The Royal Nonesuch

by

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EXT. SUNNY CALIFORNIA BEACH – DAY

The shining sea of the Pacific Ocean. Waves applaud as they kiss the shore.

WISE VOICE (V.O.)
It is a worthy thing to fight for one’s freedom. It is another sight finer to fight for another man’s. Mark Twain.

SUPER: CALIFORNIA, 1867

A BRIGHT STREAK illuminates the sky as it plunges to the earth. A fiery METEOR ROCK cools as it skips across the water’s surface several times before making one last leap into the air.

The rock thuds into a mound of white sand thirty yards inland. A tall man wearing a top hat and carrying a dusty coat approaches it.

Drops his coat, viewing the ocean in all its majesty.

He removes his hat, revealing the well worn and wrinkled face of ABRAHAM LINCOLN. His greying hair and mustache-less beard are unkept. A large GAUZE BANDAGE covers his right ear.

Falling to his knees, he pulls papers and a nib pen from his coat. Finds a blank page.

LINCOLN
(as he writes)
Blessed mother... It is most regretful you will never read this. You would delight at my description of Magellan’s Sea beckoning me to her hemline. I am eager to read it myself, having not yet written it.

Rewards himself with a thin smile.

LINCOLN
My desire to see California is fulfilled. My dreams of viewing Mar Pacifico are realized. This very day her seabed will be my pillow. Rest, at last.

He looks into the water, staring into his past.
INT. FORD’S THEATER - PRESIDENTIAL BOX

MARY TODD LINCOLN beams, leaning in.

MARY
What will Miss Harris think of my hanging on you so?

EXT. SUNNY CALIFORNIA BEACH - DAY

Lincoln picks up the meteor. His long fingers turn the rock over, inspecting it.

INT. FORD’S THEATER - PRESIDENTIAL BOX

The President and wife steal looks. Laughing together.

In the shadows behind, a Man raises a pistol.

EXT. SUNNY CALIFORNIA BEACH - DAY

His memories are disrupted by the HAMMER OF A PISTOL being cocked. Turns his good ear toward the sound.

LINCOLN
It all ends here, I’m afraid. Another hour and you would a’ never caught me. An explanation is in order.

MAN’S VOICE (O.S.)
I don’t need an explanation, mister. Just your wallet.

Lincoln stands to see the caricature of a cowboy, CLIFFORD, a young man of seventeen.

LINCOLN
(surprised)
Who in blazes are you?

CLIFFORD
Your wallet. Don’t make me shoot.

Squinting, Lincoln eyes the barrel of the gun. Part of the barrel is bent and rusty. Looks empty.

LINCOLN
It’s an absurd waste a’your last bullet if you’re not just wavin’ an empty gun at a tired old man.

(MORE)
LINCOLN (CONT'D)
Another fella will be along shortly. He’s followed me quite some distance, so I know he means business. Suggest you refill your ammo before he arrives.

CLIFFORD
This here’s killin’ steel. You have my word.

LINCOLN
Then shoot me and be done with it.

Abraham bounces the meteor rock in his hand.

LINCOLN
I’m a stone’s throw away from finishing a very long journey. I’d prefer to be alone.

CLIFFORD
Long journey from where? You come all the way ‘cross the desert?

LINCOLN
I’ve crossed more than just deserts.

He winds up to toss away the rock. Pockets it instead.

Clifford holsters his revolver and grins wide.

CLIFFORD
Hell’s fire, mister. You’re a tough guy. Just the type I’m lookin’ to have join my gang.

Lincoln shakes sand from his coat.

LINCOLN
You’ve got a gang now, do you? Where are they? Must be lost without you there to lead them?

CLIFFORD
Just joined up with ‘em. I’m from Midsummer’s Notch. You know the place? Come back with me? I can put in a word for you.

LINCOLN
Give them two. No thanks.
With a tip of his hat, he starts down the length of the beach. Clifford chases after.

CLIFFORD
Don’t know what you’re missin’.
Free to travel the world. Free from the laws of man.

LINCOLN
Freedom from you is all I need. No more gangs, tribes or fellowships.

CLIFFORD
This gang’s different. They go around disguised as a circus. While they’re puttin’ on a show they rob everyone’s money from the bank.

LINCOLN
We have a gang like that back east. It’s called Congress.

CLIFFORD
Never heard of ‘em. This one’s better though, ‘cause I’m in it. Come with me, please? I could really use your help.

Fuming, Lincoln turns on him. Cliff backs away.

LINCOLN
I’m done helping people. Spent my whole life in the service of humanity and what did I get for it?

Clifford trips, falling to the sand.

Points over Lincoln’s shoulder.

CLIFFORD
That the guy chasin’ you?

On a cliff overlooking the beach sits a DARK HORSED FIGURE.

LINCOLN
How far to this town of yours?

CLIFFORD
Coupla’ hours.

LINCOLN
Let’s skedaddle then.
EXT. FIELD - DAY

Lincoln hastily crosses a field of chaparral, occasionally looking over his shoulder. Clifford struggles to keep up with the taller man’s strides.

CLIFFORD
Who is that guy?

LINCOLN
I’ve yet to make his acquaintance.

CLIFFORD
He wanna kill you?

LINCOLN
Death doesn’t scare me.

CLIFFORD
You’re scared of somethin’. No worries. Our gang’ll flee so far the devil won’t find us.

LINCOLN
Why so anxious to get me in this gang?

CLIFFORD
There’s this woman, see.

LINCOLN
Ah, now the plot thickens.

Up ahead stands a MULE, firmly planted in place facing the distant mountains. Lincoln heads for it.

CLIFFORD
She recruited me special. Saw her at the tavern when they first hit town. Had two beers and was lickin’ on my third...

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Clifford lowers his glass to see two MEXICAN DWARFS carrying luggage to a staircase. Behind them stands MABEL, a sexy dark-haired woman, thirties.

CLIFFORD (V.O.)
Had a case of Irish courage, so I elected myself the welcome committee.
He swaggers over, taking off his hat.

CLIFFORD
Ma’am, I think you’re the prettiest
lady to ever set leg in this town.
And a fine set at that.
   (red-faced)
I mean your legs.

MABEL
That so?

She shoves him against the wall. He’s stupefied as she starts
fondling him. Drops his hat.

MABEL
I’m no lady, cowboy. Your belt’s
gettin’ awful tight ‘round your
middle here. Gonna have to take
that off. Then where you gonna
stick your gun?

CLIFFORD
Ma’am?

EXT. FIELD – DAY

The Mule doesn’t move an inch as Lincoln nears. Clifford
catches up, chatting up his good ear.

CLIFFORD
That’s when the Negro feller comes
over, Samuel. He’s the leader of
the gang, if you can believe that.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL – NIGHT

Dressed in a suit of bright colors and impeccably clean
compared to the dusty lot around, SAMUEL, a dark-skinned man
in his twenties, looks Clifford over.

SAMUEL
Easy on him, Mabel. Who’s this
stock of a lad you gone got in ya’
coil?

CLIFFORD (V.O.)
Clifford I say. ‘Cause that’s my
name.
MABEL
Got a deal for you, little
Clifford. You wanna make a deal
with a devil like me?

SAMUEL
You want be free of this place?

Cliff gulps in the affirmative.

CLIFFORD (V.O.)
She leans in real close to my ear,
breathin’ on me...

MABEL
Gather up some other able bodied
young men like yourself who can
perform a service for our company.
Do that and I’ll perform a service
for you.

EXT. FIELD – DAY

Lincoln grabs the Mule’s reins and checks its eyes and ears.
It barely notices.

LINCOLN
Not sure if it’s your eyes or your
ears that are failing. She said
able bodied young men. I’m hardly a
qualified candidate.

CLIFFORD
Ain’t no other young guys in the
Notch right now. All off with the
Mayor fightin’ savages. Closest I
could find was Jimmy Wilkens and he
ain’t nothin’ but twelve.

Satisfied with what he sees, Lincoln mounts the Mule. The
animal only twitches its ears.

LINCOLN
Which direction to this Notch?

Clifford points to the Northeast.

Lincoln clicks his tongue and yanks the reins. Mule doesn’t
budge.

CLIFFORD
So whaddya call yourself?
LINCOLN
Answer to most anything, including rascal. In the past some have called me Paul.

Slaps the Mule’s butt. No effect.

CLIFFORD
Tall Paul. That’s a good outlaw name. Gonna change my name, soons’ I find one I like. Gonna be an outlaw one day. Famous too.

Clifford takes the reins and YANKS with all his might. All he gets is a defiant SNORT. Abe dismounts.

LINCOLN
Infamy is easy when you’re out to destroy. Harder but more fulfilling to build prestige. Lifelong work.

CLIFFORD
This your mule?

LINCOLN
I thought it was yours.

He points to the Northeast. Clifford affirms. They set off that way.

Few paces in, Lincoln stops abruptly. Scans the horizon.

No sign of the Dark Horsed Rider.

He ponders the Mule.

CLIFFORD
Must be waitin’ for someone. He sure looks lonely.

LINCOLN
If he’s trying to choose who among us is the ass, he’s not alone.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROCKY INCLINE – DAY

Clifford helps Lincoln ascend a cairn-like hill.

CLIFFORD
Wasn’t but a month ago they went and burned down the church.
(MORE)
CLIFFORD (CONT'D)
Been empty since the preacher ran
off with the schoolmarm, but was a
waste of a good bonfire. God don’t
take kindly t’folks dancing round
his house when it’s ablaze.

LINCOLN
You’re talking about the Natives?
The ones who were here first?

Cliff plants down on a large stone at the hill’s top.

CLIFFORD
Who else? Godless savages, I say.

LINCOLN
The white man has run them from
their homes, stolen their land,
slaughtered their food source and
killed untold numbers of their
children. We call them savages?

Uses Cliff’s shoulder as a crutch to pull himself up to the
zenith. Turns back at the sea.

I shall return. He descends the other side.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - DAY

Clifford leads as they near a small town with large brick
buildings in the center, tapering off to shacks and tents
around the edges.

CLIFFORD
Don’t blame you for wantin’ to see
the ocean. I visit t’think
sometimes. Where I found this gun.
Never got bullets for it. Just wear
it to show up the other boys. Made
me feel real low seein’ them in
uniform going off to war.

Looks to Lincoln for a reaction. Nothing.

CLIFFORD
You don’t talk much do you, Paul?
LINCOLN
I find it’s better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you’re a fool than to open it and remove all doubt.

Cliff stops to digest this. Seems important.

Lincoln gets a good look at the town.

A group of boys white-washes the town’s fence. One of their number sits on a barrel eatin’ an apple as the others work.

Clifford catches up.

CLIFFORD
Here we are. Welcome to Midsummer’s Notch.

Passing under a wooden sign with the town’s name, they enter the flow of traffic on Main Street.

EXT. MAIN STREET – DAY

A bustle of activity. Women, children and elderly men move between the parade of horses and cows. The people are majority white with a diverse minority of Mexican, Asian and Middle-Eastern people.

At the north end of the street sits a large Boarding House. To the east is a small Livery Building next to a large two-story Bank. Across from it sits the Town Hall.

Further south is a tavern whose sign reads The Grizzly Noel. Small vendors line the road.

Lincoln gawks at the myriad of society in amusement as Clifford leads the way.

CLIFFORD
With all the men away the women been pitchin’ in, doin’ all the work. Even I was workin’ at the livery a while, but my head ain’t into people askin’ for stuff all the time.

They huddle around a fruit cart tended by a Young Woman.

CLIFFORD
Only men worth a damn ‘round here work for Sheriff Matis.
He points to a mustached man, late forties, bearing a silver
star— SHERIFF MATIS. A younger, dark haired man, DEPUTY
RANDALL loiters with him near Town Hall.

CLIFFORD
That’s a man you don’t want to
cross. He’s always throwin’ me in
the clink when mischief finds me.

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY
Matis eyes his pocket watch as Randall struggles with a mouth
full of tobacco. Sheriff sees Clifford pointing at him.

MATIS
Randall, who’s the big, tall and
ugly talkin’ to Clifford?

Randall spits out a wad so he can talk.

RANDALL
Dunno. Looks familiar, don’t he?

Spits again, spilling juice down his shirt.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY
While Clifford chats up the Fruit Vendor, Lincoln looks over
to a group of barefoot children making life and noise.

The leader of the group is JIMMY WILKENS, twelve, wearing a
paper cowboy hat. He and two other boys have wooden guns.
They flank PEDRO, a Mexican boy of ten, and nine-year-old
SIMON. The latter both wear feathers in crude headbands.
Three Young Girls huddle close by.

SIMON
Why do I always have to be an
Injun? I wannabe a soldier.

JIMMY
Yer not big enough t’be a soldier
and you got no gun. ‘Sides, yer
friends with Pedro and he is an
Injun.

PEDRO
Am not. I’m Mexican.
JIMMY
Same thing, you ask me. Come on, you gotta capture our women an’ try to steal our scalps.

Simon wrinkles his nose at a pretty girl of eight, SARAH.

SIMON
What would I wanna steal her for?

Sarah shows him her tongue.

EXT. LINTON’S LIVERY - DAY

Sarah’s mother, SUSAN, mid-thirties, is unloading bags of grain from a parked wagon. She spies Sarah with the other kids.

SUSAN
Sarah! Get over here.

Sarah leaves the group as SILAS GRANGER, aged feller who owns the wagon, approaches.

GRANGER
Now, Susan, you let me help you unload all this grain.

SUSAN
Mr. Granger, loading and unloading feed is how I feed my family. You’re not tryin’ to starve my child are you? Any news from the front?

GRANGER
News were cows, I’d be a rancher with no steer.

SUSAN
Sooner its done the sooner I can leave this wretched place. Sarah, I’ve told you a hundred times to stay away from that Wilkens boy. He’s nothing but trouble.

SARAH
We were playing cowboys an’ Indians.
SUSAN
Thank goodness you’re neither. Means you can go check your grandmother. Make sure she’s drawn some breath and eaten lunch.

SARAH
Do I have to? She smells like old shoes.

SUSAN
When she bounced you on her lap did she complain of your smell? She didn’t. Now go’on.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY
Sarah walks dejectedly away. Lincoln offers a smile. She just stares up as she walks by.

Turning her head, she catches a BRIGHT FACE poke out momentarily from behind a hitching post.

She stops to see the head of a man with a bushy beard, his face painted like a clown. This is EDMUND.

Closer, from an identical post pops out a nearly identical man, also in clown face. This is DAYLAND.

Like mirror images, they step into the street. Dayland bangs on a COWBELL as they do a do-si-do. They capture everyone’s attention and bring traffic to a halt.

EDMUND
(theatrically)
Everyone, gather around! No time for questions, no time for frowns! A circus in this town is found!

The kids jockey for position as the mob encircles. Susan wades through to Sarah’s side. Simon’s mother, MRS BLANKENSHIP, late twenties, pulls him close.

OLD MAN WILSON, sixties, pushes his way to the front.

EDMUND
Don your ties and fashion gowns, one night only within these bounds. Hear the sounds from the courts of crowns. Best part yet? We be the clowns!
Lincoln and Clifford find themselves behind an old, dark-haired woman, BARBARA, and a plump MRS WILKENS, thirties, along with her litter of tow-head children.

BARBARA

Look!

The crowd gasps as Samuel leads his troupe into the center. The two Mexican Dwarfs leap, tumble and run along the circle.

Mabel holds aloft a PYTHON for all to see. She’s followed by an Arab SWORD SWALLOWER walking on his hands.

SAMUEL

People of Midsummer’s Notch! We a traveling troupe from the palaces of Europe and the frozen tundras of Alaska...

MRS BLANKENSHIP

I hear Alaska’s real nice!

SAMUEL

One night only, I present the Amphitrite Menagerie & Circus! Featuring masters of clown and magic, Edmund the Greater and Dayland the Lesser!

The clowns make grand bows. Dayland lets out a loud FART.

The kids giggle as Edmund pulls a bouquet of flowers from his brother’s butt.

EDMUND

Foul winds bear flowerful fruit!

He throws the flowers into the crowd. Mrs Wilkens catches them, gushing.

SAMUEL

Charmer of snakes an’ bitter as venom, I give you the deadly Mabel!

Mabel teases the kids while Edmund and Dayland run down a side street.

MABEL

No men around, you ladies could use a long snake!

Susan grabs Sarah and leaves for the livery, disgusted.
EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY
The clowns run to a horse trough.

          SAMUEL (O.S.)
        No object is too sharp for the
    sword swallower, Oliver Cutthroat!

They splash water on their faces, washing off the make-up.
Dayland grabs a carpetbag from behind the basin.

          EDMUND
        (sourly)
        I thought you put fresh water in
here? Smells like horses have
helped themselves to our washbowl.

Dayland points down. Edmund’s standing in horse droppings. He
scratches his shoes and grabs a jar of powder from the bag.
Pelts Dayland with powder. The mute coughs and blinks it out
of his eyes.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY
One Dwarf leaps onto the other’s shoulders.
Everyone cheers as he performs a SOMERSAULT FLIP.

          SAMUEL
        Glick and Flick, blessed with
acrobatics and other feats unknown
to normal beings!

Randall’s riveted. Flashes a tobacco grin at the Sheriff. A
tall, bushy bearded man in buckskins, BUTLER, joins them.

          BUTLER
        What’s going on?

          MATIS
        Circus is in town.

The Sword Swallower pulls his saber from his gullet in front
of wide-eyed kids. Jimmy Wilkens is impressed.

          JIMMY
        I wanna to try that.

Edmund prances back wearing a pink dress. Old Man Wilson’s
pipe drops. Lincoln eyes Clifford. Disgraceful.
SAMUEL
Even have a bearded lady! One night
only! Two pennies a person. Half
price for children. Tonight at yon
Grizzly Noel.

OLD MAN WILSON
The Noel? Don’t circuses have
tents?

PRIEST (O.S.)
Stop in the name of God!

The circle opens as the crowd murmurs. Marching up is a
goateed PRIEST, thirties, in black robes and an Irish accent.
He’s joined by two Hooded Exorcists sporting large crosses.

TOM COLLINS, bank manager in his fifties, and MR SPECTOR, a
mustached lawyer in his fifties, leave the Bank just as the
two groups converge in front of them.

MR SPECTOR
What in God’s name is going on?

PRIEST
Devil’s name more like it, sir.
This circus is an abomination! Not
meant for eyes of Christians.

Gasps from the ladies.

Only Matis sees a face peer out from behind curtains on the
top floor of the Bank. This is MR. SPINNA, Bank owner.

MATIS
Enjoy the show.

Lincoln watches the Sheriff go inside Town Hall.

SAMUEL
Why do you plague us? We jus’
humble, meek players. These smart
people. They can judge what’s good
for they children.

PRIEST
From the authority of God, it’s
revealed that one among them
carries the demon Azekyal!

The crowd gasps though none recognize the name.

SIMON
Who’s that?
His mother covers his mouth.

**SAMUEL**

All lies. We are God-fearin’--

Dayland bursts forth, scattering children as they run away. Wearing crude horns, his mouth opens in a mute scream. He charges the Priest.

Priest pulls a bible, stopping Dayland cold.

Hiding behind others, Edmund uses a HORN to provide the demonic voice. His brother mimes the words out of sync.

**EDMUND**

(speaking for Dayland)

I will crush you, puny man. I am Azekyal. I ate the bones of Adam and devoured the cities of Babylon. I am all powerful.

**PRIEST**

Not as powerful as the Protestant church and the glorious might of Jesus Christ!

Unseen by the crowd, an Exorcist brushes black paint onto his cross. Slips it to the priest.

**PRIEST**

I command you, demon! Leave this host and return to the depths of hell. You’re forever banished ‘til the day of judgement and the moment a’rapture. Out with you!

Presses the cross to Dayland’s forehead. He shakes until the Priest pulls away. A black imprint remains on his brow.

Dayland collapses. Crowd gasps. Many cross themselves. Lincoln frowns at the spectacle.

**PRIEST**

The holy water!

Priest takes the bottle. Spits out the cork. A Lucky Woman catches it.

The water washes away Dayland’s powder. Priest grabs a black scarf from the mute’s coat and wrestles with it.

An Exorcist sticks a lit match to the end of the scarf. Disappears in a FLASH of flame.
Crowd cheers. Priest faints into the arms of his companions.
Lincoln shakes his head, walking away. Clifford follows.
Edmund ditches his dress and runs to Dayland’s side.

EDMUND
Saved! The demon— gone. May God bless you.

PRIEST
God has already blessed me.

EXT. TOWN GATE - DAY
Lincoln heads for the hills. Clifford blocks him.

CLIFFORD
Where you goin’, Paul?

LINCOLN
I may have been born a fool but I won’t make a career out of it. I’m goin’ back to the ocean.

CLIFFORD
Ocean’ll still be there in the mornin’. They’re just drummin’ up business for the show. Like puttin’ on a play.

LINCOLN
I’ve lost my fondness for plays.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY
Samuel raises his hands. Smiles at the crowd.

SAMUEL
We gone get ready for the ‘mazement tonight promises. Come one, come all! One night only!

The Circus Gang marches away. The crowd ogles the Priest.

PRIEST
I’m drained. Would someone kindly show me your church?

OLD MAN WILSON
Church burned down.
BARRBARA
Injuns burned it down. They did.

PRIEST
I’ll settle for a nice hotel then.

GRANGER
Boarding House’s full. Only place
left’s the whorehouse, Reverend.

The Exorcists swap smiles. Crowd descends into gossip.

EXT. TOWN GATE - DAY

Abe and Cliff watch the Circus Gang enter the Grizzly Noel.

LINCOLN
Why help rob the bank in your own
hometown? Ain’t it like stealin’
wheels off your own buggy?

Samuel beckons Clifford to follow him.

CLIFFORD
Don’t own a buggy nor much else.
Anyone got a dollar in the bank’s
got least two under a pilla’. Just
hear ‘em out?

Lincoln sighs, surveying both gate and tavern.

LINCOLN
Well, I’m already here.

CLIFFORD
That’s the spirit. Let’s go be
outlaws!

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - DAY

Cigar smoke dances in the sun beams as Lincoln and Clifford
walk through the swinging doors. The wooden bar is hosted by
an elderly BARTENDER with a patch over one eye.

Half the room is raised into a stage with footcandles and
poorly hung curtains. One wall has a long staircase.

Throughout are the Circus Gang, a couple of bawdy women and a
few drunks. An Asian Man sits smoking a hookah.

Mabel smokes at one end of the bar. Cliff rushes to her while
Lincoln sits at the other end next to Edmund and Dayland.
BARTENDER
What can I bend your elbow with, mister? We met somewheres before?

LINCOLN
Don’t think so. Beer will be fine. My first drink in a long time.

Mabel blows smoke in Clifford’s face.

MABEL
(whispering)
Where’d you find him?

CLIFFORD
Caught him combin’ the beach.

MABEL
Should’a thrown him back. Not exactly what I had in mind, cowboy.

CLIFFORD
He’s really smart. My word on it, he’ll do a damn fine job.

Flicks her cigarette at him, leaves.

Bartender sets Lincoln’s beer down. Abe eyes it suspiciously.

A toothless drunk, NELLY FARGUS, wakes up from his chest and waves his empty mug.

FARGUS
Whassthe matter? I’ll have ‘nother.

Bartender fills a glass and slides it down the bar. Lincoln is about to pick up his own beer when it EXPLODES, hit by the sliding glass. Both beers pour into Lincoln’s lap.

EDMUND
Drinks are on you, friend. I am Edmund the Greater.

LINCOLN
I go by Paul.
(looking down)
It’s a pleasure.

EDMUND
This is my brother, Dayland the Lesser. Forgive him for not introducing himself. He is mute.

Lincoln stares at the cross on Dayland’s forehead.
LINCOLN
We all have our crosses to bear.

Edmund spits his beer, laughing. Clifford brings a towel. Dayland’s all smiles.

BARTENDER
Ready for another?

Ignores him. Dries himself off.

LINCOLN
You two are brothers?

EDMUND
Twins—switched at birth. Originally I was the mute one.

Samuel joins them. Raises a brow at Lincoln.

EDMUND
Seems our new friend has a drinking problem. Be well to introduce him to our friends in the temperance movement.

SAMUEL
Don’t have no friends in the temp’rance movement. Over here.

The Priest and Exorcists enter as Samuel and gang sit at an isolated table near the stage.

Priest goes upstairs. Exorcists sit at the bar.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - TOP OF STEPS - DAY

Mabel peeks down at the group as the Priest joins her.

MABEL
Cowboy and that old critter are all we could cull.

PRIEST
Sheriff’s gonna have to make a loftier lynching post’s all.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - DAY

Lincoln spies Mabel and Priest talking. What’s this?
LINCOLN
You’re not concerned with that
Priest discovering your plot?

EDMUND
Course not. He’s in on it.

SAMUEL
Don’t know what Cowboy told you,
but bottom fact is we only here for
the money in the bank.

LINCOLN
You’re thieves. Why all the pomp?

SAMUEL
Confusion, distraction, deception.
Holy men say stay away, naturally
everyone gone go.

EDMUND
Not thieves, exactly, friend Paul.
We’re magicians. Magic and crime
are akin when done right.

CLIFFORD
How so?

EDMUND
Any magic trick, from simply
pulling a penny from your ear--

Reaches for Abe’s bandaged ear.

EDMUND
Er, your other ear.

Plucks out a penny. Clifford’s in awe.

EDMUND
--To making Dayland here completely
vanish, you have to distract the
audience. You mesmerize them with
your left hand while the right hand
does the magic and... voilà!

Dayland is no longer in his seat.

LINCOLN
Great trick if used on the right
people.
EDMUND
The circus, the priests--we are the left hand. You are the right.

CLIFFORD
We rob the bank!

SAMUEL
You lookouts. Scares away anyone gone see us. Warn us if any law types comin’. You up for it, old timer?

CLIFFORD
This here’s Tall Paul. An outlaw of old. Got people chasin’ him from all over.

SAMUEL
Got rooms upstairs. With a girl if you want. Food’s awful but hot. Ten dollar from the take. Each. How that sound?

CLIFFORD
I’ll take mine with a girl.

LINCOLN
And if I’m not up for it?

Clifford’s breath catches. Got serious real quick.

EDMUND
I’ll make you disappear.

LINCOLN
I’ll take the room and food. I won’t do it for profit.


SAMUEL
Got a bug on you.

He takes a swing. Lincoln grabs his wrist.

SAMUEL
You gone crazy put a hand on me?

LINCOLN
I have an affection for ladybugs. I’ve never harmed one and don’t mean to let anyone do it for me.
Lets Samuel go. The bug flies off.

SAMUEL
No bugs die long as you work for us. Rooms upstairs.
(to Edmund)
Where’s your brother?

EDMUND
A true magician never reveals his secrets.

INT. MABEL’S ROOM – DAY
Samuel enters to Mabel futzing with her dress.

MABEL
Help me. Can’t wait to shed this skin.

He leaves her in just a corset. Pulls her into a kiss they both enjoy.

SAMUEL
What do you think’a our lookouts?

MABEL
Quite a contrast. Like us.

SAMUEL
Not sure I trust the old man.

MABEL
He’s just as senile as Clifford is stupid.

He grabs a whisky bottle. She lays on the bed.

SAMUEL
Gives me the fantods. Tonight’s our last show, Mabe. We gone go off somewhere after. Hear Alaska’s real nice.

MABEL
Why can’t we go to a country that’s more... open minded?

He lays next to her, his head on her chest.
SAMUEL
Somewhere I can marry you? Best be no trouble tonight. Need trouble like I need a hole in my gut.

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY
A bearded soldier, WAYNE, late twenties, staggers to the side of the building. Bloody hands cover A HOLE IN HIS GUT.
Scans the area. Coast is clear.

INT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE - DAY
Matis plays with his pocket watch, feet up on the desk.
Randall hangs on the empty jail cell while Butler tracks a fly buzzing around.
An oily man, forties in a fancy suit-- ADRASTUS BLUB, fidgets with a military dress saber hung at his side.

MATIS
You and Butler hide out front. Randall in the back. Grab the loot, arrest the lookouts. Town will be fine so long someone hangs for it.

BUTLER
And the circus freaks?

MATIS
Woman stays here. The others--
Wayne BURSTS in. Butler and Randall draw their pistols. Blub dramatically draws his sword.

MATIS
Hello, Wayne.

WAYNE
Sheriff... Mayor’s comin’ back.

Matis sits up, waving the others to disarm.

MATIS
When is the Mayor coming?

WAYNE
‘Morrow mornin’. Had to warn you.
He collapses. Sheriff jumps to his side.
Matis waves the whiskey under Wayne’s nose. That did it. He wakes to a vision of Blub standing over him.

WAYNE
This hell? That the devil?

Matis
Adrastus Blub. Blub, this is Wayne.

Blub
A plesss-eyore. I asssewme you are a town solssier?

Wayne chugs rye, hoping Matis’ll translate.

Matis
Soldier. Blub’s a lawyer. Mr Spinna brought him in.

Wayne
What’s with the sword?

Blub
Prefer the sssword to a gun. Worn it since the Great Sussession, all through the See-vile War. Was it a sssword that pierced your abdomen?

Wayne takes another pull.

Matis
Why’s the Mayor coming back?

Wayne
Knows we burnt down the church, not the Injuns. Wants to stop the war. I don’t wanna die, Sheriff.

Matis quickly dons hat and coat, irritated.

Blub
Should be fine with suffisssiant medical attennssion.

Blub flinches as the door SLAMS. Wayne passes out again.

Ext. Main Street - Sunset

Less busy. Matis is none too thrilled heading for the Bank.
INT. LINCOLN’S ROOM - SUNSET

Lincoln watches Matis from the window of a small and simple room. Rubs the meteor rock, gathers paper and pen.

Wedged at a small table, he speaks as he writes.

    LINCOLN
    My wondrous Mary, I joined the circus today...

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Lanterns come down an alleyway like fireflies, slowly revealing the townspeople that hold them.

Torches and candles flicker over the line forming outside of The Grizzly Noel. Noisy chatter dances everywhere.

The Priest is giving grace down the line. He lays hands on Jimmy Wilkens’ head.

    PRIEST
    Bless you, sweet child.

    JIMMY
    Get yer damn hands off me!

    PRIEST
    I’m merely tryin’ to save your soul from the fires of hell and the pit of everlasting torment.

    JIMMY
    All I know yer castin’ spells to send me there. Take it back!

    PRIEST
    Lovely child.

    JIMMY
    Take it back er I’ll punch ya in ya red nose, you bog-trotter.

    PRIEST
    I take it back in the name of the father, son and holy ghost.

    JIMMY
    Take your ghost wichya too!
INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Bartender’s busy as the place fills up. Glick plays a violin as Flick collects the admission fee. Barbara scoffs as she makes her way to a seat.

BArbara
Two cents better be worth it! Well, it better.

Mr Spector and the affluent folk populate the front tables while the minorities are in back. Samuel peeks out from the curtain. Spector notices, confides to Tom Collins.

SPECTOR
Nigger man among them, I see. Perhaps we can look forward to one of their native dances.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Samuel closes the curtain, enraged. They get what they deserve. Brings a smile to his face.

Mabel and Dayland tie a corset on Edmund. He winces.

EDMUND
Not so tight. You don’t want me going from bust to burst.

Clifford and Lincoln have never seen anything like it. Samuel’s a wanted distraction.

SAMUEL
Outside, boys. Make sure the street’s clear. Once we gone in, warn us if the law comin’.

CLIFFORD
How d’we warn you?

SAMUEL
Know any bird calls?

LINCOLN
Wouldn’t say I’m a master of it.

SAMUEL
Never heard a’no birdcall master. Make sures I can hear it.

Edmund pulls a dress over his head.
EDMUND
How do I look?

Dayland wiggles flirty fingers at him.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Jimmy gets to the head of the line and drops a rock inside the penny basket. Flick grabs him and digs out the stone.

FLICK
Hold it, chu little cheat. Since whenza rock worth two pennies?

JIMMY
Who you callin’ little? Paid my two cents fair.

FLICK
That case, I raise you fee to four cents.

JIMMY
You’re daft.

FLICK
Argue-- It’s the same for da rest.

All in earshot shout at him. He knocks Glick’s bow, screeching the violin. Grabs his rock and bolts.

INT. LINTON’S LIVERY - NIGHT

Sarah watches out the window as Jimmy runs off.

SARAH
Circus is startin’ soon.

Susan sweeps the floor, flustered.

SUSAN
Whole place has been a circus since your father left. Only difference is they’re chargin’ people.

SARAH
They’ve got clowns.

She brightens Susan’s day.
SUSAN
We’ve got our share of clowns. Why is it you want to go? Fear you’ll be left out of tomorrow’s gossip?

SARAH
The clowns.

SUSAN
When your father returns and we’re in a big city, I’ll take you to a real circus. With monkeys.

She touches up the folds of a PINK DRESS on display.

SUSAN
If no one buys it, I’ll don this dress as we roll out of town.

SARAH
When will that be?

SUSAN
Wish I knew.

She watches Clifford and Lincoln pass by outside.

EXT. BANK - NIGHT

Clifford pulls his pistol on approaching the darkened Bank. Lincoln’s eyebrows advertise his disapproval.

CLIFFORD
Whaddaya think, Paul?

LINCOLN
Put the gun away. Go check the other streets. I’ll stay here.

CLIFFORD
Don’t make a run for it. Lotsa crabs on the beach at night. Take your legs off.

Clifford’s off. Abraham witnesses the last people file into the tavern. The street’s his.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Chatter dies down as Glick and Flick take the stage, lighting the footcandles.
Sword Swallower sits at the TACK PIANO in the corner and begins a honky-tonk circus tune.

The Dwarfs begin a dance for the tickled audience.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Lincoln ears the music as Sarah runs from the livery. Susan shines her lantern at him.

Small girl ain’t afraid of the tall guy. Sarah goes at ‘em.

SARAH
You part of the circus?

Kneels to her level.

LINCOLN
Now what makes you think that?

SARAH
You’ve got a funny hat and a funny beard and a funny face.

SUSAN
Sarah, you’re rude. Apologies, sir.

LINCOLN
She is simply being honest, ma’am. A facet that chisels away as we get older. Did you not think my appearance a bit unusual?

SUSAN
I saw you with Clifford Johns. Be careful of that boy. He and mischief are tarred with the same brush. He’s had a hard life. ‘Scuse me, I’m Susan and this is Miss Sarah Jane Linton.

LINCOLN
Distinctly my pleasure, ma’am. You too, Miss Sarah Jane.

SUSAN
What do we call you, sir?

LINCOLN
Paul. (standing)
Tall Paul.
INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Flick is atop Glick, arm’s wide.

     FLICK
     From the palaces of kings...

     GLICK
     And the tundras of Alaska...

Spector leans in to his friend.

     SPECTOR
     I hear Alaska’s nice.

     GLICK & FLICK
     The Amphitrite Menagerie & Circus!

Flick FLIPS to the stage. Cheers as Samuel runs out, bowing.

     SAMUEL
     Ladies and gentlemen, we have
     performed to royalty and blue-bloods. Kings and emperors. Now it
     is our honor to grace the stage of
     this marvelous town!

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The Priest and Exorcists peek out from behind a porch while
Lincoln talks to the ladies.

     SUSAN
     It’s tough times, war and all. Came
     here to make an honest living.
     Nothin’ honest ‘bout this town no
     more. Mayor’s a good man... but the
     Sheriff runs this town. Rich run
     him.

     LINCOLN
     Sounds like more damage being done
     here than the front lines.

     SUSAN
     Mr. Paul, I have work at the livery
     if you can stay a while. Got an
     extra room. It’s unpleasant work,
     but you won’t go hungry.

     LINCOLN
     Sounds tempting, but I’m only
     passing through.
SUSAN
Sleep on it. Can feed you at least before you leave. Say good night to Mr Paul, Sarah.

SARAH
‘Night.

He waves as they walk off into the night.

LINCOLN
Another job offer.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT
Clifford kicks dust, bored. Hears somethin’. Heads that way.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT
The show continues.

SAMUEL
As promised, we have sword swallowers, clown jugglers, snake charmers and--

Piano chords build the suspense--

SAMUEL
An authentic Bearded Lady!

Sam leaves. Edmund prances out to jeers and catcalls.

EDMUND
I can read your minds. You’re asking-- What’s a beautiful gal like me doing in a place like this?

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT
Bearing a heavy SLEDGEHAMMER, Samuel meets up with the Priest and Exorcists. They hurry to join Lincoln by the bank.

PRIEST
Awful friendly with that woman.
Chased her off without a kiss?

LINCOLN
I’ve broken no commandments, Father. You’re free to covet.
SAMUEL
Button up, both you.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Dayland creeps behind Edmund, finger to his lips. Makes crude gestures to the audience’s delight.

EDMUND
What you should be asking is how
did a gal like me get to be so
beautiful? One word. Any guesses?

FARGUS
Broke mirror!

EDMUND
That’s two words.

EXT. BANK - NIGHT

The Exorcists pull crow-bars from their cloaks. Samuel leads them to the Bank’s front door.

Priest tries the knob. Turns freely.

PRIEST
It’s unlocked...

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Glick and Flick join Dayland on stage. Flick climbs on Glick’s shoulders. The three raise a colorful blanket.

OLD MAN WILSON
Snake-oil!

SPECTOR
Abortion!

Crowd loves it. Edmund gestures to the blanket.

EDMUND
Magic is the word. Magic is the cure! Before your very eyes I will now transform myself from a vixen to a clown!
EXT. BURNED OUT CHURCH - NIGHT

Jimmy’s henchmen paint Pedro and Simon into clowns. Jimmy wears his shirt as a turban. He searches the ruins for just the right stick.

Clifford rounds a corner, catching them in the act.

    CLIFFORD
    What in blazes y’all up to?

    PEDRO
    We’re puttin’ on our own circus.

    SIMON
    We’re the clowns. They’re doing the acrobats...

Jimmy’s found a stick he likes. Shakes it at Clifford.

    JIMMY
    And I’m the sword swallower. Now pay up. Four cents. No, six cents.

    CLIFFORD
    Who do you think I am having that much cents?

INT. BANK - NIGHT

Priest and Samuel move furniture out of the way.

The Exorcists encircle a large safe of metal and wood. They stab it with their crowbars.

EXT. BANK - NIGHT

Lincoln hears water running. Investigates.

Can just make out a man in the shadows. Whoever it is, he’s pissing on a porch.

Across the way he sees another man’s boots hidden behind a vendor’s cart.

    LINCOLN
    Aw, to hell with this.

Shakes his head. Strides off to the Noel.
INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Edmund shimmies behind the cloth. Hooks the bottom of his dress to the blanket while the crowd catcalls.

    EDMUND
    (projecting)
    A lady needs privacy while changing.

Old Man Wilson elbows Barbara.

    OLD MAN WILSON
    Just like you, Barbara. No lady!

She belts him.

    EDMUND (O.S.)
    Disarrange what is strange. On this stage, rearrange a change!

Dayland and the Dwarfs yank the blanket up. Edmund’s only in his corset. The players feign embarrassment.

They cover him then drop the curtain-- Edmund is instantly in a fancy suit and full clown make-up.

Hoots, hollers and applause.

EXT. BURNED OUT CHURCH - NIGHT

Jimmy mimes swallowing the stick. Clifford’s not impressed.

One of the boys tries to balance on the other’s shoulders but end up falling in a heap.

    CLIFFORD
    Ain’t nuthin’. I joined up with the real circus. Leavin’ with ‘em tonight. Gonna be a fire juggler too.

    PEDRO
    If you joined the circus, why aren’t you in the show?

    CLIFFORD
    Stupid. Gotta get trained first. Well, boys, this is the last you’ll be seein’ me. Don’t be followin’ me neither.

He walks away. Jimmy throws his stick at him.
INT. BANK - NIGHT

BANG! Samuel pounds the hinges with the sledgehammer.

EXT. BANK - NIGHT

Muffled BANGS echo in the night.
Wayne steps out of the shadows of the Boarding House.
Butler leaves his hiding spot.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Edmund beams as Glick and Flick unfold the colorful blanket to the length of the stage.

    EDMUND
    Now for the trick that impresses
    kings, embarrasses queens and puts
    the court jester in stitches! With
    your help, I will make Dayland
    disappear. Volunteers?

Hands shoot up immediately.

INT. BANK - NIGHT

One last smash breaks through the hinges.
Priest and Samuel bump shoulders to peer inside.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Spector and Tom Collins hold the ends of the blanket.

    EDMUND
    Spread the magic veil. All the way
    to the end of the stage.

They comply. Edmund jumps down and walks among the crowd.

    EDMUND
    To prove magic exceeds all
distances I will proceed to walk
away from the stage. Further,
further... Vanishing, vanishing...
INT. BANK - NIGHT

Priest and Samuel peer into the safe.
Empty save a shiny object near the back.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Edmund waves his hands, edging his way to the door.

EDMUND
Gentry, lift the veil ever so slightly...

Spector and Collins obey. Dayland’s boots are still there.

EDMUND
Now lower, lower, lower. That’s it!

INT. BANK - NIGHT

Samuel picks up the shiny object. A single penny.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Blub, Wayne and Butler draw blades, converging on the Bank.
Clifford rounds a corner by the Noel. Bumps into Lincoln.

CLIFFORD
What’s goin’ on?

LINCOLN
A trap. Get inside.

The Sheriff stomps down the Town Hall steps, gun drawn.

CLIFFORD
We gotta’ warn ‘em.

He lets out a loud BIRDCALL. The deputies spin toward the sound.

Lincoln yanks Cliff into the Noel.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Abe and Cliff stop short-- the entire crowd stares at them.
Edmund’s eyes go wide with surprise.
INT. BANK - NIGHT

Samuel and Priest lock eyes. Worst case scenario.

    SAMUEL
    We’ve been duped.

    PRIEST
    Back door.

THUDS pound the front door from the outside.

Back door flies open. Randall freezes in shock. Samuel
PUNCHES him out, flees with the Priest into the night.

Front door CAVES IN as the Exorcists collect their tools.

Butler hurls his knife. One Exorcist screams and drops.

The other holds up his crow-bar defensively.

Blub meets him with his saber.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Lincoln and Cliff casually melt into the crowd as Edmund
makes his way past.

    EDMUND
    Vanishing... vanishing...

INT. BANK - NIGHT

The Exorcist and Blub clash swords. Blub playfully parries
before calmly slashing the Exorcist’s throat.

Blood splatters Wayne’s face.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

Edmund stands at the entrance, the crowd enthralled.

    EDMUND
    Vanished!

He dashes out the swinging doors. Everyone staring. The doors
swing slower and slower. Waiting for something.

Anything?
Everyone turns in synchronicity to the stage. As if on cue, Spector and Collins drop the magic blanket.

Dayland’s boots stand empty.

A great cheer goes up. Lincoln rushes Clifford up the steps.

INT. BANK - NIGHT

Matis arrives to Blub licking his sword. Butler dislodges his knife.

Sheriff checks the safe.

WAYNE
No loot, Sheriff. Couple of ‘em went out the back.

Randall holds his bloody nose.

RANDALL
(muffled)
Hid me in da node.

MATIS
Spread out. Find one of them. Any of ‘em.

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL - NIGHT

The laughter and applause die down. Starts to dawn that something’s wrong.

Spector grabs the back curtain and yanks--

Only Mabel’s python remains. It slithers out on stage.

EXT. BANK - NIGHT

Matis searches the area as Wayne, Randall and Butler fan out. Blub calmly exits.

BLUB
Sheriff, where are the lookoutss?

WAYNE
I see ‘em!

Wayne motions to a side street. Everyone runs.
EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Sheriff and company run up, revolvers ready.

It’s the wrong Circus Gang-- Jimmy Wilkens and the other kids stop short seeing the pistols. Jimmy twirls his stick.

MATIS
Put your gun away, idiot. Just kids.

Sheriff quickly high-tails back to--

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Matis rushes at the Noel, gun raised.

Suddenly the entire crowd spills out with Spector in the lead. Sheriff freezes. What the hell?

SPECTOR
Sheriff Matis! We’ve been robbed!

The crowd mobs him, shouting and pointing.

INT. LINCOLN’S ROOM - NIGHT

Clifford grins ear to ear looking out the window.

CLIFFORD
Sheriff’s got his hands full. Deserves it in my opinion.

Lincoln throws his coat at him.

LINCOLN
What about the people just conned out of their money?

CLIFFORD
They deserve it too. They’re all ignorant. Don’t respect anyone different from them.

LINCOLN
Well, this gang of yours has got the ignorant all riled up. Your Sheriff’s just upholding the law.

Clifford’s mood sours.
CLIFFORD
You think that, Paul, you’re ignorant too. He’s vile.

LINCOLN
I’ve sense enough to see your anger. What gives?

CLIFFORD
Know why he’s always throwin’ me in the clink? ‘Cause he rolled around with my ma. ‘Til she died havin’ his baby.

Cliff scrunches his face to block tears. Abe softens.

LINCOLN
I was just a boy when my mother passed. You lose your oldest companion and your greatest admirer.

Too much. Cliff breaks down. Abraham lays a hand for comfort.

CLIFFORD
Lost more than that.

EXT. BURNED OUT CHURCH – NIGHT

Randall and Wayne on patrol. Randall’s got a bloody handkerchief over his nose.

WAYNE
Whole thing stinks if you ask me.

RANDALL
All I shmell’s blood.

WAYNE
Gimme that--

He snatches the hanky, throws it into the blackened pyre.

Hanky lands on Flick’s head. Glick covers his partner’s mouth to silence him in the darkness. Sword Swallower slowly removes the hanky with a flick of his blade.

Edmund peers out from behind a burnt statue, watches Wayne and Randall walk away. Dayland gestures at the night.

EDMUND
(stage whisper)
Someone approaches.
Samuel and Priest emerge. Everyone huddles near a fallen cross. Edmund pulls a small FLINTLOCK.

EDMUND
I see no bag of treasure, Samuel. Your bevy awaits its loot. Dayland wishes to depart this grotto.

SAMUEL
Safe was empty. We been tricked.

Priest genuflects and PUKeS on the remains of the altar.

PRIEST
Willie and Eugene are dead.

FLICK
Shush, Gal-boy. What happen to da money?

EDMUND
Where’s the money and where were the lookouts? We were exposed!

Samuel shakes his head. Sword Swallower raises his blade.

EDMUND
A convenient fellowship has bound us together. Tonight the circus is no more. We are now hunted prey.

GLICK
No money?

EDMUND
Our lives are the bounty now, little friend. Dayland, grab our things.

Swallower sheathes his sword. Samuel realizes...

SAMUEL
Where Mabel at?

INT. GRIZZLY NOEL – NIGHT

Mabel’s python slithers up the stairwell.

INT. LINCOLN’S ROOM – NIGHT

Clifford wipes his nose and clears his eyes.
CLIFFORD
Don’t matter none. Roundin’ up the
gang and I’m never comin’ back.

LINCOLN
Deserting doesn’t mean your
troubles won’t follow. This woman
you’re chasing is likely long gone.

CLIFFORD
We’ll see about that.

He opens the door to Mabel. She’s livid.

MABEL
Where were you two when our men
were in the bank? How’d you miss
the Sheriff waltzing ‘cross the
street?

LINCOLN
The plan was for us to get
arrested? We get lynched while your
gang gets away?

CLIFFORD
What gives?

MABEL
That’s a lie and I’ll prove it.
Clifford, I’ll honor that reward I
promised you.

CLIFFORD
Hot damn.

Lincoln throws his hat down, aghast.

LINCOLN
Do you always use sex to get what
you want?

Mabel’s in his face.

MABEL
I’m a snake charmer. Your gut-stick
is a long, snakelike flap of skin
that sucks blood from the brain. I
use it to my advantage. Without
advantages might as well coil up
like a snake and die.

CLIFFORD
Fine with me.
She pulls up her shawl, covering her shoulders.

MABEL
You know Sheriff Matis’ room at the Boarding House?

LINCOLN
What would you see the Sheriff for?

MABEL
Idiot. He set the whole thing up.
(to Clifford)
See me there in the morning. May be one more favor I’ll need. Then we’ll see about charmin’ that snake a’yours.

She leaves them slack-jawed.

CLIFFORD
I’m likin’ this bank robbin’ bus’ness just fine. What do you think?

LINCOLN
Think I’m leaving in the morning. You take the bed. I suspect I’m taller than the tree that made it.

He rolls up his coat and uses it as a pillow.

INT. MATIS’ ROOM - NIGHT

Mabel interrupts Matis’ bourbon as she storms in.

MATIS
What happened to the money?

MABEL
You’re supposed t’have the money!

Uncoils her wrath on him.

She gets several strikes in before he grabs her arms and tosses her to the bed.

Unties his bolo tie.

MATIS
Been a change in plan.

FADE TO:
INT. MATIS’ ROOM - DAY

Matis looks into a mirror, his hair freshly combed. Hands shake as he ties a fresh bow tie. Scratches mark up his hands and neck. KNOCK-KNOCK.

RANDALL (O.S.)
Got stuff for you, Sheriff.

Regains control and unlocks the door. Randall comes in, stopping short after a look at the room.

RANDALL
As I live and die in Dixie...

MATIS
Whatcha got?

RANDALL
Tom Collins askin’ for you at the bank. Mr Spector’s asking ‘bout the circus business.

MATIS
Take care of this for me. Then meet Butler out front.

Matis leaves. Randall gapes at the bed.

Mabel’s propped up, fully naked. Strangled with a bolo tie.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Matis departs the Boarding House checking his pocket watch. Gonna be a hell of a day. He strolls toward the bank before an Oddly Shaped Man catches his eye.

Flick struggles to balance riding on Glick’s shoulders under a long coat and bowler hat.

Sheriff starts to follow. Susan gets him first.

SUSAN
Sheriff Matis, I want to report a robbery.

MATIS
(sotto)
Get in line.

SUSAN
Last night someone broke into my livery and stole an expensive item.
MATIS
What’d they take?

SUSAN
A very fine pink dress.

MATIS
That’s it?

He tries to dart away. She blocks him.

SUSAN
I’m out a great expense and you dismiss me like I’m a beggar?

MATIS
I’ve more to do than hunt down ladies’ dresses.

SUSAN
Looted on your watch. Would you be so smug with my husband?

MATIS
(annoyed)
I’ll look into it.

SUSAN
And I’ll have words with the Mayor about you upon his return.

She storms off to the Livery. Matis smiles. Smug.

INT. BANK – DAY

Tom Collins gawks at the empty safe. Matis surveys the piss-poor job his men did cleaning up blood.

COLLINS
Took it all. Town’s gonna be in a riot when they find out. Heaven knows what to do?

MATIS
Bank holiday. Women come in, send them home. Keep the door locked.

COLLINS
I can’t do that. There’s no reason.

Matis looks up the staircase at a closed door.
MATIS
Mayor’s comin’ back today. There’s your reason.

COLLINS
Who’s going to tell Mr Spinna?

MATIS
He already knows ‘bout it.

EXT. TOWN HALL ROOF – DAY

Wayne sits on the ridge armed with binoculars and a rifle. Something to the west catches his eye.

Through the binoculars he watches The Dark Horsed Figure.

EXT. MAIN STREET – DAY

Dayland, dressed as a miner, stuffs fruit in his bag as Edmund, now clean-shaven, plucks a coin from a pretty Fruit Vendor’s ear.

EDMUND
(poor french accent)
Bon! Bon mon-sheree. Avec moi!

Butler shoulders a rifle as he walks with Blub.

BLUB
I like to think I put the See-vile
in the See-vile War. Left for
better passteeures. Considered
Allasskeea, heard it’s nice, but I
tend to go where the power is.

They pass into The Grizzly Noel, nearly bumping into Lincoln and Clifford as they head up the street.

CLIFFORD
Any way I can talk you into stayin’
‘till I find the others? Ocean’s
not goin’ no where.

LINCOLN
I’ll make a deal with you. I stay
if you stay away from that woman.

CLIFFORD
Hate to see you go, Paul.
LINCOLN
Boy in your position could earn a
good reputation helping out the
women while their husbands are
away.

CLIFFORD
I do that, their men’l skin me
when they get back.

Samuel, wearing a SOMBRERO, looks up with scorn as they pass.

LINCOLN
Susan from the livery offered me a
job I’m about to decline. Sure
she’d be obliged to have you work
there again.

CLIFFORD
Tried being decent before. Just
don’t suit me much.

Lincoln offers his hand.

LINCOLN
Have a nice life, Clifford Johns.
Try and stay out of trouble.

Clifford shakes.

CLIFFORD
May our paths cross again, Paul.
Somethin’ ‘bout you I like and it’s
not just your hat.

LINCOLN
Okay, son.

They part. Clifford heads for the Boarding House. Before he
can make it, Samuel grabs him-- Rushes him off the street.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

Samuel shoves Cliff against a building, pulls a pistol.

SAMUEL
You screwed everythin’ up. They
gone lookin’ for us now.

CLIFFORD
Samuel. Hopin’ you’d find me. We
off to Mexico?
SAMUEL
We ain’t gone nowhere. They watchin’. Waitin’ for us to leave.

CLIFFORD
We’ll steal some horses. After Mabel gives me ma reward--

SAMUEL
You seen Mabel?

CLIFFORD
I’m ‘bout to see her right now.

Samuel lowers his gun. Smooths out Cliff’s rumpled clothes.

SAMUEL
Tell her come see me. Now go.

INT. LINTON’S LIVERY - DAY

Lincoln enters to Sarah crying. Simon fidgets next to her. Susan boards up a window near the empty dress stand.

SARAH
Please! You never let me do anything. It’s not fair.

SUSAN
Unfair you don’t always get what you want when you want it? You can see Jimmy Wilkens’ leapin’ frog some other time.

SIMON
But it’ll only leap at noon.

SUSAN
And it has to be at Jackson’s Creek?

SIMON & SARAH
Yes!

SUSAN
If life were fair...
(noticing Lincoln)
Mr Paul! You’ve come for the job and the room?

LINCOLN
Yes. In actuality I must--
Pedro runs in excitedly.

PEDRO
The Mayor’s comin’ back! The Mayor is coming now!

SUSAN
The Mayor? Are there any soldiers with him?

PEDRO
I think so.

They rush out, leaving Lincoln to mind the store.

LINCOLN
I’m turning it down.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Susan and the kids join the town lining the street.

Lincoln hurries after. Unseen, the Sword Swallower slips into the Livery.

LINCOLN
Susan, I’ll have to--

SUSAN
I hope Adam is with him. You’ll get to meet my husband, Paul.

LINCOLN
I’m afraid I’ll have to decline your proposition.

SUSAN
Nonsense. You work at the livery you’ll have to meet my husband.

LINCOLN
I have to decline the job.

Old Man Wilson joins the fray.

OLD MAN WILSON
Here they come. I saw the horses!

Clifford turns away and enters The Boarding House.

Two floors up a RIFLE protrudes from a window.
INT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

Clifford tips his hat to a pleasant gent in his sixties at the front desk, MARVIN, then climbs the steps.

Two Ladies in half dress run down, passing him.

    CLIFFORD

    Ladies.

Turning on his heel, his SPUR GETS CAUGHT in the wooden steps. Pulls frantically--STUCK.

EXT. TOWN HALL ROOF - DAY

Wayne sights two HORSED SOLDIERS riding into town. Drops the binoculars and shoulders his rifle.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Matis wipes sweat from his brow, checks his pocket-watch.

A MUZZLE projects from a window at The Grizzly Noel.

The whole town lines the way. A cheer goes up as a two-horse carriage comes into view carrying MAYOR THOMAS, a handsome man in his thirties. His lovely Wife sits alongside. The Mayor’s Deputy and his wife sit in front, all waving at the welcoming crowd.

Samuel spies Lincoln across the street. He discretely pulls his gun, aiming for the top hat.

The Town Hall Clock chimes noon. A LOUD GUNSHOT rings out. The Mayor’s smile disappears. His carriage slows.

Samuel freezes, staring queerly at his unfired pistol.

A few in the crowd stop waving.

Suddenly MULTIPLE GUNSHOTS ring out. Smoke pours from the Boarding House, Town Hall and Grizzly Noel. The Mayor and his Deputy slump in agony.

A horse by the Livery is hit in the flank, neighing in pain.

LINCOLN dives on top of Sarah and Simon, losing his hat. The crowd freezes in shock, silent.

ONE FINAL GUNSHOT takes the Mayor in the head. His hat flies onto the back of the carriage. Mayor’s Wife crawls after it.
A Horset Soldier leaps from his saddle onto the back of the carriage, pulling the Wife back to her seat.


The Soldier pushes aside the Carriage Driver and steers the horses to a stop outside of the Doctor’s Office.

Samuel hides his pistol and runs away.

Mr. Spinna sees all from his Bank window.

EXT. TOWN HALL ROOF - DAY

Wayne drops his rifle and rolls down the back of the roof to a wooden trellis.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

Clifford tugs unsuccessfully to free his spur.

Marvin runs out the front door.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

DOCTOR ELSWORTH, fifties, rushes to help the Soldier with the Mayor. He turns to the others helplessly.

    DOCTOR
    My God. He’s dead.

Attention shifts to the Deputy Mayor, moving him.

Silas Granger runs to his wounded horse. It bucks wildly, its nose still tied to the post. He struggles to cut the bridle.

Lincoln retrieves his hat. Locks eyes with Matis. The Sheriff doesn’t move from the Town Hall porch.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

As Randall descends the steps, Clifford twists his boot free. Rushes to the door. Wayne blocks him.

    CLIFFORD
    What’s goin’ on?

    WAYNE
    Shut it, murderer!
EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Randall and Wayne drag Clifford from the Boarding House.

RANDALL
We got the shooter!

WAYNE
I caught him!

Matis finally moves, rushing over as a Horsed Soldier kicks Clifford to the ground. Townswomen throw rocks at him.

Lincoln and Susan watch as he’s put in manacles and shoved into Town Hall. Sheriff turns his sights on Lincoln.

MATIS
Arrest this man too.

LINCOLN
On what grounds?

MATIS
He’s a stranger. Likely helped with the murder.

Susan shields him from the deputies.

SUSAN
He did no such thing. Anyone who was here can attest to that.

BARBARA
Looks like a criminal but I saw with my own two eyes he didn’t do it. Well he didn’t.

SUSAN
Of course he didn’t. He was protecting the children at great risk to himself. There’s enough wrong done. Must you add to it?

MATIS
Women saved you today, stranger. Leave ‘fore I arrest you for vagrancy.

SUSAN
Nothing vagrant about him. He works for me at the livery.

Matis sneers at her. She grabs the children as they cry.
INT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE - DAY

Clifford’s dragged to the open cell. He struggles with Randall and Wayne.

CLIFFORD
You can’t do this. I ain’t done nuthin’.

Blub and Butler enter with Mr Spector.

BLUB
The Hesssean is caught.

Butler punches Cliff in the stomach. Tosses him in the cell.

RANDALL
Found this on him, Mr Spector.

SPECTOR
The murder weapon, no doubt.

Clifford fights for air.

CLIFFORD
Gun’s empty. No bullets.

BLUB
Yes, they’re resssiding in the former Mayor I presssume.

Cliff uses the bars to climb to his feet.

CLIFFORD
I didn’t kill anyone. You have my word.

Spector gets in his face.

SPECTOR
Galleylampowoopballyblob. That is my word. Like yours, it means nothing.

Spector sighs in grief, shaking his head.

BLUB
Spector, you suddenly seem plagued by an isssue?
SPECTOR
(solemly)
I’m afraid I can’t decide between ham or chicken while we watch the boy’s lynching.

BLUB
Perhaps a sizzzling squab?

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Lincoln joins a group gathered around Silas Granger as he calms his wounded horse.

GRANGER
She’ll have t’be put out her misery. Such a fine animal. Shame.

Pulls his pistol, SHOOTS the horse dead.

Lincoln examines the bridle still tied to the hitching post.

Gazes from the horse’s wound, tracing the path back to the Grizzly Noel.

LINCOLN
Strange they’re claimin’ the boy shot from the Boarding House, yet the horse was hit on this side?

OLD MAN WILSON
Case is solved, stranger. No need to beat a dead horse.

Granger squares off with Wilson.

GRANGER
You sayin’ I beat my animals?

OLD MAN WILSON
All I said was no need to beat a dead horse.

Granger kicks his horse.

GRANGER
I’ll beat it if I reckon I wanna beat it. It’s my horse!

Lincoln leaves the two to quarrel.
INT. LINTON’S LIVERY - DAY

Susan wipes away tears as she enters-- freezes. Someone’s there with their back to her-- wearing her pink dress.

She grabs a glass jar, holding it as a weapon.

SUSAN
I warn you, I’m armed.

Edmund and Dayland pop up behind the counter. The Sword Swallower steps out of the shadows.

EDMUND
As are we, my lady.

The Pink Dressed Figure turns, revealing--

SUSAN
The Priest?

Priest blinks back tears as he sinks to his knees.

PRIEST
Beggin’ your forgiveness. We’re in dire need of your help.

Flick and Glick come out from hiding.

FLICK
They wantchu kill us.

SUSAN
God help you if you had anythin’ to do with the killin’ here today.

EDMUND
On Shakespeare’s grave we did not. They’ll lynch us for it, still. Unless...

SUSAN
Why come to me?

PRIEST
You’re no friend to the Sheriff. You see beyond your selfish needs. I see it in your eyes.

EXT. DOCTOR’S OFFICE - DAY

Lincoln examines the Mayor’s bloody carriage. Runs his fingers along the bullet grooves.
One of the Horsed Soldiers comes up.

SOLDIER
Keep your fingers and your nose out of things that don’t concern you, old man. Lose that nose like ya’ lost that ear.

He complies, walking past townspeople huddling together, afraid and confused.

Sheriff Matis steps out of the Town Hall. His star now hangs from an expensive suit and his hair is slicked.

Crowd rushes him with a symphony of questions.

He FIRES his gun in the air, silencing them. Insensitive.

MATIS
Mayor Thomas is dead. Deputy Mayor Carter won’t survive the night. I’m appointin’ myself Mayor ‘til an election can be held. Killer’s been found. Clifford Johns will be tried and hung tomorrow. Burial for the Mayor beforehand. That is all.

He walks back inside. The crowd looks lost. Traumatized.

Tom Collins wrings his hands and retreats into the Bank, the CLOSED sign still in the window.

Lincoln notes Marvin outside the Boarding House.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE – DAY

Lincoln inspects the spot where Clifford’s spur was caught.

LINCOLN
Clifford was here the whole time the killin’ was carried out?

MARVIN
You can see the cut in the wood from his spur.

LINCOLN
Will you testify to this in court?

Marvin puts on a thin smile and moves to the desk, pouring two whiskies.
MARVIN
Your accent is hard to place. I’ve heard the intonation somewhere in my past. Missouri?

LINCOLN
Near those parts, yes.

MARVIN
As a young man I was an author and a Yankee from Connecticut. My friends and I were fascinated with California. Land of opportunity.

Offers Lincoln a drink. Abraham waves it off.

MARVIN
We were told that on the sandy beaches and common paths you could pick up gold like rocks. Enough for everyone. A place where all our dreams would come true. So we travelled west.

Sips his drink. Pulls a picture off the wall.

MARVIN
The adventure of a lifetime. All were happy as we set forth from St. Louis.

Hands over the picture. Young Marvin with a party of Westward Travellers.

MARVIN
Broken wheels, shortness of food, dysentery... A lot of deaths later we made it to the mountains. Within days half of us had frozen to death. Other half were starving.

Finishes his drink. Starts the other.

MARVIN
We figured the only way to survive was to cook and eat our companions who perished. Madness filled the kingdom.

Takes back the picture, studying it.

MARVIN
I was the only one of our group to set foot on California soil.

(MORE)
MARVIN (CONT'D)
Instead of gold I found dust and
despair.

LINCOLN
Seem to have done alright for
yourself.

MARVIN
All this belongs to Mr. Spinna at
the bank. I’m merely a worker. Our
country’s solution has always been
to move further west to find a
better place. I stood on the shore
of the Pacific and found there is
nowhere else to go.

LINCOLN
Testify?

Marvin finishes the second whiskey.

MARVIN
There are those in this town that
will eat me alive if I do. Killed
for telling the truth. I ate men to
survive. There are those who eat
men only to grow fatter.

LINCOLN
They’ll intimidate you into lettin’
an honest and decent boy hang?

MARVIN
Honesty and decency are remarkable
traits, Mister. But there’s no
money in it.

INT. SUSAN’S HOUSE – NIGHT

Susan blows out a lantern near Sarah’s bed and enters the
main room, tidying around Barbara and Mr Granger.

SUSAN
We have to do something. Clifford
may be a lot of things, but he’s
not a murderer. Adam and I
practically raised him after his
mother died.

BARBARA
And a fine job that was! Well it
wasn’t.
GRANGER
Must be a mistake. He wouldn’t kill
my Gussie. They were friends.

A KNOCK interrupts.

SUSAN
If this is Julie Wilkens whining
that I closed the livery they’ll
have me on trial too.

She opens to Lincoln.

SUSAN
Mr Paul! Beg pardon. With
everything that happened today I
forgot all about you.

Barbara’s face sours as he enters, removing his hat.

BARBARA
Just as well. We must be going,
don’t we Mr Granger?

GRANGER
What? Sorry, jus’ thinkin’ of my
Gussie. Such a good horse.

BARBARA
Clifford’s sewn his fate. No need
to blame yourself. Well you
shouldn’t.

Leaves with a scowl, leading Granger out.

LINCOLN
Hope you don’t mind my comin’ over.
Several women couldn’t help but
tell me how to get here.

SUSAN
Gossips, all of them.

ANNIE LINTON, Sarah’s Grandmother, hobbles into the main
room. She lights up at the sight of Lincoln.

SUSAN
Annie, you shouldn’t be out of bed.
We’ll keep our voices down.

ANNIE
My husband voted for you!
SUSAN
I apologize, Mr Paul. I’m afraid
Adam’s mother has been quite senile
these past years.

ANNIE
We all voted for you.

SUSAN
Sounds like a fabulous dream,
Annie. Let’s go back to it, see if
he won.

LINCOLN
Ma’am? Thank you.

Annie beams, allows Susan to lead her to her bedroom. Lincoln
gazes around the home, thoughts elsewhere.

SUSAN
Would you like coffee or tea?

LINCOLN
I spent the afternoon makin’
inquiries on Clifford’s behalf. We
both know he’s innocent.

SUSAN
We have to speak for him at trial.

She starts on a fresh kettle.

LINCOLN
Susan, I wasn’t entirely truthful
with you last night. Clifford
brought me here to abet that Circus
Gang. I believe we were to take the
blame for that scheme.

SUSAN
How do you lead a good life when
everything’s a scheme or a scam?

LINCOLN
At least one of them is liable for
putting Clifford where he is. Hard
to know for sure. Looks like
they’ve skipped town.

SUSAN
Not exactly.
INT. SUSAN’S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Among the crates and barrels lie the Circus Gang and the Priest. They stir as Susan leads Lincoln downstairs.

LINCOLN
You’re an amazing woman, Susan. I’ve heard of running off to join the circus but you’re the first the circus has run off to join.

SUSAN
I don’t harbor criminals. They’ve assured me they had nothing to do with the Mayor’s murder.

Edmund removes his hat.

EDMUND
Dayland swears that if we escape this town, we are reformed.

FLICK
God our ringmaster now.

Lincoln gazes at the Priest, still in the pink dress.

LINCOLN
I wasn’t aware the church had changed its dress code from black to pink. Isn’t yellow more apt?

PRIEST
I’m not a real priest.

SUSAN
The surprises continue.

PRIEST
I was once. When my love of God was overshadowed by my lust for another priest, I was defrocked. I’ve lead a life of deceit, hurtin’ people ‘stead of healin’ them.

He sobs.

PRIEST
Two young men I loved were killed fer my part in this plot. I’ve sinned against God many times.

He rises, pulling the pink dress over his head so that he stands in just his knit underwear.
PRIEST
As of today, no more! My amends to God will be to stay in this town and rebuild its congregation. The temple that was destroyed will be rebuilt. On this rock I will build my church!

Sword Swallower applauds. The others are nonplussed. Flick points at Swallower.

FLICK
That guy don’t speak no English.

PRIEST
The very least I can do is help you save your friend. If he hangs from our deeds, my soul’s consumed.

LINCOLN
Not sure what part you can play to stop it. Not even sure yet what I can do. But perhaps by the end we’ll all find redemption.

FADE TO:

EXT. TOWN CEMETERY - DAY
The Mayor’s Wife leads a coffin and small procession of five.

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY
Fifty gather ‘round the doors, brimming with excitement. Susan and Lincoln push their way through the press.

SUSAN
It’s disgraceful. Not even in the ground yet and they’re already making speeches.

A boisterous man in his fifties, MR. POGUE, barks from on top a soapbox.

MR POGUE
We’ll make this town dandy again! Free from Mexicans and krauts, micks and niggers. I am the only one who can--

He’s hit in the face by a handful of MUD. Old Man Wilson is the culprit. He’s on a neighboring soapbox.
OLD MAN WILSON
This town needs a military man!
N’aleens, Tippecanoe, Aunt-eat ’em!
Vote Wilson for a strong leader.

LINCOLN
Looks like democracy to me. Let’s try to find a seat.

INT. COURTROOM – DAY
The wooden pews are full and more are trying to budge their way in. Lincoln and Susan shove through to the front.

SUSAN
Must’a filled up at dawn.

She spots Mrs Wilkens and her numerous children taking up the front row.

SUSAN
Julie Wilkens, it’s vital that this man and I view the trial. Can you send your children out so we can have a seat?

MRS WILKENS
Seems they have the right to sit here same as everyone else. First come, first serve.

Lincoln cups his hands in earshot of the kids.

LINCOLN
(loudly)
You say they’re givin’ free sweets outside. Free sweets for children?

Without a look to their mother, the brood scrambles from the pew and out the door. Wilkens gives a side-eye while Susan and Lincoln take their seats.

Randall and Butler push the mob from the aisles as Blub takes his place near the judges’ seat.

BLUB
Let’s be see-vile. Clear the aisles. Out with you.

Spector’s behind the prosecutor’s table. A bemused Jury of eight women and an Elderly Man look upon the gallery.
BLUB
Asseeind-- Rise for the passseonate
Judge Clemens.

Everyone stands for the JUDGE, a slender man in his forties
wearing long riding boots. He pulls on his robe.

Slaps his riding gloves against the striking block, drawing
queer looks.

JUDGE
I have come in haste from Los
Angeles. In my hurry I have
forgotten my gavel.

He sits. Blub whispers to him while everyone reclines.

JUDGE
Grave matter before us today. Grave
for this town and a grave for the
Mayor. I am a man of particulars.
In order to have order everyone
must be silent. Except for Mr
Spector and the witnesses and--

He gasps at the defendant's table.

JUDGE
Where’s the defendant?

Blub whispers in his ear.

JUDGE
Show in the prisoner.

Wayne pushes a manacled Clifford to the table. The gallery
stands and shouts at him. Judge bangs his gloves.

In the chaos, Sarah slips in. Finds Susan.

SUSAN
Sarah, who’s watching your
grandmother?

SARAH
I wanna help free Clifford. He’s my
friend too.

SUSAN
On my lap and stay quiet.

Cliff dodges an egg that hits the Judge’s bench. Everyone
quiets.
JUDGE
This is exactly the behavior I abhor. Chaos in a nutshell.

BLUB
Eggssshell.

JUDGE
A good egg gone to waste. Though the heat in this room is apt to cook it.

Randall scoops up the egg with his kerchief. Carrying it off, it spills down his pants.

JUDGE
Clifford Montgomery Johns, you are accused of maliciously murdering Mayor Thomas. Your plea?

Lincoln stands up.

LINCOLN
Your honor, if it may please the court.

Jury and gallery chatter. Blub tries to whisper but is brushed off. Gets the gloves waved at him.

JUDGE
Please please us. Yes, nothing that would please the court more than to have these windows opened. I’m sure we all agree.

LINCOLN
Windows?

JUDGE
Unfortunately they’re painted shut. We’re all cursing the white washers at this time. Makes us wish we were all someplace cool, like Alaska for instance. Told it is quite... pleasant.

LINCOLN
Beg pardon, I want to address council for this boy.

The crowd murmurs, drawing a slap of the glove.
JUDGE
Council for this boy? There is no
council for this boy.

LINCOLN
Before you try and hang him he
needs to have council provided.

Blub whispers again.

JUDGE
According to whom?

LINCOLN
According to the Constitution of
the United States of America.

Blub whispers, technically he’s right.

JUDGE
Who would represent this Yankee
Doodle Dandy?

LINCOLN
I would.

Spector gaffaws.

SPECTOR
What do you know about the law? As
familiar as a hot bath and razor?

LINCOLN
I am a lawyer, fully knowing the
practice. And if I aren’t what I
claim, wouldn’t you favor an
ignorant as an adversary?

SPECTOR
No objection. Pope Pious would not
be able to acquit the boy.
(to Jury)
I hear we have his blessing.

JUDGE
Very well. You’re his council, Mr?

LINCOLN
Paul. Thank you, your honor.

Blub’s at it again as Lincoln walks to Clifford’s side.
LINCOLN
May I ask who this is keeps buzzing
in your ear?

JUDGE
My lawyer. Everyone else is
entitled. Why am I different?
Spector, your open.

TRANSITION TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY - LATER

Spector paces in front of the jury, stroking his mustache at
just the right moments.

SPECTOR
This tragedy does not have a happy
ending. It ends with the slaying of
our dear Mayor Thomas and continues
with the trial of his killer-- this
vagrant Clifford Johns. Orphan.
Loner. Angry young man. You’ll hear
testimony about the varied,
vivacious, venomous, vicious and
violent nature in which this
varmint carried out his carnage on
the Mayor’s carriage.

Smiles all the way back to his seat.

JUDGE
Statement, Mr Paul. Keep it brief
for perspiration’s sake.

Lincoln rises, stepping to Spector’s table.

LINCOLN
I’ll be brief.

Takes Clifford’s pistol and holds it up for the jury.

LINCOLN
They say Clifford shot with this
pistol. Gun’s broken. See for
yourself, the barrel’s twisted.

Clifford frets as Abe waves the gun around.

LINCOLN
Most anyone could get off is three
shots. Not enough bullets for all
the damage done. He didn’t do it.
Returns the gun. Spector rises.

SPECTOR
I call Nelly Fargus, a birdcall master.

TRANSITION TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY - LATER

Nelly Fargus, the old drunk from the bar, testifies.

FARGUS
Was in the vicinity of the Grizzly
Noel. Heard the call of an olive-sided flycatcher in that proximity
night 'fore. Strange as they're not
local t'the area.

SPECTOR
How many shots did you hear?

FARGUS
Three shots followed by the
protests of a warbling vireo.

SPECTOR
Unlike that poor vireo, I've no
further questions.

Lincoln steps up.

LINCOLN
Mr Fargus, you're as sure of the
number of shots as you are of the
bird you just named?

FARGUS
Are a dog's lips black?

TRANSITION TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY - LATER

MR DAVIES, the balding local printer, holds a newspaper with
the headline-- MAYOR SLAIN BY LONE ASSASSIN CLIFFORD JOHNS.

Reads aloud from his own print.
DAVIES
Clifford Johns from board house window armed, fired upon heroic Mayor’s carriage. Causing Mayor Thomas fatal harmed, victim to assassin’s bullet barrage. Smiling from ruminations of his sin, Clifford Johns is the villain with such grin.

SPECTOR
No further.

Lincoln’s exacerbated.

LINCOLN
Mr Davies, how did you determine these facts in your poem? Were you present at the assassination?

DAVIES
It is a sonnet, not a poem. I wasn’t present, but I heard a full account from Mrs Blankenship. I’ll have more papers for sale this afternoon.

LINCOLN
So you did no direct investigation yourself? Didn’t bother finding other witnesses?

DAVIES
What are you implying?

LINCOLN
I’m questioning the truthfulness of your article. We look to newspapers as a source of facts. History is told from facts. What would we know of the Battle of Yorktown if the printers only relied on Mrs Blankenship?

She stirs in the gallery.

MRS BLANKENSHIP
I wasn’t at the Battle of Yorktown.

Davies looks offended.

DAVIES
You mean to call our newspaper a liar?
INT. COURTROOM - DAY - LATER

Sweat drips from Spector’s brow. Everyone fans themselves.

SPECTOR
Our final witness is Deputy James Wilkens.

Doors open. In steps Jimmy Wilkens, hair slicked, in long pants and shoes. Mrs Wilkens beams with pride.

Shows off the SILVER STAR hanging from his shirt as he walks the aisle. The other kids are envious.

Taking his seat, he glows at all of the attention.

SPECTOR
Deputy Wilkens, why were you given the honor to wear that star?

Points at Clifford.

JIMMY
‘Cause I helped catch that killer.

SPECTOR
Let the record show that the witness--

JIMMY
Deputy Witness!

SPECTOR
Um, yes, Deputy Witness has identified the defendant as a killer. Tell us your story of that fateful day.

Jimmy’s confused.

SPECTOR
Yesterday.

JIMMY
Oh, yeah. Was outside the Boarding House... 

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Jimmy stands watch wearing a white TEN-GALLON-HAT. Looks like a bona-fide hero.
JIMMY (V.O.)
Right as the Mayor was ‘bout to hit
town, I saw the killer comin’ up.

Clifford’s all in black, shoving bullets into an oversized revolver.

JIMMY (V.O.)
He was loadin’ his gun and ‘fore he
goes inside, he smiles and says--

INT. COURTROOM – DAY
Jimmy on the stand.

JIMMY
I’m gonna kill that damn fool
Mayor!

SPECTOR
(enthralled)
And then what happened?

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE – DAY – FLASHBACK
Jimmy blocks the door. Clifford swings the revolver his way.

JIMMY (V.O.)
I tried to stop ‘em. He would-a
killed me too if he’d-a had time.

Cliff shoves the boy aside and runs in.

From the dirt Jimmy sees the Mayor’s carriage arrive.

JIMMY (V.O.)
‘Fore I could warn anyone I heard
him shootin’.

Clifford’s at the window, gun blazin’. Mayor falls over.

INT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE – DAY – FLASHBACK
Matis is asleep at his desk. Jimmy runs in.

JIMMY (V.O.)
First thing, I grabbed the Sheriff
and then we ran--
INT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Clifford descends the steps as Jimmy brings the Sheriff.

JIMMY (V.O.)
Back to the Boarding House.

Matis tries to grab him. Cliff ducks under his arms, right into a Jimmy Wilkens uppercut.

JIMMY (V.O.)
One punch and I had ‘em!

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Matis pats Jimmy on the back. Cliff is led away in chains. A Photographer uncaps a camera the size of a bread box.

Jimmy poses for a hero’s portrait.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Spector’s eyes are wide with admiration. Jimmy scans the gallery to see if anyone challenges his story.

SPECTOR
On behalf of the town, I thank you for your fine work. No further, Deputy Wilkens.

Lincoln and the boy lock eyes. The heat and humidity have made Abe’s hair scraggily and floppy in a comical way.

LINCOLN
Deputy, how old are you?

JIMMY
Twelve an’ three quarter.

SPECTOR
Objection. This is a man of the law. Age shouldn’t be relevant.

Blub whispers.

JUDGE
Overruled. Age isn’t relevant.

LINCOLN
How long have you known Clifford?
JIMMY
All ma life. Never been worth a
snail’s piss.

Barbara gasps, confiding to Mrs Blankenship.

BARBARA
Mouth on that boy. Mother should
wash it with soap. Well she should.

MRS BLANKENSHP
(whispering)
You seen those Wilkens kids? Don’t
think they own soap.

Lincoln sighs. *How do I question a kid?* Sarah catches his
eye. She makes motions with her hands. *What?*

SARAH
Ribbit.

Gets it. Gives her a wink.

LINCOLN
Deputy Wilkens, you know Sarah
Linton?

JIMMY
Heck yeah. Everyone knows her.

LINCOLN
What about Simon Blankenship?

JIMMY
Don’t think he’s in here.

Simon pops up from beside his mother.

SIMON
I’m right here!

Spector fidgets as the gallery laughs. Jimmy’s not amused.

JIMMY
What about ‘em?

LINCOLN
They told me something I found hard
to believe. They said you had a
leapin’ frog that could beat every
other frog in the county?

Spector bangs on his table.
SPECTOR
Objection. Nothing to do with the murder and it’s hearsay!

JIMMY
It ain’t hearsay! I’ve got Dan’l Webster right here to prove it.

Jimmy takes a LARGE FROG from his pocket and sets it on the witness stand.

ALISTAIR WILSON, a boy Jimmy’s age, holds up another frog.

ALLISTER
My King George beat Dan’l Webster just last week. He’s lyin’, Mister Prostitutor!

JIMMY
Shut your mouth, Alistair Wilson, or I’ll have you arrested. N’that was ‘fore I put the luck curse on.

LINCOLN
If Dan’l Webster were to race King George now, Dan’l would win?

Spector’s in a huff.

SPECTOR
Objection! What does this--

JIMMY
Shut your fat mouth.  
(to Judge)  
Don’t bang that glove.  
(to Lincoln)  
Not how a luck curse works, idiot.  
Curse was put on at midnight so he only gets leapin’ powers at noon.  
Everybody knows that.

LINCOLN
Only at noon?

JIMMY
Heck yeah. Just yesterday Dan’l Webster beat Billy Gardner’s Alexander Hamilton out at Jackson’s Creek.

LINCOLN
Jackson’s Creek?
JIMMY
I even got witnesses t’prove it.

LINCOLN
If you were at Jackson’s Creek, how
did you see Clifford at the
Boarding House? First shot was
heard as the clock struck noon.

JIMMY
(shocked)
I mean--

LINCOLN
What would Dan’l Webster say?

Jimmy thrusts the frog back in his pants, giving Abe a
hateful glare. Susan side-eyes Mrs Wilkens.

LINCOLN
I love tall tales but this isn’t
the time or place for ‘em. No more
stories.
   (to Spector)
No more lies.

SPECTOR
Redirect! Deputy, did you see
Clifford shoot the Mayor in cold
blood?

JIMMY
Hell yes!

JUDGE
Deputy Witness is excused.

Jimmy spits in Lincoln’s face and storms out.

JUDGE
Witnesses for defense?

Abraham scans the courtroom.

LINCOLN
Calling Silas Granger.

INT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE - DAY

Jimmy stands before the Sheriff.
JIMMY
He's a hog-swappin', jack-knifin',
puddin'-headed, pot luggin', hay
sniffin', hair pullin', toad
lickin', backslappin', toe suckin'--

INT. COURTROOM - DAY
Silas Granger on the stand.

GRANGER
--Broom-tail, but she was an
affable horse.

LINCOLN
Which direction was she tied to the
hitching post yesterday?

GRANGER
She was conoccidental-- had a fear
of facing west. Was tied facing
east, lookin' at the livery. Loved
lookin' in on the candies. Would
have had 'em too if she had thumbs
'stead a'hooves.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY
Jimmy, as before.

JIMMY
Bass kissin', honey-fuggled, slum
guzzlin', devil dancin', mold
gatherin'--

INT. COURTROOM - DAY
Granger, as before.

GRANGER
Gussie.

LINCOLN
Where did the bullet enter Gussie?

GRANGER
Her right flank.

LINCOLN
The side facing away from the
Boarding House?
GRANGER
Yes, of course. Coincidently I could a’sworn that I saw the flash and smoke of a rifle comin’ from The Grizzly Noel.

LINCOLN
You are swearin’ to it right now.

Spector stands in a snit.

SPECTOR
It could have ricocheted!

JUDGE
Spector, wait your turn.

Slaps his glove.

SAMUEL
Son of a--

INT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE - DAY

Jimmy, still swearing.

JIMMY
Sod-swappin’, coffee boilin’, bumble bettin’, dirt feelin’...

Slows his slurs as Matis takes down a rifle.

JIMMY
Rot-guttin’... bug steppin’... wart pickin’...

Sheriff puts the rifle in Jimmy’s hands.

MATIS
Time you earned that star, boy.

INT. COURTHROOM - DAY

Lincoln turns to the jury.

LINCOLN
No further.

SPECTOR
Mr Granger, in your expert opinion, could the bullet have ricocheted?
GRANGER
I suppose--

SPECTOR
Ha! You see? Ricochet. Bullets ricochet all the time.

Everyone’s restless and sweaty. Lincoln leans in to Clifford.

LINCOLN
(whispering)
Got an idea. Might not end well. Be ready for anything.

CLIFFORD
I trust you.

Clifford slips a wrist out of his manacle for Lincoln’s benefit then slides it back in.

Abraham rises with renewed vigor.

LINCOLN
Let’s hear from Sheriff Matis.

Blub whispers.

JUDGE
Unavailable.

LINCOLN
How about the bank owner? Mr Spinna, I believe’s his name?

Gasps from the jury and gallery. Whisper from Blub.

JUDGE
Unapproachable!

LINCOLN
The feller who runs the bank, what’s his name?

BARBARA
Tom Collins. Well it is.

Collins, near the back, stands.

JUDGE
Inaccessible.

COLLINS
I’m right here.
LINCOLN
Will you take the stand, sir?

SPECTOR
He’s unable to stand-- Judge, this is hogwash. He has nothing to do--

LINCOLN
Your honor, I don’t see the harm in asking him a few questions.

Judge shakes his glove at Blub, deflecting another whisper.

JUDGE
I’ll allow it. But if I see the harm you’ll hear from my glove.

Collins takes the stand.

LINCOLN
Were you inside the bank during the assassination?

COLLINS
Yes.

LINCOLN
And it was closed at the time?

COLLINS
Er-- yes.

Blub’s eyes get big. That Rassskeel.

LINCOLN
It’s still closed, correct?

Spector stands in such a rush he upends his table.

SPECTOR
This has nothing to do with the--

LINCOLN
(volume escalating)
Your honor, I know for a fact that just like the Mayor’s life, the property of the people of this town residing within the safe inside the bank has been stolen!

Room erupts in pandemonium. Everyone’s on their feet in a huff.

Judge’s glove has no effect.
TOWNSPEOPLE
--money --life savings --still
closed --thieves--

BLUB
Judge, you must take actcseeon!

JUDGE
I will take action. Mr Paul, you
are contemptuous. Quiet!

LINCOLN
(yelling over crowd)
It’s my belief that the Mayor’s
death was a crime committed to
conceal this theft using Clifford
as a scapegoat.

Judge tosses aside his glove and pulls off a RIDING BOOT,
banging it on his table.

JUDGE
Silence! I will not have chaos.

Arguments break out among the courtroom-- very NOISY.

LINCOLN
(yelling)
Perpetuated by this decadence of
law--

JUDGE
I will not have chaos!

LINCOLN
And a poor excuse for justice!

JUDGE
(louder than everyone)
I will not have justice in this
courtroom!

Everyone freezes. A pin could drop.

JUDGE
(embarrassed)
I mean... chaos.

Judge grabs his boot, runs to his chamber.

SPECTOR
Judge?
INT. JUDGE’S CHAMBER - DAY

Judge runs into a tiny room full of books and begins shoving things into a carpet bag.

He uncovers an old GAVEL-- held together by twine.

Matis runs in and grabs his arm.

MATIS
Where you going, Judge?

JUDGE
The stranger told everyone about the bank.

MATIS
You have to stop the trial.

JUDGE
It means releasing the boy.

MATIS
Release him. I don’t want the whole town revolting!

JUDGE
They’re already quite revolting!

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Blub dodges a tomato.

SPECTOR
Who brought produce to trial?

He’s hit with an egg. Collins is fending off an angry mob.

COLLINS
I can explain--

Judge returns with the gavel. He pushes Blub away.

JUDGE
In light of the current chaos and calamity, court is dismissed.

He bangs the gavel HARD, breaking off the top. Pegs Blub. Judge retreats as Collins bolts from the room. The mob chase after in a mad rush.

Clifford slips his chains, grabs his pistol and joins Lincoln, Sarah and Susan as they leave the court.
EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Exiting Town Hall, Lincoln’s troupe wanders into the rowdy, noisy mob besieging the bank.

SUSAN
All my money’s in the bank. How’d you know it’s stolen?

Barbara charges in, finger pointing, cutting him off.

BARBARA
Only way you’d know is if you’re in on it. Well it is!

The crowd overhears, turning on Lincoln and Clifford.

EXT. UNDER PORCH - DAY

Below a structure near the bank, Jimmy Wilkens blinks sweat out of his eyes while struggling with his rifle.

He aims for Lincoln’s top hat.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Arguments spread like wildfire. Mrs Wilkens and Mrs Blankenship push each other. Clifford deflects an attack from an Elderly Woman’s parasol.

CLIFFORD
I wasn’t even in that winda’!

Sarah tugs at Lincoln’s shirttails. He spreads his long arms and attempts to calm the hysterical.

LINCOLN
No sense fightin’ each other. Your Sheriff’s the one with answers.

Randall and Butler manage to block the Bank’s door, dodging rubbish and pushing people back.

On the edge of the fray, a sombreroed Samuel pulls his pistol. Aims for Lincoln.

Mr Spinna peers out his window at the anarchy below.

EXT. UNDER PORCH - DAY

Jimmy licks his lips as the crowd near Lincoln clears.
EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Susan separates Wilkens and Blankenship.

    SUSAN
    You both gone mad?

Lincoln glances down at Sarah as she clings to his leg.

    SARAH
    Let’s go home, Paul.

Old Man Wilson grabs his shoulder.

    OLD MAN WILSON
    We’ll hang you for sedition if it’s
    the last thing--

A RIFLE SHOT rings out.

Samuel looks bewildered at his unfired gun.

The mob scatters everywhere. Clifford grabs Susan, running

toward the Livery.

She stops, looking for her daughter.

Crowd thins. She spots Lincoln all alone, kneeling with his

back to her at the bottom of the Town Hall steps.

He pivots, cradling Sarah-- a GUNSHOT WOUND to her chest. His

eyes glaze. Silently delivers the news to Sue.

    SUSAN
    (screaming)
    No! You butchers. Just a baby!

Runs forward, falling onto them.

EXT. UNDER PORCH - DAY

Jimmy’s jaw drops in horror. Fighting tears, he rolls away

from the scene.

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

Susan sobs manically into Lincoln’s chest. He wraps his arms

around her, holding the lost child between them.

    FADE TO:
INT. SUSAN’S BEDROOM – NIGHT

A CRACK OF THUNDER accompanies heavy rain falling on the house. Lincoln’s bare-chested, displaying the muscular arms and shoulders of a rail-splitter.

He struggles to don a new shirt, his thoughts miles away.

    LINCOLN
    Oh Mary... God has called another child home. Ours were taken by nature. This girl by the violence of ignorance. What can I do?

INT. SUSAN’S HOUSE – NIGHT

A small wooden coffin sits open, Sarah’s body lying peacefully inside.

Clifford and Simon stare blankly at it. Barbara, Mrs Wilkens and Mrs Blankenship sit peacefully with the grandmother, Annie. The old woman lights up as Lincoln joins them.

Blankenship fidgets in the uncomfortable silence.

    MRS BLANKENSHP
    Beautiful dress she’s wearing.
    Betsy Ross couldn’t have sown a finer one.

Wilkens feigns a sob.

    MRS WILKENS
    I was the one who last saw her alive.

    BARBARA
    Not true. I was right next to her. Well I was.

    MRS WILKENS
    No, no-- it was me. I was just about to take her by the hand.

    MRS BLANKENSHP
    You’re mistaken, Julie. It was I who saw her last. I can still see her last smile.

    MRS WILKENS
    I am not mistaken! How dare you accuse me in my time of grief? And I with six children of my own?
INT. SUSAN’S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Susan’s eyes are red but dry. No more water in the well. The Priest and Circus Gang look away in shame and guilt.

SUSAN
Best you all leave right now. I’d leave with you just to get away from this forsaken town... but I have a funeral to plan.

She unbolts the back door, letting the sound of steady rain fill the room. The gang lines up to tread its waters.

Edmund leads, stopping briefly to pay respects.

EDMUND
Our condolences, Ma’am.

Dayland, the Dwarfs and Sword Swallower pass into the night. Susan stops the Priest. He reluctantly meets her eye.

SUSAN
Will you speak at the burial? She deserves the proper prayers. I won’t have it presided over by her killers.

PRIEST
I’m not— Of course. You...
(tearing up)
Give me faith in humanity. Your compassion in light of adversity—

SUSAN
Adversity? Humanity and compassion left here a long time ago. I should have followed.

INT. SUSAN’S HOUSE - NIGHT

The women continue to argue. Simon slips away to peer into Sarah’s room.

BARBARA
I have no children but it felt like Sarah was one of my own.

MRS BLANKENSHP
I blame myself.
MRS WILKENS
You can’t be grieving as much as I.
Impossible I say.

The ladies’ sobs draw Susan upstairs.

SUSAN
Will you three stop this display?
You want to draw sympathy upon
yourselves, do it at another house.

MRS WILKENS
Our sympathy is with you, Susan.
Don’t be upset with us. If anyone
is to blame, it’s this stranger in
the top hat.

The three point venomous looks Lincoln’s way.

MRS WILKENS
I hate to be the one to say it...

BARBARA
Say it!

MRS WILKENS
When you took him in, you damned
your daughter to death!

BARBARA
Are you satisfied with what you’ve
done to this town? What do you have
to say for yourself?

He removes his hat and stands over the coffin.

LINCOLN
Death is a nemesis we all face. The
lives of our loved ones may be the
most precious part of ourselves.
When the cherished are taken away
they leave a hole that can never be
corporeally filled. A part of us
will always be missing.

He puts his broad hand on top of Sarah’s clasped fingers.

LINCOLN
Many will say she’s in a better
place. They say she’ll always be
with us. When we die we will see
her again. I just don’t know. We
all have ideas of what happens when
we die.

(MORE)
LINCOLN (CONT'D)

What journey does our soul make? Do we become ladybugs? Or does our soul perhaps travel the places we longed to see in life but were never able? My answer would only be a guess.

He sweeps a stray hair on the girl’s head then turns to the others.

LINCOLN

One thing I can say for certain is that we should honor and bury this fragile body... but this is not Sarah. This is just what we hugged her with.

Simon stares at one of Sarah’s orphaned dolls.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - NIGHT

Flick makes a dash through the rain, running as fast as his little legs carry him.

EXT. TOWN HALL ROOF - NIGHT

Butler stands from his perch and aims a long rifle.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - NIGHT

Jumping over the brush, Flick turns back to see a MUZZLE FLASH. The CRACK catches up a split second before he’s hit. Thrown to the mud, his struggle to stay awake is lost.

FADE TO:

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - DAY

Flick awakens. Fingers the trough graze wound on his head. Looks up to the REARING HOOVES of the Dark Horsed Rider’s BLACK MUSTANG. The horse’s NEIGH echoes ominously.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Migrant vendors dump mud from their wares as the midnight stallion trots past.
Dark Horsed Rider wears a UNION OFFICER’S COAT faded black by the sun. Under an overgrown beard he dons a US MARSHAL’S BADGE.

The CLOPS of his horse are offset by the STRIKING of a HAMMER. Deputy Randall nails a sign to the hitching post.

Both horse and hammer cease as The Marshal dismounts. Randall backs off as the larger man reads the poster.

$100 DOLLAR REWARD: CIRCUS TROUPE WANTED FOR ROBBERY, MURDER

With a loud SNORT, Marshal climbs the Town Hall steps.

INT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE - DAY

Spector, Wayne, Blub and Jimmy flank Matis at his desk. The Marshal holds out a crude sketch of Lincoln in silhouette.

Matis glances briefly before handing it off.

MATT
How ’bout that, Spector. You got whupped by a wanted man.

MARSHAL
He’s still here?

MATT
We shoot anyone tries to leave. Been a rash of malfeasance lately.

SPECTOR
Who is he?

Marshal takes back his sketch.

MARSHAL
Federal fugitive. I’m to deliver him back east. Alive.

MATT
Not sure we can oblige, Marshal. He killed a little girl.

SPECTOR
Broke a murderer out of jail.

WAYNE
Robbed our bank.

BLUB
Assasseeanated our mayor.
JIMMY
And he’s ugly.

MARSHAL
Can’t be the same man.

EXT. SUSAN’S STREET – DAY
Solemn faces as Lincoln and Clifford lead Silas Granger and Old Man Wilson in lifting Sarah’s coffin.

Simon puts a HARMONICA to his lips, starting a somber dirge. Pedro accompanies on a QUENACHO FLUTE.

Susan follows the coffin wearing her pink dress, joined by various townspeople while The Priest leads the whole affair.

EXT. BURNED OUT CHURCH – DAY
Randall hears the distant music while sneaking a smoke.

 Watches slack-jaw as the Sword Swallower stirs within the ruins. Dayland and deputy lock looks.

Edmund pops up, blinking out sleep. Randall drops his smoke and runs for it.

INT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE – DAY
Matis is doling out rifles to his Posse when Randall bursts in out of breath.

RANDALL
Sheriff, found the Circus Gang. Out at the ol’ church.

MATIS
Fugitive’ll have to wait, Marshal. Still, might find him ‘long the way. Show you how criminals fare in our town.

EXT. TOWN HALL – DAY
Butler climbs down from the roof to join the Posse as they take to the streets. Blub pulls his saber.

The Marshal scowls, tagging after a few strides behind.

They leave Main Street, off to the church.
EXT. TENTH STREET - DAY

Simon’s going to town on Chopin backed by Pedro’s flute.

It’s a poor part of town. Pauper women and children come out to pay respects as the coffin passes.

Susan nods to every one. Too many faces. Unreal.

EXT. BURNED OUT CHURCH - DAY

The Posse fans out, deputies taking cover while Matis stands firm, Colt in hand.

    MATIS
    Tell me where the money is, I’ll let all but one of you go.

Only the remote harmonica responds.

    MATIS
    Even let you decide which one.

Marshal hangs back, not happy with what he sees.

INT. BURNED OUT CHURCH - DAY

It’s just Glick. Hiding. Trying to decide.

Wayne finds him. Decides to run. Wayne SHOOTS.

EXT. BURNED OUT CHURCH - DAY

Glick bursts out as the wood behind him EXPLODES.

He’s only a short distance when the LOUD STACCATO of the lawmen cut him down.

EXT. ELM STREET - DAY


The cortege stops in the mud, stacking up.

Simon turns to Lincoln for direction.

Reminding him of his own sons, Abraham wrestles with composure as he nods the boy on.

The harmonica plays. Moving again.
EXT. BURNED OUT CHURCH - DAY

Jimmy watches, fascinated, as Glick squirms in mud and blood. Exhales his last breath. So that’s death?

His eyes stay fixated while his body carries him away.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

The Posse rounds the corner in time to see Edmund and Dayland duck into a side alley. Wayne and Randall lead the chase.

Marshal blocks Matis’ way.

MARSHAL
Your men just murdered that unarmed man. No star gives you the right.

MATIS
You don’t really consider it a man, do you?

Matis bumps past him. Marshal follows—under protest.

EXT. SIXTH STREET - DAY

The Harmonica grows louder as Sword Swallower, Edmund and Dayland dash blindly ahead.

One street over the funeral advances the opposite way.

The Posse gives chase.

EXT. SEVENTH STREET - DAY

Crossing the intersection, Lincoln watches the deputies run by. Next the Sheriff. Abraham FREEZES, stopping the procession—The Marshal crosses, never turning his head.

CLIFFORD
What is it, Paul?

Lincoln’s breathe has left him. Dark Horsed Rider here?

LINCOLN
Susan, I have to go. There’s a man here who’s pursued me a long way. I can’t put any of you in more danger.
Priest relives him of coffin duties. Susan hugs him. Takes a beat, but he returns it.

    SUSAN
    I don’t blame you for anything.

She lets go. Turns his glassy eyes to Clifford.

    LINCOLN
    Clifford Johns, you’re infamous in these parts now. No need to find an outlaw name. You’ve got a good one.

Cliff isn’t happy to see him go.

Abe touches the coffin then runs away.

EXT. DELAWARE AVE – DAY

Sword Swallower splits off from Edmund and Dayland.
The harmonica resumes.
Randall and Blub go after the swordsman.

EXT. DEAD END ALLEY – DAY

Randall trains his rifle, advancing on the cornered Arabian.
CLICK- Rifle’s jammed. Throws it in the mud.

Reaches for his pistol. Pulls the trigger ‘fore it’s out of the holster. Shot in the foot.

Sword Swallower coughs up his sword. They lock eyes, connecting, even as the Swaller’s blade impales Randall.

Randall throws his eyes to heaven. Beautiful sky.

Blub steps up, swinging his saber.

    BLUB
    Ah! An adversary with a seeword.

EXT. ELM STREET – DAY

Edmund and Dayland hide in doorways, flintlocks ready. Wayne charges forward, gun raised.

A puff of smoke. Another.
A hole appears in Wayne’s face. Another bloodies his eye. He fires his pistol in the air.

Butler watches him fall.

EXT. AMBASSADOR ALLEY - DAY
Lincoln turns his good ear to the gunshot.

EXT. ELM STREET - DAY
Matis, Spector and Wilkens jump over Wayne’s body.
Marshall stops, pulls his sidearm. Leaves his own way.

EXT. DEAD END ALLEY - DAY
Swallower and Blub clang steel in time to the harmonica.
Blub parries forward, driving Swallower back. Slashing, CLANGING-- Swallower’s sword flies away.
Blub slashes him down the middle.
The Arab SCREAMS, dropping to his knees.

EXT. MULBERRY STREET - DAY
The scream echoes around the funeral party. Susan closes her eyes. A few townspeople peel off for safety.

EXT. DELAWARE AVE - DAY
The Marshal hurries. Runs toward the harmonica.

EXT. SEVENTH STREET - DAY
Edmund and Dayland run for their lives.

EDMUND
We must absquatulate, dear brother.

Butler slips in the mud. Spector and Wilkens take aim.
Blub rounds the corner of a house, in the line of fire.
Jimmy shoots, striking Blub in the throat.
Blub holds his neck, lurching at Jimmy, swinging his sword.

Just out of reach, Blub stumbles and dies at the boy’s feet.

JIMMY
(in Blub’s accent)
It was an acceeadent.

EXT. SIXTH STREET - DAY

Marshal hears HORSE CLOPS approaching.

Hides behind some barrels as it GALLOPS by. On a hunch he follows.

EXT. HARROW ALLEY - DAY

The length of the street is laden with CLOTHES LINES full of linen frills and fancies.

Edmund and Dayland dodge pantaloons, zigzagging.

Butler, Spector and Wilkens raise their rifles.

EXT. POLK STREET - DAY

Lincoln shuffles between doorways. The CLIP-CLOP of a horse grows louder over the constant harmonica.

EXT. MULBERRY STREET - DAY

LOUD RIFLE CRACKS make the funeral party jump. More flee for their homes.

EXT. HARROW ALLEY - DAY

Edmund gasps-- grasping at clothes lines that break under his grip. Staggering as his eyes smile at Dayland.

Dayland’s eyes smile back. He covers himself with a stolen blanket, winding it around him.

Matis fires his Colt.

Blanket fills with holes before dropping shapelessly.

Dayland has VANISHED.
EXT. MIDSUMMER’S ALLEY - DAY

Lincoln rounds the corner, into the crosshairs of a man on a horse. The rider lifts his sombrero—Samuel.

Neither expected the other. Samuel remembers his gun.

    SAMUEL
    I’ve never killed anyone.

    LINCOLN
    Don’t let me get you started.

    SAMUEL
    They killed her? Mabel? She was gone be my wife.

    LINCOLN
    I’m sorry for you, son.

    SAMUEL
    Are you? They’ll kill me too. Treat me no better than a slave. I’m gone take a few of you with me.

Abraham slowly raises his hands.

    LINCOLN
    I am not your enemy, sir. We’re both runaways.

Takes one to know one.

    SAMUEL
    Can’t run forever.

Marshal steps from the shadows.

    MARSHAL
    He’s right. No more running.

Hunter and prey size each other up.

    LINCOLN
    You’ve followed me a long way.

    MARSHAL
    It is you. Mr Lincoln—why did you leave? Everyone thinks you’re dead.

    LINCOLN
    The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated.
EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

Matis, Wilkens, Spector and Butler advance. Jimmy sees the stoic look on the others’ faces and tries to ape it.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Simon and Pedro pipe the procession onto Main Street.
Sheriff and Posse make the turn on the opposite end. Both headed toward each other.

EXT. MIDSUMMER’S ALLEY - DAY

Samuel cagily waves his gun between Lincoln and Marshal. His horse betrays his anxiety, stomping side to side.

    MARSHAL
    I’m a Federal Officer. There
doesn’t need to be any more blood
shed. I can help.

Lincoln turns to the wailing harmonica— it’s close and LOUD.
Too much for Samuel. Tears blinding, he aims for Lincoln.
Marshal sees what’s coming— JUMPS into action.

    MARSHAL
    You can’t!

Samuel SHOOTS.
The Marshal shields Lincoln. Collapses into Abraham’s arms.
Samuel raps his horse’s ass and charges away--

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Samuel bolts out, rearing his horse between the Posse and the Funeral. He FIRES MULTIPLE SHOTS at the Sheriff’s men.

They FIRE BACK, cutting down both Samuel and horse.
The Priest’s hit in the arm. A bullet grazes the coffin— it falls to Susan’s horror.
Simon’s harmonica hits the mud, silenced as he’s yanked to safety. Everyone flees, even the Merchants.

Only Clifford remains by Susan, righting the coffin.
EXT. MIDSUMMER’S ALLEY - DAY

Lincoln covers the Marshal with his coat. He takes a hard
look at the man’s ARMY REVOLVER.

Grabs it, runs to--

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Butler dips his rifle and suddenly BELCHES BLOOD. Under his
bushy beard is one of Samuel’s bullets. He collapses.

Matis and Spector swap faces. That’s that.

Lincoln peers out from behind a porch.

Susan’s had it. Her finger traces the bullet furrow.

Incensed, she marches furiously at the Sheriff.

SUSAN
(yelling)
You call this civilization? You
call this FREEDOM? How many
children have to die? How many
husbands off to a war they never
come back from?

She stops a stone’s throw from Matis to grab a rock.

SUSAN
This is how you rule us? Steal our
lives like you steal our money?

Matis all but dares her.

MATIS
I’m protecting this town.

SUSAN
This TOWN--

She pegs him in the shoulder with the rock.

SUSAN
Needs protection from you!

Wilkens points his rifle at her. Spector the same.

Lincoln stands. Oh no.

Clifford steps in front of her. His pistol shifts between the
riflemen.
SPECTOR
Matis, tell your bastard to stop
aiming his gun at me.

Matis sneers as Clifford’s whole world changes. Not him.

CLIFFORD
She told me you wasn’t.

MATIS
She was a liar. Lied ’bout a lot of
things. Wonder you turned out so
damned honest.

Cliff’s drawn to him. Hug him or hit him? Hits him.

Matis knees him severely. Kicks him down. Kicks him when he’s
down.

Susan flails at Matis, spitting in tongues. He clutches both
her wrists, enraged by this uppity woman.

Lincoln’s done. Done running. Done hiding.

LINCOLN
Forgive me, Mary.
(with force)
STOP!

Gallantly he strides forward, Colt tucked in his belt. Each
step fortifying him. He’s a leader, damnit!

The Priest sees God’s Hand.

Jimmy Wilkens sees a hero.

Matis throws Susan down and looks to the Bank’s window.

Spinna’s watching. Jerks his head. Get to it.

Throwing off his coat, Matis meets Lincoln in the middle of
the street.

Face to face... hands twitching over guns. Neither blink.

LINCOLN
We could kill each other.

MATIS
We could.

LINCOLN
Lot of death here today.
MATIS
(he’s right)
A lot of death.

LINCOLN
We could perpetuate the violence.
Stain the land with more blood.
What does it accomplish?

MATIS
(angry)
You come into my town--

LINCOLN
This isn’t your town!

Gestures to Susan and Clifford.

LINCOLN
It’s their town. The people’s town.
Without them you’re just a blustering knave. I kill you,
another will take your place.

Points at Mr Spinna.

LINCOLN
That’s who I want see. He’s the blight that pollinates your evil deeds. He’s the menace to tranquility. The cancerous root.

Back to the Sheriff. Indifference with a bit of pity.

LINCOLN
You, sir, are just a trifle. Your vanity buttresses you high above your own nugacity.

Infuriated, Matis reaches for his holster. Spinna KNOCKS on his window-- gesturing to himself.

MATIS
The blight wants to see you.

SUSAN
No, Paul. They’ll kill you.

He gives her a gritty smile.

LINCOLN
They’ve already lost. Theirs is a perdition of their own creation.
INT. BANK - DAY

Matis and Lincoln trod up the steps. Tom Collins stands among bags full of money.

INT. MR SPINNA’S OFFICE - DAY

His cherry-polished WHEELCHAIR matches the walls and the cherry-polished desk.

Lincoln gets his first good look: a balding, bloated sack of stern, dressed to the nines with no use of his legs.

MR SPINNA
The one who’s been causing all the trouble, eh?
(as to a servant)
I’ll see him alone, Matis.

MATIS
I’ll be downstairs.

The door’s SCRAPE gives the two a moment to size each other up. Both take a breath, waiting for the other.

MR SPINNA
How would you like to run this town? The Mayorship is up for election.

LINCOLN
You can’t buy me. You can’t entice me. You can’t promise me favors.

MR SPINNA
(confused)
Well what is it you want? A job?

LINCOLN
I worked for one gang of crooks in this town. Not workin’ for another.

Got Spinna’s attention. Rolls forward for a strike.

MR SPINNA
Crook? I’m a businessman. Do you think I arrange all these things for my own amusement? Stir up the town a bit? Give them a hanging?

Dashes his blanket aside, flashing a small DERRINGER.
MR SPINNA
It’s for my business. None of your business. Get out of here.

Abraham pulls his shirt open. Shoot me.

LINCOLN
You going to kill me? A lotta people died to make this a country of liberty. All men equal under the law. You’ve built this ivory tower on the misfortunes of others. You scheme ways to swindle your fellow man out of their money, their happiness, their liberty.

Spinna lowers the gun.

MR SPINNA
Liberty? They depend on me.

LINCOLN
You leave them in desperation. You crave their dependency. You’re addicted to it. Without their dependencies you’re a shallow, empty-shelled nothing.

Spinna rolls back defensively.

MR SPINNA
Is that all you got? Takes a lot more to offend me, sir.

LINCOLN
In your narcissism and avarice you’ve no sense of the common good. You’ve no moral apathy. You inflame the savageness of man, creating false distinctions, fanning envy and resentment. All the while imposing only your will and you-- (how pathetic) You robbed your own bank.

That stung a bit.

MR SPINNA
Whaddya propose we do about it?

LINCOLN
We let reason be our rock.

Considers it.
MR SPINNA
Not in this country.

He SHOOTS from the hip.
Lincoln SLAMS into the wall. Fires back. Stumbles forward.
Floor hits him on the side of the head.

FADE TO:

INT. MR SPINNA’S OFFICE – DAY – MOMENTS LATER

The light catches his top-hat standing upright on the floor.

POUNDING ON THE STAIRS snaps him to his feet, hugging the desk. His lower side’s now a BLOODY WOUND.

Spinna remains seated, a hole between his eyes.

LINCOLN
Sic semper tyrannis.

DOOR BURSTS OPEN-- Spector bumps Matis aside and FIRES!

PING--RING--BEERP

The bullet bounces from cherry wall to cherry wall-- pegs Spector right in his heart.

SPECTOR
Ricochet?

He drops. Lincoln and Matis UNLOAD on each other. The desk is splintered-- The back wall dotted. ALL MISSES.

Matis dumps his shells. Hands shake reloadin’.

Behind the desk, Abe gasps at a pain in his pocket. Pulls out the METEOR ROCK.

With all energy focused, he RISES. Winds up--

Fastball cracks the Sheriff’s head. His legs go rubbery. Off balance, he steps on the brim of Lincoln’s hat--

Pinwheels-- the hat flies up. Abe plucks it from the air.

Matis CRASHES through the window, in gravity’s hands.

Lincoln puts on his hat.

Grabs five-dollar bank notes to hold his side in.
INT. BANK - DAY

A thousand LADYBUGS fill the air and crawl over a bewildered Lincoln as he staggers down past a shamed Tom Collins.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Matis squirms inhumanly, reaching broken bones for his dropped pocket-watch.

Clifford stands over him, revolver shaking minutely.

The Sheriff’s hand starts to wrap itself around--

The revolver ROARS, the saved bullet depriving Matis of a grip. Sheriff out.


Abraham’s not scared. Jimmy is. His FROG leaps from his pocket and he drops his gun to follow.

Susan and Clifford run to Lincoln’s side, catching his fall.

SUSAN
Paul!

CLIFFORD
We gotta get you sewn up.

The boy winces as he peels a bank note. Not him.

SUSAN
Get the doctor! Anybody?

The town’s peeking out. None respond.

LINCOLN
He... won’t be any assistance.

SUSAN
We’ve got to do something!

What can we do?

LINCOLN
Water!

CLIFFORD
I’ll get some--

Abe grabs him tight. Pulls him close.
LINCOLN
Take me to the water. I want to see it one last time.

Gets it.

Cliff leaps away, leaving Susan and Lincoln to admire each other. There’s more of us out there.

Clifford bows the Marshal’s black horse so that Abe is lifted onto the saddle. Cliff steadies and mounts.

Townspeople come out, doffing their hats when Father Abraham trots past. He slumps.

Susan releases his hand to stand by Sarah’s coffin.

Clifford spurs the horse to a run.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN – DAY

A band of soldiers led by a distinguished CAPTAIN LINTON stop their march to see the dark horse ride for life and death.

EXT. FIELD – DAY

Midnight hooves break the hard ground, machine-gunning ECHOES throughout the desert.

It leaps over the FALLEN CORPSE of the lone MULE.

EXT. SUNNY CALIFORNIA BEACH – DAY

The horse hits the brakes as it hits the shore.

Lincoln falls from the saddle, his hat tumbling into the water. Cliff jumps off and kneels by his side.

Cradles Abe’s head. Lincoln takes in the sea.

LINCOLN
It all ends here.

CLIFFORD
If I hadn’t a--

LINCOLN
Whoa, son. No blame for this. I was... overdue.
CLIFFORD
You get up there? Tell ‘em nice things about me.

Makes him smile.

LINCOLN
You have my word.

Clifford ponders it all.

CLIFFORD
What if there is no heaven? Or a hell? Where do we go?

Tears of hope wet Abraham. It’s out there somewhere.

LINCOLN
I hear Alaska’s nice.

He’s with the angels now. Cliff hugs his body.

His top hat washes out to sea, bobbing in the waves.

FADE OUT.