

THE HARDER THEY FALL

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Screenplay by Jeymes Samuel and Boaz Yakin

Card: **While the events of this story are fictional...**

Card: **These. People. Existed.**

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

In the distance, a small white CHURCH sits in the middle of an open field.

INT. CHURCH SIDE-HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A dining room. A painting of Jesus hangs directly above a fireplace. On the other side of the stone wall hangs a shiny WINCHESTER 1866 RIFLE.

A MAN, PASTOR THEODORE LOVE – dressed in a black gown and clerical collar, hangs his coat by the door.

Behind him, his WIFE, ELEANOR LOVE, finishes prepping the dinner table. A full Sunday feast.

Theodore's SON, NATHANIEL LOVE, years old, sits at the table holding his tattered two-string guitar.

His father smiles and takes the guitar from his son.

THEODORE LOVE
Not at the table, son.

Theodore walks over to Eleanor – they kiss lovingly.

Theodore sits at the head of the table – Eleanor sits on his left – with his son to his right.

Little Nathaniel attempts to grab bread from the bowl but his mother lightly smacks his hand–

ELEANOR
Grace first.

THEODORE LOVE
You know better.

Eleanor smiles. The Pastor, his wife, and his son hold hands and bow their heads.

THEODORE LOVE (CONT'D)
Father, we are gathered here to share this food in your name. Bless this food into our bodies, Oh Lord. Bless our hearts in all that we do, Oh Lord, so we may walk in your na–

The NEIGH of a horse from seemingly right outside the door stops the Pastor's prayer in its tracks. The family all look toward the door in puzzlement.

ELEANOR LOVE
Who'll be out here at this time?

THEODORE LOVE
I have no idea.

Silence.

Then-

BANG! BANG!

Theodore gets up and walks toward the door. A weary caution is upon him.

He opens the door.

I/E. CHURCH SIDE-HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A TALL MAN in a trench coat and Stetson stands before him. FIVE MORE MEN in trench coats on horseback dismounting their horses behind him. These are not law-abiding men.

The Pastor stares closely at the Man... Theodore's eyes fill with shock and fear as though he is staring at the Grim Reaper.

Theodore's mouth opens-

THEODORE LOVE (CONT'D)
No.

The acoustic folk song 'THREE AND THIRTY YEARS' PLAYS on the soundtrack.

Theodore quivers in fear. He looks up a shiny WINCHESTER 1866 RIFLE hanging on the stone wall.

The Man calmly brushes Theodore to the side and enters his home. Theodore follows him. ONE OF THE OTHER MEN walk inside behind the Pastor...

E/I. CHURCH SIDE-HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Man walks to the Mother and Son seated at the table. Theodore pleads to him.

THEODORE LOVE (CONT'D)
Leave my family alone... please.

The Man's Henchman stands behind little Nathaniel and places his hand on the boy's shoulders, ensuring he cannot move.

The Henchman's hand bears the TATTOO OF A SCORPION.

The Man the Pastor called 'RUFUS' pulls out two COLT ARMY REVOLVERS with checkered ivory grips and heavy leaf engraving on a SOLID GOLD finish.

He points his guns at Eleanor and Nathaniel. Theodore shakes tearfully.

ELEANOR

Theodore...?

THEODORE LOVE

It's okay. It's okay.

Eleanor and Nat are frozen with fear.

THEODORE LOVE (CONT'D)

Leave them out of this.

The Man COCKS back each hammer.

THEODORE LOVE (CONT'D)

Your quarrel is with me. Let's go outside, take a walk and handle our business. Please...Please I'm begging you

The Man calmly... BLOWS Eleanor to Kingdom Come. Theodore SCREAMS—

Eleanor FLIES BACKWARDS and hits the wall. Dead on impact.

Theodore and Nathaniel SCREAM! The Pastor runs to his wife, STILL SCREAMING. Little Nathaniel struggles in vain to get free of the Henchman.

Theodore Love holds his Wife's body - seemingly begging God in ERRATIC PRAYER.

Theodore looks up at the Man in fury and LUNGES toward- BANG!! BANG!!

The Pastor CRASHES back to the floor- Dead at his wife's side.

..

NATHANIEL SCREAMS—

NATHANIEL LOVE

NO!!

He puts his guns back into the holsters and turns to the son.

NATHANIEL WEEPS AS

-The Man takes out a SHAVING RAZOR with a red handle and stands

-THE HENCHMAN GRIPS NATHANIEL BY THE CHIN-

-The Man walks over to Nathaniel Love and CARVES the blade into the boy's forehead...

NATHANIEL SCREAMS UNTIL THE HEAVENS CRACK.

NATHANIEL LOVE (CONT'D)

NO!!!

HARD CUT TO

EXT. CEMETERY - DUSK

TITLE:

SALINAS, TEXAS

SOME TIME LATER

INT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

The front doors open, and the Priest steps inside, backlit by the sun's red rays. He stops as he sees

A SINGLE FIGURE kneeling at a pew in front of the altar in the otherwise vacant church. The PRIEST calls out in Spanish:

PRIEST

<Father Esparza? I'm here for confession...and the collection. You know what happens when you're late with my coins.>

FIGURE

What possesses a man to paint a scorpion on his hand?

The Priest takes a step forward into the light, and we see the face of JESÚS CORTEZ. A white clerical collar encircles his neck.

CORTEZ

Excuse me?

The figure in the pews raises a black hat and puts it on its head. Stands and turns, revealing himself to be a YOUNG MAN wearing a dark coat. His hat is low, casting a shadow over his steely eyes. This is NAT LOVE.

NAT

A snake... I understand that, the Garden of Eden, Bible et cetera. But a scorpion? That puzzles me.

Cortez's demeanor changes from quizzical to nervous.

CORTEZ

Who are you?

NAT

A man here to kill The Scorpion... Jesus Cortez.

Cortez and Nat lock eyes. CLOSE ON CORTEZ'S HAND— TATTOOED WITH A SCORPION— He almost tries to conceal it.

CORTEZ

Those were different times. Whatever happened between you and I must've been a long time ago.

Nat Love removes his hat... revealing AN INDENTED SCAR OF A CRUCIFIX ON HIS FOREHEAD.

Cortez looks closely... has a moment of realization.

CORTEZ (CONT'D)

(shocked)

No.

NAT

(softly)

No.

CORTEZ

(regretfully)

Please.

NAT

(simply)

Please.

CORTEZ

(fearfully)

I'm sorry.

NAT
 (peacefully)
 I'm sorry.

Cortez has no choice - He reaches down to open his robe- and reveals a GUN-BELT with TWO SIX-GUNS.

Nat moves aside the flap of his coat, revealing a GUN at his own hip.

Cortez draws his gun with great speed, but

Nat draws faster and fires- BANG! Hits Cortez right in the chest- FREEZE FRAME:

THE

Another shot from Nat hits him in the heart- FREEZE:

HARDER

Another shot sends him off his feet- FREEZE:

THEY

Another shot catches Cortez in the middle of the air- FREEZE:

FALL

Cortez slams down to the ground in a cloud of dust and blood.

Nat holsters his gun. Walks over to Cortez and looks down at him.

Nat reaches down and pulls the collar off Cortez's neck. Then, from O.S.

SCARED VOICE
 Is it over?

Nat sees the terrified FATHER ESPARZA peeking out from behind the pulpit.

He folds the collar and puts it into his pocket.

NAT
 This is a wanted man. Turn his body in, you'll have five thousand dollars for your church.

FATHER ESPARZA
 Why aren't you taking him in yourself?

NAT
I'm worth ten.

Nat flips open the cylinder of his pistol. The voice of ELVIS PRESLEY singing 'CRYING IN THE CHAPEL' blasts on the SOUND-TRACK as Nat puts bullets in the chamber. Then he turns, tips his hat to Father Esparza, and

EXT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

-- THE DUB BASS-LINE BENEATH ELVIS' VOICE KICKS IN as Nat Love swings up onto his horse, prods its flanks, and rides out of town; This is a different version of the song. This is a different version of a Western.

Opening titles appear over

A HORSE'S GALLOPING HOOVES

Churning up the ground -- WIDEN OUT to see EIGHT MENACING RIDERS on horseback, wearing CRIMSON HOODS, with the eyes and mouth cut out, riding toward us at full speed...

CLOSE ANGLES ON THE CANVAS BAGS hanging off the backs of the horses -- ONE BAG has a slash in it and A FEW FIVE DOLLAR BILLS FLY OUT, whipping into the air...

WIDE ON THE RIDERS, so wide they look like dots in a cloud of dust, riding over the rough terrain. SUPER:

Indian Territory, Kansas border

CAMERA TILTS DOWN to reveal TWO MEN in the f.g., pressed back against jutting rocks. TWO COWBOYS -- BILL PICKETT, and JIM BECKWOURTH, early 20s. Pickett flips a coin and gazes behind him.

Pickett begins CHANTING AN OLD NEGRO SPIRITUAL--

PICKETT
Upon my return. See a changing
soul.

Pickett cocks his WINCHESTER.

PICKETT (CONT'D)
That a walk was far. And way too
long.

The Gang ride through the passage, galloping to the other side...

PICKETT (CONT'D)

They'll run from me, As they ran
from you, That fear in me, In a
distant view...

And- BLAM! A rifle shot rings out... A near-impossible shot.
ONE of the eight men flies off his horse.

BLAM! -- A SECOND MAN falls back in his saddle...

The remaining SIX spin their horses around, drawing their
guns-

ANGLE ON PICKETT

Ensnconced behind a rock, his rifle leveled as deadly a shot
as there ever was- he FIRES TWO MORE TIMES- BLAM! -- BLAM!

-- Killing A THIRD MAN and wounding another. The gang's
leader, tough MONROE GRIMES, leaps off his horse's back and
gets behind it. He pulls his hood off and shouts to his men-

BLAM! -- Pickett finishes off the wounded man. The remaining
THREE manage to climb off their horses and get behind rocks,
blocking themselves from Pickett's sights...

ANGLE ON PICKETT -- Taking careful aim, and- BLAM!

-- Shoots one of the men in the leg. The man goes down
screaming, and-

Monroe SHOOTS HIS OWN HORSE in the head and pulls it down to
the ground, tucking down behind it.

He pulls out his RIFLE from his saddle, braces it on his dead
horse's flank and FIRES accurately at-

PICKETT, who is forced to duck down as...

THE OTHER THREE MEN see the direction their leader is firing
in; two of them level PISTOLS and the third gets his RIFLE
and all of them fire at the spot Pickett is hiding behind.

PICKETT scrunches down, BULLETS flying all around him...

MONROE

Stop firing! It's one man. We got
him pinned.

THE BANDITS stop shooting, staying behind their horses,
keeping their guns leveled in Pickett's direction.

MONROE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Wait for his to head show, then
 blow naps off that muthafucka. Be
 patient...

BECKWOURTH (O.S.)
 I hear patience is a virtue-

THE SURPRISED BANDITS spin around to see

JIM BECKWOURTH

Standing behind them. Crazy, his hands are empty, hanging
 by the sides of his still HOLSTERED PISTOLS.

BECKWOURTH (CONT'D)
 -- But I ain't never been able to
 wait to see if the muthafucka true
 or not.

CLYDE GRIMES of the Crimson Hood Gang knows this loudmouth.

CLYDE
 Jim Beckwourth.

BECKWOURTH
 The Brothers Grime.

CLYDE
 It's Grimes with an 'S' you
 egotistical piece of shit.

BECKWOURTH
 I remember times y'all hoods used
 to be Crimson. You know the
 Crimson Hood Gang. Those
 muthafuckas is pink now.

CLYDE
 You know, momma used to say 'Jim is
 such a sweet boy' you what I used
 to say? MUTHA FUCK JIM! Look what
 he did to my FUCKIN' EYE!

BECKWOURTH
 I am sweet!

CLYDE
 Ya not sweet.

BECKWOURTH
 Bitch I'm Sweet!

Clyde and Beckwourth continue arguing back and forth in front of the BANDITS.

CLYDE

I'd rather be dead than hear this
muthafucker keep talkin'

Clyde and the BANDITS draw their weapons, but

BECKWOURTH is lightning-fast -- He draws BOTH GUNS AND FIRES THEM-- instantly taking down TWO MEN-- FIRES and nails Clyde.

BECKWOURTH

Much obliged muthafuckers!

PICKETT, who has arisen from behind his rock and is walking toward them, furious, shouting at Beckwourth:

PICKETT

What the hell is that shit, playing
quick-draw games when my ass
getting shot at?

BECKWOURTH

Hey, Hey. You got your lucky coin
on you, right?

PICKETT

No luck man. This is real grown man
shit. We could die.

BECKWOURTH

But we not gonna die.

Beckwourth spins his pistols, grinning at Pickett:

BECKWOURTH (CONT'D)

I'm lightnin' with the blam blams!
Admit it.

PICKETT

Might could be, but I hearsay
there's a quickdraw more lightnin'
than you, go by the name of
Cherokee Bill.

BECKWOURTH

You hearsay, you ain't seensay, but
I say, fuuuuuck Cherokee Bill.
Rather than complaining you should
be applauding my performance.
Actually the only words that should
be coming out your black ass
lips...

PICKETT
Oh Black ass?...

BECKWOURTH
Should be...

BLAM! Without looking, Beckwourth BLOWS AWAY THE HIDDEN PISTOL that the dogged MONROE drew from his boot, out of his hand.

BECKWOURTH (CONT'D)
Gracias.

Monroe keeps trying, crawling to his gun, as the two men approach him.

Beckwourth kicks the gun further away from Monroe.

PICKETT
Will you stop reaching Negro?

MONROE
Goddamn. You just killed my brother.

BECKWOURTH
Yeah but calm down. You look like you having a bad day.

MONROE
Better than you sunza bitches, when you find out whose money you done fucked with.

PICKETT
Correction, you done fucked with. Y'all rob banks, we rob y'all, and ain't a negro from here to Africa gonna know we even exist.

Pickett levels his rifle and chambers a round.

MONROE
You think I'm talking about a bank?

Monroe looks Pickett in the eyes and starts LAUGHING a vicious LAUGH.

Pickett hesitates, Monroe's laughter ringing in his ears. SOUND OF BOOTS ON CEMENT, and we cut to

EXT. DOUGLASTOWN - DUSK

From a nearby ridge Nat Love sits on horseback looking down on the glimmering lights.

Title:

DOUGLASTOWN

THE RHYTHMIC DRUM OF 'HARD TIMES' BY PABLO GAD RINGS OVER THE SOUNDTRACK

CLOSE ON NAT LOVE -- riding down the street in a raucous town that is a total contrast to Redwood. This is clearly a place populated with lawbreakers. SUPER:

SLO-MO ANGLES on various MEN and WOMEN looking at Nat as he rides by... some recognizing him, giving respectful nods...

EXT. STAGECOACH MARY'S SALOON - NIGHT

SIGN ABOVE THE DOOR says just that: STAGECOACH MARY'S SALOON.

TILT DOWN TO SEE...

Nat Love tethering his horse to a post crowded with horses out front.

-- FOLLOW NAT AS HE STEPS IN THROUGH THE SWINGING DOORS AND INTO

INT. STAGECOACH MARY'S SALOON - CONTINUOUS

FULL OF ROWDY CLIENTELE, A BLACK FEMALE TRIO -- GUITAR PLAYER, PIANO PLAYER, and PERCUSSIONIST, play their instruments with rollicking fervor...

Nat is stopped at the entrance by a smooth-cheeked YOUNG BOUNCER in a sharp vest, hat and crisp shirt. This is CUFFEE. Soft-spoken, coolly confident.

CUFFEE

Evening, sir. Kindly check your weapons and enjoy the festivities.

NAT

This is Stagecoach Mary's place, and ain't no guns allowed?

CUFFEE

'Cept for Mary's, naturally.

NAT

Naturally. And naturally she set a fresh faced boy like yourself here to see to it.

CUFFEE

I got to see to a lot of things, Mr. Love. People see me and they don't feel too intimidated by what they see. See?

NAT

We familiar?

CUFFEE

No, but you right famous around these parts. Folk say you once cut down three men with one bullet.

CAMERA SWINGS OVER to see that the wall is covered with GUNS hanging from nails hammered into the brick.

CUFFEE (CONT'D)

I ain't met a man who can do that yet. Excuse me—

A COUPLE OF ARMED HARDCASES have entered through the doors behind Nat.

CUFFEE (CONT'D)

Evening Gents. Kindly check your weapons and enjoy your evening.

HARDCASE #1

I'd sooner check my right arm, boy.

The Hardcases shove past Cuffee, who reaches out and holds Hardcase #1's arm.

CUFFEE

Then you could walk 'cross the way to Jourdan Anderson's. You could hold guns and drink there.

HARDCASE #1

We drinking here, you puny little fuck.

Hardcase #1 pulls free and takes a swing at Cuffee— but Cuffee isn't there— ducking quickly and easily under the blow, coming up with a vicious punch to the man's face that knocks him flat to the ground...

Hardcase #2 spins but Cuffee kicks him in the nuts, doubling him over, then finishes him with several quick, nasty punches to the face. It's over before it started.

CUFFEE

Of course some folk tend to feel a way, regardless.

Nat looks on, amused, as Cuffee wipes his BLOODY BRASS KNUCKLES on one of the men's jackets, and takes out their GUNS as a FEW MORE MEN step past Nat.

CUFFEE (CONT'D)

Get 'em over to Doc Brown's. And take they guns over to the Sheriff. He can give 'em back when they leave town.

The men pick up the two Hardcases and carry them out. Nat turns his gaze to Cuffee.

NAT

What they call you?

CUFFEE

They call me Cuffee.

Nat hears a loud scraping sound that causes him to turn his head...

CLOSE ON THE BARREL OF A SHOTGUN

BANGING ON THE FLOORBOARDS... TILT UP TO REVEAL

A STOVE-TOP HAT WEARING, FIERCE-EYED WOMAN - AFRICAN TRIBAL PAINT ON HALF OF HER FACE

Clad in a bright red corseted dress, walking toward the stage, holding the shotgun, dragging its barrel across the floor. This is STAGECOACH MARY. The crowd bursts into a cacophony of stomping and cheering as the trio of musicians, who have never stopped playing, shift into a new gear, and

Mary BANGS her shotgun barrel on the floor rhythmically and BEGINS SINGING a raw and upbeat CALL AND RESPONSE NUMBER called 'THE JIM CROW COUNT' -- The crowd is enraptured, pounding along with the song...

ANGLE ON NAT

More entranced than anyone in the room. He almost absent-mindedly hands his guns to Cuffee, and drifts forward as if in a dream...

CLOSE ON MARY

Singing with a straightforward, sexy, unadorned voice, taking in her audience... then her eyes widen as she sees

Nat Love moving through the crowd, looking right into her eyes...

Their eye-contact is electric. Mary can barely finish her song, but she manages to make it to the end, the sound of APPLAUSE fading into a blur...

Mary walks down from the stage, toward Nat.

NAT

You still ain't talkin' to me?

They meet in the middle of the saloon, and instantly are locked in a deep, passionate, profound kiss that lasts and lasts. No one in the stunned crowd has seen anything like it in public...

CLOSE ON MARY AND NAT -- She finally breaks the kiss, and whispers in his ear:

MARY

Get out.

NAT

What?

Mary looks into Nat's eyes.

MARY

I said- leave.

NAT

Then what was that kiss for then?

MARY

To remind me of what it was. This-

Mary hauls off and PUNCHES Nat in the face. She can hit. Nat staggers back a step or two- it looks like that's it- then his legs give out some more and he falls back onto a small table surrounded by cowboys and whores and takes the whole damn thing down with him to the floor.

MARY (CONT'D)

That's to remind you of what it is.

Mary turns and walks out of the saloon, over Nat's body.

MARY (CONT'D)
Cuffee, clean this man up.

Nat clambers back to his feet. His hat has been knocked off his head, fully revealing the crucifix on his forehead. Eyes widen all over the saloon.

Nat looks for his hat, then turns to see

Cuffee has picked it up, and is holding it out to him. Nat takes the hat. Cuffee speaks softly.

CUFFEE
Second floor. Third room on the left.

INT. MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nat gently opens the door and steps inside. He walks over with his hands held high. Mary is across the room, her back turned to him - she wipes the tribal paint from her face.

NAT
Mary...

MARY
That's about the only thing I need to hear coming out of your mouth is 'Goodbye, Mary'.

NAT
The one thing you'll never hear me say again.

MARY
Till the next time you hear tell of the whereabouts of some man that done you dirt...

NAT
Ain't none of them left.

Nat walks to Mary. She is not having it.

MARY
So you found The Scorpion?

NAT
Mary, the only thing that mean anything to me in this world now, is you.

MARY

And what about the Nat Love Gang?

NAT

Ain't much of a gang since you left. Just me, Jim, Bill. Next time they come around here I'll settle it.

MARY

I can almost believe that. Almost. But you didn't get the last one, did you?

NAT

You can say his name-

MARY

What about Rufus Buck?

NAT

Rufus in Yuma for the rest of his natural life. For a man like him that's worse than death.

MARY

As that man drew breath, your spirit is going to be cursed and wild as it ever was. I made things. I built things. And I ain't gonna risk all that 'cause you come... trotting back.

A moment... they're very close.

NAT

Trotting...? Okay well, I guess I came into the wrong saloon, cause I ain't talking to the Mary Fields I knew...

MARY

Things have changed.

NAT

I see that. Because that Mary...That Mary won't shy away from nothin'.

Mary's eyes are gleaming, her face close to Nat's...

Nat whispers-

NAT (CONT'D)

What was it the Apache called you?
Wolf Lady?

Nat reaches into his pocket and we see him take out a GOLD WEDDING BAND. Mary doesn't see it.

MARY

That's some bullshit Pickett used to say. Apache called me, Coyote Woman.

NAT

Wolf Lady is more like you...

Mary turns and kisses Nat hard. They lock in a passionate embrace, getting hotter, then

Nat and Mary simultaneously hear something. Nat quickly grabs a SMALLER PISTOL from his breast pocket, Mary snatches up her SHOTGUN, and they move away from the door, levelling their weapons. All this took three seconds.

From outside the door-

VOICE (O.S.)

I'm comin' in. Wolf Lady don't blow the head clean off my neck now.

Nat lowers his pistol, and opens the door, revealing

BILL PICKETT- hat in hand.

NAT

Pickett, you got the worst timing in the history of timing.

PICKETT

Oh ya'll was making sex. I apologize. But what I got to show you can't wait.

EXT. STABLE - DOUGLASTOWN - CONTINUOUS

AN UGLY LAUGHTER is audible from the outside of this ramshackle stable

INT. STABLE - DOUGLASTOWN - CONTINUOUS

MONROE GRIMES- weathered and worn- looks up at the sound of the door being flung open. He grins through bloodied teeth-

MONROE

Well, well, well, if it ain't the
debonair dipshit himself.

Nat strides right past Beckwourth, drawing his pistol and
pressing it hard against Monroe's forehead—

PICKETT

Whoa! Easy, Nat— listen to what the
man has to say—

NAT

So he can tell me the same stories
he's been telling you?

MONROE

Why the fuck would I lie?

NAT

Rufus Buck is behind bars for the
rest of his life.

MONROE

He getting out.

NAT

How?

Nat pulls the hammer of his pistol back.

MONROE

Damned if I know, I just know it's
so. All the gangs gettin' set to
ride for him again. Half the take
was his...

(laughs)

And you fools just took his money.

Nat knocks Monroe down.

NAT

You think Rufus Buck was gonna let
you keep half that money, and you
callin' me a fool?

MONROE

I guess I am.

NAT

On your feet.

Monroe stops laughing.

NAT (CONT'D)

Exhale.

Monroe squeezes his eyes shut. BANG! Nat severs the rope binding Monroe's wrists with a single shot.

NAT (CONT'D)

Now, Get out of here.

Monroe can't believe it. He looks around at the rest of the Nat Love Gang, who might just be as surprised as he is...

NAT (CONT'D)

Leave.

Monroe rises to his feet and quickly runs out of the back of the stable...

Nat puts the gun back into its holster.

PICKETT

What you doin'? We coulda killed last of the Crimson Hoods right there.

NAT

It's called the Crimson Hood Gang. You think that's the last one?

Takes a few steps toward the stable doors, then he stops right in front of Mary... but does not make eye contact with her...

A still moment. Then Nat continues on and exits the stable, leaving the other three behind.

BECKWOURTH

I'da bet my left 6-shooter, he was bout to kill that man.

MARY

If that man telling the truth, Nat just did him a whole lot worse.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TERRAIN - DAY

THE LEGENDARY VOICE OF BARRINGTON LEVY SINGS OUT; "HERE I COME" OVER THE CLASSIC BASS-LINE AND BANGING DRUMS, AS-

The Rufus Buck Gang gallop at top speed, bandanas covering their mouths.

They cover much terrain, until they stop at the edge of a rise overlooking a railroad cut into the landscape below.

INT. STEAM TRAIN - DAY

THE WHITE TRAIN DRIVER looks through the open window of the engine cab -- and sees

A SINGLE FIGURE- SITTING ATOP A HORSE right in the middle of the tracks in the distance. The train driver SOUNDS THE HORN-

EXT. RAILWAY TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON TRUDY SMITH - dressed in an officer's coat and cap- perched on her horse like royalty- She shows not the slightest bit of alarm. The train is getting closer...

INT. STEAM TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

The driver grits his teeth... makes his decision and pulls the brakes to a SCREECHING HALT, and

The train stops just meters in front of Trudy. The furious driver jumps out of the engine cab and approaches her enraged.

DRIVER

What the hell are you doing out here? This ain't how you board a train, you stupid ni-

BANG! Trudy pulls a SIXGUN out and shoots the driver in the head --

-- Cherokee Bill and two more BANDITS appear at her side coming from behind nearby rocks.

CHEROKEE BILL

He might coulda said nincompoop.

TRUDY SMITH

We ain't no nincompoop.

PASSENGERS are poking their heads out of the carriage windows as the outlaws walk to the train.

TRUDY SMITH (CONT'D)

They say somethin that even start with an 'N', they gonna meet the same fate. Let them see our faces.

They remove their scarves. Cherokee Bill whistles, and the rest of the GANG appear from cover all up the length of the trains, drawing their weapons and moving to cover the spaces between the cars, as

Cherokee and Trudy walk up the steps at the back of the train and open the doors—

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE 1 - CONTINUOUS

Cherokee and Trudy step into the car. There isn't a black person in sight. The PASSENGERS reek of wealth...

They huddle together in the middle of the car. FOUR MEN stand protective guard in front of the WOMEN and CHILDREN.

CHEROKEE BILL

My name is Cherokee Bill. Let it be known that I don't particularly enjoy violence, that being said, you are now in the company of extremely violent individuals. So...Don't do no stupid shit, alright?

The BIGGEST MAN of the passengers steps to the front. He is suited and has a long curly mustache, like that of a typical 19th century athlete.

BIGGEST MAN

Get off this train now, you motherless scum.

Cherokee Bill is genuinely perplexed.

CHEROKEE BILL

You must be the hero. Great spirit, why is there always one? You're rude. I might actually enjoy inflicting violence on you. Who knows, maybe you'll win. Let's see.

Cherokee mockingly makes a boxing fight stance and gestures from the Man to come forth— The Man charges forth and swings at Cherokee -- Cherokee easily ducks the blow and puts his hand out behind his back and, as if in a rehearsed routine, Trudy takes a CARVING KNIFE from her bag and puts it in Cherokee's hand, and

-- with lightning speed, Cherokee SLICES each of the man's thighs, then calves, and the man falls to the floor in agony.

CHEROKEE BILL (CONT'D)
 See my point? Now please, can you
 all step aside so that we may
 conclude our business here without
 further ado?

The terrified passengers crush to the sides of the car and Cherokee, Trudy and the other two men move to the next car-

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE 2 - CONTINUOUS

-- The PASSENGERS there are scared stiff and crammed together.

A YOUNG WHITE SOLDIER stands at the back of the carriage guarding the door to carriage three. His gun is aimed toward the gang. Cherokee and Trudy don't even react.

YOUNG SOLDIER
 Stop right there!

CHEROKEE BILL
 No.

YOUNG SOLDIER
 I said stop.

CHEROKEE BILL
 Put the weapon down boy. Or we
 will kill you and everybody on this
 train.

Cherokee draws his own gun and levels it toward the soldier.

CHEROKEE BILL (CONT'D)
 I said put the gun down.

All in precise unison, Trudy and the bandits behind her aim their weapons at the passengers.

The frightened soldier lowers his gun. Cherokee approaches him and takes the rifle from his hands.

CHEROKEE BILL (CONT'D)
 (to the soldier)
 Are there any more soldiers on that
 car?

YOUNG SOLDIER
 There are.

TRUDY SMITH
 Exactly how many?

YOUNG SOLDIER

Thirty.

Cherokee CLICKS back the hammer of his pistol. The Young Soldier is scared stiff.

YOUNG SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Ten!

CHEROKEE BILL

See that's all you had to say.

Cherokee spins the Young Soldier toward the next car door.

CHEROKEE BILL (CONT'D)

Open the door.

The Young Soldier freezes in fear.

CHEROKEE BILL (CONT'D)

I said open the damn door!

INT./EXT. TRAIN CARRIAGE 2 - CONTINUOUS

Cherokee pulls the Young Soldier back a step, keeping him in between himself and the next carriage.

ANGLE ON the door from inside the car...

Cherokee calls out over the Young Soldier-

CHEROKEE BILL

My dear battalion-

GUNS are aimed at the door. These guns are held by TEN SOLDIERS.

At the rear of the carriage is a huge rusting metal box. This is what the SOLDIERS are guarding.

CHEROKEE BILL (CONT'D)

I imagine you have all of your artillery aimed at the door. I would like to inform you that in front of that door lies one of your very own troops. Any bullets coming through that door will hit him first.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE 3 - DAY

The commander of the troop— a LT. GENERAL— early fifties, walks from the back of the carriage to the doorway to address Cherokee.

LT. GENERAL
State your name, criminal.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE 2 & 3 (SPLIT SCREEN) - CONTINUOUS

CHEROKEE BILL
Oh I am not a criminal sir. But my name is Cherokee Bill. What is your name, sir?

LT. GENERAL
My name is 'Officiant Of The Goddamned Law'! Let that soldier go immediately. Leave this train now and no one will be hurt.

CHEROKEE BILL
That sounds like fear talking, Officiant Of The Goddamned Law. We've hurt a couple of folks already. You just going to let us go Dred Scott Free?

LT. GENERAL
State your purpose, bastard?

CHEROKEE BILL
Also I'm not a bastard. But you got something that we want and we got a solder that you want. Now, I suggest we make a peaceful exchange and everybody lives to see another day. Sound dandy?

LT. GENERAL
Just let the boy go and—

Trudy SHOTS the young soldier in the arm. The passengers in the carriage SCREAM.

YOUNG SOLDIER
(in agony)
I'm okay, Pa!

The penny drops. Cherokee smiles.

CHEROKEE BILL

That is just a flesh wound sir. You have ten seconds to lay down your weapons and open the door or your kin shall perish.

LT. GENERAL

Harm him further and I'll kill every last one of you godless sons of bitches.

Too much damned talking. Trudy SHOOTs the soldier in the leg. The passengers scream. Trudy stares coldly at them. Silence.

CHEROKEE BILL

Damn Trudy, you know I like my countdowns!

CHEROKEE BILL (CONT'D)

My apologies sir, My friend here doesn't like arithmetic. Be that as it may- seven seconds.

Cherokee Bill starts his countdown from six.

The Lt. General turns to his men.

LT. GENERAL

Lay down your rifles.

The soldiers hesitate.

LT. GENERAL (CONT'D)

I said lay them down.

The soldiers put down their rifles. SPLIT SCREEN ENDS as

The Lt. General opens the door and walks backward toward the metal box.

CHEROKEE BILL

Alright. Thank you kindly. Go ahead and walk boy.

Cherokee enters the carriage with his gun held to the young soldier's temple, Trudy behind him. She steps to the sliding door on the side of the carriage and opens it, revealing

The rest of the gang outside. They step up into the car, guns leveled at the soldiers...

CHEROKEE BILL (CONT'D)

Keep walkin', just keep movin'. No one do anything stupid.

(MORE)

CHEROKEE BILL (CONT'D)

Just walk like you've been taught:
LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT. LEFT RIGHT LEFT.
Skip to the loo my darlin'...

Trudy walks to the metal box and runs her hand over it. There is a key lock attached.

TRUDY

Open it.

LT. GENERAL

I can't. The key is back in Yuma.
Next key is waiting...

Cherokee cocks his hammer and the Young Soldier squeezes his eyes shut, when

ONE OF THE SOLDIERS reaches for his rifle. Cherokee SHOOTS him in the head with lightning speed.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

One more time.

LT. GENERAL

You'll be hounded to the ends of
the earth for this.

TRUDY

I don't like long distances, Lt.
General Abbott. Ever cross your
mind why you were given the task
of transporting a lone outlaw from
one prison to another?

The Lt. General's eyes widen as Trudy steps close to him-

Trudy takes a letter from her coat and shows it to the Lt. General.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Full pardon for Mr. Buck and his
associates for all misdeeds.
Signed, General George Pryce

LT. GENERAL

(in disbelief)

General Pryce? What's this about?

Trudy returns the pardon to inside her coat pocket.

TRUDY

Well... He came to us with a
proposition- Kill a particular
Officiant Of The Goddamned Law.

(MORE)

TRUDY (CONT'D)

A man so crooked that even the government is embarrassed by his misdeeds. Apparently you and your men wiped out an entire town, women and children included, to steal silver.

TRUDY & CHEROKEE BILL

Now That's some unscrupulous shit.

The General pulls out a set of keys from his jacket and UNLOCKS the door of the box. He backs away as the door swings open slowly...

With a slight smile RUFUS walks out of the box, acknowledging Trudy and Cherokee. Rufus exhales.

Trudy turns and stares at the General. The General quickly unlocks Rufus's hands, then unlocks the shackles around his ankles.

Rufus stares at the Lt. General. He turns to Cherokee.

LT. GENERAL

Please. I'll disappear. No one will see me aga-

Cherokee FIRES a bullet through the Lt. General's chest, hurling his body backward. Dead on impact.

The Lt. General's son SCREAMS.

One of the gang comes forward and hands Rufus guns, a gun belt and a black hat.

REVERSE ONTO RUFUS'S FACE: He addresses the soldiers, his voice like a lion's roar.

RUFUS BUCK

Who here can drive a train?

Weeping, the Lt. General's son shakily raises his hand. Rufus turns to Trudy and Cherokee Bill.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)

Everyone but him.

Trudy, Cherokee Bill and the gang begin SHOOTING the crooked soldiers in the carriage. It is a bloody scene. The soldiers scurry, ducking and reaching for the guns already on the floor, to no avail.

Slow Motion on Rufus, walking through the flying bodies and GUNFIRE, oblivious to it...

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Rufus Buck sits on horseback on the middle of the tracks, flanked either side by his gang as they watching the train leave.

MCU ON RUFUS as Barrington Levy's voice blares out;

"I'm broad."

CUT TO: CLOSE SHOT ON CHEROKEE BILL

"I'm broad."

CUT TO: CLOSE SHOT ON TRUDY

"I'm broader than Broadway!"

CUT TO: CLOSE SHOT ON RUFUS

INT. STAGECOACH MARY'S SALOON - NIGHT

Nat Love, sitting alone at a small table, stares into camera. We move in closer and closer, until we are TIGHT ON HIS EYES. THE MUSIC FADES.

-- we're back in. Nat looks up, pulled out of his reverie as the sound of the saloon rises to full volume. His eyes narrow as he sees

CASH FLOATS IN THE AIR in SLO-MO -- SONG CONTINUES AS WE RACK to

JIM BECKWOURTH at the bar, tossing the money in the air, surrounded by laughing LADIES OF THE NIGHT who grab for the bills... he takes the BOTTLE that is handed to him as we continue our slow-motion tracking shot into the Saloon...

-- PAST COUPLES DANCING in the open space behind the bar, past GAMBLERS at the poker tables... until we reach a table where

-- BILL PICKETT and MARY sitting together with untouched drinks. Pickett is spinning his lucky coin, Mary looking disapprovingly toward the bar where Beckwourth is carousing, and shaking her head. She then turns and gazes behind herself, and we CONTINUE TRACKING past in the direction of her look, toward

A TALL MAN IN BLACK

Standing in the doorway, taking in the saloon. Cuffee approaches him-

CUFFEE

Evening, sir. Check your weapons with me and enjoy what's left of the night.

The man turns, pulls the lapel of his jacket back and reveals a TIN BADGE pinned to his vest. This is U.S. DEPUTY MARSHAL BASS REEVES.

CUFFEE (CONT'D)

No need to show me that star, I know who you is. In here though, I be the sheriff, which makes Miss Mary the Marshal. And the Marshal say no one comes in here gunned up, or they might could get gunned down.

BASS REEVES

My badge begs to differ.

Cuffee knows it's the truth. Reeves continues walking through the smoky space. He shoots a dry look in the direction of

JIM BECKWOURTH AT THE BAR

Surrounded by the ladies who are shoving cash into their décolletage and showering him with kisses. Beckwourth sees the Marshal and slowly walks from the bar-

BECKWOURTH

Excuse me...

Reeves keeps walking and stops in front of Nat Love, who looks evenly at him from over his half-empty whiskey glass.

NAT

So how you intend on taking me in, Marshal? Staring me to death?

BASS REEVES

How about just death?

ANGLE ON MARY AND PICKETT

Bass Reeves opens his coat.

ANGLE ON MARY - SHOTGUN leveled at Reeves.

Bass Reeves doesn't flinch for a second. He reaches in his pocket-

CLACK! She pulls the hammer back, but

Reeves pulls out a pipe- A match- Lights it. Puffs...

Nat smiles coolly- gives a slight nod in Mary's direction, and Mary lowers the shotgun, but puts it down on the table where she can reach it.

Reeves pulls a chair from the next table and sits opposite Nat. Indicates the WHISKEY BOTTLE.

BASS REEVES (CONT'D)

Mind?

Nat slides his glass over.

NAT

Never known you to touch it.

BASS REEVES

Only after I kill a man. Or before.

Reeves fills the glass.

BASS REEVES (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I was on the trail of the Crimson Hood gang on account of a bank robbery in Kansas City. Turns out someone got to them before me...

NAT

You know I don't rob banks.

BASS REEVES

But you rob them that do, which is all the same to me.

NAT

Texas. I was in Texas at the time of that robbery.

BASS REEVES

How you know when it took place?

NAT

Whenever any robbery takes place, I was in Texas. Unless the robbery is in Texas.

Bass smiles, reaches for the glass and fills it again.

BASS REEVES
Way I hear it, some of them boys
with the Crimson Hoods was part of
a new Rufus Buck gang.

Bass looks for a reaction from Nat, who just says—

NAT
Rufus is in Yuma.

BASS REEVES
He's out. But you already knew
that...

NAT
Then why you here drinking my
liquor when you should be out
rounding up deputies to bring him
to justice?

BASS REEVES
He's been pardoned.

Nat's eyes narrow— he does his best to keep his disbelief in
check.

BASS REEVES (CONT'D)
Rufus Buck has been absolved of his
countless depredations. Free again
to roam God's green earth...

Bass studies Nat for a beat, then—

BASS REEVES (CONT'D)
But seeing as I've been scouring
this terrain for bank robbers and
such, that particular piece of news
has failed to reach me.

Nat looks up, locking eyes with Bass...

ANGLE ON MARY AND PICKETT WATCHING INTENTLY.

MARY
What they saying?

PICKETT
Something about guns, killing.
Mary, why you let that little kid
take my gun like that. What kinda
stupid rule is that. Should be four
guns pointing at...

MARY
Shut up Pickett.

ANGLES ON BECKWORTH AND CUFFEE--watching like hawks at the ready. Then, all of a sudden--

-- Nat picks up his glass and splashes his drink in Bass Reeves's face - Mary swiftly aims her gun at the marshal.

Bass stands and draws both of his guns in one smooth motion-- one pointed at Nat, the other toward Mary. Cuffee cocks a gun pointed at the Marshal.

BASS REEVES
(to Mary)
If you shoot, he's dead. If you miss... all of you die.

Nat casually lights his cigar.

BASS REEVES (CONT'D)
(to Cuffee)
You, come here.

Cuffee looks to Mary for some indication of what to do. She gives none.

BASS REEVES (CONT'D)
Take these cuffs. Cuff this man, or I put three in his chest right now to lessen the trouble.

Mary nods at Cuffee. Cuffee steps over to Bass Reeves and takes the handcuffs from him.

BASS REEVES (CONT'D)
(to Nat)
Tell this young buck to back up

NAT
Easy, Jim.

Cuffee cuffs Nat, then steps back as Reeves reaches over and pulls him to his feet. Reeves turns to the hushed saloon.

BASS REEVES
Everybody in here knows who I am. I'm taking Nat Love to Fort Smith to be tried. Anyone tries to follow me to save him, well... you know what I do... y'all enjoy the rest of the evening.

EXT. MAYOR'S ROAD - MORNING

A SINGLE ELECTRIC GUITAR NOTE SCREAMS ON THE SOUNDTRACK AS A THUDDING BASS-LINE KICKS INTO A SLOWED DOWN REMIX OF 'KILLER' BY ADAMSKI. SEAL'S VOCAL SCREAMS as RUFUS BUCK

Enters frame. Still in his jail clothes, he sits like a warlord atop his steed, right at the end of Main Street.

SIX RIDERS appear either side of him -- to his left, led by Trudy Smith - to his right, led by Cherokee Bill -- THE CITIZENS out in the street stop what they are doing.

Title:

REDWOOD CITY

THE GANG rides down the center of Main Street, drawing frightened looks and hushed whispers as they pass...

ANGLE ON A SECOND-STORY WINDOW FROM WHICH WILEY ESCOE

Is watching, the GANG reflected in the window-pane in front of him...

INT. REDWOOD BANK - MOMENTS LATER

The bank doors open and Rufus Buck enters the bank, followed by Trudy Smith and lastly Cherokee Bill. The CUSTOMERS AND TELLERS in the bank fall silent, as the trio passes through and stride toward the manager's office. Cherokee Bill opens the door...

INT. BACK OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The bank manager, BEN HODGES, slick but possessing the face of a shady past, sits at his desk. He looks through his office window at Trudy, Cherokee and Rufus Buck, walking through the bank-

Rufus and Trudy walk in -- Cherokee behind them. Ben steps over, and speaks with a confidence few can display in Redwood-

BEN HODGES

Cherokee Bill, Ms. Smith, morning to you both. Mr. Buck, glad to have you back in Redwood, sir.

Rufus nods.

TRUDY

Any word on the take from the Kansas City bank?

BEN HODGES

The Crimson Hoods took it for twenty-five thousand dollars, but they were ambushed before they got here.

TRUDY

Everybody knows it's suicide to take from us.

BEN HODGES

Someone obviously disagrees.

CHEROKEE BILL

God damn it. That will put us right back where we started. How we supposed to build a Mecca without any bricks?

Trudy steps close to Ben.

CLOSE ON RUFUS -- his eyes blazing, calculating, as from behind him--

TRUDY (O.S.)

We're going to have to take it out of our own bank.

BEN HODGES (O.S.)

We don't hold that kind of money, Trudy. We maybe got a few pennies over a twenty five hundred dollars cash.

RUFUS BUCK

What he say?

BEN HODGES (O.S.)

Twenty-five...

RUFUS BUCK

I heard you

TRUDY

Wiley

CHEROKEE BILL

Yeah

RUFUS BUCK

Sure is hot ain't it...

Rufus snaps forward and walks out of the bank...

EXT. MAYOR'S MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

A TWO-STORY affair lodged in between the general store and barber-shop. SEVERAL ARMED GUARDS are standing outside the front door. They nervously put their hands on their guns as Rufus approaches...

But Rufus strides right up to the steps and stands in the midst of the armed GUARDS.

Rufus looks at CARSON, THE GUARD LEADER and the other men... just a look.

INT. WILEY ESCOE'S OFFICE - A MOMENT LATER

Sheriff Badge gleaming on his lapel, Wiley Escoe sits at his table chowing down on a bloody steak- looking directly into the camera - obviously talking to Rufus-

WILEY ESCOE

Rufus Buck. Look at you, a relic of yesteryear, with nothing. And now you think can roll into my town and take what belong to me? Who in the fuck you think I am? Ain't nobody scared of you and ain't nobody runnin'. I'm a sinister motherfucker too. One click of my finger and you disappear. So I suggest you leave, before I finish my steak. And if you even think of sticking arou-

-KNOCK!! KNOCK!! - THE DOOR - Wiley Escoe looks up.

CUT TO WIDE - We see Wiley Escoe is alone - talking to himself.

Carson and the second guard step in

WILEY ESCOE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Come in.

CARSON

Sheriff, Mr. Buck wants to see you out front.

Wiley nervously pauses.

WILEY ESCOE

Tell that man I ain't got nothing to say to him.

Carson draws his weapon, to Wiley's surprise.

CARSON
It wasn't a request.

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Wiley Escoe steps out into the sunlight, followed by Carson and other guards...

Rufus is standing in the middle of the street, Trudy, Cherokee and his gang all around him. A crowd has gathered in the center of town... people watching from the wooden sidewalks, from behind doors and windows...

Wiley walks into the street and stands in front of Rufus.

RUFUS BUCK
Wiley Escoe.

WILEY ESCOE
Rufus.

Rufus just looks at Wiley. Wiley steps toward Rufus. Hands close on guns all around them. Wiley stops close enough to Rufus so that they're the only two who can hear one another.

RUFUS BUCK
You wanna sell this town. While I rot in prison.

WILEY ESCOE
The world you knew is gone. A flood is coming, and you think you can hold onto this place when it hits? I know enough to get mine and get out. Kill me, and you'll have nothing...

Rufus almost smiles.

RUFUS BUCK
You know, a man like you will have us all subservient till the end of our days... so long as you can buy yourself a house, a badge... and them goddamn gold teeth.

Rufus then reaches down to his gun-belt... unclasps it, and takes it off. He hands the belt and guns to Trudy Smith...

Wiley is confused for just an instant. Then he gets it.

WILEY ESCOE
 You wanna do this here?

Rufus and Wiley face each other in the middle of the street. This is the kind of tough that doesn't exist in the world anymore...

Wiley comes at Rufus and

THROWS WILDLY. Glimpsed by the first punch. Rufus moves just an inch making Wiley's next blow a miss.

In one motion, Rufus takes his gun from the hand of Trudy- who was at the ready- and GUNBUTTS WILEY IN THE FACE. Wiley falls to the floor in agony.

We see angles on the faces of the onlookers... ordinary citizens... children... The Gunmen... Cherokee Bill and Trudy Smith, who smiles.

Rufus kneels down to Wiley- holds him at the back of his head and- VICIOUSLY GUNBUTTS HIM REPEATEDLY until the sound of the gun hitting Wiley's gold teeth- knocks two of them out-

RUFUS BUCK
 Oh shit. I done hit gold. Hey Boy,
 Come get that gold. Tell your mama
 you rich now! Go ahead!

Woody, the Redwood kid, sneakily picks up the teeth and pockets them.

Rufus stands over the barely conscious Wiley Escoe.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)
 I'm not going to kill you, Wiley.
 We were friends once.

Rufus speaks softly-

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)
 But know this... Redwood will never
 be yours. Never. Matter of fact you
 ain't welcome here no more. Now. I
 want you to vacate immediately or
 die where you lay.

The crowd looks on in mute disbelief.

HOLD ON WILEY

On his back, bleeding and broken, as Rufus turns and walks away, followed by Cherokee, Trudy Smith and every other gunman on Main Street, including Wiley's former men. The entire town knows one thing...

Rufus Buck is Back.

EXT. WATERING HOLE - DAY

BASS REEVES' WAGON approaches across the prairie, Reeves sitting on the buckboard. He pulls his horses to a stop by the watering hole.

BACK OF THE WAGON: Bass Reeves opens the door, revealing Nat still chained.

NAT

You know you coulda taken these off a while back.

BASS REEVES

Yep.

Nat steps off the wagon. Reeves reaches over and unlocks the cuffs from Nat's wrists.

Reeves smiles dismissively - walks to the side of the wagon and pulls out a shovel.

BASS REEVES (CONT'D)

Tell me something. How you know Rufus will be in Redwood?

NAT

He's taking the money from the Crimson Hoods. That's where he'll be.

BASS REEVES

And now you're teaming up with a marshal to bring him in.

NAT

I ain't not bringing him in, I'm bringing him down. And we ain't teaming up, old man. Your life's expendable, Marshal. My gang's ain't. Shit, since we're out here, I oughta tell you... I was fixin' to kill you... when you and your fellas brought in Rufus.

BASS REEVES

A lot of men be fixing, son.
They always seem to die before they
get the job done. And just for the
record... I took Rufus in alone.

He hands Nat a rifle, and-

There is a RUSTLE from nearby-

Both men snap around, Nat raising the rifle, Reeves pulling
out his pistols, standing back-to-back; then

SEVERAL MOUNTED FIGURES emerge from the trees around the
watering hole -- revealing themselves to be STAGECOACH MARY,
BILL PICKETT, JIM BECKWOURTH and CUFFEE.

Reeves shoots Nat a suspicious look -- But Nat is truly
surprised.

NAT

Mary. I figured you'd be halfway to
Fort Smith by now...

Mary climbs off her horse. Bass Reeves tenses-

MARY

You can put down them guns,
Marshal, this ain't a ambush. But
you-

(points at Nat)

You on the other hand, might want
to keep yours handy...

Mary steps up in front of Nat. Glares into his eyes-

MARY (CONT'D)

You really think I'm stupid enough
to fall for that bullshit y'all
pulled in my saloon?

NAT

I don't want you mixed up in this
anymore.

MARY

Then you should have told me so.

PICKETT

I must confess to some raw feelings
myself.

NAT

This ain't no road to ask a friend
to travel.

Nat speaks quietly to Pickett—

NAT (CONT'D)

Now you take that money you took
off them Crimson Hoods and buy that
ranch you're always blabbing about.

PICKETT

That's mighty generous of you but
that ain't how this gang works,
Nat. Take stays in the usual place,
ready to be shared three ways when
we come back...

NAT

Ain't no coming back from this.
(to the others)
Now get out of here. All of you.
This ain't your fight.

MARY

You take on the Devil himself,
you're gonna need more than just
you and the Marshal.

BASS REEVES

I seen the devil and Rufus Buck
ain't him... The devil's white.

Jim Beckwourth laughs. Nat turns to him—

NAT

You got a reason you want to die,
Jim?

BECKWOURTH

Outside of you saving me from this?

Beckwourth pulls down his collar to reveal a deep scar around
the entirety of his neck.

BECKWOURTH (CONT'D)

Besides— Monroe said Cherokee Bill
run with Rufus. Every time I speak
on my speed a muthafucka pull
Cherokee Bill out they ass. I'ma
put an end to that argument once
and for all. Like it say in the
Book of Clarence; "No man out-speed
me—

PICKETT

-Out-speed ain't a word and
Clarence ain't a book. I'm kinda
hopin' Cherokee put a bullet in
your ass just to shut you up.

Cuffee reaches into a saddle-bag and pulls out Nat's GUN-BELT
AND PISTOLS.

CUFFEE

You left these on my wall, Mr.
Love. Figured if we was going after
villains, you'll need em....

Nat takes the guns from Cuffee.

NAT

Obliged.

Mary turns to her horse, unties NAT'S HORSE from her own, and
hands Nat the reins. A moment of eye-contact between them...
then she turns and swings up into her saddle.

MARY

What are y'all waitin' for? You
think destiny coming to you?

Mary urges her horse to a gallop, and we

HOLD ON NAT

Watching her ride for a moment; then he swings himself up
onto his own horse. The instrumental of 'THE HARDER THEY
FALL' BLARES ON THE SOUND-TRACK, as we cut to

THE NEW NAT LOVE GANG

Galloping across the prairie, with Bass Reeves bringing up
the rear behind them...

INT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Rufus sits at a table in the empty saloon, watching the crowd
gather outside. Trudy Smith walks in-

RUFUS BUCK

How'd I look?

TRUDY

Alright.

RUFUS BUCK

Everybody out there?

TRUDY
Just about.

Trudy stands before Rufus.

TRUDY (CONT'D)
How could you do it?

Rufus turns slightly, as Trudy steps up beside him.

TRUDY (CONT'D)
How could you trust all of this to
Wiley?

Rufus takes a beat.

RUFUS BUCK
If you were running Redwood, who
would've kept our operation goin'?
Who woulda kept all the other gangs
in line? Look, I know that Wiley
got his ways, but he was loyal
once.

Trudy takes that in, then—

TRUDY
Loyalty is a virtue, Rufus. Until
it ain't.

RUFUS BUCK
Are you loyal to me?

Trudy almost takes offense.

TRUDY
See these folk here either can't
see it, or don't want to, but I
believe in what you're doing. This
place can be the promised land for
us. Long as that's so, ain't
nothing I won't do to see it
through.

Rufus looks at the crowd gathering outside, then walks close
to Trudy.

RUFUS BUCK
You tell them.

He puts his head against hers—

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE SALOON - MOMENTS LATER

Trudy steps out in front of the crowd and calls out-

TRUDY

Citizens of Redwood -- A new day is dawning! As by now you have doubtless learned, the territory is being officially opened up for settlement. They say what we own is goin'; stay our own. But you know as well as I do what that's worth. Your land, your businesses, your homes, have all been promised to the highest bidders by your one time sheriff, Wiley Escoe...

Murmurs from the crowd. Cherokee Bill steps forward-

CHEROKEE BILL

Mr. Buck can prevent that from happening. But in order to do so it will be necessary for us levy a tax, to be deposited in the Redwood bank by noon Friday.

Full on murmurs in the crowd. A FARMER stands-

FARMER

At what cost to us?

TRUDY

Fifty thousand dollars.

A COLLECTIVE GASP. Shouts of protest. A BUSINESSMAN stands-

BUSINESSMAN

You could scrape every penny from every living soul in this town and it wouldn't come near to that.

JAMES- A YOUNG SHOPKEEPER- speaks out-

JAMES

You got us between a rock and hard place, Ms. Smith-

TRUDY

How long you been alive in this country? A rock and a hard place is what we call Monday.

JAMES

I heard of Rufus Buck. How bad a man he is. But he got himself thrown in jail before, and I reckon he'll be there again soon enough...

(puts on his hat)

-- when he is, maybe I'll come back to this town... Because I ain't paying shit.

He turns to leave, but--

Rufus exits the saloon- the crowd take him in.

RUFUS BUCK

You think I made redwood for myself? To what end? Redwood ain't a hiding place 'cause I don't hide. It ain't a dream. I don't dream. You know what it is? It's an example for others to follow. And You...you... are enemies of progress.

He walks and stands right in front of James- Every citizen's blood freezes. James starts to shake in fear and opens his hands to show he's unarmed.

JAMES

Please. I got a family.

RUFUS BUCK

What's your name?

JAMES

James.

Rufus draws his pistol and BANG! SHOOTS James in the heart, sending him crashing to the floor in a heap.

RUFUS BUCK

Rest in peace, James

RUFUS WALKS THROUGH THE CROWD AND THEY PART LIKE THE RED SEA,

UNTIL HE IS STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE BUSINESSMAN WHO SPOKE. THE MAN SWEATS. RUFUS SPEAKS SOFTLY--

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)

Now How much?

The man is confused... afraid to answer...

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)
How much can be gathered?

BUSINESSMAN
Ten thousand. Maybe fifteen, if
every last cent is squeezed.

Rufus stays there a moment, then continues on toward the
Mayor's Mansion.

RUFUS BUCK
Ain't nobody leave town until we
collect it all.

TRUDY SMITH

Steps forward and calls out, startling the crowd again—

TRUDY
And if you fail to comply, you and
everything you love... will burn.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

WILEY ESCOE -- Beaten and bruised, barely able to stay in his
saddle, rides his horse amongst the trees.

CLICK! From off the side. Wiley halts and puts his hands
high.

WILEY ESCOE
I have nothing to rob.

Bill Pickett emerges from the shadow of the trees, gun aimed—

PICKETT
But I got somebody to shoot. Step
down.

Wiley dismounts. Pickett WHISTLES— Cuffee steps out from the
trees on the other side of Wiley, holstering a pistol. Pats
him down quickly and efficiently.

BASS REEVES (O.S.)
Wiley Escoe.

Wiley stops as he sees Bass Reeves stepping out of the
shadows.

He sags with exhaustion... And fear.

WILEY ESCOE
Bass Reeves. Fuck.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Nat Love paces angrily near Wiley - who sits on the ground in front of him.

WIDER: The rest of the gang is sat around the campfire - except Reeves - who stands nursing the burning pot.

WILEY ESCOE

Redwood is crawling with gunmen.
Rufus came with twelve. Took six of mine. Who knows how many he got by now.

BECKWOURTH

I don't believe a word this man saying. He's a scout. I say we kill him. And we take the rest of them teeth.

Beckwourth draws his pistol quick.

WILEY ESCOE

You ever shot a sheriff, boy? A mayor? Little harder than shooting regular folk. And I'm both.

BASS REEVES (O.S.)

You both alive and dead, 'cause Rufus don't like loose ends.

The others turn to Reeves, who takes out his pipe and keeps his eyes on Wiley-

BASS REEVES (CONT'D)

Law don't find a man like Rufus Buck unless you got inside information. Ain't that right, Wiley? If I had my way, you'd be right up under the jail next to Rufus... But you cut yourself a deal and wound up wearing a badge instead.

WILEY ESCOE

You got your reasons you want Rufus gone and I got mine. Ain't the enemy of my enemy my friend? Rufus tryin' to save Redwood. But for that he need money. And that's one thing he ain't have.

Wiley tenses. Nat glares at him-

NAT

All right. Look here. You made a deal with the Devil. Now he come to collect. You rest up, but be gone by sun up, or it's gonna get go from bad to badder. You hear?

EXT. CAMP - CLOSE ON CAMPFIRE

Flames filling the screen. RACK to a shining GUN spinning, then being placed back in a holster—

WIDER SHOWS: The gang gathered around the campfire. We don't see Mary and Wiley yet. Beckwourth draws his gun again, lightning fast, puts it back in his holster, draws again and proceeds with gun tricks. He is impressive.

BASS REEVES

All them tricks'll get you killed, son.

BECKWOURTH

Listen Marshal, I'm faster than any weapon. You can trust in that.

Beckwourth smiles.

CUFFEE

I seen faster.

BECKWOURTH

Alright, where?

CUFFEE

In the mirror.

PICKETT

Negro said in the mirror.

Laughter from Pickett and Beckwourth.

CUFFEE

I rather ride into a battle with a dark horse over a golden stallion.

BECKWOURTH

Huh? What that mean?

CUFFEE

Shiny shit get shot.

Nat looks across the flames, to where Mary is tending to some of Wiley Escoe's wounds, short distance away. Clearly unhappy she's doing it. She looks up and makes eye-contact with Nat-

BECKWOURTH

What you think about that, lawman?

BASS REEVES

I think you're all going to die.

Mary breaks her defiant eye-contact with Nat -- then leaves Wiley and walks away from the camp into the shadow of the trees.

EXT. EDGE OF THE FOREST - SUNSET

Mary stands at the edge of a rise gazing out at the darkening valley below where the town of REDWOOD is visible. A voice on the soundtrack sings-

"Away with the wind she goes, And away with the wind she goes."

Nat walks up behind Mary, and -

NAT

(singing softly)

As her garden grows, hold those
flowers close, for away with the
wind she goes.

Steps closer to Mary - She speaks in the most unwavering manner-

MARY

I'll be back with information by
sun up.

NAT

Information from where?

MARY

Redwood. You know we can't trust
Wiley's word. Someone's got to go
in there and get the lay of the
land before we make our next move.

NAT

Yeah, Mary, but that someone ain't
got to be you.

MARY

Every gun-hand in the territory's gonna recognize you the second you get hop off your horse. Same with Bill and Beckwourth.

NAT

-In case you forgot, your face is more famous than the rest of ours put together, Stagecoach Mary. Got it up on advertisements for that saloon of yours from here to Texas...

MARY

Which is why I can ride into town in plain sight. Everyone knows I'm buying saloons. Rufus needs money. I'ma make him an offer on Trudy Smith's place--

NAT

Mary, what in my character makes you think I'll allow that?

MARY

I'm not asking for your permission.

Nat hesitates. Takes a deep breath, and reaches into his pocket--

NAT

Then I... I guess I'll just be asking you for yours. Since you'll never let a man give you away, I just have to ask you direct--

Nat holds out the WEDDING BAND.

NAT (CONT'D)

It's the ring my father gave my mother.

Mary's eyes glitter, but she gives no response.

NAT (CONT'D)

I was gonna give it to you back in Douglas...

MARY

But you didn't.

NAT

I am now.

Mary takes a moment, then she steps close to Nat-

MARY

I used to hate feeling helpless over you. Those days are over, Nat. When the dust settles, we gonna go our separate ways, for good... but not until the dust settles, I'm here till then.

No answer.

Mary closes Nat's hand over the ring-

Nat absorbs the weight of the moment- taking in the woman he loves. Then-

MARY (CONT'D)

See ya sun up

Mary walks off.

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The street is ALIVE. Though the townsfolk are well behaved, WHORES still holla at men from the balcony of the saloon and JOHNS and GAMBLERS are aplenty. Then

"BLACK WOMAN" BY THE BULLITTS RINGS ON THE SOUNDTRACK as-

Stagecoach Mary, rides her horse into frame- and stops at the top of the street. She looks around-

And begins to ride slowly down enemy territory.

She takes in Main Street- making mental notes of her surroundings, particularly Rufus Buck's ARMED HENCHMEN; they stand outside the hotels, the bank, and on the roofs of various buildings...

Mary stops outside of a hotel and dismounts, when ANGEL steps into her way:

ANGEL

You a resident of Redwood, ma'am?

Angel puts his hand on his gun. Mary doesn't flinch-

MARY

You don't own a gun confident
enough to ask where I reside.

ANGEL

This gun says answer the damn
question.

Mary whips around the SHOTGUN that was in her saddle-holster-

MARY

This gun don't talk.

CLACK! - CLACK! Hammers pulled back. Mary turns to see TWO
GUNMEN leveling weapons at her. Then they part, as TRUDY
SMITH steps through-

TRUDY

Stagecoach Mary.

MARY

Ghastly Gertrude Smith.

TRUDY

I prefer Treacherous Trudy, myself,
but I'll take it. What brings you
to my town?

MARY

I heard Rufus Buck was back.

TRUDY

News travels fast.

MARY

Got an offer he'll want to hear
about.

TRUDY

Any offer you got, you can make to
me.

MARY

I don't do business with the help.

Trudy's eyes glare... but she forces a smile. Reaches her
hand out.

TRUDY

Gimme tha shit.

Mary flips the shotgun up. Holds it there, then hands it to
Trudy.

MARY
Lead the way, Treacherous Trudy.

INT. TRUDY'S SALOON - MOMENTS LATER

THIS PLACE IS STUNNING - THE DECOR - THE MUSIC - THE LADIES
OF THE NIGHT - THIS SALOON IS A WORLD ONTO ITSELF.

Mary is led into the stunning establishment by Angel and followed by Trudy, who is holding Mary's shotgun over her own shoulder.

Mary is impressed but tries to conceal any sign of it as-

A LADY painted entirely in BLUE, clothed only with jewelry around her chest and waist area - seemingly comes out of nowhere and dances hypnotically.

The Blue Lady moves backwards as if leading Mary, Trudy and Angel through the saloon. She disappears by the BAND PERFORMING, revealing a MAN sitting inside a golden arc at the back of the room-

RUFUS BUCK

Is sitting alone at a table in a golden arc at the back, watching the band play. Mary sees him- her shock and fear is visibly evident.

Cherokee Bill sits at the bar. He notices Mary and puts his drink down.

Trudy speaks a few words to Rufus. Then she looks over and nods, and

Angel steps aside. Mary approaches the table, trying to hide her fear, and then she is there. Rufus stays as he is for a moment, then turns and faces Mary. Mary displays confidence.

TRUDY
Speak your piece.

Mary does her best to meet Rufus's gaze.

MARY
I assume you know who I am. I
assume you know who I used to run
with. Those days are over for me
anyhow, but I didn't get to be
Stagecoach Mary Fields without
having my ears to the ground...
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

and my ears tell me you just lost
twenty-five thou that was coming
your way.

Lamplight glitters in Rufus's eyes. Rufus says nothing, but
Trudy...

TRUDY

I'm hoping your proposal rivals
your nerve-

MARY

-Allow me the latitude of
completion.

Trudy is almost taken aback at the quip -- Cherokee Bill
walks over from the bar and stands at the other side of Mary.

Standing between Trudy and Cherokee, Mary tries to display
confidence.

MARY (CONT'D)

My saloon in Douglas is booming.
Bought me another one in Elks and I
got a restaurant in Cascade too.
For the sum of all that, I'll take
this one off your hands. The mere
mention of my name brings forth
good business to any establishment
attached, whereas, with all due
respect, the name Rufus Buck...
instils fear.

Rufus Buck regards Mary with his blazing eyes.

RUFUS BUCK

We know who you are. You walk into
my town with that proposal, is
risky. The kind of risk a woman
such as yourself wouldn't tie
herself to...'less there was a
whole of a lot more at stake.

Mary keeps it together-

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)

See, I don't believe in
coincidences... like you just gonna
walk in here right after the
Crimson Hoods get ambushed, with my
money. What are you thinking?

CLOSE ON RUFUS BUCK: Glaring at Mary. He looks at Trudy...
and doesn't even have to gesture.

Mary sees this... and defiantly, almost smiles.

Trudy swings the butt of her shotgun into Mary's face— WHACK!

TRUDY

You musta forgotten whose name is
on the door.

(to the bar)

Another round. We havin' a party,
y'all. Come on.

EXT. RIDGE - LATE MORNING

The sun is already beating down on the valley... Nat Love stands on the ridge looking down into the distance with concern. There is no one approaching anywhere within eye-shot.

NAT

All right Mary. All right.

INT. JAILHOUSE - NOON

CAMERA ON Trudy's hands as it slowly cores an apple.

TRUDY

So you still sayin' you don't know
nothin' about that money and you
done come here alone?

Mary tied up in the chair, grins.

MARY

That's right.

TRUDY

You done rode all the way over here
to get yourself killed. And for
what?
-- For love?

MARY

Love is the only thing worth dying
for. But you wouldn't know
anything about that.

Trudy pauses her gaze on Mary. She swings over a chair in front of her.

TRUDY

You know, I had a sister named
Mary.

(MORE)

TRUDY (CONT'D)

She was pretty and strong-willed-like you. She died of polio when I was eleven. Always in pain but would never let me see her cry. There was a girl called Hope. Lived by us. Big fat kid. Always picking on the smaller kids, obviously out of jealousy. Ain't never fuck with me though. She hated Mary with a passion. Always teasing her about how thin and frail she was. Then one day, Hope walkin' past our house with an apple in one hand and a blade in the other. She decided to throw the apple across the street at Mary, and it hit my sister in the head and knocked her out of balance. She fell down the steps. Broke her ankle. That was the first and only time I physically saw my sister cry. And there was Hope standing there laughin' her ugly fuckin' face off. My daddy... he got home... he took off his belt and he beat me, for not protecting my sister. He lashed me until my whole body went numb. Then he went to Hope's house to do the same to her. But when he got there he saw her entire family at the side of their house, all of them crying and screaming... and there was Hope lying on the floor in a pool of blood. Somebody had slit her throat. Killed her with her own knife. Daddy was speechless. He ain't said a word to me when he came home. The next day he sent me to live with my grandparents. And the next time I seen my sister she was laying in a coffin. Disease had killed her.

Mary absorbs Trudy's story.

MARY

I am sorry your sister had to suffer. I admire her bravery. Truly. But you get no words from me.

Only the core of the apple remains in Trudy's hand.

TRUDY

Your know I actually admire your
bravery. But I'm afraid the outcome
is still the outcome. H

Trudy carefully slides her knife upon Mary's neck.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Hope... must die.

One of Trudy's Gunmen puts a rope around Mary's neck and
begins STRANGLING her. Mary can't breathe. She is just about
to lose consciousness and as Trudy signals -

TRUDY (CONT'D)

But not yet.

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Mary hits the dirt face-first. Trudy Smith stands over her.
Angel pulls the bruised Mary to her feet. TWO GUNMEN stand
behind them - Other Gunmen on the roofs and balconies of Main
Street, looking menacingly at the citizens around them. Trudy
turns to Angel:

TRUDY

Leave her out here in the street so
everyone can see her. No one comes
to collect her before sunup, put a
bullet in her head.

ANGEL

Looks like we're not gonna have to
wait that long.

Trudy turns in the direction Angel is looking. As do all the
others...

FIVE RIDERS

Are approaching from the outskirts of town. Gunmen on
rooftops, porches and from the street all prepare their
weapons.

Cherokee Bill, who has been watching from the side, detaches
himself from the post he was leaning and joins Trudy in the
middle of the street, as

The five riders reach the edge of the town. Nat Love, Bass
Reeves, and Beckwourth in the front, Cuffee and Pickett right
behind them. As they approach

Pickett slides off his horse, keeping close behind it, and drawing his rifle with one smooth motion he sidles to the cover provided by the wooden pillar in front of a nearby shop. He levels the rifle immediately at Trudy far down the street...

Nat dismounts a short distance away, and the others follow. Cuffee takes the horses' reins and leads them to a post, keeping a hand on a pistol and staying behind the horses for cover...

Nat Love and Bass Reeves walk into the middle of the street and face Trudy and Cherokee Bill. Beckwourth leans on the post outside the bank. He looks at Nat-

BECKWOURTH
Whoever die first.

NAT
Whoever die first.

BASS REEVES
What kinda dumb saying is that? You two trying to get shot.

Nat steps forward and he and Mary lock eyes.

TRUDY
Nat Love. How predictable.

NAT
You predict my friend Bill Pickett aiming at your bowler cap?

Guns turn toward the distance. They can't even see Pickett.

NAT (CONT'D)
You'll be dead before your men find their aim.

TRUDY
And you die right after.

NAT
But your boss won't see one red cent of that money. Where is he?

TRUDY
Where is who?

NAT
(sternly)
Where is Rufus Buck?

Trudy wasn't expecting that. She walks toward Nat. Mary shakes her head at Nat as if- 'Not yet.

Trudy makes eye contact with Bass Reeves - they know of each other... well.

TRUDY
(sarcastically)
Bass. If I knew you were switching sides, I'd ask you to come join us.

Reeves - with an ice cold menace-

Trudy is unfazed. She steps right in front of Nat Love - and speaks calmly-

TRUDY (CONT'D)
Ain't you here for your damsel in distress?

NAT
You don't look hard of hearing. So I'ma ask you again. Where is Rufus Buck?

Trudy smiles. She realizes there is another story behind this man.

TRUDY
Well, clearly, you don't know me. Tell your men to go. But you, stay. Maybe your damsel might live a longer.

Nat is ready to kill everything. Mary remains level headed through the entire standoff - She looks at Nat and calms him - Nat moves his hand away from his gun.

Trudy nods to Angel. He signals the Gunmen in Redwood- they all lower their guns...

NAT
Marshal.

Bass Reeves raises his hand - Pickett immediately lowers his rifle.

TRUDY
Aww, You're pretty though. Ah, take her ass back in there.

Trudy turns around and heads to the jail. The Gunmen behind Mary lead her back to the jail after Trudy. Angel remains, staring at Nat.

Cherokee turns toward the saloon, then, loud enough for all to hear-

BECKWOURTH

Ay!! That the quick draw I hear
tell about, Cherokee Bill?

Beckwourth takes several steps forward, and stops:

THE INSTRUMENTAL OF "DO YOUR THING" BY ISAAC HAYES, RINGS ON
THE SOUNDTRACK.

Every eye is on Beckwourth and Cherokee. Nat can't believe
what he's seeing-

Cherokee stops a few paces before Beckwourth.

BECKWOURTH (CONT'D)

I hear you so fast that your
opponents ain't got time to draw,
before you put two in they back.

CHEROKEE BILL

Nah, that ain't me. I'm the
Cherokee Bill that shoots men in
the mouth that talk too much.

BECKWOURTH

I'll make it easy for you. You draw
first.

CHEROKEE BILL

That what you think this is? "Who
the quickest draw in the West?"

BECKWOURTH

All comes down to who fast and who
ain't, right?

CHEROKEE BILL

No, It all comes down to who's
alive and who's dead.

(to Trudy)

Trudy, I'm gonna get me something
to drink. Goodnight.

The remaining men on the street are glued to the two.
Cherokee pauses, then

Cherokee turns his back on Beckwourth and walks into the
saloon.

BECKWOURTH (CONT'D)
 Hey, Hey drink my ass! I practiced
 that standoff all night

Nat turns to Beckwourth and glares at him, keeping his temper in check.

NAT
 Jim.

Beckwourth is pumped with adrenaline... but he keeps it together, and turns and walks back toward Bass Reeves and Cuffee and the horses...

ON NAT'S GANG:

Beckwourth swings up onto his horse and joins Reeves and Cuffee as they ride back out of town, under the gaze of the gunmen on the rooftops and all around them.

Bill Pickett steps out of cover, reluctantly gets onto his horse and joins the gang. They all look at Nat.

Nat Love stands alone in the street - He nods confidently to his men as if; "Not yet."

Angel comes up behind him and grabs Nat's hands, pulling them behind his back. Nat smiles. This is war.

INT. JAILHOUSE - LATER

Nat dangles by his wrists from a rope on the other side of the bars. Trudy Smith watches with amusement as Angel PUNCHES Nat repeatedly in the gut. About to hit the face, but-

TRUDY
 That's enough.

Angel delivers another body shot. Trudy turns and leaves the room, let out by Angel, who stands right outside the door.

Nat talks to Mary behind him-

NAT
 They beat you bad?

Mary's Silence speaks volumes.

Nat's eyes turn red with rage.

NAT (CONT'D)
 I'll kill them all.

Then-

The jailhouse door opens -- Nat is too worn to turn and look -- A figure enters the dim space whistling. Walking toward Nat-

Rufus Buck stands face to face with Nat. Takes a long stare at Nat's scar. Then

RUFUS BUCK
You familiar with Napoleon?

Nat just glares at Rufus.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)
He said, "I driven towards an end that I do not know. As I reach it, as I shall become unnecessary, an atom shall suffice to shatter me. Until then, all forces of humankind can do nothing to stop me." As a man, he knew exactly who he was. Most importantly, he knew that his time would come to an end. Cut him down.

Rufus nods at Angel, who steps forward and cuts him down. Nat tries to stay standing, but drops down to his knees, and

Something falls out of his shirt pocket. CLINKS on the floor...

Rufus looks down and sees THE WEDDING BAND. He bends down and picks it up, turns it in his fingers. Looks at Mary across the bars, and stands over Nat-

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)
Do you know why I gave you that scar?

Nat's eyes gleam with hate-

NAT
So I would remember you.

RUFUS BUCK
No. I gave you that scar so I can know your face when you come back to me.

Rufus slips the ring into his own jacket pocket.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)

Nat Love, The outlaw who robs
outlaws. The angel of death who
hunts down those who trespass
against him with no mercy. I know
who you are.
And I see the line that you won't
cross. See, I know what's on the
other side.

Rufus motions to Angel, who pulls Nat up and puts him into a
chair. Rufus turns away from Nat.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)

Apologize for the beating. It was
more of an indication for what Ms.
Fields might see if we fail to come
to terms.

NAT

What terms?

RUFUS BUCK

You will return the money you
stole from me by Friday noon. Not
a moment later. And you will add
ten thousand dollars on top of
that. We'll call that interest.
(Pause)
Somethin' funny?

NAT

Ooh shit, How you reckon I'ma get
that?

Rufus turns to Nat.

RUFUS BUCK

You're gonna rob a bank. Nat Love
is gonna rob a bank.

Rufus lets that sink in.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)

In the meantime, here's a little
token of my appreciation in
advance.

He takes a small WOODEN BOX from his coat pocket, and throws
it at Nat.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)

Go 'head, open it.

Nat inspects the box - it's an old STRAIGHT RAZOR

Nat's eyes fill with fury... his body almost trembles, but he keeps it together.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)

I expect my money on Friday. All off it.

Rufus Exits.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

CLOSE ON NAT, rolling the wooden box in his hands:

BASS REEVES (O.S.)

You know I can't let you do that.

NAT

If that money ain't in Rufus' hands in three days, Mary'll die.

PICKETT

What bank are we talking about, anyway?

NAT

Maysville.

PICKETT

Maysville?— That's a white town.

NAT

Yeah, which is why they gonna have ten thousand dollars in their bank.

PICKETT

It's crazy.

BECKWOURTH

My emotions are all types of confused. I mean, Pickett, I agree. That's crazy. But Nat, I also agree with you telling the marshal here that we gonna do that shit anyways. That's some true outlaw shit. We outlaws, ain't we--

NAT

—Ain't no "we", Jim. Not after that shit you pulled in town nearly got us all killed.

Beckwourth bites back his bile at the admonishment.

BECKWOURTH

I had that.

NAT

You go fetch that money you took from the Crimson Hoods. Pickett, kid, you comin' with me.

Beckwourth gives Nat an "are you serious" look, which Nat ignores.

CUFFEE

If Rufus Buck wants that bank took, why don't he send his own men?

NAT

This way he's clean. I gotta go in barefaced as day, a freshly-minted bank robber, face up on wanted posters all over the territory—

BASS REEVES

They'll be on you like flies on shit before you knock on the door.

NAT

Yep. I said "I" had to be recognized...

Nat reaches into the saddle-bag on his horse, pulls out a bundle and throws it to Cuffee, who catches it. Unfurls it, revealing a LONG, PUFFY RED DRESS. Cuffee's expression sinks.

CUFFEE

Oh, hell no!

NAT

(to Cuffee)
For Mary.

Cuffee hesitates, then reaches down and unbuttons her jeans—

Nat turns around out of respect. Beckwourth lets out a relieved sigh.

BECKWOURTH

Close fuckin' shave. I thought I was falling for a fella for a little bit. That's why I didn't say nothing.

(to Pickett)

(MORE)

BECKWOURTH (CONT'D)

Did you feel it too? You felt it right? I know it wasn't just me...

PICKETT

It was just you, Jim.

EXT. ROAD TO MAYSVILLE - DAY

THE HAMMERING PIANO OF "MY GUNS GO BANG" BY THE BULLITTS BLARE ON THE SOUNDTRACK, as

Nat Love, Cuffee and Bill Pickett trot and then gallop to Maysville.

EXT. MAYSVILLE - AFTERNOON

Nat and Cuffee, closely followed by Pickett, ride toward the town's main street...

Title:

MAYSVILLE (*It's a white town*)

Cuffee is in the red dress, a red bonnet on her head, riding side-saddle, barely able to stay on her horse's back. She reaches up to fix her hat from falling over her eyes and almost slides off her horse.

A MOMENT LATER

They stop at a hitching post near the BANK. WHITE TOWNSFOLK watching them closely. Nat dismounts first— reaches a hand to Cuffee. Cuffee takes it, and slides off her saddle. Her ankles buckle in her high-heels, and she almost falls. Nat keeps her up. He then takes the reins from her hand and gives them to

Pickett, who leads the horses to a water trough across the street, keeping his collar turned up to cover his face...

Nat reaches his arm out to Cuffee, like a gentleman—

NAT(CONT'D)

Allow me.

ANOTHER MOMENT LATER:

Nat and Cuffee walk side by side down the gangplanks. Cuffee trips, but Nat catches her.

NAT (CONT'D)

What's your real name?

CUFFEE

Cuffee my real name. Name I was born with is Cathay Williams.

NAT

You walk even worse'n you ride.
(sarcastically)
Cathay.

Nat smiles at a passing group of WHITE PEOPLE.

CUFFEE

Mr. Love, my momma always told me to respect my elders, so I'm not gonna say what I'm thinking.

NAT

That's all right. I can read your mind.

CUFFEE

Then I'm sorry you had to hear that.

They stop outside the bank doors. Nat takes a beat and inhales. Looks at Cuffee—

INT. BANK - CONTINUOUS

Nat and Cuffee enter the bank. EVERYONE STOPS IN THEIR TRACKS - CUSTOMERS - THREE FEMALE TELLERS - TWO GUARDS, ALL STARING AT NAT AND CUFFEE.

Cuffee walks toward the CLERK'S WINDOW... trips... catches herself and, holding up her skirt, continues on, while

Nat stays back, scopes out the space. The TWO TELLERS at their windows each have a CUSTOMER. A BANK MANAGER was assisting an ELDERLY COUPLE at the time of entry, and—

—TWO BANK GUARDS -- one by the door, the other by the counter, not sensing danger... just frozen in wonderment.

Cuffee manages to arrive in front of the open teller's window with no further incident.

TELLER

Yes?

CUFFEE

I'd like to make a withdrawal.

The Teller grins- Then sniggers- Then bursts into laughter. She looks at the two other tellers who start laughing. She finally collects herself-

TELLER

You have to have an account, ma'am.
And, well... I'd recommend a bank
in Jericho or even Redwood for
that.

CUFFEE

Oh, I'm not talking about that
kinda withdrawal, ma'am...

Cuffee pulls up her dress and awkwardly reaches under it, fishing around for something... having trouble finding it...

Every eye in the bank is on her, fascinated and appalled.

CUFFEE (CONT'D)

I'm talking... I'm talking about...

Nat's nerves are nearly jumping out of his skin, as Cuffee struggles under her dress for another moment, and finally

-- Pulls out a SIXGUN and points it at the Teller:

CUFFEE (CONT'D)

-- That kind.

The GUARDS near Nat reach for their gun, but- WHAM!- Nat smashes one in the face with the butt of his own pistol, knocking the man cold, then

Suddenly a BIG MALE CUSTOMER charges up behind Cuffee- He grabs her arm, causing her to drop her gun, and neck-locks her, lifting her off her feet.

Nat swiftly draws another gun and levels it at the Customer. He grits his teeth, very unwilling to pull the trigger.

This has gone sideways with the quickness...

WHACK! Cuffee ELBOWS the Customer in the ribs, then PUNCHES him in the side of the head! He falls back, letting her go. Cuffee turns around in a fury, and WHACK!! Knocks the Customer out cold on the teller window counter.

Nat levels his gun at the SECOND GUARD across the room, who aims his gun right back, clearly frightened. Nat speaks evenly-

NAT

Hey blue eyes. You're scared. Your hand is shaking. You'll miss. I won't. Exhale.

It is a tense face-off. The Guard doesn't know what to do. He looks at both Nat and Cuffee...

The Guard places his gun on the floor and slides it over to Nat. Cuffee holds her gun level at the teller.

CUFFEE

I ain't like my partner. He don't wanna shoot nobody. But all of a sudden, I'm of a mind to. Now open that fuckin' gate.

The Teller gets up and opens the gate. Cuffee steps through.

-- Cuffee pushes the pistol against the Teller's head.

CUFFEE (CONT'D)

Think I'm funny now?

Cuffee then turns to the Bank Manager who has remained calm throughout.

CUFFEE (CONT'D)

What you lookin' at? Get all the customers over there.

The Manager urges the Customers to the corner of the room.

CUFFEE (CONT'D)

(to the Guard)

Get 'em over there!

The guard joins the others.

NAT

Times have changed...ain't they?

Nat reaches down and drags the unconscious guard to the counter.

NAT (CONT'D)

They say robbing banks is hard work. But that's a lie. Robbing banks is easy-- the hard part is doing it without killing...

Nat lowers his gun and offers his hand to the Bank Manager--

NAT (CONT'D)
 What'll it be Mr. Manager?

The bank manager gladly shakes it.

NAT (CONT'D)
 Good man.

EXT. BANK - MORNING

Nat exits the bank, followed by the Manager, who is holding TWO SATCHELS. He is followed by Cuffee, staying close to the manager, covering the gun pointing at his back with a lady's PURSE. They smile at a few SUSPICIOUS PASSERS-BY as they walk across the street...

Nat grabs the SATCHELS from the Bank Manager and throws them over the backs of the horses as the townspeople in the street freeze...

Nat gives a last look at the Manager-

NAT
 (to the manager)
 Pleasure banking with you.

He swings up onto his horse, and he and Cuffee take off on their mounts.

INT. BANK - CONTINUOUS

The frightened Guard runs to the wall where he leans on an IRON LEVER connected to a PIPE running up to the ceiling-

EXT. BANK - CONTINUOUS

-- Connected to an AIR HORN that lets out a loud, continuous BLARE.

The door to the SHERIFF'S OFFICE right near the bank flies open and SEVERAL DEPUTIES hustle out, drawing their guns, but

BLAM! The hat is blown off the first Deputy's head. BLAM! The wooden door right near the 2nd Deputies face splinters, and the two men go diving back into the office...

BILL PICKETT is firing his rifle at the Deputies from over the horses, shattering the Sheriff's office windows, keeping everyone inside it at bay.

Pickett slaps his horse and jumps onto it on the run, catching up with Nat and Cuffee - the three of them take off in a full gallop as Pickett finishes firing his clip.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

A SATCHEL is slung down over a PILE OF SATCHELS.

CUFFEE

Don't even look like much.

Nat, Bill Pickett, Bass Reeves and Cuffee are in the clearing. Cuffee is back in her young-man's clothes.

NAT

Ain't what it looks like, it's what it can buy you.

Bass Reeves steps close to Nat:

BASS REEVES

Rufus won't let Mary go once he gets that money.

Nat's eyes gleam darkly. He knows.

NAT

Yeah you know it. He'll kill her and let me go, so's I carry that hurt with me.

BECKWOURTH

So what, we just went through all that trouble for nothin'?

NAT

Now we got something he wants.

BECKWOURTH

And that's it?

NAT

Gonna have to be.

Then they hear the SOUND OF WHEELS crunching on dirt. The gang instantly move, drawing their weapons and turning to see

A ONE-HORSE CARRIAGE approaching the clearing -- as it draws nearer, we see that

WILEY ESCOE

Is sitting on the buckboard. He pulls the horses to a stop and raises his hands.

WILEY ESCOE

You can be all hasty and shoot me
if you want, or you're gonna wait
to see what I brought with me
first.

A MOMENT LATER:

The carriage doors swing open, revealing a TROVE OF WEAPONS:
RIFLES, AMMO, BOXES OF DYNAMITE.

WILEY ESCOE (CONT'D)

Rufus got stashes like this all
across these hills. Enough for a
small army.

Reverse on our gang, looking at the arsenal.

Wiley grins and starts arming himself-

WILEY ESCOE (CONT'D)

Don't nobody take what I got coming
to me. Not even the Devil himself.

BASS REEVES

Rufus Buck is a man. Ya'll best
reconcile yourselves with that
fact.

NAT

Man or devil, this gonna be the
Buck's last day amongst the living.

Cuffee pulls a pair of SIXGUNS off the cart, balancing them
in her hands.

Pickett begins to sing his chant:

PICKETT

Upon my return, see a changed soul,
That road was far, And way too long

Beckwourth & Nat join in Pickett's chant, grabbing ammo off
the wagon...

NAT, BECKWOURTH & PICKETT

-- They'll run from me, As they ran
from you, The fear in me is in a
distant view...

THE ACOUSTIC BALLAD 'A HYMN FOR VENGEANCE' BY THE BULLITTS,
STARTS OVER THE SOUNDTRACK. THE WORDS ECHOING PICKETT'S NEGRO

SPIRITUAL- THE MELODY PLAYING OUT OVER-

ANGLES ON THE GANG arming up and strapping dynamite together.
A war is coming-

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - DUSK

THE ARMED GUNMEN guarding the street look up, as they see-

A ONE HORSE WAGON approaching from the outskirts of town.
There are THREE RIDERS behind it...

FROM OVER THE GUNMEN ON THE ROOFTOPS

A PAIR OF HORSES, carrying a load between them, are visible
trailing the Wagon and the three riders as they come up Main
Street...

MOMENTS LATER:

Bass Reeves dismounts his wagon in the middle of the street.
Starts unhitching the horse from the wagon, whistling
Pickett's chant...

INT. JAILHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Trudy Smith is looking out of the window. She sees

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Bass Reeves standing backlit in the center of Redwood.

ANGEL steps up to Reeves as he pulls the harness off the
horse.

BASS REEVES

Afternoon. I would ask you to run
go fetch your superior...
-- But that'd be like asking you to
fetch your daddy. It could be
anyone, right?

ANGEL

You know, I'm willing to bet my
right arm I got a higher body count
than yours.

BASS REEVES

That'd be a bad bet, son.

CHEROKEE BILL (O.S.)
 I fancy that song or whatever it
 was you was whistling there.

Angel WHISTLES back to a Gunman outside the saloon- The
 Gunman opens the door of the saloon- Cherokee Bill walks out.

Reeves gives the horse a smack on the rear - it trots away
 down the street. Cherokee Bill strides over to Reeves.

CHEROKEE BILL (CONT'D)
 That our money?

Reeves starts walking away from the wagon.

BASS REEVES
 Walk with me.

Cherokee Bill follows him, hand on his gun.

BILL PICKETT

Now on the roof sees a GUNMAN in front of him looking down
 onto the street. Pickett sneaks behind him and - WHAM! Knocks
 the Gunman unconscious. He drags the man to the side and
 quickly ducks down as-

CARSON

Perched on the roof of the Mayor's Mansion, his RIFLE in hand
 -- with an almost sixth sense, tears his gaze from the street
 and looks up toward Trudy's saloon - No one is there.

BASS REEVES (CONT'D)
 You know they call your boss the
 Devil himself. But even the devil
 need his money. So being as we are
 in possession of that money, let
 me dictate the terms of engagement-

KABOOOOOOOOOOOM! -- THE WAGON BLOWS UP in a TREMENDOUS
 EXPLOSION behind them. Angel is blown to pieces...

Gunmen and citizens alike hit the deck...

Even Cherokee Bill is shocked as one of the Gunman's arms
 crashes at his feet.

CHEROKEE BILL
 What the fuck was that, old man?!

BASS REEVES
 Is that the right arm or the left?
 Oh yeah, that... Yeah, now there's
 us... and there's y'all.

Cherokee grits his teeth and looks up at

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

RUFUS BUCK in the window of the Mayor's Mansion. Rufus shakes his head- No.

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Cherokee Bill swallows his pride- and lowers his arm.

FACES DUCK behind windows and into doorways... CITIZENS run away without missing a beat... THE BLACKSMITH AND VARIOUS SHOPKEEPERS abandon their carts and businesses, running away from Main Street...

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - EDGE OF TOWN

NAT LOVE approaches on horseback sitting high in his saddle. The prodigal son returns. He stops at the edge of Main Street as if he can see

RUFUS BUCK standing in the window watching from the other end.

Behind Nat comes CUFFEE- perched atop Wiley's wagon, the back of which THE SATCHELS OF MONEY are sitting, strapped to a BIG STACK OF EXPOSED DYNAMITE -- She holds a pistol- directly aimed at the DYNAMITE.

BASS REEVES AND CHEROKEE BILL

Watch as Nat and Cuffee approach -- They reach the center of Main Street and stop there.

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Nat dismounts -- Cherokee Bill walks over and sees Cuffee with the gun pointed at the pile of satchels and dynamite.

Cherokee carefully flips open the satchels, sees they are stuffed with GREEN BILLS...

NAT
 Mary.

CHEROKEE BILL

Yeah we'll get to that, We're gonna count this first.

Nat shakes his head-

NAT

Now, or your boss is gonna be one quick draw and thirty-five thousand dollars short.

Cuffee cocks the hammer of the pistol. Cherokee Bill bites it back again. He turns toward the JAILHOUSE and gives a sharp whistle-

THE JAILHOUSE DOOR opens, and MARY is led out into the street by TRUDY SMITH and TWO GUARDS. One Guard has a PISTOL aimed at Mary...

Mary makes emotional eye-contact with Nat, and

Nat tears his eyes from Mary and looks up to Rufus.

NAT (CONT'D)

All right. Unhitch this horse, so's Mary can ride out.

Cherokee Bill gives Nat a venomous stare, but does as he says and de-rigs the horse...

NAT (CONT'D)

You always move so slow?

CHEROKEE BILL

You always talk so much?

Nat takes the reins of the horse. Cuffee moves back to the other side of the street...

Nat leads the horse down the street toward Mary, leaving Cherokee Bill standing by the pile of money...

Then-

Cherokee can't take it anymore. He pulls out his gun in order to shoot Nat...

Nat doesn't even turn around.

NAT

Really? In the back? Whatchuthink Beckwourth?

BECKWOURTH

Nah, he wouldn't do that, cause then I'll have to put a bullet through his cranium.

Cherokee turns around and sees Beckwourth in front of the stores on the street. Guns are leveled at him, but Beckwourth doesn't pay them any mind. Cherokee lowers his gun.

BECKWOURTH (CONT'D)

...and we'll never know who the fastest really is, now would we?

CHEROKEE BILL

You know, I gotta hand it to you, boy. You do know how to make a grand entrance.

BECKWOURTH

Shit, I didn't even rehearse that one.

Cherokee holds a moment... And speaks sincerely-

CHEROKEE BILL

Quick draw, Nat Love a dead man walking... but you don't have to be. Why don't you go back to your horse, get your shit and back to wherever it is you call home.

Beckwourth smiles that signature smile.

BECKWOURTH

You know that's impossible.

Cherokee Bill looks almost saddened, but stands at the ready.

CLOSE ON CHEROKEE BILL:

CHEROKEE BILL

Count down from five?

CLOSE ON BECKWOURTH:

BECKWOURTH

Five. Four. Thr-

CHEROKEE BILL DRAWS HIS GUN WITH LIGHTNING SPEED AND-

BLAM!!!

SLO-MO BEHIND CHEROKEE'S BULLET WHIZZING TOWARD HIS ENEMY-

MONEY BLOWS UP INTO THE AIR all over the middle of the street...

ANGLE ON RUFUS BUCK

AT THE WINDOW, SEEING HIS FORTUNE SCATTER TO THE FOUR WINDS.

A flash of rage... then resignation... and maybe even a slight gleam of respect in his eyes. Then he turns away and leaves the window...

CLOSE ON TRUDY SMITH

Her eyes filling with fury; she turns and shouts at the Gunmen holding Mary-

TRUDY

Kill her.

Then-

CUFFEE -- Runs out from the other side of the street, slows ever so slightly to get aim and- BLAM! BLAM! FIRES her pistols with deadly accuracy -- instantly cutting down BOTH GUARDS with headshots as

Bill Pickett

Is receiving FIRE from the opposite roof - He ducks and hastily raises his gun over his head and FIRES at Trudy without looking - HIS RIFLE BLASTS kick up the dirt around her feet -- she darts toward Textile Alley.

Stagecoach Mary drops to the ground with the two dead guards - Pulls the left Guard over her body as a shield -

TWO GUNMEN closing in from Mary's left - They aim at Mary, blowing FOUR SHOTS into the chest of the dead guard - Mary grabs his gun while lying beneath him and CUTS DOWN the two Gunmen firing at her.

SLOW MOTION:

SEAL'S VOICE SCREAMS OUT

"Oh that reaper he gonna win..."

Nat Love holds on the neck of the horse with one arm as it gallops toward Mary...

"All them people that live in sin..."

GUNMEN all along the street draw aim at him, but- POW! POW! POW! They go down one after another, as

BILL PICKETT fires his rifle from the rooftop as
 BASS REEVES is covering Nat from outside the Apothecary.

"There that coffin you're gonna lie, so..."

"Give that lady a ring of fire..."

Mary spins around and FIRES A BLAST --

"You're dead in your blood..."

It blows a nearby GUNMAN right through a store window...

Nat lets the horse go, drawing his guns as he hits the ground...

"That's your woman, Ain't no better love."

Nat reaches Mary on the horse -- throws open his long coat with his free hand, pulling out Mary's PUMP-ACTION SHOTGUN. He throws it to her- she catches it and

Nat stands back to back with Mary and the two of them FIRE AWAY at the surrounding Gunmen.

ON THE ROOFTOP:

Bill Pickett has to squeeze flat as the sharpshooters on the adjacent roofs and balconies fire at him, blasting the wooden barrier in front of him to pieces...

ON THE STREET:

Mary turns to Nat:

MARY
 Trudy Smith is mine.

THE INSTRUMENTAL OF 'AIN'T NO BETTER LOVE' RINGS OUT ON THE SOUND-TRACK AS

Mary breaks out after Trudy toward Textile Alley. Nat covers her as he moves across to the saloon, CUTTING DOWN A GUNMAN in range to draw a bead.

EXT. TEXTILE ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Mary's shotgun moves the hanging drapes as she looks for Trudy Smith. She spots a barn- and knows who waits within-

INT./EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

THE VOICE OF THE LEGEND FELA KUTI ENTERS THE SOUNDTRACK:

"We gonna play for you our first tune tonight And the first tune is called O l'oun t'awa se n'yara Je k'abere Now, which means... Let's start what we have come into the room to do"

Trudy stands waiting, cocks her pistol - staring Mary down

Mary cracks the shotgun and ejects her remaining shell.

Trudy throws her pistol to the side. It. Is. Going. Down.

TRUDY

Let's Go.

THE STABBING HORNS, KEYS AND DRUMS KICK IN WILDLY, WITH FELA'S WILD VOCAL BLARING AT US, AS

Trudy and Mary charge each other screaming! Mary swings her shotgun, Trudy evades and out of nowhere, FLINGS her knife out and CUTS Mary on her cheek!

Mary covers her cheek in shock - Trudy swings her knife-chain, smiling.

The fight between the two women is vicious and fast, both of them skilled in their own right... SPARKS FLY off the gun-barrel as the knife glances off the hot metal, two warriors locked in mortal combat...

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

NAT LOVE

Walking down the boardwalk - A GUNMAN darts out of the bank and attacks Nat - Nat dismantles him and shoots him in the chest and

FLINGS his knife at another approaching GUNMAN

NAT notices the curtains move in another store and immediately FIRES THREE SHOTS through the glass door - He kicks it open - A BULLET RIDDEN GUNMAN staggers in front of him - Nat grabs and throws him to the street and puts one more bullet in him. Then-

BANG! NAT LOVE IS SHOT IN THE LEFT SHOULDER BY

ONE OF TWO GUNMAN running out of the alleyway --

With lightning reflexes, Nat runs toward the Gunmen, pushes them both against a wall, and- BLAM! - A single shot through the head of both men.

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Cherokee Bill comes out of the millinery, shaking off the effects of the dynamite blast... sees Cuffee shooting down a Gunman. He draws a bead and

-- Cuffee sees him. Ducks back and Cherokee's BULLET hits the post near her face. She presses back in a doorway, bullets hitting around her, as

Cherokee Bill approaches, firing carefully, getting closer with each shot...

ON THE ROOF

Bill Pickett sees this, and

PICKETT

Not today, you slick sonofabitch.

Pickett aims at Cherokee Bill -- but one of the gunmen across from him SHOOTs first, blowing splinters in front of his face, and

-- Pickett's shot hits the dirt by Cherokee Bill's boots; Cherokee Bill runs for cover, as POW! POW! Pickett shoots at him... and he dives behind the stock of the General Store across the street, tucking in as Pickett's bullets explode near his head, then

PICKETT IS HIT by the Gunman on the roof furthest from him.

CUFFEE

Is right below the balcony, firing sideways and upward, blowing holes in the floorboards until the Gunman topples over the edge and falls at her feet.

Pickett sits on the roof, gathering his breath; then gets up, looks down his rifle sight, and FIRES-

-- Nailing the Gunman between the eyes.

MORE BULLETS hit the roof around Pickett, and he backs away, gasping in pain as he falls over the rails of the roof onto a balcony. He lands clumsily and has to duck as more BULLETS hit around him, fired by

A GUNMAN ON A NEARBY BALCONY. It looks bad for Pickett -- but BULLETS EXPLODE through the planks beneath the GUNMAN's feet, hitting him in the legs and groin

BASS REEVES

Walking slowly through the street, aiming his pistols deliberately and hitting one man after the next, as every shot taken at him, no matter how well-aimed, misses him by centimeters.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Mary continues battling through textiles and hay. Both worn out, bloody and bruised.

Trudy flings her knife - Mary runs at Trudy with a pitchfork - She misses. The pitchfork breaks. No matter, Mary keeps fighting with the remaining handle. They go back and forth with blows till Mary throws a factory powder into Trudy's face. Trudy is knocked back... Mary spins around and throws a cross straight to her face.

Trudy stumbled to the ground when Mary -

WHACKS THE HANDLE OF THE SHOTGUN IN TRUDY'S FACE-

SLOW MOTION:

Trudy is rendered unconscious before she falls backward and hits the ground. Mary stands over Trudy- then looks upward- AND SCREAMS LIKE A WOLF IN FURY...

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Bass Reeves is out of bullets -- He runs toward the Blacksmith's cart and picks up a hammer. A HENCHMAN runs toward him and WHACK!! is HIT with the hammer in the head before he could get off a shot- Reeves turns him around-

BLAM! BLAM! The Henchman is shot by TWO GUNMEN aiming at Reeves -- Reeves grabs the Man's pistol and SHOOTS the two Gunmen dead. Reeves crosses the street heading toward

NAT LOVE

Who covers the Marshal as he reloads calmly.

They fire at the Gunmen who are lining up in front of the Mayor's Mansion and forming a veritable firing squad... forcing Nat and Reeves to take cover behind a nearby wagon, wood chips and debris splintering all around them.

Nat breaks out from behind the wagon, firing as he goes...

-- drawing the fire from the Gunmen, the first two of whom he shoots dead... and

Bass Reeves bursts out from the other side of the wagon, with a clear line of sight at the remaining Gunmen and he and Nat fire in tandem - BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

And suddenly... BAM! The music stops: NAT LOVE IS HIT.

A CRIMSON HOOD member rides to Nat on the ground, aim his pistol at him.

CRIMSON HOOD
Exhale. Mutha Fucker.

BLAM! Bullet straight through the head knocks the Crimson Hood straight off his horse.

CLOSE UP - BASS REEVES.

Reeves drags Nat's body back behind the wagon.

INT. MAYOR'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS

THE GUNMEN by the windows are FIRING out at Nat and Bass Reeves across the street. Then there is a CLUNK, and they whirl around to see

A STICK OF DYNAMITE rolling on the floor right at their feet. TILT UP to

WILEY ESCOE standing in the doorway of the Sun Room. He runs out toward the Living Room.

One of the Gunmen lurches forward to kick the dynamite, but-

BOOOM! It blows the Gunman to pieces and the other men right out of the window and all across the room. Lamps crash and fall and the wooden floor and walls catch fire...

INT. MAYOR'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Wiley stands in the smoky Living Room... Then something catches his eye-

A FIGURE walking down the stairs, the smoke obscuring it. Wiley frantically raises his gun and FIRES repeatedly into the smoke. Waits, sweating, Then- CLICK.

The smoke clears, revealing-

RUFUS BUCK

Standing a few yards from Wiley. Guns pointed at Wiley's head.

RUFUS BUCK

I always knew it was you who gave me up.

WILEY ESCOE

God knew my heart.

RUFUS BUCK

-Goodbye old friend.

WILEY ESCOE

Rufus, I didn't have a choi... -

Rufus lowers his aim slightly and fires-

HITTING THE SATCHEL hanging from Wiley's shoulder- hitting the DYNAMITE inside it and - BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!- Wiley is incinerated along with the entire interior of his side of the mansion...

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Nat and Reeves are pinned behind the wagon. Suddenly they hear Click, Click. The Gunmen are out of bullets..

BLAM!!

Nat CUTS a GUNMAN DOWN WITH A HEADSHOT!

Reeves turns and fires, taking out another Gunman. They keep shooting as bullets slam all around them until--

-- the last Gunmen is taken down by this hail of bullets. And the street is suddenly very, very still.

We see Nat and Bass Reeves approaching, warped by the heat, until they finally draw into focus at the entrance.

The slain Body of Jim Beckwourth lies in front of Nat Love.

BASS REEVES
I told that kid... them damn
tricks.

Nat looks at his comrade mournfully.

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Bill Pickett, wincing in pain, pulls himself off the rooftop and drops onto a terrace, then pulls open the window...

INT. SALOON/WHOREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Pickett climbs into an empty room -- Runs through it and opens the door...

He half-walks, half-falls down the stairs, clutching his pistol, and enters the

SALOON: Where a HANDFUL OF HOOKERS are huddled up, scared out of their wits. Stagger through the room...

PICKETT
Sorry ladies.

Then Cuffee bursts through the swinging doors and presses her back to the wall.

PICKETT (CONT'D)
Cuffee, you alright?

CUFFEE
Just need to reload. But you look hurt, Mr. Pickett.

PICKETT
Ain't nothin' but a flesh wound.
Maggie ain't ready for me today.

Pickett pulls out his lucky coin. It has a bullet lodged in it. He kisses it.

PICKETT (CONT'D)
What the fuck? I'll be damned.

Then-

BLAM! -- A bullet shoots through the chest of Bill Pickett.

CUFFEE
PICKETT!!

Pickett turns around... wheezing heavily... Revealing

CHEROKEE BILL standing behind him, gun out. Cherokee looks puzzled as Pickett gasps for air-

CHEROKEE BILL

Why you got that look on your face?
No, no brother, no.

Pickett tries to grab Cherokee's face. Cherokee calmly moves Pickett's bludgeoned hands away.

CHEROKEE BILL (CONT'D)

Don't do that. You had a choice.
You always got a choice.

The dying Pickett is wheezing while bloodying Cherokee's jacket. Cherokee moves Pickett's hand away and places his own arm kindly on his enemy's shoulder.

Cherokee pulls Pickett even closer and- BANG! BANG! BANG!

THE SMOKE OF CHEROKEE BILL'S GUN RISES BETWEEN THE TWO MEN --

Bill Pickett drops dead on the floor. Cherokee lowers his gun.

Cuffee stands before Bill's killer, eyes red with rage.

CUFFEE

He didn't even have a chance you
sonofabitch.

Cuffee takes a bullet out of her pocket. Puts it in the chamber- staring at Cherokee Bill...

CUFFEE (CONT'D)

You gonna shoot me in the back
too? Or cheat the count?

Cherokee Bill holsters his gun... She's ready to draw. Then like lightning...

Cherokee Bill motions to draw -- CUFFEE IS SURPRISINGLY FASTER- SHE FIRES!

CUFFEE'S BULLET WHISTLES through the air and BLOWS THROUGH CHEROKEE BILL'S NECK!

Cherokee blinks, reaches up and grabs the wound with his hand.

CUFFEE (CONT'D)

Beckwourth was faster.

THE MELANCHOLY SOUL OF ISAAC HAYES' 'GOING IN CIRCLES' BARES ALL ON THE SOUNDTRACK, as-

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

THROUGH A FRAME OF BURNING FLAMES -- warped by the heat -- we see CHEROKEE BILL come staggering out of the saloon across the street, holding his neck... totter on his feet and as if looking at Rufus, he finally collapses in the dirt...

INT. MAYOR'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS

REVERSE ON RUFUS -- looking at this from inside the burning space. His eyes fill with sadness and weariness. He turns...

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Nat takes a moment. Then places a pistol on Beckwourth's body. He gets up -

NAT
(to Bass)
Look after my friend.

BASS REEVES
Nat...Don't miss.

FROM WITHIN THE DOORWAY OF THE MAYOR'S MANSION

INT. MAYOR'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Nat steps into the space, guns drawn, and sees

RUFUS BUCK

Sitting in partial profile at the bar at the far end of the room, whiskey bottle on the table - glass in his hand - his GUNS ON THE TABLE.

THE STRINGS OF 'THREE AND THIRTY YEARS' HAUNT THE SOUNDTRACK.

Nat's eyes flash with emotion.

NAT
Pick up your guns.

Rufus doesn't turn around... instead;

RUFUS BUCK

I know what it is now. It's the eyes.

Rufus makes no move to do so. He just finishes his drink.

NAT

Pick 'em up, I say.

Rufus puts the glass down.

RUFUS BUCK

Your father...

Nat's blood runs cold.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)

He was a good man?

NAT

He was. And my mother was a good woman. Before you cut 'em down.

RUFUS BUCK

Seems we had a different upbringing

NAT

I don't care how you was raised. Now Pick up your guns and turn around.

RUFUS BUCK

I used to watch my father beat my mother to a pulp if she overcooked his food. He cut her up real good if undercooked it too.

(turns slightly)

One day, I decided to intervene, and he turned his wrath on me. My father was not a good man. Not a good man. He was an outlaw. Robbin' banks... He liked to drink. My mother took a bottle and cut him to protect me. He lashed back at her, and just like that... she was gone. Then, like the coward he is, he took everything we had and left, leaving me with my...my mother. I was ten years old, you know, about the same age you was... when I gave you that scar. I had to fend for myself but I became who I am, just like you.

(MORE)

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)

As I did, all I could ever think about is wanting my father to pay for what he did. I searched for him for years and years and I could never find him. It's like he had disappeared off the face of the earth. I ain't stop though. I kept looking, until I did find him. One day, lo and behold... there he was, my father.

Rufus stands up.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)

A new man, he was clean now. Sober. Man of God. At church. He had a pretty little wife. And he had a son, about the age of ten years old, whose eyes blazed like mine.

BACK TO NAT:

Overwhelmed with shock and horror... tears fall from Nat's eyes. His gun hand trembles.

NAT

You're lying.

Rufus stares into his eyes--

RUFUS BUCK

Killing our father was retribution, but--

NAT

My Father! My Mother!

RUFUS BUCK

But it wasn't enough. Letting you live that was true revenge. Every sin you mad, every bank you robbed, everybody you killed. I mean, look at you. You everything he tried to run away from. Buck. Changed his name to "Love". You a Buck. Just like me. Just like him. But you better. You gonna surpass even me, because I could not kill my brother... I couldn't kill my brother. Yet here you are about to kill yours.

Nat is torn asunder with the revelation. Rufus lets it fester.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)
 It's time to take your revenge,
 Nathaniel Buck. Go on.

Through his falling tears Nat finds the strength to speak.

NAT
 No.

Nat lowers the gun. Turns and walks away.

RUFUS BUCK
 Nathaniel Buck! Take your revenge.
 Nathaniel Buck!

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Nat fires at the ground.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)
 Take your goddamn revenge! You a
 Buck.

Rufus walks toward Nat slowly, and again-

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)
 Nathaniel Buck!

The name hits Nat Love like a shotgun blast to the chest.

RUFUS BUCK (CONT'D)
 Nathaniel Buck!

The name 'Buck' hits Nat like a bullet. Rufus gets closer-

RUFUS BUCK((CONT'D)
 Nathaniel Bu-

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! NAT SHOOTS Rufus Buck in the chest,
 emptying his pistol.

Rufus's eyes glitter with unknowable emotion... a glimmer of
 a smile... then he slumps back in the chair. Dead.

Nat steps back to Rufus and stands in front of his body.

Nat reaches into Rufus Buck's bloody pocket and removes the
 GOLD WEDDING BAND he took from him. Then he reaches toward
 his forehead and draws cross with his finger

EXT. REDWOOD MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Mary is standing in the middle of the street, holding her blood-spattered shotgun. She watches, as

Nat comes out of the burning Mayor's Mansion. He stops by Bass Reeves, and they acknowledge each other with a look. Then he continues into the street and

Nat and Mary stand facing one another.

MARY

Is the devil dead?

Nat hesitates. Then-

NAT

I- I don't know.

WIDE ANGLE on Nat and Mary. Bass Reeves one side of the street, and the emerging Cuffee on the other...

DISSOLVE TO:

CAMERA TILTS DOWN TO

THREE WOODEN CROSSES on freshly dug graves...

On each cross a name is carved:

JIM BECKWOURTH

BILL PICKETT

E.C.U. on the bullet-holed coin of Bill Pickett - Nailed between his first and last name. A rose is placed either side of his grave...

And finally...

NAT LOVE

Scarred Stagecoach Mary and bandaged Nat Love stand at the graves of their comrades. Bass Reeves and Cuffee stand a short distance behind them.

NAT (CONT'D)

Alright Fellas.

Mary turns to Bass Reeves.

MARY

You sure the law gonna believe he's dead?

BASS REEVES
I'm the law Ms. Mary. If I say a
man's dead, he's dead.

Mary turns to Cuffee-

Cuffee holds a gleaming deputy badge in her hand.

MARY
(to Cuffee)
And you? You sure this is what you
want?

CUFFEE
(cheesin' widely)
I kinda always wanted to be a
sheriff, deputy, Marshal person.

Mary smiles slightly.

MARY
(to Nat)
What you looking at me like that
for? We got work to do, Mr. Love.

Mary mounts her horse - takes a last look at her friends -
kicks her horse's flanks and gallops off.

Nat mounts his horse- and looks at Reeves.

Reeves nods, then allows the slightest of smiles-

A last look between the two men, then Nat turns his horse
gallops after Mary.

HIGH ANGLE

Shows Nat and Mary galloping toward the West -- Reeves and
Cuffee toward the East.

'THE HARDER THEY FALL' BLASTS ON THE SOUNDTRACK AS WE

PULL BACK TO REVEAL that they are being watched by ANOTHER
FIGURE

Back to camera, a hand, holding a black bowler hat... Trudy's
hat.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE HARDER THEY FALL