

The Crossing
(aka Reconstruction)

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The Crossing

TEASER

INT. TRAIN - MISSOURI - 1866 - DAY

The Civil War has recently ended, a war that tore the United States apart. The wounds are fresh and deep and no family has escaped its terrible brutality. The period after the Civil War was called Reconstruction, as the country tried to heal and rebuild. But in the border state of Missouri, where family fought against family, scores were still to be settled, and pockets of resistance still roamed the countryside...

We see the reflection of JASON EDDING'S face as he stares out the window of a moving train.

The landscape is flat and uneventful, punctuated by solitary farmhouses.

Now we see Jason's face as it turns towards us -- eyes focused on the passing landscape, but his mind is elsewhere.

His face is youthful, but his eyes tell a different story.

A hobbled VETERAN enters the train car and addresses the passengers...

VETERAN

Ladies and gentlemen, I apologize for disturbing your journey. I am a proud veteran of the war that severed our nation. I was wounded in battle, where I lost the ability of my legs to carry me. I pray daily for the Lord to heal and restore this great nation as well as my legs and my life. If you can spare a penny or some food it would be appreciated.

The Veteran begins to sing, 'Beautiful Dreamer,' in a voice so pure and true it is nothing less than startling.

He hobbles down the aisle rattling a tin cup.

As he passes, Jason drops a coin into his cup. He clamps his hand over Jason's, stares dead at him with rheumy eyes.

VETERAN (CONT'D)

Hard times don't quit.

The Veteran moves on. Jason turns to the window as the train rolls on. He takes a pull from a whiskey bottle kept by his hip.

The Veteran's song hangs in the air as Jason closes his eyes, rests his head against the glass.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A barren field littered with dead cattle. Steam rises from several carcasses.

Jason walks through the field. As he passes one of the cattle, we see the cow has been split at the belly.

A dead man is curled inside the steaming corpse.

Jason continues to walk through the field...

In each of the steaming corpses he sees a man, curled like an unborn child, inside the eviscerated cow.

He hears someone call his name...

WOMAN O.C.

Jason.

He turns and sees a beautiful young woman in a formal gown standing next to a handsome young soldier in his best Union dress uniform. The soldier has a cane and hobbles as he steps beside the woman.

Jason looks at them, his face a map of hurt and pain.

MAN O.C.

We're your family.

Jason turns again and sees an older man in a tuxedo standing beside his elegantly dressed wife. She extends her arms to Jason, beseeching...

WOMAN O.C.

Come home.

Jason raises his hands to his face in anguish.

When they drop to his sides the people are gone. He stands alone in a field of devastation.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

OVER BLACK

The high-pitched SCREAM of a train's whistle.

INT. TRAIN

Jason's eyes spring open. He's sweating, disoriented. He stares at a family sitting across from him. The FATHER shakes Jason's leg, leans in.

FATHER

You alright?

JASON

Just nodded off.

Jason sees the man's ten year old son staring at him.

BOY

You were talking.

The boy's mother shushes him.

MOTHER

Don't be rude, Johnny.

JASON

It's alright.

(to the boy)

I say anything worth noting.

BOY

I couldn't say.

Jason bends to pick up the empty whiskey bottle rolling around the floor by his feet, and we see a Bowie knife strapped to his calf.

FATHER

I know you from somewhere.

Jason looks up, sees the boy has seen the knife.

JASON

I don't think so.

FATHER

No, I do, I know I do...

We hear the screech of wheels on the metal tracks as the conductor stands at the front of the car - -

CONDUCTOR
 (calling out)
 Circle Bend, Missouri.

Jason stands, retrieves his shoulder bag, as the train slows, coming into the station...

BOY
 We're going to California. To start fresh.

JASON
 Sounds like a good plan.

Jason looks at the boy. The father stands...

FATHER
 I was with the 118th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers. That ring a bell?

JASON
 No.

FATHER
 I swear it's on the tip of my tongue...

EXT. CIRCLE BEND, MISSOURI - TRAIN STATION - DAY

Jason gets off the train, moves down the platform passing a vendor selling roasted corn, and Veterans, some still dressed in blue and grey.

The train Conductor stands on the steps between cars. He leans out as Jason passes...

CONDUCTOR
 You want to go to Hastings. See Barker, the tanner.

The conductor nods down the platform as a man, wearing rebel grey, bangs into Jason from behind. He glares at Jason, ready for an escalation.

Jason heads down the platform as the train starts to pull out. The family man opens his window...

FATHER
 (yelling)
 Hey, I remember! You're - -

- - his voice is drowned out by the trains whistle as it rolls out of the station.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - DAY

As Jason moves away from the platform he sees a man, BARKER, standing by a wagon piled high with animal skins -- beating a drunkard on the ass with a stick.

BARKER

Lookit you. You couldn't drive a nail, no less a wagon.

Jason watches as the drunkard tries to scurry away on all fours, but Barker continues to whack him on the ass.

BARKER (CONT'D)

Go on, piss y'self, you scrofulous piece of Yankee shit.

Barker stops to catch his breath. He notices Jason watching.

JASON

You Barker?

BARKER

I am.

JASON

I'll drive your wagon.

BARKER

(brandishes the stick)

Get on, before I give you some of this.

Barker turns away...

JASON

Didn't you hear, the war's over. We're all on the same side now.

Barker looks Jason up and down. He doesn't look convinced.

EXT. WAGON - DAY

Jason sits on the wagon loaded with skins.

BARKER

I got a bullet in my chest from one of you Union men. Doctors said it missed my heart by a penny.

JASON

Wasn't me.

BARKER
How do I know that?

JASON
I wouldn't of missed.

Jason's dead serious. Barker chuckles.

BARKER
There a reason you want to go to
Hastings?

JASON
Do I need one?

BARKER
I don't suppose you do.
(spits, then)
Follow the Mizzou north. You get to
hill country, head west. You cross
the Rockies you've gone too far. If
you don't get shot, mutilated, or
scalped there's 20 dollars waiting
for you in Hastings.

JASON
Now I got a reason.

BARKER
You got a firearm?

JASON
No.

BARKER
Hell's bells, where you think
you're at?

Barker extends his rifle to Jason.

BARKER (CONT'D)
Don't matter which side you're on.
This is Missouri. There's someone
on the other side.

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

Jason's wagon heads over the endless prairie.

In the distance lush rolling hills rise out of the horizon,
offering a promise of coolness and shade.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - LATER - DAY

Jason comes upon a farmhouse. It's eerily quiet. A horse whinnies in a paddock. A dog approaches, barking mercilessly.

Jason looks at the house, gets off the wagon. The dog is working himself up, but Jason isn't afraid.

He goes up to the dog - - rubs his face and back, quieting him - - then continues on to the house, the dog following.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Jason steps over the threshold, the dog disappearing ahead of him. He follows the dog...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jason sees a teenage girl, IRENE, rocking back and forth. Her tear-streaked face cradles the head of an older man in her lap. He's lies in a pool of clotted blood, gutted, dead.

Jason approaches, bends to feel for a pulse.

JASON

He's gone.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Jason finishes shoveling dirt over a freshly-dug grave. Irene, kneels, and places a cross over the head of the grave. She stands.

JASON

You want to say something?

IRENE

I don't have anything to say.

JASON

Always something to say.

Irene looks from Jason to the grave, furrows her brow. A beat, then - -

IRENE

He was my flesh and blood daddy. He was mean as a snake, but he had his soft spots too. I think I was one of 'em, but it's hard to say.

A beat, then she looks at Jason.

IRENE (CONT'D)
That's it.

Jason nods.

EXT. WAGON - DAY

Jason sits Irene in the wagon, puts the shovel in the back..

JASON
Wait.

Jason goes to the paddock, and takes the horse, leading it to the wagon.

He ties it to the back of the wagon. He gets in the wagon, the dog jumps in after him.

A beat, as he stares at the house, then...

JASON (CONT'D)
You got family?

IRENE
Had two brothers.

She looks down, then at Jason.

IRENE (CONT'D)
Nobody's waiting for me, or looking for me.

A beat, then Jason whips the oxen and the wagon is off.

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

Jason cooks beans and bacon on an open fire. He takes a plate of food to Irene.

IRENE
My brothers were killed at Gettysburg.

He sits, as she moves the food around on her plate with a fork...

IRENE (CONT'D)
One was blue, one grey.

She uses her fingers to mop up some food, lets the dog lick her fingers...

IRENE (CONT'D)
 They were always fighting.
 (beat)
 Funny, in a way, don't you think?

She uses the fork to eat the beans and bacon.

IRENE (CONT'D)
 There was a boy, Johnny Babson. We
 kissed before he went off to fight.
 He never came back.
 (beat)
 You got a beau?

Jason eats his food, but he's more interested in the contents
 of a whiskey bottle.

JASON
 Only a boy can be a beau. Girl's
 something else.

IRENE
 What's a girl then?

JASON
 Paramour. Or sweetheart.

IRENE
 Why can't I be a beau?

JASON
 It's a French thing.

IRENE
 Well, do you?

Jason swallows a belt of whiskey.

JASON
 Do I what?

IRENE
 Have one of those whatever's.

JASON
 I did.

IRENE
 She die?

JASON
 No, she's very much alive.

IRENE
Why'd you leave her?

JASON
You ask a lot of questions.

IRENE
It's how I find out what I want to know.

Jason takes another pull.

JASON
I didn't leave her. She left me.

IRENE
For what for?

JASON
For my brother.

IRENE
Can't coat that with honey.

JASON
No, you cannot.

IRENE
He better lookin' than you?

JASON
By a wide mile.

IRENE
That would explain it then.

She looks at Jason, then away...

IRENE (CONT'D)
Never had a sweetheart and never will, I can swear to you that.

Off Jason's look.

IRENE (CONT'D)
Spend enough time around boys you know they're not happy unless they're killing something.

She strokes the dog, lets him eat off her plate...

JASON
Who killed your father?

IRENE
The Colonel.

Off his look.

IRENE (CONT'D)
They call him the Grey Ghost cause
you can't see him unless he wants
you to. I hope I never do.

JASON
This 'ghost' got a name?

IRENE
If he does, nobody knows what it
is. They say he rode for Grey in
the war, and now rides for mayhem.
He's got a gang with him.

She licks her fingers.

IRENE (CONT'D)
You gonna do bad things to me like
boys do?

JASON
No.

Jason takes his bottle, gets up and heads back to his lean-
to.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

They're stopped at a river. Jason unyokes the oxen, as the
horse and the dog drink at the water's edge.

IRENE O.C.
You comin' in?

JASON
No.

Irene bathes in a secluded pool in the river, protected by
trees. She can barely make out Jason through the trees.

IRENE
Can't you swim?

No response.

IRENE (CONT'D)
Must love the smell of your own
stink.

She hears Jason swat the oxen on the rump as they lumber to the river and start to drink.

IRENE (CONT'D)
If I was gonna kill myself, I'd
just go under and not come up.

Irene sinks down in the water until she's entirely submerged.

We hold on Irene's face underwater, eyes wide open.

Suddenly, Irene's head emerges out of the water, gasps for breath, and she sees - -

A black panther sitting on a branch of a tree that projects into the river. The panther stares at Irene, bares its teeth.

Irene SCREAMS.

Hearing her scream, Jason runs through the trees, going knee deep into the river, where he sees Irene staring at the branch of the tree.

Jason looks at the branch. There's nothing there.

IRENE (CONT'D)
Did you see it?

Off Jason's look.

EXT RIVER - DAY

Jason sits on the wagon, waits. Irene, fully dressed gets in the wagon beside him. She sits ramrod straight.

IRENE (CONT'D)
I see things sometimes. They can be
as real to me as your face.

She looks down at her hands in her lap.

IRENE (CONT'D)
If you want to kiss me, you can.

Jason looks at her.

IRENE (CONT'D)
It doesn't matter anymore.

JASON
What's your name?

IRENE
Irene.

JASON
How old are you, Irene?

She looks dead at Jason.

IRENE
Too old now.

A beat, then Jason turns away, whipping the oxen, as the wagon takes off.

EXT. HILL COUNTRY - DAY

Jason, Irene, and the dog ride in the wagon.

The wagon approaches a small stream. A dozen men and women dressed in white are being baptized in the river.

They sing "We Shall Gather at the River," as they wade in the stream.

TELFORD, the preacher, dunks another white-robed acolyte in the stream, as his wife, RACHEL, leads the group in song.

Jason whips the oxen and they strain to pull the wagon across the stream.

A shock of recognition crosses Telford's face as he sees Jason.

Irene notices, glances back, as the wagon comes up on the far bank of the stream.

IRENE (CONT'D)
You know him?

JASON
Who?

IRENE
The preacher.

JASON
No.

Irene glances back at Telford as the wagon continues on...

IRENE
He knows you.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. HASTINGS, MISSOURI - DAY

All the prerequisites of a frontier town: general store, leather goods store, barber, hotel, church, bank, newspaper, telegraph office, - - on opposite sides of a wide dirt street.

A couple of farmers hawk their goods on the street.

The church is the most substantial building in town, its spire reaching to the sky.

Several stores have been destroyed during the war. The bones are intact, but they're useless, unoccupied, although a couple of storefronts are being rebuilt.

A series of tent structures house the businesses that were once in the destroyed buildings, one of which has a red and white barber pole in front of it.

MILLER, the sheriff, walks up the planked sidewalk, whistling a tune. He wears a worn rebel hat on his head. He stops and sees - -

QUINT, feral child, sitting on the sidewalk, gnawing on what looks like a bone.

Miller walks up to Quint, peers down - -

MILLER

What you got there, Quint?

Quint holds up the hard grey bone.

MILLER (CONT'D)

My God...Is that a turd?

Quint smiles.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Gawdamighty, Quint. You are a human being. Our kind does not eat feces.

Quint happily gnaws on the hard turd.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Put down that shit, it is not fit for man or beast.

Quint ignores Miller, at which point he pulls his gun, cocks the trigger.

This gets Quint's attention, and he scurries off like the golem, leaving his turd at Miller's feet.

Miller holsters his gun, stares at the feces, yells - -

MILLER (CONT'D)

Ambrose.

A clerk, AMBROSE, comes out of the telegraph office.

AMBROSE

Sheriff?

MILLER

Remove this turd.

Ambrose picks at the turd, sniffs, tosses it back on the ground...

AMBROSE

It ain't a turd.

MILLER

Well, I don't care what the hell it is, get rid of it.

AMBROSE

What you want me to do with it?

MILLER

Bury it, or burn it. It is unsightly and unsanitary.

AMBROSE

Yes sir.

Miller tiptoes around the turd, continues down the street. Ambrose watches for a beat, then kicks the turd into the street.

INT. BARBER'S TENT - DAY

The barber, JOSEPH, sits in his barber's chair reading the local paper, as Miller walks in.

JOSEPH

Afternoon, Sheriff.

MILLER

Afternoon, Joseph.

Miller looks around the tent...

MILLER (CONT'D)
I would like a shave.

JOSEPH
Yes sir.

Joseph gets out of the chair and Miller sits. Joseph grabs a clean sheet and is about to throw it over Miller, but Miller stops him.

MILLER
And a *clean* sheet.

JOSEPH
This one is clean.

MILLER
I would no sooner wipe my rectum
with that rag, Joseph.

Joseph goes to a cabinet filled with sheets...

MILLER (CONT'D)
I can feel the hairs growing out of
my face, Joseph.

Joseph glances at Miller, taking out a new sheet.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Each follicle wriggling worm-like
out of its burrow. Is it possible
to feel hair grow, Joseph?

JOSEPH
I couldn't say.

MILLER
You are a barber, are you not?

JOSEPH
I am.

MILLER
Then if you cannot say, who could?

JOSEPH
Only thing I know about hair is how
to cut it.

MILLER
But if you had to say, how would
you say, Joseph? Does such a
sentiment strike you as...
unhinged?

JOSEPH
 Unhinged? No sir, NO sir. Never.
 Unhinged.

Miller narrows his eyes at Joseph...

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 But if I were to say, which is to
 say if I HAD to say...

Joseph measures out his words with a teaspoon. He doesn't want to offend.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 I would say it was... unusual.

Miller's eyes narrow further, he sucks air with his tongue between his teeth...

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 But we live in strange times and
 unusual thoughts and things do
 occur with some regularity.

A beat, Miller nods...

MILLER
 Yes they do, Joseph. An apt
 observation.

Joseph is about to throw the new sheet over Miller, when Miller grabs his hands.

MILLER (CONT'D)
 If I see one drop of blood on your
 Union hands, I will drop you like a
 stone.

EXT. HASTINGS - DAY

Townspeople stop and pause as four young GREYCOATS, - - faces caked with a mask of grey ash, long coats trailing behind them - - gallop into town.

One of the Greycoats, TISK, waves a black flag on a pole.

Another, BUGLER, wearing a ratty Union uniform, blows an erratic tune on a bugle.

A third,, STILES stops his ears.

STILES
 Christ Almighty, Bugler, I can fart
 better'n that.

The fourth, SEAMUS, addresses the townspeople.

SEAMUS
 (mocking tone)
 The Colonel extends his greetings
 to the good citizens of Hastings.
 May we all continue to prosper.

This triggers manic hiccup-like giggles on the part of the Bugler.

SEAMUS (CONT'D)
 Shut up, Bugler. I'm convocatin'.

Quint goes up to, Tisk, on horseback, his hand outstretched .
 Tisk gives him a swift kick.

TISK
 Get away from me, mongrel!

The men dismount and disperse.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

A customer exits the store, freezes when he sees Tisk about to enter.

Tisk knocks the customer's hat off his head - -

TISK
 Show some respect.

- - as he enters the store.

INT. STORE - DAY

WILLIAMS, the proprietor, looks terrified as Tisk enters.

TISK
 What have you got for me today, Mr.
 Williams?

INT. LEATHER GOODS STORE - DAY

Through a window at the back of her shop, ANNA, sees the Greycoats, hears giggling coming from the front of the store -
 -

ANNA
 (calling)
 Dora!

She hurries towards the front of the store, stops short, when she sees SEAMUS, kneeling, holding her five year old daughter close to him.

The girl clasps a teddy bear, giggles, as Seamus tickles her.

SEAMUS
(tickling Dora)
Look who's got the kitchy-coos.

The girl squirms from the tickling.

ANNA
Let her go.

SEAMUS
Good day, Miss Anna.

ANNA
(hard)
Let her go!

Seamus looks at Anna for a beat, then releases Dora.

DORA
(indicating teddy bear)
Look mama.

SEAMUS
The Colonel got a present for your
little girl.
(pointed)
A nice teddy to snuggle with on
long, lonely nights.

Seamus ruffles the hair on Dora's head, smiles at Anna.

ANNA
Come here, Dora.

The girl runs to her mother. Anna takes the teddy bear, holds Dora close to her.

ANNA (CONT'D)
She has one, she doesn't need
another.

She tosses the teddy bear to Seamus. It lands at his feet.

INT. HOTEL - DAY

It's seen better days. The Bugler and Stiles enter. Stiles goes up the front desk, dings the bell, while the Bugler takes a seat and stretches his legs.

A beat, then the proprietor, DECLAN, appears.

BUGLER

Look what the cat drugged in...

DECLAN

I don't have any money today.

BUGLER

Spend it all on your colored bitch?
Now the slaves are free, that must
mean they're free for the takin'.

The Bugler snorts with laughter...

DECLAN

The hotel is empty.

STILES

Maybe you should cut your rates.

The Bugler giggles...

DECLAN

I'll get some money next time.

STILES

Next time? What is it The Colonel
says about the future, Bugler?

BUGLER

'The future has not arrived.
Therefore it is of no consequence
to me'.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Tisk counts out money, licks his finger, then writes the amount in a small leather-bound ledger.

TISK

You're short, Williams, but the
Colonel is a compassionate man.
Give me five pounds of beans, a
pound of sugar, a pound of salt,
and we'll call it a day.

Williams stands for a moment, wanting to say something. Tisk makes a 'face', then - -

TISK (CONT'D)

Move it, amigo, I ain't got all
day.

As Williams gathers the stuff, Tisk makes a turn around the store...

TISK (CONT'D)

This store was built by Mr. Alsop.

Good man, he was.

(shakes finger at
Williams)

You got it for a steal.

WILLIAMS

Mr. Alsop put the store up for sale
when he decided to move his family
to Kentucky.

TISK

He **sold** it because he was secesh
and didn't want any part of what
you people done to this country.

Williams puts the sacks of beans, sugar, and salt on the counter.

TISK (CONT'D)

You think you're on top now, don't
you?

(jabs a finger in
William's chest)

This isn't finished.

EXT. HASTINGS - DAY

Jason's wagon pulls into town. He drives the wagon in front
of Anna's leather good store, gets off.

JASON

(to Irene)

I'll be right out.

He goes into the store.

INT. LEATHER GOODS STORE - DAY

Jason enters the store. No one is there.

JASON

Hello?

ANNA O.C.

I told you - -

She appears from the back, stops short at the sight of Jason.

JASON
I've got a wagon load of skins from
Circle Bend.

The shock is immediate and electric, she can't take her eyes
off him.

JASON (CONT'D)
Barker said to bring them to Mrs.
Jenson.

ANNA
That's me.

An awkward pause, then - -

JASON
You want me to bring them round
back?

ANNA
Yes.

He looks at her for a moment, and heads out of the store.

EXT. LEATHER GOODS STORE - DAY

Jason steps outside, stops, then heads to the wagon.

Irene sits in the wagon, sees Anna watching inside the store.

IRENE
What's she looking at?

Jason unloads the wagon, glances back at Anna.

JASON
She's just looking.

IRENE
I don't like her.

JASON
(dry)
You see something in her face?

IRENE
No. Yours.

Jason looks at Irene, like he's been caught. She turns as the
dog starts barking...

...sees Declan running down the street.

Seamus pursues him on horseback, then lassos Declan with his lariat.

Declan falls to the ground, dragged behind the horse.

The other Greycoats laugh as Seamus' horse drags Declan into the middle of the street.

The Bugler giggles maniacally and blows a tuneless tune.

Stiles and Tisk shoot their guns in the air and holler in delight.

Doors to shops open and people spill out into the street where they see Seamus' horse dancing around Declan, lying prostrate in the dirt.

Miller comes out of the barbershop, face lathered. He wipes his face with the sheet, and crosses to Seamus.

MILLER

What's all the commotion, Seamus?

STILES

(indicating Declan)

This ruffian owes a debt he refuses to pay.

BUGLER

Tried to run but we caught him.

MILLER

I'm sure it's a misunderstanding, and he'll be happy to pay what's due.

SEAMUS

One foot.

MILLER

A foot..?

SEAMUS

That's what's due.

BUGLER

(giggles)

Next time he won't run so fast.

Irene starts to tremble, leans in close to Jason...

IRENE

That's them. They're the ones did it.

The dog starts barking incessantly as Seamus dismounts.

SEAMUS
Will someone *please* put an end to
that infernal racket.

Tisk takes his gun and shoots the dog.

Irene cries out, scurries over the wagon to the dog who whines softly, wounded...

SEAMUS (CONT'D)
Thank you, Mr. Tisk.

TISK
Pleasure.

IRENE
(cries out)
Animals!

The Bugler tips his cap to Irene.

Irene tries to go after the Greycoats, but Jason stops her, holds her fast.

JASON
(angry)
You didn't have to shoot that dog.
He did you no harm.

TISK
He was upsetting my equilibrium.

SEAMUS
(to the bystanders)
The Colonel has been very specific
in his instructions. Failure to pay
for protection leaves a man
unprotected.

Jason starts to drive off. Tisk grabs the yolk around the oxen - -

TISK
Stick around. Party's just getting
started.

SEAMUS
Give me your axe, Mr. Stiles.

Stiles hands Seamus an axe. Seamus waves the axe to the crowd.

SEAMUS (CONT'D)

You have to use elbow grease to chop through bone. Take it from me, it is not as easy as it looks.

(beat)

Who wants to do the honors?

He looks around, relishing his power and their fear - -

SEAMUS (CONT'D)

There must be one honest citizen up to the task...

People are mute and unresponsive, averting their gaze.

His eyes fall on Jason, who looks right at him.

SEAMUS (CONT'D)

(to Jason)

You.

Jason doesn't move from the wagon.

SEAMUS (CONT'D)

One foot.

(to Declan)

You got a preference which one you keep?

Declan tries to crawl away, but he can't...

SEAMUS (CONT'D)

(shrugs)

Your call, mister. Either one's fine with me.

Jason still doesn't move.

A beat, then Seamus pulls out his gun, points it directly at Jason.

SEAMUS (CONT'D)

Justice will be dispensed today. One way or the other.

A beat, then Jason starts to get off the wagon, but Irene tries to hold him back.

IRENE

Don't...

He frees himself from her, glances around at the townspeople...

... then gets off the wagon and heads towards Declan.

Seamus hands the axe to the Bugler. The Bugler walks to Jason, offers it to him...

Jason takes the axe, continues towards Declan.

He glances down at Declan, who cowers, as he passes him, heading straight to Seamus.

Seamus raises his gun and fires directly at Jason, but the gun jams. He fires again, but again it jams, but then Jason is upon him.

Jason whips the axe and sever Seamus' head - -

- - and in one fluid motion grabs Seamus' gun, before the body buckles and falls - -

- - and fires at Stiles, dropping him to his knee -

- - but not before taking a bullet in the shoulder from Tisk.

Jason wheels in time to hear a rifle shot and see Tisk fall down dead.

Jason sees Anna outside her store, pointing her rifle dead at the Bugler.

The Bugler doesn't move.

It's all over in a matter of seconds. Seamus and Tisk's corpses lie in the street.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. LEATHER GOODS STORE - DAY

Anna and Jason. It's close and intimate, silence hanging over them like a fine mist, as she tends to his wound.

ANNA

We lived side by side, said good morning... our children played together, prayed together...we were neighbors... friends, but not *good* friends, because we knew it was a lie. We knew we were broken.

She gets scissors and cuts the bandage...

ANNA (CONT'D)

The fear was there but it was buried. Now fear is the only thing we trust. We wrap it around ourselves like a blanket on a cold night. It's the house we live in, it's what we know, what we believe in.

(beat)

That's what the war did.

She smooths the bandage...

JASON

You're not afraid...

She shakes her head...

ANNA

Other things. Not them.

She looks at him, her hand resting lightly on his shoulder. Dora comes out from behind the store.

DORA

Momma...

ANNA

It's alright, sweetheart.

DORA

Who are you?

JASON

Jason.

He looks from the little girl to Anna. Now she knows his name.

DORA
Are you mama's friend?

JASON
I'd like to be, if that would be all right with you.

DORA
Okay.

Anna smiles at Dora. Dora looks at Jason, goes back. The weight of the little girl's presence hangs in the air.

JASON
She's a beautiful little girl.

ANNA
She is my sun and moon and all the stars.
(beat, then)
We lived on a farm. Before the war. I had two boys. Union came looking for their father. Found him in the barn. So they burnt it down. My boys were in the barn.

JASON
I'm sorry.

ANNA
No one's got a lock on pain.
(a beat, then)
I've got my memories. They're as real to me as you.

She looks at him, he holds her look, then...

JASON
You don't know me. Why put yourself at risk?

She thinks about it...

ANNA
Sometimes you do a thing and don't know why. It just happens.
(beat)
Isn't that the way it is?

Jason's takes her hand, resting on his shoulder. She's surprised and so is he.

He runs his fingers over her hand, smoothing her fingers as if they were the feathers of a bird.

She looks at her hand in his...

They look at each other, knowing something real and important is happening...

MILLER enters the store, breaking the spell...

MILLER

How are you?

JASON

Good enough.

MILLER

Good.

(clears his throat, then)

Would you give me the pleasure of your company, Mr..?

JASON

Eddings. Jason Eddings.

ANNA

You arresting him, Miller?

MILLER

That's a harsh way to put it, Anna.

ANNA

What for?

MILLER

Seeing as he separated one of the Colonel's men from his head, I'd say it was for his own protection.

INT. JAIL - DAY

Miller leads Jason into a cell. There are two cots in the cell. Miller cleans the dust off one of the cots, sits on the edge, motions for Jason to sit on the other cot.

MILLER

I apologize in advance for the accommodations. Please.

Jason sits and Miller abruptly stands, cleans off the cot some more, sits again, perching on the edge.

MILLER (CONT'D)

I saw what you did, Mr. Eddings. We all did.

(a wink)

I have been waiting for you.

Miller scratches himself...

MILLER (CONT'D)

When the gun jammed, that's when I knew.

(wags a finger)

I knew it was you. Everybody saw what happened. But I knew...

(taps his head)

what it **meant**.

JASON

Guns jam.

MILLER

Guns jam, sir, they do, but when they do, they do, they don't **don't**.

JASON

I wouldn't go looking under rocks for silver dollars, Sheriff. It doesn't mean anything.

MILLER

Nothing *means* nothing. But you and me, we know when something is something.

Miller jabs the air with a finger.

MILLER (CONT'D)

We **know**.

Jason smiles, humoring the man.

JASON

Well, I have to admit you got a point there. We do know when something is something.

MILLER

Thank you.

Miller smiles, rises.

MILLER (CONT'D)

It is a privilege and an honor to have you as my guest, Mr. Eddings.

(MORE)

MILLER (CONT'D)

I can see there is no need for shackles or chains. Please make yourself at home.

Miller exits.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

The bodies of Seamus and Tisk lie in a wagon. Seamus' head rests on his chest - - his hands clasped on top of his head as if holding it to his body.

Townpeople strip the bodies of their boots, belts, etc.

TOWNIE #1
(to Townie #2)
Damn boot is stuck.

TOWNIE #2
A man's feet oughtn't be exposed to the elements.

TOWNIE #1
Boots won't do him any good. He's dead.

TOWNIE #2
Particularly when deceased. It's shameful and humiliating.

Townie #1 pries one of Tisk's boots off.

TOWNIE #2 (CONT'D)
Dead or no, a man's feet is personal.

Reverend Telford and his wife Rachel ride up in their wagon.

TOWNIE #1
Afternoon, Telford.

Telford's wife averts her eyes from the bodies.

TOWNIE #2
Sorry for the indiscretion, ma'am, these rascals were intending to make an example of Declan's foot.

TELFORD
Where's Miller?

TOWNIE #3
He's with the lad who shot 'em.

Off Telford's look - -

TOWNIE #2

Don't know his name or where he
come from, but he is a godsend.

TELFORD

Where is he?

TOWNIE #2

Miller took him to jail for his own
protection.

TOWNIE #3

It was a miracle, Reverend.
(indicating Seamus' body)
Seamus tried to shoot the stranger,
but his gun jammed. Two times.

TOWNIE #2

So he cut off his head and shot him
with his own gun.

TOWNIE #1

Hallelujah!

Townie #1 does a little Irish jig...

TOWNIE #3

As God is my witness, Telford, the
gun did not fire, and then it did.

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

Miller whistles to himself as he scribbles in his leather
bound diary. Tight little scrawls swarm over the page - - the
writing of a man whose mind is fleeing.

Telford enters.

TELFORD

Evening, Miller.

Miller looks up, blinks...

MILLER

Telford..?

TELFORD

I'd like to have a word with the
prisoner.

MILLER

He's not a prisoner.

TELFORD
Is he free to leave?

MILLER
We are free when we die, Telford.
Until then we are all held captive.

Miller stands, leads Telford to Jason's cell. Jason lies on his cot, eyes open.

INT. CELL - NIGHT

Miller unlocks the cell door. Jason looks up.

TELFORD
You look like a man.

Miller leaves as Telford enters the cell.

JASON
What did you expect?

TELFORD
Something...more.

Telford sits, studies Jason.

TELFORD (CONT'D)
I saw you at the river.

JASON
I recall.

TELFORD
The townfolk, they think what you did is a sign.

Jason looks at him.

TELFORD (CONT'D)
People often mistake the work of the devil for the hand of God.

A beat, then - -

JASON
You're familiar with the devil's work, are you?

TELFORD
I am.

Beat, then - -

JASON

You have soft hands. I would wager
you have never seen the devil in
action.

Jason looks hard at Telford.

TELFORD

You're a dangerous man. You know
how to kill and you're not afraid
of dying. The moment I saw you I
could see that you are lost, and
pain and suffering follow where you
lead.

CU A GIRL'S SMILING FACE

*She's radiant, cocoa colored skin, green eyes, hair like
sunlight.*

*And now the girl lies on her back in the throes of passion. A
man moves on top of her, fucking her.*

*She takes the man's face in her hands, and we see that it's
Jason. She wants him to look at her when he comes.*

*They look into each other's eyes, then suddenly, he sees a
flash of movement in her eyes, and he rolls off her as a
gunshot explodes near her face.*

*A gleaming knife cuts the rebel soldier's achilles tendon. He
falls, still holding his rifle - -*

*Jason clasps the soldier's head from behind, and with one
lightening fast movement, cuts him from ear to ear.*

And now Jason's running through a swampy mangrove forest.

*Bullets ringing out from all directions. Chaos and carnage
all around him.*

*He dives into a pond, disappears under the water, as
thundering horses make the ground shake.*

*Under the water, we see Jason, eyes wide open, sinking,
sinking...*

*As the water above him ripples from the weight of the
thundering horses...*

INT. CELL -DAY

Jason wakes with a start, momentarily disoriented.

JASON

Miller?

No response. He stands up, goes to the cell door...

JASON (CONT'D)

(calling)

Miller?!

EXT. HILL COUNTRY - DAY

Miller rides his horse to the river. He gets off his horse, and begins to undress, stripping naked.

He takes his clothes and walks to a big tree. He removes his diary and takes out a sealed envelope, used as a placemark.

He uses his knife to impale the envelope to the tree. Something is written on the envelope, but we can't read it.

Miller makes a neat pile out of his clothes, badge, and gun, and puts his boots neatly on top of the pile.

Then he walks back to his horse and gives it a hard slap on the rump.

The horse takes off.

Miller watches it run for a moment, then turns and walks towards the river. He begins to whistle to himself...

He continues to whistle as he steps into the river and keeps walking - - the water rising with each step.

Still whistling, now it's up to his waist, now shoulders - - as he begins to bob up and down.

Finally the water is at his head, then the whistling stops as the water rises over his head, and he disappears.

Hold on the water for a long beat. The sounds of the wind and the current. No sign of Miller.

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

Jason sits on his cot, staring at the floor. A beat, and Irene appears with her hobbled dog.

JASON

Where's the sheriff?

IRENE

He's gone.

EXT. HASTINGS - DAY

Jason and Irene and the dog walk thru town. The dog hops on three legs, his other leg bandaged/in a splint.

They're followed by Quint who keeps his distance. People stop and stare, giving Jason plenty of room.

JASON

Your dog seems to have made a speedy recovery.

IRENE

He got dramatic on account of never been shot before.

JASON

He got a name?

IRENE

No.

JASON

A dog with no name?

IRENE

Never needed one. Where we going?

JASON

I'm going to the stable. Don't know about you.

IRENE

You want me to come with you?

JASON

I can find my way.

He heads to the stable. Irene and Quint stand for a moment, then Quint races off following behind Jason, as Irene turns and goes.

INT. STABLE - DAY

Jason enters the stable, goes to Irene's horse in one of the stalls. He goes to the horse, strokes its face...

SAM O.C.

I shoed and fed her.

Jason turns and sees, SAM, a big black man.

SAM

Oxen are out back with the wagon.

Sam turns to Quint, who crouches by the entrance.

SAM (CONT'D)
C'mon in, Quint. I got a apple for
you.

Jason looks at Quint, who looks back at him.

SAM (CONT'D)
Six months before, someone raised
the union flag in Wrightwood which
set The Colonel's blood to boil.
Fifty miles from here. He kilt
every man, woman, and child without
exception. The boy showed up half-
dead. Ain't said one blessed word
since.

JASON
Where were the Union soldiers?

SAM
Ain't no soldiers. They sick and
tired of four years of fighting,
packed up and went home.

Quint scurries off.

SAM (CONT'D)
You ain't from these parts, are
you?

JASON
No.

SAM
I was born in Missouri. Slaved here
all my life.
(dripping sarcasm)
But I'ma free man now, don't that
beat the band?

Sam extends his arms out, laughs, a deep hearty life-
affirming laugh.

JASON
What do I owe you?

SAM
Don't owe me nuthin'. You already
paid.

Off Jason's look.

SAM (CONT'D)

When you killed those bushwackers,
that was payment 'nough for me. But
you stirred a hornet's nest,
mister. The Colonel is not only a
phantom and a plague, he is a
vengeful man and you will no doubt
feel his fury.

EXT. HASTINGS - DAY

Jason heads down the street. As he passes Anna's store, he
sees her in the window.

He can't take his eyes off her.

Suddenly, feeling his presence, she looks up, sees him. She
holds his look, then turns as a customer enters the store.

Jason stands for a moment, watching her, then crosses the
street, and heads to the hotel.

Quint follows at a distance, stops outside the hotel.

INT. HOTEL - DAY

The hotel is empty. Jason rings the bell. A beat, then Declan
appears.

JASON

I'd like a room.

Declan stands there, dumbstruck.

JASON (CONT'D)

You got one?

Declan doesn't move or speak.

JASON (CONT'D)

Sign says this is a hotel.

DECLAN

Yes sir, it is.

Declan places a large ledger on the counter.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

You have to sign in.

Declan extends a pen to Jason.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

It's a formality. State requires a signature in case you're a wanted man.

JASON

What's to keep me from signing a false name?

DECLAN

Nothing.

Jason signs his name, as Declan cranes his head to see it in the book.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Jason...Eddings. Would you allow me to offer you the Presidential suite, Mr. Eddings - -

Off Jason's look.

- - as a token of my foot's appreciation.

JASON

Alright.

DECLAN

Anything else I can do would be my distinct pleasure.

JASON

I need a bath.

DECLAN

Right away.
(calling)
Eleanor.

A beat, Declan smiles nervously at Jason, then - -

DECLAN (CONT'D)

(shouting)
Eleanor!

A beat, then ELEANOR, an attractive sleepy-eyed black woman, appears.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Mr. Eddings would like a hot bath.

Eleanor looks from Declan to Jason, doesn't move.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Please bring two buckets of hot water, some soap, and clean towels to the Presidential suite.

A beat, Eleanor gives Declan a look that could fry an egg, then shuffles off.

JASON

Not keen on taking orders, is she?

DECLAN

No sir, she is not.

JASON

We got that in common.

Declan hands a key to Jason.

JASON (CONT'D)

I'd also like a clean shirt and a bottle of whiskey, if it's not too much trouble.

DECLAN

No trouble at all. I'll take my two feet and get right on it.

JASON

Much appreciated.

Jason takes the key, and goes up the stairs to his room.

DECLAN

Welcome to Hastings, Mr. Eddings.
Top floor.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - THE PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - NIGHT

New wallpaper, a mirror, and new glass windows. Two beds, instead of one, are what make it Presidential.

That, and a reproduction of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Jefferson Davis. All bases are covered in this Presidential suite.

Jason lies in bed. He's dressed - - hair combed, wearing a new shirt. He drinks from a bottle of whiskey as he stares at the ceiling, but, once again, his mind is elsewhere.

He gets up and walks to the window, stares out.

The street is empty. Lit by moonlight. A dog barks in the distance.

He looks out at the street. He sees Quint crouched across the street, staring up at Jason in the window.

Jason looks at Quint and he scurries off into the darkness.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jason exits the hotel, walks down the street. He's headed for the leather goods store.

He goes around the back, stops at the door, considers, then knocks gently.

A beat, then the door opens.

Anna appears in a nightgown.

She looks at Jason. He holds her look. No surprise in either face. She steps aside to let him in.

He steps into the room. Anna quietly closes the door.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

They make love as if their lives depended on it - - passionate, intense, nothing held back.

Both are silent so as not to wake her sleeping daughter. Locked in a struggle - - it's THAT personal - - as if any sound would be an admission.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

They lie in bed - - together, yet alone. Jason starts to get out of bed.

ANNA

(sotto)

Don't go. Not yet...

Jason lies back down. Anna traces the scars on Jason's body...

They talk quietly, so as not to wake Dora...

ANNA (CONT'D)

(indicating a scar)

What's this?

JASON

I don't remember.

She kisses the scar...

ANNA

I don't understand wanting to
forget.

She continues to trace a map over his scars...

ANNA (CONT'D)

I would be lost without my
memories.

JASON

I should go.

He starts to get up, she grabs his arm - -

ANNA

I wanted you the moment I saw you.
I knew you wanted me too.

They look at one another, see each other, then Anna releases
his arm...

ANNA (CONT'D)

Now you can go.

A beat, as he looks at her, searches her face...

JASON

Every day for the last four years I
thought I was going to die.

ANNA

You didn't. You're here. We're both
here.

JASON

I don't know why.

ANNA

It doesn't matter.

JASON

It does to me.

(beat)

I killed a lot of people. I was as
close to them as I am to you.

ANNA

It was war.

Jason looks at her...

JASON

Not all of them were soldiers.

He stands, starts to dress...

JASON (CONT'D)

Your boys...

She goes to him, tries to put her hand over his mouth, but he grabs it, holds it firm...

JASON (CONT'D)

It could have been me.

ANNA

It wasn't. That makes all the difference.

She grabs him, kisses his face. They struggle and he returns her kisses, both swept up in their need and longing - - holding tight to one another, as if holding on for dear life.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Telford and townspeople are gathered by the big tree, at the river, for a memorial service for Miller.

Clouds gather, the weather is changing...

TELFORD

The bible tells us that it is a grievous sin to die by one's own hand. For that alone, Miller will never feel the closeness, love, and warmth of our Heavenly father. May the Lord have mercy upon his soul.

TOWNSPEOPLE

Amen.

TELFORD

If anyone wishes to say something...

A man, ELI, steps forward, clears his throat.

ELI

Miller kilt my brother, Ray, in the war. I rejoice that he burns in hell.

Eli steps back. A beat, then a man, STONER, steps forward, as the wind picks up.

STONER

He wasn't much of a soldier, or a sheriff...

People hold on to their hats as leaves rustle and start falling off the tree.

STONER (CONT'D)

... but he could draw your likeness like a mirror, when his mind was right.

Leaves are falling in clusters, twisting and turning in the wind...

Stoner and the others look around, astonished, as the leaves swirl like fireflies.

TELFORD

Miller was a sinner, but he was also a victim of war. We are told the war is over, but we know good is eternally fighting evil. The light always struggles against the dark.

Just as suddenly as it started, the wind dies down, and the tree stops shedding leaves.

Telford takes out the unopened envelope.

TELFORD (CONT'D)

Miller left this stuck to this tree.

(reading)

To Be Opened Upon My Demise.

Telford tears open the envelope, removes a folded piece of paper. He unfolds the paper, reads it. His mouth drops open...

TOWNWOMAN #1

What's it say?

TELFORD

"I leave Jason Eddings my gun, my badge, my horse, and..."

TOWNSWOMAN

And what?

TELFORD

...the future".

Everyone is silent, then - -

A herd of geese heading south fly overhead, squawking.

INT. CAVE - DAY

A spacious cave, lit by candles hanging on the walls, oriental rugs on the stone floor.

The sound of distant thunder, followed by flashes of lightning...

Stiles, the wounded Greycoat, sits at a long wooden table. A bowl of beef stew and a loaf of bread in front of him.

He stares off into the darkness at a figure we sense, but can't see.

STILES
Seamus picked a man to carve off
the rascal's foot.

GREY GHOST
Who was he?

STILES
Never seen him before. Seamus
called him out, and he looked right
at Seamus - - he wasn't afraid,
Colonel, he was just...

GREY GHOST
What?

STILES
Looking.

Stiles stares into the darkness.

STILES (CONT'D)
Seamus is angry that he don't see
fear - - so he says 'you! - - you
do it'. The bugler give him the axe
and he walks straight for Seamus.
Seamus pulls his gun, takes aim and
fires, but the gun jams. Two times,
Jesus... Then he's upon him and...

GREY GHOST
What?

STILES
Cuts off his head.

A beat, then - -

GREY GHOST
And Tisk?

STILES
Kilt him too.

GREY GHOST
He shot Tisk?

Stiles is silent.

GREY GHOST (CONT'D)
The man killed Tisk?

STILES
Anna. Anna kilt him.

A beat, and then the Grey Ghost emerges out of the shadows. He is tall and lanky with strong ropey arms and prematurely grey hair.

A long scarf swaddles his face so we can't see his face. All we see are his eyes.

GREY GHOST

Anna?

Stiles looks scared as he addresses the Colonel.

STILES

Shot him with a rifle.

The Grey Ghost moves past Stiles, stands facing the cave entrance.

STILES (CONT'D)

I'll take some men and go back and kill him who kilt Seamus. I will bring you his scalp as God is my witness.

GREY GHOST

No.

He walks over to Stiles, places a hand on his shoulder.

GREY GHOST (CONT'D)

You've done enough. Eat. Rest.

Stiles nods, turns to the food, breaks off a chunk of bread, dips it into his beef stew.

The Grey Ghost pulls out a long gun and puts a bullet into the back of Stiles head.

INT. TELFORD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's starting to rain...

Telford sits down to dinner. His wife, RACHEL, brings another plate of food to the table, takes a seat at the far end.

Telford puts food on his plate. Rachel sits before her empty plate.

RACHEL

There was talk in town today.

TELFORD

People talk, it's what they do.

RACHEL
About the stranger.

Telford stabs his food with his fork, eats...

RACHEL (CONT'D)
They believe he's been sent here to
save us.

TELFORD
(indignant)
Save us? From who?

RACHEL
From the bushwackers. From
ourselves, each other...

She reaches for a plate of food...

TELFORD
Because a gun misfired, because the
weather changed...?

Telford throws down his napkin in disgust...

TELFORD (CONT'D)
If the Devil himself came bearing
gifts at the birth of our Lord, do
you know what the 'people' would
do?

She averts her eyes from his, pours a glass of water from a
pitcher...

TELFORD (CONT'D)
They would anoint him and call him
King.

She sips her water, reaches across the table and puts some
more food on her plate.

TELFORD (CONT'D)
And do you know why?

RACHEL
I'm sure you will tell me.

Telford bangs the table.

TELFORD
Because people are weak. And
gullible. And weakness breeds fear,
and that is why when we see the
Devil we must confront him.

Telford puts his napkin in his lap, stabs his food, and chews
- - vigorously.

Suddenly they hear a roar coming from outside the house. They
stop, sit up, listen. And they hear it again.

Telford gets up from the table, grabs his rifle, and goes
outside.

EXT. TELFORD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's raining. He stands on the porch, hearing the rustle of
steps in the adjacent woods.

And then he sees it - - a black panther strides out of the
woods, looks at Telford with his fierce yellow eyes.

Telford is momentarily stunned, then raises his rifle and
fires off a shot, but the cat is too fast, and the bullet
misses.

Telford fires off several more shots into the black woods.

INT. LEATHER GOODS STORE - NIGHT

The rain tap dances against the roof. Anna tucks Dora into
bed.

DORA

Are father and my brothers in
heaven?

ANNA

If there is a heaven, I'm sure they
are there.

DORA

Is there a heaven?

ANNA

No one knows.

DORA

Where else could they be?

ANNA

In our hearts.

She kisses the girl good-night, tucks her in. She closes the
door to the apartment behind the store, enters the store.

She stops short when she sees - -

- - the Grey Ghost sitting in her store. His face still covered by a wrap-around scarf, and a broad brimmed hat is on his head...

GREY GHOST
It's been a long time, Anna.

ANNA
What do you want?

GREY GHOST
I came to see Dora.

ANNA
She's sleeping.

He removes the broad brimmed hat, shakes the water off it...

GREY GHOST
She's mine too.

ANNA
Only by blood.

GREY GHOST
Blood is all there is.

A beat, as he looks dead at Anna. She holds his look.

GREY GHOST (CONT'D)
You murdered one of my men.

A beat, he sees a flicker of fear in her face...

GREY GHOST (CONT'D)
I have no wish to leave Dora without a mother. But I am curious why you would do such a thing for a man you don't know?

ANNA
He's not like you.

GREY GHOST
Any man can kill, but only a few develop the taste for it. He has the taste.

The Grey Ghost stands, put his hat on his head, takes his walking stick and heads to the door.

ANNA
If you harm him, you will never see your daughter again.

He turns, looks at Anna. Her look is hard, but there is the slightest sway, to her body.

GREY GHOST
If you desire that he lives, see
that he leaves Hastings.

The Grey Ghost turns and exits the store.

On Anna, reeling, she reaches out her hand to steady herself.

EXT. HASTINGS - NIGHT

The rain comes down hard. Lightening followed by thunder.

The Grey Ghost, broad brimmed hat pulled low, moves through town, the steady click-click-click of his walking stick on the wooden sidewalk.

People on the street ignore him. *It's as if they don't see him.*

He sees Irene sitting on a rocking chair under a storefront, rocking back and forth, keeping out of the rain.

He crosses the street, stops.

GREY GHOST
I knew your father. He was my
friend.

Irene stops rocking, stares at him, his face swaddled by his scarf. He steps up onto the sidewalk...

GREY GHOST (CONT'D)
I am sorry for your loss. Please
accept my condolences.

The Grey Ghost moves closer, stands by her feet...

GREY GHOST (CONT'D)
But he betrayed me.

IRENE
Who are you?

He unwraps the scarf from his around his face...

GREY GHOST
No one.

We see his horribly disfigured face - - teeth exposed in a rictus - - staring at Irene with a fixed grotesque leer.

Irene SCREAMS, covers her face, as thunder rumbles and lightening illuminates the sky.

Trembling, she drops her hands from her face. The Grey Ghost is no longer there, *it is as if he vanished into thin air.*

EXT. HASTINGS - NIGHT

The church steeple stabs the sky - - the highest point in town. Suddenly a bolt of lightening STRIKES the steeple, igniting it on fire.

A fire alarm is sounded.

EXT. CHURCH - LATER

Townspeople have rushed to try to put out the spreading fire.

Despite the punishing rain, the church blazes.

Townspeople, drenched from the rain, have formed a bucket brigade as they try to put out the raging fire.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Irene runs through the woods. She's soaked and slips in the mud. She gets up and continues running, wet to the bone, covered in mud.

She slips again and tries to get up, but she can't get traction, slipping and sliding in the mud.

She grunts and cries as she crawls on all four through the woods.

Lightening illuminates the trees - - conjuring images of the Grey Ghost's grotesque face.

She SCREAMS, tries to burrow into the mud, then gets up and runs SCREAMING until she slips and falls again.

She hears a distinct growl coming from above. She looks up, water striking her face, eyes in a blanket of tears...

Another bolt of lightening illuminates the BLACK PANTHER in a branch, high up a tree.

The panther growls, bares its fangs, it's fierce yellow eyes, glowering at Irene.

She tries to get up and run, but she slips, as the panther ambles down the tree and comes towards her.

Wet, exhausted, covered in mud, she can no longer rise and run. She crawls backwards till she's stopped by a tree.

Shivering from the wind and the rain, shaking with fear, she huddles against the tree, stares at the beast as it approaches.

Suddenly the panther stops, looks at Irene.

She stares back, mouth hanging open, mute...

Then the panther lies down.

The animal turns to face the woods, as if to protect Irene from whatever may come.

Irene spent, shivers, draws herself into herself, trying to shield herself from the storm.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The storm rages, the building buckles and burns. People, exhausted, unable to put the fire out, watch it burn.

Telford sees Anna take Jason's hand and lead him around the side of the building, out of view.

Pelted by the rain, Anna's back is pressed against another building to shield her from view...

ANNA

(with urgency)

You have to go! You have to leave here now!

JASON

Why?

ANNA

I want you to go.

JASON

I don't believe that.

ANNA

You don't know, you don't understand, you have to go! Please.

Their faces are *this* close. They are both soaked from the rain. They search each other's eyes for a beat, then - -

Jason takes her face and kisses her long and hard.

Anna throws herself against him, as if having leapt off a bridge, into his arms. She kisses him back with all her force.

The sounds of their ardor are drowned out by the storm -- they push and pull at each other, lost in lust.

A flash of lightening illuminates Telford, in the distance, watching them.

EXT. HASTINGS - DAY

Not a cloud in the sky, a crisp chill in the air.

We see the burnt out husk of the church, the skeletal steeple incongruously still standing.

Jason, carrying his leather satchel, enters the stable.

SAM

I suppose you'll be wanting Jeb Stuart.

Off Jason's look...

SAM (CONT'D)

Miller's horse. The one he bequeathed you. That's his name. I myself would have named him John Brown.

Sam smiles.

JASON

Would you send a telegram to Mr. Barker in Circle Bend, let him know his oxen and wagon are here?

SAM

I'll do that.

Jason peels off some money, holds it out to Sam.

JASON

Please take it.

A beat, Sam takes the money.

SAM

This is too much.

JASON

It's for the girl, Irene. When you see her, give it to her.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

It would be a kindness to me, if you'd keep an eye on her. She's got no one.

SAM

I will.

Sam goes to get the horse out of a stall.

SAM (CONT'D)

Where you headed?

JASON

West.

SAM

That's a direction. Not a destination.

Sam saddles the horse.

SAM (CONT'D)

I imagine you'll know where you're going when you get there.

JASON

Imagine so.

Jason nods, leads the horse out of the stable.

SAM

What about Miller's gun and his badge?

JASON

You keep them.

SAM

And the future..? He left you that too.

Sam laughs, heads back into the stable as Jason saddles up and heads down the street.

People come out of shops - - stop and stare, watch as Jason heads out of town.

Jason sees Quint hiding beneath the raised sidewalk. Quint watches him as the horse walks by.

Jason kicks the horse into gear. They canter through town.

EXT. LEATHER GOODS STORE - DAY

Anna steps out of the store, her daughter by her side. He looks at her.

She returns his look, then watches him as he continues out of town.

Suddenly Quint races down the street trying to catch up to Jason.

Jason looks over his shoulder, sees Quint running...

He stops his horse, as Quint runs up, out of breath.

QUINT

Don't go.

Jason is caught by surprise, doesn't know how to respond.

JASON

Thought you couldn't speak.

Quint looks at him, entreating.

JASON (CONT'D)

Maybe you just had nothing to say.

Jason looks at Quint, then looks off, his face a map of hurt and pain...

JASON (CONT'D)

I can't save you.

Jason kicks his horse and canters out of town.

Quint stands there watching Jason disappear from view.

EXT. TELFORD'S HOUSE

Jason approaches. He gets off his horse and walks to the door, knocks.

A beat, then Rachel answers. She can't hide the fear and surprise on her face.

RACHEL

My husband's not here.

JASON

I came to see you.

(beat)

May I come in?

INT. TELFORD'S HOUSE

Jason sits across from Rachel.

JASON
I knew your brother.

RACHEL
Michael?

JASON
We soldiered together.

RACHEL
Were you with him when he died at
Bentonville?

JASON
I was with him when he died. It
wasn't at Bentonville.

RACHEL
I don't understand...

JASON
I spent the last four years in the
south - - Carolinas, Alabama,
Florida. Officially, I didn't
exist. Neither did Michael.

Jason stares dead at Rachel.

JASON (CONT'D)
A year ago, we were sent to
Florida. We sabotaged the salt
works at Apalachee Bay then headed
to Pensacola. We burnt crops,
poisoned cattle - - killed, maimed,
whatever and whenever we could.

He stops, looks at Rachel... disbelieving, yet knowing it's
true...

JASON (CONT'D)
We were in Favorville, it's not a
town, not even a place. Swamp and
pasture. That's all was there.
(beat)
There was a woman. I thought
nothing could be stronger than her
desire to be free.
(beat)
I was wrong.

He exhales, struggles to go on...

JASON (CONT'D)

When the rebels attacked I ran.
Michael and the others tried to
hide in the bellies of the dying
cattle.

RACHEL

You ran?

JASON

Yes. I ran.

She stares dead at Jason. He holds her look.

RACHEL

Why are you telling me this, what
are you doing here?

Jason removes the letter he saved at the camp fire...

JASON

Michael thought he was going to
die. We all did. We gave each other
a letter to deliver upon our death.

Jason extends the letter to Rachel.

JASON (CONT'D)

He gave me this to give to you.

Rachel takes the letter.

RACHEL

Did you read it?

JASON

No.

She runs her hands over the letter...

RACHEL

You're a coward.

She looks hard at Jason...

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Jason rides up a ridge, pausing at the crest.

High on the ridge, Jason turns and looks down at the town of
Hastings.

It looks small and peaceful.

His gaze is drawn to dust being kicked up in the distance.

Several Greycoats riding fast towards Hastings. One of the men holds a black flag aloft as they ride.

Jason watches them for a moment, then stares west - -

- - we know the look, and know that he is seeing something in his mind's eye.

A beat, he turns and spurs the horse towards Hastings.

END ACT FOUR