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BILLY THE KID

Episode 101

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EXT. FORT SUMNER - NEW MEXICO - DAY

These words appear on screen:

FORT SUMNER. NEW MEXICO. 1880

It's late afternoon on a January day in this small, mean, negligible township in New Mexico. The main street, comprising just a handful of wooden buildings, is dusty and - apart from a couple of LOCALS and a few thin scavaging dogs - deserted.

But the quiet is shattered by the sudden arrival of around SIX COWBOYS, galloping down the street towards Bob Hargroves' saloon, one of the town's principal buildings.

EXT. SALOON - DAY

Some of the BOYS holler with delight as they reach their destination, jumping off and tying up their horses to the posts outside the sleepy-looking saloon.

A YOUNG MEXICAN WOMAN, who looks like she just got out of bed, appears on a balcony on the first floor of the building, and stares down at the new arrivals. Like many saloons, this one is also a brothel.

The COWBOYS, laughing and in high spirits, make their way inside. We "notice" one of them, but not because he pretends to be the leader: a slim, taut, blue-eyed YOUNG MAN in his early twenties. Clean-shaven, smartly dressed in a black frock coat, black trousers, boots and maybe a Mexican sombrero. Already a legendary figure in the American West, despite his modest demeanor, this is BILLY THE KID.

INT. SALOON - DAY

The place is half-empty. BOB HARGROVES himself stands behind the bar, smiling as the cowboys surge and clatter inside, their laughter filling the place.

BOB HARGROVES

Hey now: I guess you boys just got paid?

BILLY

Sure did, Mr Hargroves.

BILLY glances round at his friends.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Boys, the drinks are on me!

The others cheer and holler again. Hargroves brings out the whiskey - then catches Billy's eye, and directs his attention to a solitary FIGURE sitting at a table at the back of the saloon.

The big, solid-looking fellow is drinking from a bottle of "Kill-me-quick" whiskey. He looks over at Billy, grins unpleasantly - and pulls out a fine, ivory-handled Colt pistol from his belt, placing it on the table in front of him. One of the other young COWBOYS, CHARLIE BOWDRE, steps in front of Billy and takes a few steps towards the big man.

CHARLIE

You're Joe Grant, ain't you?

GRANT

Sure am, boy. All the way from Texas.

CHARLIE

What are you doing?

GRANT

I'll tell you what I'm doing! I'm gonna do you all a big favor, and rid the world of one of the worst crooks and base criminals in the history of this fine country.

(beat)

And earn myself a good bounty in the process.

He grins again, re-fills his glass.

Hargroves glances at Billy.

BOB HARGROVES

Don't rise to it, Billy; he's too drunk to know what he's saying.

Billy smiles his open and engaging smile.

BILLY

I ain't rising to anything, Bob. I reckon we can sort this out amicably - if Mr Grant still has any sense in him.

He moves round Charlie and walks over to Grant's table. The saloon has fallen completely silent.

Billy looks at Grant, then at the ivory-handled Colt.

BILLY (CONT'D)

That looks a fine gun, Joe. Mind if
I take a closer look at it?

A beat.

Then, unexpectedly, Joe picks up the Colt - and hands it to Billy.

Billy examines it with professional interest. Unseen by anyone else, Grant slips a small derringer out of his pocket under the table - and aims it upwards, towards Billy.

Billy lifts the hammer of the ivory handled Colt and revolves the cylinder, noting immediately there are two empty chambers. He lets the hammer down, and hands it back to Grant.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Thanks. She's a real beauty.

A beat.

Then Billy tips his hat, turns and walks slowly back to the bar, rejoining his friends.

Almost immediately, they relax. Bob lets them fill their own glasses. Conversation starts again.

Billy passes the bottle on without pouring any.

CHARLIE

You ain't drinking?

BILLY

No. Not yet, Charlie.

A couple of NEW CUSTOMERS come into the bar. The boys josh each other again. The crisis seems to have been averted.

And then, everything changes. Suddenly getting to his feet, Grant picks up his Colt and walks behind the bar.

BOB HARGROVES

Joe, now then: what the hell you
think you're doing?

Instead of answering, Grant uses the Colt to start knocking glasses and bottles off the bar, shattering them in a spray of glass.

The place falls silent again. The newcomers leave swiftly. Grant, flushed and intoxicated, stares across at Billy, and says loudly:

GRANT
Pardner, I'll kill a man quicker
than you will, for the whiskey.

A beat.

Then Billy nods.

BILLY
(quietly)
I accept the challenge.

Pushing back the right side of his frock coat, Billy reveals his own gun, sitting in its holster. But he makes no move for it - even as Grant lifts the ivory-handled Colt, aims it quickly and fires at Billy's heart.

But the hammer falls with a dull click on an empty chamber. And in that instant, almost too fast for the human eye, Billy the Kid has whipped out his gun and fired, planting a ball between Grant's eyes.

Grant, a look of surprise on his dead features, falls heavily, noisily and slowly down among the broken glasses on the wooden floor, and lies still.

The whole business has lasted just a few seconds. Billy walks behind the bar and looks down at Grant's sprawled corpse. He makes the sign of the cross over his own chest, then looks at the still-silent crowd.

BILLY (CONT'D)
You know, I'm going to be blamed for poor Joe's death. I am more or less blamed for every killing in the whole West these days. But you all saw what happened. I didn't want to kill Joe. I had no grudge against him. I feel I am more sinned against than sinning - and that's a fact.

He takes a coin out of his pocket, puts it down on the counter, and looks over at Bob Hargroves.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Bob, make sure he gets a decent burial, with a preacher and everything he needs to send him on his way to the other life. That's all I got to say.

And Billy walks out, into the sunlight.

TITLES.

WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE

(The Story of Billy the Kid)

EXT. NEW YORK CITY SLUMS - EVENING - 1864

These words appear on screen:

NEW YORK CITY. 1864

The crowded slums where most of the houses are still made of clapper board, with a few taller brick tenements between them. The road is a dusty track, turning to thick mud in winter, full of horses, carts and hungry PEOPLE. The dwellings, packed together, are delapidated and in various states of squalor. A few pale and dismal lights shine in the gathering gloom.

And then a door to one of the dwellings opens, admitting a couple of PEOPLE, and -

INT. DWELLING - EVENING

Inside this shabby and poor space, there is suddenly bright candle-light, gaiety and laughter, and a gathering of around 12 PEOPLE, both MEN and WOMEN, mostly IRISH.

They greet the new-arrivals, who are also Irish, with boisterous conviviality, thrusting drinks into their hands, hugging, regaling them with laughter.

The MAN shakes hands warmly with his host, PATRICK (PADDY) McCARTY, a lean, friendly-looking man, with soft brown eyes, who in his thirties.

IRISHMAN

Good to see you, Paddy. How are you now?

PADDY

I'm not complaining, Donal. Not at all. And you and Deirdre are more than welcome.

DONAL looks around.

DONAL

So - where's the birthday boy?

A beat.

Then a WOMAN'S VOICE answers.

WOMAN V.O.

Here he is!

A YOUNG IRISHWOMAN, with lustrous black hair and sparkling eyes, emerges from the kitchen, holding a TWO-YEAR OLD BOY in one arm and an older BOY by the hand. Her name is KATHLEEN McCARTY.

DONAL, dropping to his haunches, looks the young boy in the eye.

DONAL

A very happy birthday to you,
Henry.

The boy doesn't react.

PADDY

He prefers being called Billy.

Donal, unfazed, fixes the boy with his gaze again.

DONAL

Well then, Billy. Seven years old
today, is it?

BILLY suddenly smiles, and nods. His smile, so genuine, so open, and perhaps helped slightly by two protruding front teeth, melts the hearts of the Irish watchers.

DONAL (CONT'D)

Here's a little something for you.

He hands Billy a small gift, wrapped in newspaper. Billy unwraps a small tin whistle. He grins again, and blows on it proudly.

BILLY

Thank you, sir.

Donal ruffles his hair.

DONAL

Now tell me, Billy - what do you
want to be when you grow up?

BILLY lets go of his mother's hand, and steps forward.

BILLY

I want to be an American!

He pretends to stand tall. Holding a fat cigar between his childish fingers - making everyone in the room laugh at his precociousness.

Then Kathleen gently says:

KATHLEEN

Good boy. But don't ever forget
where you came from. You'll always
keep Ireland in your heart, won't
you?

Billy turns, puts his hand back into his mother's hand, and nods.

BILLY

Yes, ma.

Kathleen smiles at him.

LATER:

Sat around a plain deal table, on wooden stools, in the candle-light, the GUESTS tuck into Irish stew and gravy and potatoes, washed down with home-made beer and illegal potcheen.

The lively conversation turns more serious. Another of the guest's, MICHÁEL O'SULLIVAN, looks across at Paddy.

MICHÁEL

So Paddy, have you had any luck
finding a new job?

A beat.

Then Paddy shakes his head.

PADDY

No. But I hear there's a contractor
called Murphy hiring men for the
docks.

DONAL

Aye, we've all heard that!

He shrugs.

PADDY

Bound to be something. Sure, this
is one big busy city!

MICHÁEL

How's that, now? I've been looking a good while. They don't want us newcomers here.

Micháel's wife, MARY, pats his hand reprovingly.

MARY

Micháel, won't you stop that? Remember what it was like back home!

MICHÁEL

I'll never forget it. But here's no different, Mary. There are no jobs for the likes of us. Sure, don't you know that yourself?

Mary, biting her lip, silently acknowledges it.

Donal pulls a piece of paper - a flier - out of his pocket.

DONAL

I picked this up in the street. It's an advertisement. It says there are plenty of jobs out West. There's even a government grant for those willing to travel to what they call here...

(he reads)

"The Land of Opportunity. Wanted: healthy men and women who want to work hard and succeed in life."

He passes the flier around the table. Even Billy gets to see it.

PADDY

I dunno.

DONAL

What is it you don't know, Paddy?

PADDY

New York is full of Irish people. Just like us. We don't even know what the West is! What kind of people are out there.

MICHÁEL

Paddy, you can bet your bottom dollar that, wherever it is, the Irish will be there already!

The true remark produces laughter.

PADDY

I still think we can make it here.
I always dreamed of New York. I'm
going down the docks tomorrow. I'll
get one of them jobs, sure I will.

Silence falls over them.

In the silence, Billy blows on his tin whistle. They remember it's his birthday.

Kathleen looks across at Donal.

KATHLEEN

Donal, now, did you bring your
fiddle?

Donal grins. Gets up, and takes his precious fiddle out of its case, and stands up, like he's standing on stage.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Play for us.

Donal starts to play an energetic Irish jig. The whole mood in the room changes abruptly, as they are caught up in the music.

And then Billy steps into the centre of the room - and starts to dance. An ancient Irish jig, learned from his parents, that Billy performs with a big smile on his face.

And everyone else starts to clap and they all join in the wild Irish dancing, bringing festivity and joy briefly back into this poverty-stricken, blighted world of the lower West Side.

INT. BEDROOM - DWELLING - NIGHT

The whole McCarty family sleeps in the same small, damp room. The youngster in bed with its parents, Billy asleep on a narrow wooden shelf, his tin whistle clutched in his hand.

A pale tallow candle softly illuminates a small statuette of the Virgin Mary.

KATHLEEN

(quietly)
Are you asleep?

A beat.

PADDY

No.

KATHLEEN

There are no jobs at the docks.

PADDY

I know. I went down there today.

KATHLEEN

Micháel said that he and Mary have almost decided to leave and go west. They've given up hope here.

In the darkness, Billy, his eyes open, is listening to his parents talking.

PADDY

Where are they going?

KATHLEEN

I don't know. A place called Kansas, I think.

(beat)

Should we go with them?

PADDY

You know what I think, Kathleen.

KATHLEEN

We could maybe buy a little place; turn it into a small boarding house and restaurant. You know I like to cook.

A beat. She looks over at her apparently sleeping son.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

There's no school here that'll take Billy. They all say they're "full". But he needs to learn, Pat. Surely there's schools out West? Schools that'll take him.

A long beat. Patrick doesn't respond.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Pat...?

(beat)

What are you thinking?

No response.

She reaches over, touches his face, and flinches.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Why! You're crying!

PADDY

Sure I am, my love. Crying for all
of us.

Kathleen props herself up, stares down at her husband.

KATHLEEN

Now you listen here, Patrick
McCarty, we didn't come all this
way to fall at the first hurdle.
The good Lord will look after us,
but you and me have to be strong -
for our boys, for Billy and Joe. We
came over here to start a new life,
didn't we? Well, maybe our new life
will start right there in Kansas.

A long beat.

PADDY

(softly)

Maybe.

Kathleen smiles, lies down again, putting her arm around him.

KATHLEEN

I love you, Mr McCarty.

On his shelf, Billy smiles at the thought of adventure.

We STAY on Billy's face.

Then transpose it.

INT/EXT. WAGON - TRAIL - DAY

Billy sits up front with the old-time DRIVER, who's called
MOSS, and who keeps his shotgun conveniently beside him.

Patrick, Kathleen and Joe sit on the board behind as the
wagon - carrying their few possessions - lumbers down the
track. There are five wagons in all in the convoy, strung
out, pulled by horses with a few spare horses and a few head
of cattle tied or driven on behind by a couple of hired
COWBOYS.

They are early in their journey, maybe not even out of New
York State. The landscape all around them is dotted with
farmsteads.

All the land is parcelled out and fenced, with cattle and sheep grazing, and tilled fields full of growing crops. The occasional FARMER with his horse or ox-drawn plough can be seen.

Billy marvels at the scene.

BILLY

This is really nice country, Mr. Moss.

MOSS nods, spits out a plug of tobacco.

MOSS

Sure is. But those farmers, they own all of it. You're going somewhere's different.

Billy smiles.

BILLY

We're going West.

Moss laughs.

MOSS

You know it's a long road, don't you?

BILLY

I don't mind.

Moss lapses into silence, quietly urging on the horses. Billy starts to play his tin whistle.

Behind them, Kathleen is still breast feeding her youngest child, while Paddy surveys the landscape.

PADDY

A small parcel of this land would have been all my desire, Kathleen.

KATHLEEN

I know. But you heard the man, we're too late. We have to move on.

A beat.

Reluctantly, Patrick nods.

EXT. CAMP-SITE - NIGHT

The wagons have formed a circle. A fire is burning in the centre, on which some steaks are being cooked.

There are at least SEVEN FAMILIES travelling, including the family of Micháel and Mary, who are sat now with the McCarty's. They also have children: two young TWIN GIRLS and a SLOW-WITTED BOY called SAM.

There is also a GERMAN FAMILY, a DUTCH FAMILY and even a POLISH FAMILY. All immigrants! Their different languages spill into the surrounding darkness.

Old Moss and some of the other DRIVERS and the two COWBOYS help with the cooking, as well as helping to drink from the bottles of illegal potcheen.

Paddy looks at Micháel.

PADDY

You know where we're going, do you, Michaál?

MICHÁEL

All I know, Paddy, is that it's a place called Coffeyville, in Kansas, an old trading post, now apparently a flourishing town. There was no more information.

PADDY

What you going to do there?

MICHÁEL

I can set myself to many trades - if there's work. You know how it is!

PADDY

I wish to God I did.

MICHÁEL

Paddy, we couldn't stay in New York! We were dying all over again.

A beat. Joseph the youngster starts crying.

PADDY

Give him me.

Kathleen hands him the child - while she helps to serve the food.

Somewhere in the darkness, a COWBOY starts to play his guitar: a bitter-sweet song about life on the range.

Billy runs over to see how he plays it, is mesmerised by the instrument and the sound it makes. And, as usual, the pleasure makes him grin - which the cowboy responds to.

And now it's later.

The fire is dying down, the plates have been washed, PEOPLE are settling to sleep.

Out of the darkness comes a fine tenor voice. Paddy is singing an Irish lament, one of those beautiful, sad, melancholic Irish songs about leaving Ireland and home for ever.

He sings it beside the dying fire.

Inside his wagon, the youngster is sleeping - and Billy crawls under the blanket beside his mother.

A beat.

BILLY

(quietly)

Ma, is this here place anything
like Ireland?

Kathleen smiles, shakes her head.

KATHLEEN

No, not so much. It rains a lot in
Ireland, which is why everything is
so green. In fact, what they say in
Wicklow is that if you can't see
the mountains, then it's raining.
And if you can see them, then it's
going to rain!

Billy laughs.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Go to sleep now.

She tucks him in, kisses his forehead and then puts her hands together in prayer.

Billy does the same.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Mother Mary full of grace, be here
with me now and until the hour of
my death. Amen.

BILLY

Amen.

They both cross themselves.

Kathleen cradles him.

KATHLEEN

You know that everything is going
to be just fine, Billy, don't you?
I promise. Everything will be all
right.

Billy nods. His eyes close.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Everything is NOT all right. There's a lot of shouting and
splashing.

The five wagon convoy have been crossing a ford, the water
swollen by the winter rains. The first two WAGONS have got
across safely, but something has happened to the third wagon.
The horses have lost footing, panicked and are thrashing
about in the water. The wagon is tilting.

Old Moss is still trying to regain control of the horses, but
in the meantime Kathleen has gather the youngster into her
arms, and grabbed hold of Billy.

Paddy is ready to jump into the swollen river.

KATHLEEN

No, don't Paddy. For God's sake!
No!

The two COWBOYS ride into the water, trying to grab the reins
of the panicked horses. Everyone else is paralysed, staring
at the terrible scene. Some of the other WOMEN are screaming.

The wagon tilts again. Paddy jumps into the water,
disappearing beneath the surface. Billy cries out:

BILLY

Father!

The cowboys are having no luck calming the horses. Moss has given up.

Paddy abruptly resurfaces.

PADDY

The axle's bust. She's no good.

MOSS

We got to get off her!

The cowboys use their knives to cut the reins and let the frightened horses find their footing and struggle to the shore.

The wagon falls sideways. It's contents are emptied into the water, and swept away. Kathleen, momentarily under water, keeps hold of Joseph, but loses Billy.

The strong hand of Old Moss plucks Billy from the water and wades towards the shore, with cowboys and some of the IMMIGRANTS helping the rest of the family to safety.

In the confusion, they've lost sight of Paddy. It's Micháel who sees him still in the water and pulls him onto dry land. For a few moments, Paddy just lies there.

MICHÁEL

Paddy! Paddy - are you all right?

A long beat.

PADDY

Yes. I guess I'm all right.
Swallowed some water.

MARY

You can travel with us.

KATHLEEN

Thank you, Mary. You're kindness
itself.

(beat)

We just lost everything we owned.

Then she looks with concern at her husband.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

We have an OVER-HEAD view of the four wagon convoy - as it moves slowly across a very different landscape.

They have reached the mid-west. There are big skies and empty plains, and distant mountain ranges. There is no more lush green vegetation, but a harsher, hotter climate.

INT. WAGON - DAY

The wagon now holds the McCarty family and Micháel's family. There isn't much room. Despite, or because of, the heat, water is rationed; everyone sits in their damp clothes.

Billy is once more sat next to Old Moss at the front, his enthusiasm undimmed. Scanning the huge, empty skies he watches a Bald Eagle glide under the sun, and sees the architectural wonders of the heaped boulders all around.

Moss glances at him.

MOSS

I told you it was a long road,
didn't I, boy?

BILLY

Yes you did, Old Moss. But I still
don't mind.

He grins, then moves back into the wagon. Kathleen and Joseph both smile at him. Billy chucks his brother under the chin, crawls back between Micháel's FAMILY to a place right at the rear of the wagon where his father lies on a ready made bed.

BILLY (CONT'D)

(cautious)

Father?

No response.

Billy gets closer. Stares at his father, whose face is a sickly white, and gaunt.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Are you all okay? You want some
water?

Paddy shakes his head. But is too sick to do more. Billy himself doesn't know how to be of comfort, and stares dumbly at the floor.

Then Paddy reaches out a hand...and Billy gratefully grabs it. And smiles, tentatively, uncertainly.

EXT. CAMP SITE - MID-WEST - LATE AFTERNOON

They have stopped for the day, out on the plain.

As Billy watches, one of the COWBOY'S leads one of the spare horses out beyond the circle of wagons.

BILLY

Where you taking him?

COWBOY

You wanna eat, don't you, Billy?

He disappears from sight. Billy listens - and moments later, hears the gunshot.

LATER:

The COWBOYS and DRIVERS are having fun firing their carbines and colts at targets. The targets seem a long way away. Billy is rivetted by the exercise. He can't take his eye off the gunmen, who ramp up the difficulties of the targets - but nearly always seem to hit them.

Old Moss is also watching. He sees Billy's keen interest.

MOSS

You want to try?

BILLY

Well...sure.

Moss smiles, takes a colt out of his belt, primes it, and puts it into Billy's slender hand.

MOSS

Now you be very careful, Billy.
This ain't no toy. This here is the
trigger. You put your finger on it,
so, then aim, and gently squeeze.
You got that?

Billy nods. Is very serious as he lifts the gun and tries to aim. It's heavy in his hand, which shakes. Moss puts his left hand under his right hand, to support it.

MOSS (CONT'D)

Go on now.

Billy aims at a target. Starts to squeeze the trigger, and closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. BOB HARGROVES SALOON - FORT SUMNER - DAY

The same action we saw before. But now we see it from Billy's POV.

Joe Grant smashing glasses with his colt, then suddenly raising it, aiming at Billy and pulling the trigger.

With no result.

We see Billy, in that instant, go for his gun, almost faster than the eye can follow. And firing at the same time.

And the hole appearing between Grant's eyes. And Grant falling into the broken glass.

EXT. WAGON TRAIN - DAY

Another extraordinary landscape, as the immigrants move further west.

INT. WAGON - DAY

The wagon has stopped. Kathleen follows Mary inside. Mary pulls back a blanket, revealing her two YOUNG DAUGHTERS lying side by side. They are barely conscious.

KATHLEEN

What is it?

She puts a hand to the girls' foreheads, which are damp and hot.

MARY

I don't know. They caught something maybe. A girl died in the German wagon.. They were all pretty good friends.

(beat)

Honest - they can't eat. They can barely drink or swallow.

(beat)

I'm so scared for them, Kathleen.

Kathleen looks at her.

KATHLEEN

We got to pray for them. Nothing else we can do, Mary. Only pray to our Savior.

EXT. CAMP-SITE - EVENING

The TRAVELLERS stand over the two small graves. Mary and Micháel are weeping. Kathleen says a prayer. Micháel's bewildered son and Billy throw flowers over the new mounds.

EXT. CAMP-SITE - NIGHT

Still in a state of shock, the TRAVELLERS sit around the fire.

The COWBOY plays his guitar.

Suddenly the horses get spooked. Out beyond the wagons, they start whinnying and snorting.

The DRIVER'S and COWBOYS, immediately alert, reach for their guns.

Billy looks at Moss.

BILLY

What is it?

MOSS

Horse thieves, I guess.

He reaches for his shot gun.

MOSS (CONT'D)

You stay here.

He joins the MEN as they creep out beyond the circle of the wagons.

Someone CALLS OUT - and is met by a shot.

Then there's more shooting. The sound of the horses. Panic. More shouting.

Billy and Kathleen see Micháel produce an unexpected gun.

MICHÁEL

I can't just do nothing!

MARY

Micháel!

He runs towards the incident.

There's more shooting. Like fire-crackers going off in the night.

Paddy, barely sensible, strains to make sense of it.

PADDY

What is it? What's happening? God
knows - why are we here?

Billy stares - as Micháel comes back into the fire-light. But he's stumbling. His shirt front is wet with blood.

MICHÁEL

I'm so sorry, Mary. I got shot.

He stumbles and falls straight, face down, into the fire.

EXT. FORT RUSKIN - DAY

The wagon train makes its way up to the Fort - a large compound in a commanding position, fenced in with high wooden walls, but with buildings both inside and outside the compound, and acres of fenced-off pastures for cattle and horses beyond.

Billy, sitting beside Moss, surveys the scene.

It's like nothing he's seen before. There are SOLDIERS in blue uniforms, some of them black soldiers. They are being drilled in the open by white OFFICERS.

At the gates, there are lines of PEOPLE waiting to get inside. Many are bringing produce, or queueing for permits. There are also INDIGENOUS AMERICANS, waiting patiently, wrapped in colored blankets, so very different from all the rest.

Billy is intrigued.

BILLY

Moss - who are they?

MOSS

Well, Billy, they are the native people. They've lived on this land a lot longer than us. But now we've kinda taken it away from them.

BILLY

Why?

MOSS

For their own good. They never worked the land. They're lazy. We've given them their own reservations.

(MORE)

MOSS (CONT'D)

They can start farming and working
for a living, like us, instead of
just thievin' and drinkin'.

Billy struggles to understand. Looks back at the (mostly)
MEN, hunched up, wrapped in their blankets.

EXT. WAGON TRAIN CAMP - FORT RUSKIN - DAY

The wagons are parked up, the horses relieved of their
harnesses.

An ARMY SERGEANT and two TROOPERS have come out of the fort
to check them over.

The TROOPERS move from wagon to wagon, peering inside. Most
of the families have got out and are standing around in their
groups. SERGEANT ABLER, in his thirties, over-weight and with
thinning hair, walks over to Patrick, Kathleen, Billy and
Joe.

SERGEANT ABLER

Name?

PADDY

McCarty.

SERGEANT ABLER

Where you folks headed for?

PADDY

Coffeyville. That's in Kansas. You
know it?

Sergeant Abler doesn't offer an opinion.

SERGEANT ABLER

How long you plan to stay here?

MOSS

Maybe a week. We need to fix a few
things. You know how it is,
Sergeant.

SERGEANT ABLER

Sure.

(looks at Kathleen)

You Mrs McCarty?

KATHLEEN

I am.

SERGEANT ABLER

These your kids?

BILLY

I'm Billy, and this is my brother
Joe.

Billy smiles. Sergeant Abler finds himself smiling back.

SERGEANT ABLER

We got a store at the fort where
you can purchase provisions.
There's also a blacksmith if your
horses need new shoes. We can also
sell you a couple of horses, you
need 'em.

A beat. He stares for a moment at Patrick: his gaunt face,
thin frame.

SERGEANT ABLER (CONT'D)

We have a post surgeon here called
Dr. Daniel M. Appel. I suggest,
sir, that you pay him a visit. You
don't look well to me.

He pauses again, looks back at Kathleen.

SERGEANT ABLER (CONT'D)

On Saturday we are posting a party
here at the fort. There will be
music and dancing and things to
eat. All you folk here are invited.

KATHLEEN

Thank you, Sergeant.

Sergeant Abler walks over to where Mary is standing, beside
her large but expressionless, vacant-eyed SON.

He tips his hat.

SERGEANT ABLER

Ma'am.

MARY

Sergeant.

SERGEANT ABLER

Name?

MARY

I'm Mary O'Sullivan. This is my
son, Sam.

The Sergeant glances around.

SERGEANT ABLER
You two travelling alone?

MARY
We are now. We lost my husband, and
our two daughters, back there on
the trail.

Her lips quiver with emotion.

Sergeant Abler looks at the boy.

SERGEANT ABLER
This your son?
(mary nods)
What's your name boy?

A long beat.

MARY
He can't talk.

SERGEANT ABLER
That's a real shame.

He tips his hat again, moves on to the GERMANS.

INT. OFFICE - FORT RUSKIN - DAY

Patrick, stripped to the waist, is sitting in front of the young surgeon, Dr. Daniel Appel. Appel is intelligent and curious. Patrick's ribs show through his skin.

He checks Patrick's pulse, listens to his heart, checks his eyes and ears, taps his back...all the usual, rudimentary tests.

DR. APPEL
Tell me: do you FEEL ill, Mr.
McCarty?

PADDY
Depends what you mean, Doctor.

DR. APPEL
Most people would know what I mean.
They would have physical symptoms.
(beat)
You're still quite young. You have
a good frame. But there's
something...

PADDY

I don't care 'bout my body.

DR. APPEL

Then what do you care about?

A long beat.

PADDY

I feel ill in a different way. I feel sad a lot of the time. I'm not always sure why. Sometimes it's hard to feel hungry. Or get out of bed. I love my children, Doctor, but sometimes their voices sound so far away.

DR. APPEL

Believe me, Mr. McCarty, I have seen a lot of people who feel like you. They have an acute feeling of loss, which is hard to explain, since they are still with their families. Sometimes the very landscapes here bring on this...this feeling of desolation.

A long beat. Patrick lifts his head, stares at the Doctor.

PADDY

What should I do? I want to get well. I love my family. I don't want to hurt them.

DR. APPEL

I treat soldiers who have gunshot or arrow wounds: who are miles from home and loved ones. The treatment is often relatively simple. In your case, it's not simple. Because the wound is in your mind.

(beat)

And the only cure is for you to be able to change your mind.

PADDY

What does that mean?

A beat. Dr. Appel opens a drawer in his desk, brings out a small volume.

DR. APPEL

You are Irish. So I suspect you can read. I want you to read this book.

(MORE)

DR. APPEL (CONT'D)

It's a volume of verse by one of our first American poets. He's called Walt Whitman and this volume is called "Leaves of Grass". This is some of the best medicine I know. You are frightened by this land that is new to you, that is so vast that your mind cannot contemplate what it means. Whitman, the first poet of the new America, can help you to see what's here, in front of your eyes. And not be afraid of it, or feel so lost before it.

(beat)

I know that a doctor prescribing a book of poetry is rather unusual. But I believe it can be the first step in your cure.

Patrick takes the book, stares at it a moment.

PADDY

I thought you might give me some real medicine.

Doctor Appel stares back at him.

INT. FORT RUSKIN - EVENING

It's the evening of the party. Some attempt has been made to hang some bunting and decoration around the big barrack room. Tables and chairs have been pushed back around the walls, and a long trestle table has been laid out with food, mostly meat.

There's beer and spirits for sale.

The room is filling up: OFFICERS in their parade uniforms, some CATTLEMEN, HORSE TRADERS and GENERAL SUPPLIERS, as well as several COWBOYS.

There are many more MEN than WOMEN. The WOMEN are mainly officer's WIVES or DAUGHTERS, or COOKS, LAUNDY WORKERS and perhaps, more discreetly, a few of the WHORES from the local bordello.

We see things through Billy's POV. He enters the big room alongside his father, mother and younger brother, who have all done their best to clean up and spruce up after the long journey. Kathleen is even wearing some jewellery, which we've never seen before, and which fascinates Billy.

The other IMMIGRANT FAMILIES also come in: Mary and her mute son, the GERMANS, DUTCH and POLES.

Billy sees a small group of SOLDIERS with musical instruments, setting up on a make-shift bandstand. And as he walks around the room, he sees groups of OFFICERS sat around circular tables, already playing cards for money. This, too, fascinates him.

PEOPLE have started to drink. The place is getting noisier. And then there's a shout for "ATTENTION" - as the commanding officer of the fort, COLONEL JACKSON, enters, flanked by senior officers like Dr. Appel.

JACKSON is tall, gray-haired, with a long drooping moustache and a beaked nose.

The SOLDIERS in the room all rise and salute him, as he steps onto the bandstand.

COLONEL JACKSON

Good evening. I want to welcome all of you to this evening's social event, trusting all of you to have some fun and maybe forget for a while whatever else is troubling you. We got music, food and liquor. I wouldn't advise any of you to get too drunk...

(some laughter)

But I appreciate that most of you live hard lives out here, and it's only right that you get an occasional chance to let your hair down and dance. So, what the hell, just get on with it. You have my blessing.

Laughter. Some applause. The "band" strikes up a tune. They are poor musicians for the most part, but it doesn't matter. PEOPLE immediately seek out partners, and begin to dance.

The players go back to their card games, bottles of whiskey in front of them.

LATER:

The evening has grown more untidy. The band's music has got even worse, but that doesn't affect the young officers and the daughters and the whores on the floor, dancing pressed together, drunk, kissing.

And doesn't trouble the SOLDIERS who have already passed out drunk.

Or - as Kathleen notices - her friend Mary dancing with Sergeant Abler, who is as clumsy on the dance floor as he is everywhere else.

Her mute son also staring at this unlikely couple.

Colonel Jackson has had enough and walks out with the Doctor.

There's a sudden, but brief fistfight between some CATTLEMEN at one of the tables.

It blows over.

Then, as if in a fantasy, Billy looks towards the door that Colonel Jackson exited out of, and sees instead one of the North American Indigenous PEOPLE - a young MAN, with a handsome, weathered face and a bonnet garlanded with feathers, replace him in the doorway - and stare, expressionless, at the antics of the new Americans in the room.

Kathleen, having briefly forgotten, now glances at her husband. Patrick still looks gaunt, but now there's a fresh gleam in his eyes. And she notices.

Takes his hand, and leads him onto the "dance floor". The band continues their dreary and appalling playing. There's no way Kathleen and Paddy can dance together to this!

And Kathleen quickly gives up. But not before glancing despairingly towards Billy.

And this is his moment.

Billy steps smartly onto the bandstand. The musicians stop playing, waiting to see what is going to happen.

Billy starts to sing. In a sweet, clear voice he sings an Irish jig, and starts to dance.

His father and mother, hollering for joy, join in. Mary joins in. Many of the SOLDIERS, who are also of Irish descent, start to join in. They can sing and they can dance this Irish jig, that is full of high spirits, hope and joy.

Billy, even in the heart of his performance, notices that his father has regained enough strength to really throw himself into this moment.

It's a great moment. At last the big room is reverberating to the sounds of a true song. Even some of the poor MUSICIANS pick up on it, and start to play it, for real.

The whole room is suddenly rocking, and Billy is leading the charge.

And Kathleen stares at him, like she never loved a human being so much as this frail kid, for her whole life. And the tears roll down her cheeks. And she hugs her husband.

EXT. FORT RUSKIN - DAY

The McCarty's are storing provisions into their wagon. Moss is harnessing the horses.

The other Immigrants are doing the same.

It's time to leave.

Kathleen looks around, glances at Patrick.

KATHLEEN
Where's Mary?

A beat.

Then Patrick points to where Mary, her mute son Sam and Sergeant Abler are approaching.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
You coming, Mary?

MARY
No. Sam and me - we're staying here
at the fort. Sergeant Abler is
going to look after us.

Kathleen looks between them.

KATHLEEN
You sure?

MARY
Yes. We need a man to protect us,
Kathleen. I can't manage on my own.
Not with Sam. You know...

SERGEANT ABLER
I'm hoping that Mary will agree to
us getting married, in due course.
Sam here needs a father.

Kathleen moves closer to Mary, looks into her eyes.

KATHLEEN
Well, if you're sure...?

MARY

(quietly)

I don't say it's perfect, Kathleen.
I had other dreams. But those
dreams got cut short. Don't blame
me.

Kathleen smiles, and hugs her.

KATHLEEN

I won't ever blame you. Just you
look after yourself, and Sam, and
make a good life here.

The words sound a little hollow.

Mary waves to the others.

MARY

Bye, Paddy. Hope you get better.
And you Billy and you Joe, you got
lots to look forward to. A whole
new world.

Billy stares back at her.

EXT. LANDSCAPE - DAY

The wagons are moving away along the trail. Billy is sitting
next to Moss up front. Moss notices that Billy is frowning,
maybe thinking of something.

MOSS

You okay, Billy?

BILLY

Sure I am, Old Moss. I just want
someone to teach me to play those
card games.

MOSS

Those games are the devil's work,
Billy. You stay away from them.
Don't never gamble. I seen how it
ends.

Billy falls silent.

The empty landscape opens up before them.

BILLY

How long we got to go before we get
to this place that we're going?

Moss chuckles.

MOSS

You don't want to think like that,
Billy. Otherwise you get sad that
you ain't ain't ever reaching the
end. But sure, we're nearer the end
than we ever was before.

(beat)

You still got your whistle? Then
play us a tune.

Billy takes out his whistle, starts to play a tune he's
learned.

Moss grins.

EXT. CAMP-SITE - NIGHT

The wagons have gathered together. A fire is burning.

There's a river nearby (the Verdigris River) and most of the
other Immigrants and their families are swimming and making a
noise, splashing about in the cooling waters, shouting out
happily in German, or Dutch, or English, or Polish.

Kathleen is feeding her youngest son Joe, some real food.
Billy notices, looks for his father - can't find him.

Wanders down closer to the river.

And finds Patrick sitting by himself, wrapped in a blanket,
just starrng into space.

Billy sits down beside him. The moon rises in the sky.
There's a range of hills just on the horizon, and as Billy
looks a group of INDIGENOUS AMERICANS, on horseback, ride
across the frame. It's a rather beautiful, magical sight.

But Billy can see that his father isn't engaged or
interested. Patrick hasn't shaved, hasn't changed his
clothes. He looks more wasted than ever.

Billy, oppressed by his father's silent depression, just sits
beside him. Waiting for him.

There's a long beat.

PADDY

I love you, Billy.

BILLY

I love you too, pa.

PADDY

I'm not well. I wish I knew.

BILLY

You can get better. I think we're almost there.

PADDY

Where is that?

BILLY

Where we're headed.

A long beat. Paddy shakes his head.

PADDY

I wish I could be of comfort to you, Billy. That's always been my aim. I'm your father. I should be reassuring and hopeful. I'm not doing that for you.

BILLY

I told you, we're nearly there, pa. Moss told me. I'm looking forward to it. Our family is going to do well. We'll all be happy.

A beat.

Patrick doesn't answer. And then Billy hears his weeping.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Don't cry, pa. Please don't cry.

PADDY

You're already too old. You should still be a boy. I can't bear it.

Billy puts his arms around his father's neck.

BILLY

We'll be all right. You'll get well.

A beat.

We look up at the moon, hanging there in the dark sky.

EXT/INT - WAGON - TRAL - DAY

The wagons descend into a valley, where the silver thread of the river gleams in the hot sun.

Old Moss wipes the sweat from his eyes.

Behind him, Billy sits with his mother. Billy is trying to read from the small book of verse that the doctor gave Patrick - Walt Whitman.

BILLY
Shine! Shine! Shine!/Pour down your
w...w...

KATHLEEN
Warmth.

BILLY
...great sun/ While we...?

KATHLEEN
Bask.

BILLY
Bask, we two together. Two
together/ Winds blow south, or
winds blow north/ Day come w...w...

KATHLEEN
White.

BILLY
Or night come black./Home, or...?

KATHLEEN
Or rivers and mountains from home.

BILLY
Singing all time, m...m ...m

KATHLEEN
Minding no time.

BILLY
While we two keep together.

Billy smiles up at her, and she smiles back in return. Then quietly reads on a moment.

KATHLEEN
Till of a sudden/May-be kill'd,
unknown to her mate/ One forenoon
the she-bird crouched not on the
nest/ Nor return'd that afternoon,
nor the next/Nor ever appear'd
again.

A beat.

Kathleen looks behind her, into the wagon, the CAMERA following.

To where Paddy lies on a bed of straw. The child, Joe, plays with some toy beside him. But Paddy himself just stares at an old time-piece, watching the hands move, watching time pass away.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

The wagons come around a bend in the river.

The horses and wheels slowly pass a wooden sign with some recent paint on it, forming a single word:

COFFEYVILLE

INT. WAGON - DAY

Old Moss removes his hat, the hair beneath it slicked down with sweat.

MOSS

Here we are, folks. Coffeyville!

Billy scrambles onto the seat beside him, looks out at the old Trading Station that has now become - or is in the process of becoming - a new western town. Everywhere they look there is work in progress: lumber-yards, saw-mills, wagons and mules loaded with building materials.

BILLY

Look, ma!

Billy is excited. Kathleen squeezes in beside them, with Joe on her lap.

KATHLEEN

Look Joe, it's your new home!

As the small convoy trundles slowly down the Main Street they see a few established store-fronts, boarding houses, restaurants, wheelwrights, saddlers, saloons, banks and gaming houses. But there are big gaps between the buildings and everything looks new and raw.

There are also a couple of CIVIC BUILDINGS, with flags hanging limply from tall flag-poles. And traffic: a few wagons, buggies, horses and carts.

But it sure looks like a frontier town.

Kathleen looks at it in some dismay.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

No wonder they were urging people
to come here. It's not even built!

BILLY

Oh, ma!

KATHLEEN

Well, just look at it. It's not a
real place. It don't exist.

PADDY

(quietly)

I'm sure it's fine.

Kathleen regards his pale, suffering face.

KATHLEEN

Oh Pat - sure, it's a decent place.
We'll be happy here. You'll see.

But, for the moment, all Paddy can see is the face of his old
timepiece, as he watches the clock tick down.

EXT. FIELDS - COFFEYVILLE - NIGHT

The wagons have come to rest in a field just outside the
town, near the river.

It's dark; the sky is threatening. And suddenly there is a
large, jagged flash of lightning, which lights up the whole
plain for a few moments.

And then the thunder speaks! The noise crashing and
reverberating.

And, after that, the rain. Almost from nothing, it becomes
torrential: sheets of water falling from the angry skies.

INT. WAGON - NIGHT

In the back of their wagon, the McCarty's try to stay dry and
safe - even as the lightning strikes the earth again, and the
thunder rolls over them - and the rain pours in through the
breaches in fabric, and drenches them.

Joe is crying and miserable. Paddy lets the rain fall over
him. Kathleen tries to keep her children as dry as possible,
but without much success.

The weight of the water on the canvas over their heads splits it, and water gushes inside like a waterfall.

Thoroughly wet-through, Billy crawls to the entrance of the wagon and stares out at the storm.

Not far away, a huge and ancient tree has been struck by lightning and is burning. Burning like a torch. The torchlight illuminates the town of Coffeyville, making it look small and bleak against a vast and empty landscape.

He crawls back inside, lies beside his mother. Joe has fallen asleep. Paddy is sleeping too, his breath rasping. Billy searches for his mother's hand.

BILLY

(quietly)

Tell me about that giant!

KATHLEEN

What giant?

BILLY

You know!

KATHLEEN

You mean Finn McCool?

Billy nods happily, settles down.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Well now, it was all a long time ago, back in Ireland. There was a giant called Finn McCool, a great warrior. He lived with his mother by the sea and one day he decided to build a great causeway so that he could walk over to Scotland without getting his feet wet.

Billy smiles at the thought.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

Finn moved rocks from his home in Antrim into the sea, and started to build his giant causeway. But unknown to Finn, in Scotland there lived another giant called Benandonner, otherwise known as the Red Man. Now Benandonner was also building a causeway across the sea to Ireland. And as the giants came closer they started to shout and threaten each other.

BILLY

What did they shout?

KATHLEEN

Oh, you can imagine!

(beat)

Anyway, when they got even closer, Finn saw to his horror that Benandonner was much, much larger than him. He regretted at once his trash talk, and started to run back to his home, hoping that the Red Man would leave him alone.

BILLY

But he didn't!

KATHLEEN

No! Benandonner came after him across the causeway. His boots made such a noise on the stones that Finn had to put moss into his ears to deafen the sound. At last he got home and told his mother, Oonagh, about his peril. His mother thought of a plan at once! She wrapped her son in a sheet and told him to climb into the bathtub!

Billy giggles.

BILLY

Then what?

KATHLEEN

Then - the great giant Benandonner arrived at the door. He asked to see Finn McCool. Oonagh said she was very sorry, but her husband was away hunting deer in County Kerry.

(beat)

But she said that perhaps Benandonner would like to meet Finn's little baby? And she shows him Finn McCool, all swaddled in a sheet and lying in the tub.

Billy snorts with laughter.

BILLY

What did the Red Giant do?

KATHLEEN

Well, he thought that if this was just Finn's child, then Finn himself must be the biggest giant in the whole world. And he fled back across the causeway, destroying it as he went.

Kathleen pauses, looks Billy in the eye.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

So you see, Billy, you don't have to look brave and tough and big to be a real man or to make a difference. If you're smart, you can beat a bully any time.

A beat.

He looks up at her.

BILLY

Yes. But it was his mother who was smart, wasn't it?

Kathleen smiles - but doesn't answer.

EXT. COFFEYVILLE - DAY

The storm has reduced the Main Street to mud. PEOPLE and vehicles still struggle though, but the scene is much more dismal.

But Kathleen, determined Kathleen, is already out and about with her son Billy and his younger sibling, Joe. They mount the boardwalk and look for places of information.

There are notices outside some of the rooming houses, offering rooms and accommodation, at reasonable rental prices. There are some job vacancies. There are ads for the gambling joints. And there are one of two WANTED POSTERS - featuring crude sketches of criminals WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE. And the price on their heads.

Kathleen scans the ads. She needs to find a place for them to live. Also, a place that might work as a restaurant and boarding house, which is all her dream.

The ads don't give her much hope.

A buggy, moving past them at some speed, splashes mud over all their clothes.

INT. BANK - COFFEYVILLE - DAY

Kathleen has put on her best dress and her jewellery again.

She sits across from a middle-aged, balding, myopic BANK MANAGER, who keeps dabbing his sweating face with a cloth.

BANK MANAGER

I understand that you are looking for a loan, Mrs McCarty. That's what banks are here for. But I don't see that you are offering any collateral.

KATHLEEN

We lost everything we owned on the journey from New York. We own a wagon and three horses, and I have some modest savings.

(beat)

But the fact is, the American government encouraged us to come out here, with the promise of new jobs and opportunities. I have set my heart on buying a place big enough to be both a restaurant and a rooming house.

BANK MANAGER

What experience do you have, running a restaurant and rooming house?

KATHLEEN

I'm a good cook. And a practical person.

BANK MANAGER

You don't have any letters of recommendation for such jobs.

KATHLEEN

I thought I was coming to a new world, where everyone would have the chance for a new beginning, so long as they were willing to work hard. Sir, I am very willing to work every hour God sends, to make a business. I have a family to support - two young children.

The manager nods, seems briefly sympathetic.

BANK MANAGER

You're married; you have a husband.
What does he do? I'm surprised he
ain't here.

KATHLEEN

My husband is...he's sick.

BANK MANAGER

Then - he can't work?

KATHLEEN

He's getting better. He'll soon be
ready to work.

(beat)

In New York we read advertisements!
They said they would pay immigrants
to go west.

BANK MANAGER

That's just the kind of thing the
government says. It don't mean
anything.

A beat.

The manager closes his books.

BANK MANAGER (CONT'D)

I don't see how I can help you, Mrs
McCarty. This is a bank not a
charity.

KATHLEEN

The government promised us help! We
came out here because -

BANK MANAGER

I have other appointments, Mrs
McCarty. I don't want to waste any
more of your time.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - COFFEYVILLE - DAY

Kathleen and Billy stand before a thin, spinsterish-looking
WOMAN with gray hair tied back in a severe bun, and
spectacles perched on the end of her nose.

SPINSTER

I charge five dollars per week for
a room. I won't accept less.

KATHLEEN

I can't afford five dollars a week.
I need to find a job. We've just
arrived and my husband is sick.

The spinster wrinkles up her nose.

SPINSTER

That's not my business.
(looks her over)
Perhaps you could sell some of your
jewellery, Mrs McCarty.

KATHLEEN

Perhaps I could help you run your
boarding house. I'm a good cook. I -

SPINSTER

Out of the question! I can hardly
break even as it is.

A beat.

KATHLEEN

We don't have anywhere else to go.
I thought -

Despite herself, Kathleen starts to cry.

SPINSTER

Now, now. I'm sure you can find
somewhere else.

KATHLEEN

We've tried. No-one wants us. I
never imagined -

Her quiet sobs alarm and disturb the spinster.

SPINSTER

I would prefer it if you didn't
cry.

(beat)

Oh -

She suddenly touches her heart, and quickly sinks into a
chair, breathing with difficulty.

KATHLEEN

What is it?

SPINSTER

My heart....

Her breathing becomes worse. Kathleen leans in.

KATHLEEN
You have some medicine?

SPINSTER
The doctor. Need the doctor.

KATHLEEN
Where is he?

SPINSTER
(in increasing agony and
alarm)
Right at the end of town. A white
frame house, behind the law court.
(beat)
Oh Lord.

BILLY
I'll go.

KATHLEEN
Good boy. Quickly.

And Billy is already on his way.

Kathleen gets a cushion to put behind the spinster's head.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
You just sit there, nice and quiet.
Billy will bring the doctor.

The spinster nods, stares back at her.

SPINSTER
Maybe we could come to some
arrangement after all...

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - COFFEYVILLE - DAY

In the small wooden church, Kathleen and Billy kneel with a
line of other TOWNSFOLK to take communion.

The elderly PRIEST moves along the line, offering the bread
and the wine and making a blessing.

When he gets to Kathleen and Billy he pauses, clearly not
recognising them. Then he smiles, offers the bread and wine,
and makes the sign of the cross over both their bowed heads.

PRIEST
 E nomine Patri, et filius e
 spiritus sancti. Amen.

The priest's VOICE still holds its gently Irish lilt.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The priest stands at the open door, shaking hands with the
 WORSHIPPERS as they leave.

PRIEST
 Thank you for comin'. God bless
 you. God bless all of you.

He offers his hand to Kathleen.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
 It's always a great pleasure to see
 new faces in our church. I'm Father
 O'Leary.

KATHLEEN
 (with a smile)
 Where are you from, Father?

PRIEST
 Originally? From Donegal. And you,
 my dear?

KATHLEEN
 Wicklow.
 (beat)
 I'm Kathleen McCarty and this is
 Billy.

Father O'Leary offers his hand.

FATHER O'LEARY
 Pleased to meet you, Billy.
 (beat)
 Are you here to stay with us, Mrs
 McCarty?

KATHLEEN
 I hope so. We've only just arrived.
 With my husband. He's...he's sick.
 That's why -

Her voice trails away.

FATHER O'LEARY

I'm very sorry to hear that.
Perhaps I can call on him?

KATHLEEN

That would be very kind of you,
Father.

FATHER O'LEARY

We have to look after our own, Mrs
McCarty. Sure, no-one else will
look after us.

He smiles again, ruefully. Then turns and walks slowly back into his empty church.

EXT. MAIN STREET - COFFEYVILLE - DAY

Kathleen and Billy walk down the boardwalk above the dusty street, looking at the shops, saloons, restaurants, saddlers, clothes stores - and the PEOPLE.

Kathleen studies - discreetly - what the other YOUNG WOMEN of the town are wearing. And their hair-styles.

Being smaller, his eye-level being approximately at the level of the mens' leather belts, what he notices, above everything, is how many of the MEN wear guns. Not just COWBOYS but plenty of REGULAR GUYS are wearing them at the hip.

Billy follows his mother into an all-purpose store.

INT. STORE - DAY

The interior of the store is cavernous. There are aisles of vegetables, fruit, cured meats as well as furniture, grain supplies, tools...just about everything imaginable.

While Kathleen chooses some foodstuffs, Billy wanders away - and finds himself looking up at racks of rifles and shot guns, and open cabinets full of colts, derringers, pistols and ammunition.

The prices are marked but there's no security at all. Perhaps only something like Joe Grant's ivory-handled colt is fixed down to avoid it being stolen. The rest of the guns are available to the customers to examine.

Billy, fascinated, reaches up and takes out a pistol. It doesn't sit snug in his hand: the barrel is far too long.

But he likes the look of the thing - and he catches sight of himself in a mirror - and poses in front of it, pointing the gun at the mirror, with the biggest grin on his face.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

The family have moved into the single room promised by the Spinster.

Now Kathleen quietly opens the door and approaches the bed in the corner of the room. A make-shift curtain covers the window so the space is dark.

On the bedside table is the small statuette of the Virgin Mary that Kathleen has brought from New York, and Paddy's time-piece. In the quietness of the room, the time-piece can be heard ticking.

Paddy lies in the bed, thin and gaunt, with his eyes open.

Kathleen sits beside him, takes his limp hand.

KATHLEEN

I have things to say, Patrick. I want you to listen. You don't have to speak.

(beat)

Billy and I went to church. The priest, Father O'Leary, is going to come and visit you. He's praying for you.

(beat)

I have to sell the wagon and the horses. I can't help it. We need the money and we don't plan going anywhere any time soon, I don't think.

(no reaction)

I might have found a job. Just - just cooking some meals for the spinster. Means I can still look after Billy and Joe.

(beat)

But that's the best news. I found a school for Billy. He's starting tomorrow. Aren't you...aren't you happy about that?

Paddy registers nothing.

INT. SCHOOLROOM - COFFEYVILLE - DAY

A low wooden building in which a single TEACHER - a young WOMAN in her late twenties - faces a class of about 30 CHILDREN, whose ages range from about 5 to around 12.

The CHILDREN, mostly BOYS, are messing about as the teacher writes something on a board. It's chaotic, really. Some of the boys make lewd gestures behind the teacher's back.

Billy, the new boy, sits apart, watching - probably feeling bad for the teacher.

Who finally finishes scribbling, turns back to face the class.

TEACHER

Be quiet! Quiet! You're all here to learn. Do you really want to end up being stupid and ignorant? Is that a good plan?

They quieten a little.

OLDER BOY

Miss? Miss!

TEACHER

(weary)
What is it?

OLDER BOY

Can I kiss you?

The words provoke a outburst of sniggering and laughter.

The teacher bangs her ruler on the desk, in sheer anger and frustration. Until they fall silent again.

She points to what she's written on the board.

TEACHER

Can anyone read this rhyme? It's a children's rhyme. You older boys, you should be ashamed you can't even read it.

No-one pipes up. They snigger a bit more, make faces, screw up their eyes but aren't embarrassed.

BILLY

I can read it.

They all look over at the new kid, and the sniggering starts again.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Old King Cole was a merry old soul/
And a merry old soul was he/ He
called for his pipe and he called
for his bowl/ and he called for his
fiddler's three.

The whole class has fallen silent.

The teacher stares disbelievingly at Billy.

TEACHER

My goodness, Billy. You CAN read!

Billy lowers his eyes and tries to be invisible.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

Billy, returning from school, is met in the hallway by Kathleen.

She puts a warning finger to her lips - then quietly opens the door to their room.

INT. ROOM - BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

They stand in the doorway and look over at the bed in the corner.

In the half-light they can see Father O'Leary talking to Paddy. Paddy is dressed and sitting up in bed, and nodding at something Father O'Leary is saying. He seems strangely animated.

As they watch, Father O'Leary puts a hand on Paddy's shoulder.

Kathleen smiles at Billy.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAWN

It's dark - but the first hint of light is touching the horizon.

INT. ROOM - BOARDING HOUSE - DAWN

Billy is gently shaken away by his father, He opens his eyes. Paddy is already dressed. He indicates that Billy should follow him.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAWN

Father and son sneak out. The streets are quiet. There are two saddled horses roped to the railings outside, one a smaller pony for Billy.

Paddy helps his son into the saddle.

Then they ride off together.

EXT. LANDSCAPE - DAY

The sun beam down. They ride down by the river.

Billy has never ridden a horse before, but he finds it easy.

After a few moments they stop, and survey the big, open landscape, the huge skies.

PADDY
It's beautiful!

BILLY
Yes, pa.

PADDY
And you know what, Billy, I'm not frightened any more. I embrace it. I'm part of it. We've travelled a long way, but we've come home.

BILLY
Yes, pa.

Billy smiles. Looks adoringly at his father.

He closes his eyes.

INT. ROOM - BOARDING HOUSE - DAWN

Kathleen gently shakes Billy's shoulder.

KATHLEEN
(quietly)
Billy...Billy...

Billy's eyes open.

BILLY
Yes, ma?

Then he sees that her face is wet with tears.

BILLY (CONT'D)
What is it?

KATHLEEN
I'm so sorry...So sorry, Billy.

She turns her head, towards her own bed.

Billy runs across the room, sees his father lying still, his eyes closed.

BILLY
(desperate)
Pa...Pa!

He reaches out to touch his father's face, is shocked to find the skin cold.

Kathleen gathers him into her arms.

KATHLEEN
He's gone, Billy. He died sometime in the night. At least Father O'Leary gave him the last rites, thanks be to God.

She crosses herself.

BILLY
But he -

Billy is still confused by his dream.

KATHLEEN
He's just sleeping Billy. He's at rest now.

BILLY
Why'd he have to go, ma?

Kathleen can't answer him. Can only hug her poor, bewildered child.

KATHLEEN
Poor Billy.

They hug each other.

EXT. CHURCHYARD - CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Kathleen, Billy and Joe stand by the open grave. The spinster, the GRAVE DIGGERS and Father O'Leary are the only other ones to bare witness.

Father O'Leary nods and the grave diggers gently lower the plain wooden coffin into the grave. Father O'Leary sprinkles it with holy water; makes the sign of the cross, and recites the Dies Irae (Day of Wrath) in Latin.

Kathleen takes something out of her pocket and offers it to Billy.

KATHLEEN

This was your father's crucifix.
He'd want you have it.

Billy stares at the small, delicate silver cross on its thin silver chain. He takes it from his mother, and his hand closes around it.

Father O'Leary begins to pray in English.

FATHER O'LEARY

God of all consolation/ in your
unending love and mercy/ you turn
the darkness of death into the dawn
of new life.

Kathleen takes a handful of earth and sprinkles it over the coffin lid, and then Billy does the same, then helps his little brother to do the same.

FATHER O'LEARY (CONT'D)

Show compassion to your people in
their sorrow/Be our refuge and our
strength/ to lift us from the
darkness of grief/to the peace and
light of your presence.

The window, too, sprinkles a handful of earth onto the coffin. Then the grave diggers set to work with their spades.

FATHER O'LEARY (CONT'D)

Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ/ by
dying for us, conquered death/and
by rising again, restored life.

Billy looks up - and sees an American eagle rising through the warm air on outstretched wings, gliding across the blue sky.

He looks back and sees his mother weeping, as the widow also weeps beside her, and little Joe too starts to cry.

FATHER O'LEARY (CONT'D)

May we then go forward eagerly to
meet him/ and after our life on
earth/ be reunited with our
brothers and sisters/where every
tear will be wiped away/ We ask
this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL

Amen.

Billy, who is not crying, reaches out and takes his mother's hand, to comfort her. And then looks down at the plain wood coffin one last time.

BILLY

Goodbye, pa.

As the grave fills with earth, the small family starts to move away.

KATHLEEN

Thank you, Father.

FATHER O'LEARY

Bless you, Mrs McCarty. And bless
your poor boys. I pray that the
Lord will take good care of you.

He makes the sign of the cross.

Billy leads his distraught mother and his little brother along the path, away from the church. We can see the effort he is making not to cry; his eyes are steely with emotion. He is moving on.

The CAMERA rises above this simple scene: the wooden church, the grave site, the small figures in this early American landscape. As if we are watching from the POV of the American eagle flying above.

And as we watch, we start to HEAR Billy's mature VOICE. He is singing a folk song about the American West. For this is the true start of his journey there!

END OF PILOT

