling the mules. Charlie still wears the trapper's hat.

Ahead of them, Warm points to the river below.

They come closer and discover a spot where the current slows down and the river bed widens. A landscape like before the birth of the world.

89 EXT WARM'S ENCAMPMENT DAY :

They cut the branches on a tree they just felled. A mule pulls a trunk into the middle of the river.

Bare-chested, the men cut branches and carry rocks... They work up to their waists in water.

The dam is starting to take shape. Warm crosses the dammed river to gauge its depth. With a knife, he scrapes the boulders in certain spots. He examines the samples with a jeweler's magnifying glass.

Very tight shot: striations in the rock, shimmers of quartz, golden reflections.

90 EXT RIVER BANK :

The sun is beating down. The men nap in the shade of the trees.

Just the sound of insects and the river.

91 EXT ENCAMPMENT EVENING:

A new camp has been set up below at the foot of one of the riverbanks.

Eli and Charlie finish setting up tents when they hear hoofbeats. They look back. Warm and Morris arrive with a mule straining under three barrels. The brothers watch the convoy pass by: it is obviously the Formula.

Eli sees his brother's eyes light up.

92 EXT RIVER BANK ENCAMPMENT NIGHT

All four sit around a fire to finish their supper.

MORRIS

Who wants to stand guard tonight?

CHARLIE

That's our job, isn't it?

93 EXT RIVER BANK NIGHT:

Wearing his trapper's hat, Charlie sits up on a rock that towers over the river.

After a while, he hears laughter down in the valley.

He straightens up and sees the three others drinking and laughing, gathered around the fire. .

CHARLIE

What are you doing?

MORRIS

We can't sleep!

CHARLIE

What's the point of me being on guard, if you all don't go to sleep?

WARM

Charlie, why don't you come down
and join us? It'll do you good.

ELI

Come on. Come on, there's no point.
We're not going to sleep !

94 EXT RIVER BANK NEW ENCAMPMENT DAWN:

The four of them have their feet in the water. They guzzle
booze. They rarely speak, smoking cigarettes and watching the
sunrise.

95 EXT RIVER DAM DAY:

Morris is swimming in the translucent river. Charlie sits on
the riverbank, mocking look on his face.

CHARLIE

Do you really believe in that two-
bit ideal society nonsense?

MORRIS

What do you want me to say?

CHARLIE

I don't know but I say that a guy
with a little bit of smarts
has to realize that it sounds like
solid gold bullshit.

MORRIS

Why do you think I'm here?

CHARLIE

Like us. For the gold.

MORRIS

Sure, the gold, but what do you do
with it?

CHARLIE

Spend it, obviously!

MORRIS

You really think you'll have time
to? With all the corpses you've
left behind, the Commodore, your
famous drunkenness...

(MORE)

MORRIS (CONT'D)

And if your pockets are full to boot, something tells me you won't be living to a ripe old age.

CHARLIE

And would your ideal society make a difference?

MORRIS

I can't say for you, but for me, yes.

Charlie thinks.

CHARLIE

Or else it's a scam. A trap for suckers. Is that it?...

Morris gestures that he has heard enough.

CHARLIE

Let me tell you something, John Morris: you are one goddamned arrogant asshole.

MORRIS

Let me tell you something, Charlie Sisters: I couldn't care less about what you think... that is to say, if you think.

96 EXT CAMP DAY:

Eli goes to check the horses. They are all there, except for Tub. A piece of old rope dangles where he had been attached. Eli whistles, looks everywhere.

97 EXT FOREST TUB HOLE DAY:

He notices some blood on a bush.

More, a little further on. Then hoof prints on the ground...He reaches the edge of a landslide.

At the bottom of the ravine, Tub, motionless on his back, hoofs up.

Eli looks at him, saddened.

98A EXT RIVER BANK DAY:

Eli is sitting on the riverbank, looking at the reflection of the sun in water, at the jumping trout.

WARM (O.S.)

What are you doing here?

Eli turns around to see Warm coming towards him.

ELI

Nothing much.

WARM

I'm heading up to the dam to see if the water has settled.

98B EXT RIVER BANK DAY:

They are walking. At the bend, they see the dam where Morris and Charlie are working and talking.

WARM

See that?

ELI

Yeah, I get the impression Charlie is changing...

WARM

You mean he's not going to try to kill us anymore?

ELI

It's a little strange talking about this with you, isn't it?

WARM

It's Better facing up to things. You know, one day I asked Morris how he ended up working for a man like the Commodore. He said something along the lines of... the desire to break away from his family, to live an adventure. Honest enough. How about you? How did you end up here?

Eli smiles.

WARM

Does my question bother you?

ELI

No, no, it's just a long story. Charlie was always violent. When he got into a fight, it usually would end badly. And when you kill a man, you end up with his father, his brother or his friends on your tail, and you have to start all over again. One thing leads to another and I had to help him. He's my brother.

They walk in silence. At one point, Eli makes a face. He puts his hand to his heart. He is dizzy.

WARM

You all right?

Eli shakes his head. His hand looks for something to lean against. Warm helps him.

WARM

Must be the heat. We'll sit here a moment and it will pass.

ELI

I'm sorry... I lost my horse... He died, I mean... Tub is dead... He was a middling horse, but... I didn't think it to affect me like this...

ELI

When we were kids, Charlie killed our father.

A beat.

ELI

I'm the older one. I should have done it.

WARM

Do you regret that?

ELI

Yes... 'cause after that, Charlie was never the same.

99 EXT RIVER CAMP DAY:

Morning. Charlie sits on a rock, bare-chested. Eli is cutting his hair.

CHARLIE

That was a very pleasant day, don't you think?

CHARLIE

You get on well with Warm?

ELI

And you with Morris?

CHARLIE

What did you talk about?

ELI

About us, about the Commodore...
About Pa. He's an easy man to talk to.

ELI

Tell me, what do you think the Commodore will do when he sees we're not coming back?

A beat.

CHARLIE

He'll send men after us. We'll have to get rid of them. And the ones after, and all the others he sends on our trail.

ELI

And then?

CHARLIE

And then, sooner or later, to put an end to it, we'll have to kill the Commodore...

Eli does a double take. He considers the possibility.

ELI

Imagine we manage to kill the Commodore. What next?

Charlie doesn't answer. Eli hesitates, then:

ELI

You take his place?

CHARLIE

...

ELI

Are you taking the Commodore's
place?

Charlie looks at him.

ELI

How long have you been thinking
about it?

Charlie smiles, giving a small, mysterious shrug of the
shoulders.

100A EXT RIVER DAM NIGHT:

They cover their legs with grease, they pour the solution
into smaller buckets.

Warm and Morris exchange a look of hope.

Warm looks straight to the lens. The smile on his face is
hard to read: an ambiguous mixture of worry and excitement.

100B EXT RIVER DAM NIGHT:

In the moonlight, the dammed up water looks like a black
mirror.

Charlie and Eli are on the riverbank, next to one of the open
barrels. Morris is standing on the top of the beavers' dam
with a long branch. Warm, also with a branch, is standing on
the other side of the river.

WARM

Once you've emptied the solution,
Morris and I will agitate the water
to increase the field of
illumination. Now once the formula
starts to activate, grab your
buckets and get to work!
Not a moment to lose.

Charlie and Eli lift the barrel and enter the water. They
pour out the dense, viscous formula. The odor disgusts them.

Warm and Morris hurry to stir the water with their branches,
dispersing the solution.

Charlie and Eli retreat to the riverbank, coughing.

They whack their branches on the water even harder, until Warm motions them to stop.

The brothers wait on the bank. Still nothing.

CHARLIE

What's going on, Warm?

WARM

Just wait.

The four men stare at the black water, waiting.

Suddenly, a glow, then another, then... the river lights up. The four men rush in with their buckets: Warm and Morris under the dam, Charlie and Eli on the other side.

Innumerable tiny gold nuggets, now dots of light, as clear as stars in the sky.

The four men work the river as fast as they can. All we can hear is the clanking of the nuggets falling into the buckets.

The leafy trees look like a vault of gold overhead.

Eli stops a moment to watch the three men working. Their faces are lit by the river. They all smile. A breeze plays with their hair. Eli smiles too and goes back to work.

Then the glow dies down as quickly as it appeared. Slowly, the leafy vault darkens.

Eli heads back to the bank, crying and coughing. He sees Charlie banging away at the cover of another barrel.

ELI

What are you doing?

CHARLIE

We'll dump it all in!

Warm sees him from the other bank.

WARM

Leave off! Eli, stop him!

Charlie lifts the barrel. He takes a few steps. He loses his balance and falls. Thick liquid pours out of the barrel and trickles onto his right hand, immediately attacking his skin.

The loose barrel rolls down to the river, where the formula spreads in viscous filaments.

Blisters appear on Charlie's forearm. They swell and pop like a toad's throat. He holds back a shriek of pain.

ELI
Charlie?

Behind him, the river shines again in the barrel's wake.

Morris and Warm run across the dam. Morris trips. Eli sees him fall into the water and disappear. He holds his breath. Morris's face resurfaces. He screams.

Eli sees Warm put down his bucket and immediately darts up:

ELI
No, Hermann, no!

But Warm jumps in and disappears, like Morris.

101A EXT. RIVER DAM. NIGHT:

The water is black. Warm resurfaces, holding up Morris. They cough, spit, gasp for breath. They collapse onto the sand.

101B EXT WARM'S CAMP DAWN:

Day breaks slowly over a landscape that has lost its colors. Dead beavers and fish wash up onto the gravel.

On the riverbank, Morris is dying.

A groan more painful than the others makes him turn his head. Morris is looking at him. His face is horribly burnt, his lips quiver as if trying to speak.

Charlie knows what he is begging for. He stands up and finds a belt with weapons. He grabs one as best he can with his left-hand fingers that still work.

He tosses the revolver to Morris, and then kicks it closer to his hand.

102A INT WARM AND MORRIS'S TENT. DAY:

Eli goes inside Warm's tent.

Face ravaged by blisters. Milky eyes bulging out. Heavy breathing.

ELI
Hermann? Can I do something for
you?

WARM
Morris? Is that you?

Eli starts to clarify, but...

ELI
Yes, it's me.

WARM
Oh, John! Where did you disappear
to?

ELI
I was getting some firewood.

WARM
John, I feel I have known you a
long time. I'm sorry you died
before me. I wanted to help you. I
wanted to be your friend.

ELI
You are my friend, Hermann.

Warm retches. His last sigh sounds like paper crumpling.
As Eli inches closer to Warm, a gunshot rings out. Eli stands
straight.

102B EXT WARM AND MORRIS'S TENT. DAY:

Eli comes out of the tent. Charlie looks at him.

By his side, Morris, dead, holding the revolver against his
chest.

103 EXT WARM AND MORRIS'S TENT. DAY:

Eli packs their bags to leave. He brings the results of the
night's collection: a bucket two-thirds full of nuggets.

He manages to fit their treasure into Warm and Morris'
horse's saddlebags.

Charlie is too weak and ill. He stays under the covers.

104 INT MORRIS' TENT. DAY:

Eli gathers Morris' things.

On a crate by the bed, he discovers a hardback notebook with a title on its cover: "Adventure diary".

The pages are blackened with cramped, regular writing. Eli feels a presence behind him. He leaves the tent.

ELI (O.S.)

I must confess that the very happiest moments of my life have been spent in the wilderness of the far west with the plentiful supply of dry pine logs on the fire. I would not... I would sit cross legged enjoying the genial warmth and watch the blue smoke as it curled upwards.

105A EXT MOUNTAINS. CALIFORNIA DAY:

The brothers walk down the river.

ELI (O.S.)

Scarcely did I ever wish to change such hours of freedom for all the luxuries of civilized life.

105B EXT MOUNTAINS. CALIFORNIA DAY:

In the steep passes, Eli has to tie Charlie to his back. An ordeal.

106 EXT CANYON CRANE DAY:

Eli hears a scream from behind. Charlie has fallen from his horse. Eli rushes over.

107 EXT CRANE'S TOWN DAY:

There are houses at the end of the road.

108A INT DOCTOR CRANE'S PRACTICE/OPERATING ROOM DAY

A black forearm falls to the floor with a thud. Eli picks it up and places it in the bucket nearby.

Doctor Crane cauterizes and bandages the stump.
Charlie is still asleep on the operating table.

Eli looks at the stump in the bucket.

108B INT DOCTOR CRANE'S PRACTICE/OPERATING ROOM DAY:

A fly lands on Charlie's mouth. Eli chases it away, wipes his brother's brow.

Eli sits back down. Behind him, the doctor is washing his hands.

Noise in the vestibule. The doctor's little girl has come home. Father and daughter speak in hushed tones.

Then father and little girl enter the room. Doctor Crane looks worried.

CRANE

Sir, there are men asking about
you.

ELI

What men?

CRANE

In the street. Three of them.

Eli lifts the curtain and looks across the street. There is a silhouette in front of the saloon/ general store.

The guy is not trying to hide. He nods, swaggering. He looks like a killer.

Eli cautiously opens the door a chink.

ELI

Rex, shit !

REX

Eli?

ELI

Yes!

REX

Is it true that Charlie is out of
the game?

ELI

What do you want?

REX

Me? Nothing. The Commodore sent me.
It's been a while since you left
and he's growing impatient.

Eli peers into the street and sees two other silhouettes behind him. When he looks back, he sees Charlie on the table.

ELI

(to the doctor)
Is there a back door?

CRANE

Yes.

ELI

Go, go, go, go, go! Charlie,
Charlie get up ! We have to go.

Eli is about to lift Charlie to carry him. Charlie opens his eyes and uses his good arm to grasp Eli's collar. Eli does not understand.

Charlie hangs on. Stares into his eyes, without letting up. His stare is tantamount to an order.

He shakes his head in an irrevocable "no".

Eli puts him back down. Charlie's eyes remain glued to him.

REX (O.S.)

Do I have to come in and get you?

ELI

No, I'm coming out!

REX

First you toss your guns, then come
out with your hands up!

Eli goes to look for Charlie's Colts. He slips them into the back of his pants and undoes his belt.

109 EXT STREET DAY:

He opens the door, tosses his belt and raises his hands.

REX

Good. Come on out and talk!

Seen from behind, the butts of Charlie's Colts stick up in his pants.

110 INT DOCTOR CRANE'S PRACTICE/OPERATING ROOM DAY:

Charlie lies on the operating table. His eyes are open. He hears voices.

When the first gun goes off, his stump goes to draw. Bullets shatter a window pane. The doctor and his daughter crouch.

111 EXT CRANE'S TOWN STREET DAY:

Two men lie sprawled across the street. One of them screams in pain. Eli steps over and shoots him in the head.

The third man crawls to take shelter. Rex. Eli walks toward him, crushes his back with his boot.

ELI

Are there others behind you?

Before Rex answers, Eli fires.

112 EXT FOREST MAYFIELD DAY:

The brothers gallop on Rex's horses, new boots and spurs on their feet.

113 EXT FOREST MAYFIELD DAY:

They try to find their buried treasure. But the mountain has shifted and the spot is unrecognizable.

Charlie finally finds the fork in the tree and tries to line up with it. All he can see are the disheveled fir trees, like a box of matches spilled on a table.

ELI

Come on, let's go.

Charlie looks around. Distraught.

114 EXT ROCKY LANDSCAPE EVENING:

The sound of a cavalcade approaching. A group of horsemen gallops by.

Hidden by the rocks, Eli watches them ride by. When he can no longer hear them, he comes out of his hiding place, pulling his horse by his tether.

Charlie leans over the horse's neck to grab the reins with his good hand.

He puts the reins in his left hand, spurs the horse and passes in front. Eli follows him.

115 EXT LANDSCAPE GUNFIGHT NIGHT:

Darkness.

Flashes of light and muted gunfire in the distance. We move in slowly.

CUT TO.

Sheltered behind the trunks of felled trees, Eli shoots into the shadows. The shadows shoot back.

Crouched next to him, Charlie reloads guns as best he can with a bad hand.

ELI

The horses! Get the horses to safety!

Charlie makes the horses lie down and lies down alongside them.

Charlie's face against the horse's side.

He closes his eyes. For the first time, he is afraid.

FADE TO...

116A EXT PRAIRIE DAY:

A wide, flat landscape. On one end, the two brothers gallop, followed on the other end by four men who start shooting at them. In the distance, gunshots and smoke.

FADE TO...

116B EXT PRAIRIE DAY:

Two men lie on the ground, dead. One of them has his foot still caught in his horse's stirrup. Charlie searches their bodies, grabs their weapons and ammo, and hands them to Eli who's still on his horse.

FADE TO...

116C EXT PRAIRIE DAY:

Galloping again. The horses' immaculate white coat.

FADE TO...

117 EXT ROCKY LANDSCAPE NIGHT:

They have built a fire.

Charlie cries. Eli changes his brothers bandage wrapped up around bloody stump.

.../...

As he stands guard and finishes eating, Eli discreetly watches him.

CHARLIE

Rex and Sanchez, and those other guys we didn't even know... You really think it's a good idea to go back up north?

ELI

Well you know very well why were going north. And you know what we still have left to do.

CHARLIE

I lost the hand that I work with. You'll be on your own on this.

Charlie lets go of the powder flask. Eli wants to help immediately, but stays where he is. Charlie has seen that and keeps trying.

Eli can't look at his brother struggling with the gun.

CHARLIE

Are you ashamed of me?

Charlie's eyes well with tears.

ELI

Do you mean what your saying?

CHARLIE

Everything has fucking changed so much.

ELI
 No, nothing has changed. You're my
 little brother and I love you.

Eli empties his pan in the fire. It sizzles and smokes.

ELI
 In a week, we'll be in Oregon City,
 and I'll kill the Commodore.

.../...

Charlie is lying asleep near the embers. Eli stands guard.

He hears his brother's sobs getting lost in the stillness of
 the night.

118: EXT. LANDSCAPE DAY:

The sun is beating down.
 The two brothers are riding slowly. At one point, Eli stops,
 around: empty landscape as the eye can see.

ELI
 Hey, have you noticed how long it's
 been since anyone's tried to kill
 us?

CHARLIE
 I don't know... three, four days ?

ELI
 Don't you find that strange?

Charlie turns around now. He also finds it strange.

119: INT/ EXT BARN OREGON CITY DAY.

Final rehearsal. Charlie repeats one last time.

CHARLIE
 You walk in the front door. Take
 the staircase on the right, go up
 make a left, the office is on the
 second door on the left.

ELI
 How many guys are up there with him
 usually?

CHARLIE

Usually there's a guy sitting right outside the office. And one in the room further down.

They load their guns.

120 EXT COMMODORE'S MANSION OREGON CITY- DAY:

With his remaining hand, still damaged, Charlie slips a gun in his belt.

The brothers enter the town, which is strangely deserted.

They walk up the street. In the distance, a black cloth has been striated around the large door of the Commodore's mansion.

People scurry about underneath, as if waiting for something.

121 INT. COMMODORE'S MANSION OREGON CITY- DAY:

The Sisters brothers are standing side by side in a wood-paneled parlor.

Eli takes off his hat. Charlie follows suit.

Behind them, townsfolk dressed in black, sitting on two rows of benches.

In front of them: an open coffin. Inside, the Commodore's corpse, lying on ice.

An undertaker is standing nearby, waiting to hammer the lid on.

CHARLIE

(softly)

Fuck! You must be disappointed.

A beat.

ELI

Yeah, kinda.

MAN:

Sir? I think no one else may be coming. May we close the casket?

ELI

Sure.

They put on their hats and start to leave.

ELI

Hold on.

Eli turns around, steps back to the coffin, gun in hand, and brings it slamming down on the dead man's face.

An unpleasant cracking sound. Ice cubes bounce on the wood floor.

General astonishment. Eli raises his hand to calm everyone down.

ELI

Just making sure.

Then they leave.

122 EXT OREGON CITY DAY:

They gallop out of town and up to the plain.

The evening falls.

Their conversation continues, indistinct in the distance.

123 EXT SISTERS FARM DAY :

The sun is about to rise. At a bend in the road, a modest farm appears: barn, stables, farmyard, fenced in vegetable patch.

As Eli and Charlie head up the slope, a woman appears in the doorway.

MOTHER

Hey, if you come any closer I'll shoot you!

ELI

It's us Ma'.

CHARLIE

It's your sons, it's Charlie and Eli!

MOTHER

My sons? Oh my god, well why, why did you come, why did you come back?

ELI
To see you Ma'.

MOTHER
If you came here to hide or to run
away from something you just turn
around, I don't wanna see ya!

ELI
No we're tired Ma'. We just want to
come home.

CHARLIE
We just came here to see you. I
swear.

ELI
Please?

124 INT SISTERS FARM / BEDROOM DAY

Eli watches his mother's old hand stroking Charlie's face.
They speak, but he does not hear what they are saying.

He walks around the house, his eyes lingering on the walls,
he finds the a measuring rod, marked with names and numbers:
Charlie, a date, a height, Eli, a date, a height.

He pushes open the door to their bedroom. Their beds are
there, one on each side of the room.
Behind him, he hears the voices of Charlie and their mother.
Eli sits down, pulls off his boots, lies down on the bed,
soothed by their voices.

He stares at the piece of cloth over the window, gently
billowing in the breeze. Lulled by its back and forth, his
eyelids grow heavy. His feet are twenty inches too long for
the bed.

On the floor, through the curtains' sway, the breaking light
of day.

THE END.