

**"GODLESS"**

Part II

Written by

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MARY-AGNES  
 (watching the stage)  
 Just like Shakespeare.

The procession stops in a cloud of dust in front of the hotel. Charlotte leans towards Mary-Agnes.

CHARLOTTE  
 Least you could've done is put on a dress.

Mary-Agnes ignores her, watches as the DRIVER of the lead coach climbs down and opens the door and A SMALL MAN in a dark suit hops down from the coach and grins at the ladies. Not at all the man described in the newspaper.

MAN  
 Well now, it's not very often that a gentleman is greeted by such a passel of fine looking ladies.

None of the women move.

MAN (CONT'D)  
 Now which one of you would be Mayor Cummings charming widow?

Mary-Agnes steps forward. The Man cocks an eye at her masculine attire, is startled as she extends her hand.

MARY-AGNES  
 Mary-Agnes. And you're... Mr. Sloane?

MAN  
 No, ma'am, I'm J.J. Valentine, Mr. Sloane's humble number two, now made a surprised number one by... unfortunate circumstance.

MARY-AGNES  
 What happened to-- What unfortunate circumstance?

MAN/VALENTINE  
 (removes his hat)  
 Mr. Sloane was murdered by vicious outlaws.

The ladies all stand there, trying to regroup.

MARY-AGNES  
 Yes, well, this is Mrs. Charlotte Temple and Miss Callie Dunne.

Valentine kisses all of their hands.

VALENTINE

What a divine pleasure, ladies.

Another MAN, skinny and bespectacled, climbs out.

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

This here is Colonel Farnsworth,  
from the Colorado School of Mines.

FARNSWORTH

(looking around)

How do you do.

MARY-AGNES

Colonel? Of *what* may I ask?

VALENTINE

(laughs)

Whether Colonel Farnsworth came by  
his title in any military manner is  
doubtful. But I assure, you he's a  
real mining engineer.

Farnsworth looks at Mary-Agnes, already hating her.

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

My new head of security, Mr. Logan.

He indicates A HUGE MAN on horseback with A RED BEARD. LOGAN  
nods at the ladies, then spits a mouthful of tobacco into the  
dust near Mary-Agnes.

The men on horseback take in the nearly empty town, the women  
gathered to take *them* all in. Charlotte sees A NUDE WOMAN in  
just her boots walking down the street, no one really paying  
her much mind.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, good God...

Before Mr. Valentine can turn and look, she has him by the  
arm...

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Shall we go inside?

Mary-Agnes just stands there as Charlotte leads him up the  
steps...

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

How was your trip, Mr. Valentine?

VALENTINE

I always say, Ma'am, that a trip on  
the stage is something to look back  
upon with pleasure in afterlife...

Mary-Agnes stands there a moment lost in thought. She watches Logan and his men at their horses, taking in the town, giving it a once over that makes her uncomfortable. Logan then turns and looks right at her and smiles as we--

**CUT TO BLACK**

**CREDITS**

6 **FADE INTO LA BELLE - AFTERNOON**

6

McNue leads Roy -- his hands bound in front of him -- into town. SARAH DOYLE, a randy woman in her thirties, steps onto the street, takes in Roy, quickly wipes her face with her sleeve.

SARAH  
Who's your prisoner, Sheriff?

MCNUE  
Never you mind, Sarah Doyle.

Roy looks around, sees nothing but WOMEN on the street.

ROY  
Where all the men at?

MCNUE  
Dead. Mine took 'em.

ROY  
All of 'em?

MCNUE  
Anybody able worked underground.

Roy looks off at the dead Silver Mine, then looks pensively at the quiet street, a few children playing.

ROY  
You understand, Sheriff, once word gets out, "Roy Goode's" here, they ain't gonna be no stoppin' Frank.

McNue looks at Roy, ponders the possibility. Finally--

MCNUE  
You ain't gonna be here that long.

7 **INT. JAILHOUSE - AFTERNOON**

7

As WHITEY WINN, the teenage "gunfighter," practices drawing his guns one and two at a time in front of the mirror. He wheels around and draws as McNue opens the door--

MCNUE  
 Jesus Christ, Whitey. Put that damn  
 cannon away.

Whitey holsters his gun, takes in Roy as he follows McNue  
 into the jail. McNue looks at the kid, winces...

MCNUE (CONT'D)  
 And when's the last time you  
 bathed, son?

WHITEY  
 Few days ago.

MCNUE  
 You sure it wasn't longer'n that?  
 (fans the air with a hand)  
 You're 'bout as ripe as a human  
 body can get...

WHITEY  
 Black coach come in today, with a  
 full escort a firepower.

MCNUE  
 I saw. Must be them mining folks.  
 Where the damn keys at...

WHITEY  
 (eyeing Roy)  
 Do I know you?

ROY  
 I don't think so.

WHITEY  
 You sure? What's yer name?

Roy looks at McNue who keeps his back to Whitey as he sifts  
 through the junk on his desk, his hands missing the RING OF  
 KEYS that sit there, then finally grabbing hold of it...

MCNUE  
 Whitey Winn, this here's...

McNue exchanges a look with Roy, decides he better not risk  
 it. He sees the ring sits atop a MONTGOMERY WARD CATALOGUE.

MCNUE (CONT'D)  
 ...Mr. Ward.  
 (tosses Whitey the keys)  
 Lock him up. And no visitors.

WHITEY  
 (grins)  
 Why? Is he dangerous?

MCNUE

Just do it...

Whitey grabs Roy by the shoulder, shoves him into the cell and smirks at the skinny man in ragged clothing.

WHITEY

What'd he do?

MCNUE

(looks at Roy)

Robbed a stage.

WHITEY

Really? Where?

MCNUE

(annoyed)

Up in Alamogordo. Now lock him up.  
I'm gonna go check on my children.

Whitey turns the key, plays with it while he considers Roy.

WHITEY

Don't look much like the stage  
robbin' type.

Roy just looks back at him.

WHITEY (CONT'D)

Looks more like the pissin' in  
public type to me.

8

**EXT. BALD KNOB - DUSK**

8

A series of caves on a rocky slope. Frank Griffin and his thirty men are now settled in a few of them.

GATZ BROWN

*...Perhaps there is some decency in  
Roy Goode after all.*

Bill Chick and Bud Ledbetter cook dinner over the fire. Dyer Howe sharpens his knives while the tracker, Floyd Wilson, and the giant Alonzo Bunker tend to the horses.

GATZ BROWN (CONT'D)

*As he continues to thwart Frank  
Griffin and his gang at every turn,  
most recently in Creede, Colorado--*

Gatz Brown reads from an issue of the *Daily Review*. Griffin leans against his saddle listening. Donnie and Daryl clean their guns while Amos Green milks one of his snakes. One big, happy family.



TRUCKEE

You alright?

Alice looks at him, still getting her bearings. Iyovi speaks to him in Paiute. He gives his mother another look and then lies back. Iyovi then turns to Alice who looks away, now grabs the lantern.

ALICE

I need some air.

12      **EXT. ALICE'S RANCH - SAME**      12

As Alice steps outside and stands there drinking in the night air, slowly calming herself. She looks at the barn. Stares at it a long moment, then crosses to it.

13      **INT. BARN - SAME**      13

As Alice comes in, the lantern throwing shadows all over the place. She hears a soft nicker from a stall, turns and looks at the pack horse Roy left behind.

She walks over to her, gently rubs the animal's nose. She crouches down, holds the lantern so that she can check the poultice Roy put on her bad leg before he left.

ALICE

How you feeling, girl?

Alice smiles at her, then turns and walks over to the pallet of straw Roy had been sleeping on. She stands there, staring down at it when something catches her eye.

She crouches down, reaches into the straw and pulls out the LETTER. The one addressed **C/O LUCY COLE IN MOSES, NEW MEXICO to ROY GOODE**. And then on the other side the return address: **JIM GOODE. ATASCADERO, CALIFORNIA**.

She studies the envelope thoughtfully, is tempted to open it. Starts to, in fact, but thinks better of it, and just puts it in her pocket and leaves. LAUGHTER OVER...

14      **INT. HOTEL LA BELLE DINING ROOM - NIGHT**      14

We follow a CHILD carrying a pot of coffee from the kitchen, past a sign that reads *No dynamite in the rooms* to where...

Valentine sits at the dinner table with Colonel Farnsworth, Mary-Agnes, Charlotte Temple and Callie Dunne. Other WOMEN from the town wait on Valentine and his associates. Clearly the mining company is important to all of them.

VALENTINE

Such a fine meal would've done honor to the best hotel in New York.

Valentine pours Mary-Agnes another glass of wine, the mine expert, Farnsworth, eyeing the decanter hopefully, but Valentine ignores him, hoists his own full glass...

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

Good taste, good order, handsome children and domestic happiness are the necessary consequences, even in a wild place such as this.

CHARLOTTE

Hear hear.

Mary-Agnes drains her glass without comment. Valentine quickly pours her another. Clearly trying to get her as drunk as possible. He smiles now at Callie.

VALENTINE

Miss Dunne, I don't believe I ever had me a marm as pretty as you are.

CALLIE

Thank you, sir.

VALENTINE

May I ask, have you always had a fondness for teachin' young'ns?

CALLIE

No, sir, I'd always been a whore.

Valentine almost chokes on his wine. Even Farnsworth stops shoveling mashed potatoes long enough to look at her.

CALLIE (CONT'D)

I just sorta fell into teachin' after Magdalena's closed, and then the schoolhouse got struck by lightning and burned down, took the old marm with it.

VALENTINE

I see.  
(turns to Mary-Agnes)  
So tell me, Mrs. Cummings--

MARY-AGNES

McNue.

VALENTINE

Excuse me?

MARY-AGNES

I've returned to my maiden surname.  
(finishes her drink)  
Albert's dead.

(MORE)

MARY-AGNES (CONT'D)

No reason for me to keep carrying his name about like a bucket a water. He's got a brother in Missouri for that.

VALENTINE

How... independent of you. So tell me, Miss *McNue*, how has the lovely town of La Belle fared these past two years without any men around?

MARY-AGNES

We've done alright--

CHARLOTTE

--It's been difficult. Quite difficult. As you can well imagine, a town full of ladies is ripe fruit for the wicked. Since the accident, it seems everyone who's come through has tried to take some advantage.

The women nod solemnly, except for Mary-Agnes who shakes her head, polishes off another glass of wine.

VALENTINE

Well, we at Quicksilver aim to help you ladies all we can. You've got a mine with some value to it, and I've got the men to work it. But first, before we strike any deal, we need to determine how *much* value there actually is.

Valentine now looks at Farnsworth, who has been eating his fill and not paying much attention.

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

Colonel Farnsworth, s'pose you educate us about the mine here at La Belle.

15

**EXT. "THE GOOD LODE" SALOON (LA BELLE) - NIGHT**

15

As ED LOGAN -- Valentine's red-bearded head of security -- and his three men ride up to the saloon. Someone tosses a bucket of water into the street and Logan's horse shies...

LOGAN

Goddamn animal...

16 INT. JAILHOUSE - SAME

16

Roy watches through the bars as Logan slips off his horse and pulls his saddle, drops it right there in the dust, takes the blanket from the horse's back and proceeds to beat the animal about the face with it.

17 INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM - NIGHT

17

Valentine clips the end off of a cigar, lights it as Farnsworth drones on...

FARNSWORTH

The chloride ores reach from the surface to a depth of 60 or 70 feet. Then comes a barren streak, extending down from 20 to 30 feet to the water-level.

(sits back)

It's this unproductive stratum which makes your mine not as fertile as it might be.

Callie and Charlotte look at Mary-Agnes.

MARY-AGNES

That's true, *Colonel*, but you go below the water level, you see that the vein remains unbroken. We believe that it'll keep its promise for as far down as you can dig.

The other women nod. Callie smiles at Mary-Agnes. Valentine looks back at her across the table. The woman may have drunk a gallon of wine, but her mind's as clear as the crystal she drank it from. Valentine smiles at her...

VALENTINE

It's our feeling, Miss *McNue*, that the lode is far more ordinary than that. That perhaps, in the very beginning, it was salted to make the deposit look richer.

The other women freeze. Charlotte's hand goes to her mouth.

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

You should know that there have always been rumors to that effect.

Valentine shrugs as if to say "Sorry, but...", then takes a sip of wine. Mary-Agnes keeps her eyes locked on the little man seated across from her.

MARY-AGNES

Mr. Valentine, La Belle is no "ordinary lode," but a Goddamn mountain of quartz, and you know it, and I know it, and I'd wager that there fat pinhead you brung with you knows it, too. But if you don't wanna talk sensibly, there's plenty've other outfits we can go to.

Charlotte gives Mary-Agnes a look, then...

CHARLOTTE

Mr. Valentine, we want *your* help, we really do. We *need* you--

MARY-AGNES

--but we're not just gonna give it all away either.  
(looking at Charlotte)  
We've lost too much already.

VALENTINE

Yes, you have. Do you ladies know what they say about La Belle?  
(then)  
That it's more a place of note than importance. A place of many houses, but few souls to live in them.

MARY-AGNES

As you well know, those houses were all full not that long ago.

VALENTINE

Actually, Miss McNue, I *don't* know. The railroad is closer to Lordsburg than here. So to my way of seeing, they had already robbed you of your population *before* the accident.

MARY-AGNES

We got enough ore here to bury Lordsburg.

VALENTINE

So you say, yet your deepest shaft is what, 86 feet?

MARY-AGNES

We have one finished that goes down 103 feet and another just about so that goes down 160.

Valentine gives Farnsworth a look.

MARY-AGNES (CONT'D)

Before the men died, we had plans to build a forty stamp mill and a thirty ton smelter to keep up with all the ore they were pulling out.

That gets the two men staring at her.

MARY-AGNES (CONT'D)

We know how to run the mine. We wanna be partners. Fifty-fifty.

18

**INT. JAILHOUSE - NIGHT**

18

Roy sees the drygoodsman, ASA LEOPOLD, an old man with a permanent scowl, warily watching the saloon from his porch. HIRAM, the blacksmith stands in the shadow of his livery, also watching.

WHITEY (O.S.)

It true, Alice Fletcher shot you?

Roy turns around and faces the grinning sixteen-year-old with snow white hair and two giant six-guns on his hips, standing at the bars.

WHITEY (CONT'D)

Wouldn't doubt it, seein' as the woman was a widow twice fore she was even twenty-one.

Roy looks at him. *Twice?*

WHITEY (CONT'D)

First one died in a flash flood. Then she disappeared for a bit. Then maybe six years later, outta nowhere, she shows up on the ranch with a child and a Paiute husband claimin' the property was still rightfully hers. But Asa Leopold...

(nods across the street)

...the drygoodsman and his sons squatted the land while she was gone. Claimed they paid a \$200 relinquishment so the land was theirs.

ROY

What happened?

WHITEY

Sheriff McNue got into it with the Leopolds, told 'em Alice's deed was still good and they hadda vacate.

ROY  
Got into it, how?

WHITEY  
Well, the Leopolds was waitin' when Bill went out to the ranch to show 'em the deed, and they bushwhacked him. Bill took a bullet in the hip, but still kilt all three of Asa's boys.

ROY  
The same Sheriff brought me in? He shot *all three*?

WHITEY  
Didn't monkey around none neither. Just walked in while they was still shootin' at him, and put 'em all down.

Roy takes that in.

WHITEY (CONT'D)  
Was a time Bill was quite the gun. Taught me two years ago, after my Daddy died in the mine.

Roy looks at the boy, something they have in common.

WHITEY (CONT'D)  
Alice and her family moved into the house, but then one day her husband turned up dead in the street, shot in the back.

Roy turns, looks through the bars as old Asa Leopold locks up his store and limps across the street.

ROY  
The old man?

WHITEY  
Nobody knows. Don't matter, though. Few weeks later, Asa's wife died a rheumatic fever.

Roy watches the bitter old man mount the steps to the saloon.

WHITEY (CONT'D)  
Folks say it was Alice and the old Indian woman conjured a spell, brung all the bad luck after that. I say it just goes to show, eventually, we all of us find the dirt one way or another.

19

**INT. "THE GOOD LODE" SALOON - NIGHT**

19

Barney, the one-legged barkeep, takes care of Valentine's security detail. A few RANCH HANDS have ridden into town as well, so the place is near full. Been a while since Barney had this many customers.

Logan watches the room, chewing tobacco and, much to Barney's chagrin, freely distributing the results about the floor.

LOGAN

Where these other boys come from?

BARNEY

One a the cattle outfits. They come through now and again. Less'n less since we lost the whorehouse.

TWO COWBOYS get up and leave the bar, one of them sliding his glass to Barney...

COWBOY

I can spit more'n you pour in this place.

Ed Logan watches them go, looks at the tintype of all of the miners that hangs behind the bar. Barney refills his glass.

BARNEY

(his usual comment)

Eighty-three good men. Gone in less than five minutes.

Logan ignores him, turns to the door where TWO YOUNG WOMEN take the weapons from every man who enters, gingerly drop them into a tub and hand out a claim check with a friendly "there you are, sir."

LOGAN

Why don't you ladies join us inside.

WOMAN #1

Someone needs to work the door.

Logan opens his coat so they see a GUN he hadn't handed over. Lifts his leg where another resides in his boot and smiles...

LOGAN

I'll keep ya'll safe.

20

**INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

20

As Valentine considers Mary-Agnes through his cigar smoke.

VALENTINE

Let me ask you something, ladies.  
What's the strongest building in  
town?

CHARLOTTE

Why, that's easy. This one.

VALENTINE

And what makes it so strong?

CHARLOTTE

It's made of iron and brick. My  
husband, Theo, insisted on it.

VALENTINE

And that iron and brick comes from  
where? The East.

(then)

Rifles, nails, gunpowder, flour,  
coffee, ammunition -- all of it  
comes from the East.

He smiles at the women.

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

Quicksilver Mining has been based  
in Pittsburg for twenty-two years  
and if you allow us, we'll build  
your whole town out of iron and  
brick. Metaphorically speaking, of  
course.

Mary-Agnes sees the other women nodding their heads.

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

In a month's time, I can have fifty  
good men here. A hundred the month  
after that.

The women all stop serving, eating, whatever they're doing.

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

A hundred and fifty men, all here  
to work hard and take care of all  
of you.

(looks at Mary-Agnes)

I'm sure that by now you ladies  
have all got to be nostalgic for  
the scent of a man. A real man.

A murmur goes through the room as a dozen women all blush at  
once. Mary-Agnes looks around at the other women, disgusted.  
Valentine now gets up...

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

Quicksilver will take just ninety percent of the claim and bear one hundred percent of the costs.

MARY-AGNES

Maybe you didn't hear me before.  
We want half--

VALENTINE

I heard you, Miss McNue, and while you may possess a working knowledge of the mine, you are naive when it comes to the business of running it. Certainly not on your own.

MARY-AGNES

And I think *you, sir*, are naive when it comes to understanding just what we all been through. And just how changed we are on the other side.

VALENTINE

(looking back at her)  
Some of you more than others.

She looks back at him a moment, then stands, faces the other ladies.

MARY-AGNES

There was nothing but a dozen tents when Albert and I got here. One of those was a saloon and the other a whore house.

(to Charlotte)

You remember that.

(to Sarah Doyle)

And so do you. So do all of you. We built this place together. We gave up our old lives to start new ones.

CHARLOTTE

Yes. And then we lost everything.

MARY-AGNES

We lost our *husbands* and a few horses. *We're* still here. Your children are still here. The silver's still here. And it's still *our* Goddamn silver which means we still got choices.

(then, to Valentine)

Mister, we're a lot fuckin stronger than you think we are.

Valentine watches with a nod as they all take that in.

VALENTINE

How? As they say, *it takes a mine to work a mine*. You don't have the capital. You don't have the men--

MARY-AGNES

We'll go to the Paiutes.

Charlotte looks at Mary-Agnes. Valentine smiles.

VALENTINE

You can't be serious.

VOICE

I could work it!

A MAN comes stumbling into the room, wild-eyed and dressed in ruined clothes, several patches of his hair missing. Callie looks at Mary-Agnes who just shakes her head.

VALENTINE

And who might you be, sir?

The Man just stands there, looking around.

JOHN DOE

What's all this then?

Charlotte leans close to Valentine, whispers...

CHARLOTTE

That's John Doe. He was the only man to survive the accident.

VALENTINE

Doesn't anybody know his name?

CHARLOTTE

Was his first day on the job. I expect the foreman knew his name, but--

(looks at Mary-Agnes)  
--he's no longer with us.

JOHN DOE

I can work the mine!

And now Sadie Rose takes the man by the arm.

SADIE ROSE

C'mon, baby, let's get you home.

JOHN DOE

(as he's lead away)  
I can work it!

VALENTINE

Well, a few dozen more like him and  
your troubles are over.

Farnsworth laughs as Valentine takes out a CHECK and sets it down on the table. Charlotte and the others look, gasp at the number. Valentine takes his coat off the back of the chair.

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

That's a cashiers check for twenty thousand dollars. I will give you the time it takes for me to put on my hat and coat to decide whether you and your lovely town want the money and the men... or not.

Silence. Humming, he puts on his coat. Nobody moves. Mary-Agnes just stares back at him as he now reaches for his hat.

VALENTINE (CONT'D)

I suggest y'all put it to a vote.

Charlotte immediately thrusts her hand into the air.

CHARLOTTE

I say we take the deal!

And now the rest of the women -- except for Callie and Mary-Agnes -- do likewise. Valentine slowly places his hat on his head, looks around the room and smiles.

VALENTINE

A wise decision, ladies.

Charlotte faces Mary-Agnes: power has been transferred.

21 **INT. BILL MCNUE'S PLACE - NIGHT**

21

Trudy and nine-year-old William, Bill McNue's two children, sit by the fire. The boy reads while the little girl plays with a doll. McNue sits in a rocking chair staring at them.

The little girl looks up and smiles at him. He just stares back at her.

MCNUE (V.O.)

Know what I want?

22 **ON ANNA MCNUE**

22

His late wife, now sitting opposite him embroidering.

ANNA

Million dollars, I s'pose.

MCNUE

I want a little curly headed girl.

ANNA  
 (looks up, smiles)  
 Well, I'll do the best I can.

A GUNSHOT and MCNUE COMES AWAKE. His daughter is staring at him. Standing over by the door--

BOY  
 I heard a gunshot, Pa.

MCNUE  
 That you did.

He sighs, gets to his feet, grabs his gunbelt and moves to the door, pausing to look back at his son, William...

MCNUE (CONT'D)  
 Mind your sister till I get back.

23 **EXT. LA BELLE - NIGHT**

23

As the two young, drunk, COWBOYS ride through town, hollering and firing off their weapons. McNue rides up and dismounts.

COWBOY  
 We're wild wolves and we gonna kill  
 any man, carries a weapon!

He fires a shot in the direction of old Hiram who ducks back into the livery.

24 **INT. "THE GOOD LODE" SALOON**

24

As Logan nods to a couple of his men, puts a hand on his gun as we hear MORE GUNSHOTS and then...

MCNUE (O.S.)  
 Evenin', fellas...

Logan sees McNue standing in the dark street, holds his men back.

25 **EXT. LA BELLE - NIGHT**

25

As the cowboys turn around and face McNue.

MCNUE  
 What can I do for you?

COWBOY  
 We came to see Magdalena...

MCNUE  
 She cleared out months ago. Now,  
 I'm sorry you rode all this way for  
 nothing, but I'm gonna have to ask  
 you boys to ride on out.

COWBOY  
Or else what?

26 INT. JAILHOUSE - SAME

26

As Roy peers out the barred window at the crowd gathered in the doorway of the saloon. We can't hear what's being said, but we hear A GUNSHOT as one of the cowboy's fires through a window. Behind him, he hears Whitey's chair creak...

WHITEY  
I best get on out there.

27 EXT. LA BELLE - SAME

27

McNue tries to hold his ground, keep smiling. Logan and his men do nothing, watch the proceedings from the doorway.

MCNUE  
Now, c'mon, I know you boys don't want no trouble.

COWBOY  
You ain't gonna be no trouble.

And now the Cowboy sits up straight in his saddle.

COWBOY (CONT'D)  
No trouble t'all.

McNue stands there frozen in the middle of the street. He can't really see either of them in the dark. He starts to take a step closer and trips over something in the street.

The crowd outside the saloon is dead silent now. McNue looks up at the two men...

MCNUE  
Boys--

A GUNSHOT bites one of the cowboys in the shoulder. He grabs at it, turns and looks at Whitey as the young deputy steps off the opposite sidewalk, the two big Colts in his hands.

COWBOY  
You shot me in the damn shoulder, boy!

WHITEY  
Name's not "Boy," it's Whitey Winn.

And he fires again, the second slug drawing a thin red line along the cowboy's cheek.

WHITEY (CONT'D)  
The next one spoils yer face.  
(raises both pistols)  
(MORE)

WHITEY (CONT'D)  
 Now you heard the Sheriff--  
 (tilts his head)  
*Git.*

The two cowboys don't need much time to think before they wheel their horses around and ride off into the dark.

WHITEY (CONT'D)  
 You all right there, Bill?

Logan watches the Sheriff tromp off into the dark. He then notes Whitey and his two guns as the teenager wheels them back into their holsters, then turns to the crowd.

WHITEY (CONT'D)  
 Don't worry, folks. They ain't none  
 a them gonna bother you again.

The crowd goes back into the saloon. Whitey waits, turns to watch McNue storming off down the street.

28

**INT. JAILHOUSE - NIGHT**

28

Roy turns from the window and watches as McNue comes in and angrily kicks over a chair. He pulls a bottle of whiskey and a glass from a drawer, sits down at the desk. He pours himself a full one and drinks it down, then pours another. Looks at Roy as he comes away from the window.

MCNUE  
 You enjoy that?

Roy sits down on the floor of the cell, looks back at him.

MCNUE (CONT'D)  
 I s'pose you woulda shot them two.

Roy says nothing.

MCNUE (CONT'D)  
 Either way, I'm sure you think I'm  
 a coward, like everyone else 'round  
 here.

ROY  
 I don't judge another man else I  
 walked in his footsteps.

McNue stops. Looks at Roy. That wasn't exactly what he expected to hear from a man like Roy Goode. He tips the whiskey down his throat.

ROY (CONT'D)  
 What's a matter with your eyes?

Once more McNue looks at Roy.

ROY (CONT'D)

I had a horse once, lost his sight.  
Had the same heedful walk you do.

McNue shakes his head, pours himself another drink.

MCNUE

I been losin' it bit by bit since  
my wife died, few years ago, givin'  
birth to my daughter. Way things  
are goin', I figure I got maybe  
another six months 'fore I go  
totally blind.

ROY

I'm sorry.

MCNUE

I don't need your pity.  
(takes the drink, then)  
Instead, why don't you tell me  
about Frank Griffin. Where you  
figure he's hidin'?

ROY

Frank ain't *hidin'*, Sheriff. He's  
out there spillin' blood from hell  
to breakfast, tryin' to make me  
feel bad.

MCNUE

For what? Stealin' from him?

ROY

*Leavin'* him. He always thought a me  
as kin and Frank don't like it much  
when his kin abandons him.

MCNUE

Why *did* you abandon him?

ROY

It's personal.

MCNUE

Not after a whole town a folks get  
lynched it ain't.

ROY

I tried to stop that.

MCNUE

But you didn't.

ROY

No, sir. I didn't.

Roy just sits there now, lost inside himself.

MCNUE

Griffin might go back up to that canyon where you shot him, try'n pick up your trail.

ROY

He more'n likely did just that.

MCNUE

Which means that *you* more'n likely led the man right *here*.

ROY

Frank ain't ever gonna find me. A man alone can be invisible if he knows what he's doing.

MCNUE

But Griffin's riding with thirty. And thirty men wouldn't at all be invisible, would they?

ROY

No, sir, they would not.

MCNUE

So if someone rode up to Doubtful Canyon, they oughta be able to pick up Griffin's trail without too much trouble.

Roy looks at him. Can see that McNue is serious.

ROY

Sure, if that "someone" had proper eyesight.

MCNUE

I ain't blind yet.

29

**INT. DAILY REVIEW OFFICE - TAOS - NIGHT**

29

A.T. Grigg, sets type for the next issue. Lost in his work, he doesn't even look up as the BELL on the door CHIMES..

GRIGG

The classified desk is closed. Come back tomorrow morning when the boy is here.

VOICE

I'm a big admirer of your work.

Now Grigg looks up, sees Frank Griffin and the Devlins, just inside the front door.

GRIFFIN

I just wish it was more accurate.

A.T. Grigg takes one look at Griffin and nearly wets himself. Griffin smiles, takes a step closer.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Way it sounds in your paper, Roy Goode's makin a fool a me.

GRIGG

Well, he--  
(clears his throat)  
He did best you at Creede.

GRIFFIN

From the sweet end of a rifle. Are you crying, sir?

GRIGG

No... it's my eye.  
(dabs at it)  
An old war wound.

GRIFFIN

You fought in what war?

GRIGG

I fought my wife, may she rest in peace. On the last occasion, she broke a bottle of liniment against my cheek.

Griffin chuckles. Grigg smiles, starts to regain confidence.

GRIGG (CONT'D)

What is it I can do for you... gentlemen?

GRIFFIN

Let's just say, you're gonna give me immortality, and I'm gonna let you live longer'n you might've.  
(then)  
I want you to write a story, only as I prescribe it to you.

Grigg tries to stand up straight.

GRIGG

I'm sorry, but I'm not for hire. I print the truth only as I see it.

GRIFFIN

Coulda fooled me. Hell, the *Daily Review* don't even come out but once a week. That's a lie right there.

GRIGG

I print the news of the day.

Griffin takes another step forward.

GRIFFIN

Well, sir, the news of *today* is,  
the crybaby editor of the *Daily*  
*Review* was found this evening in a  
puddle of his own piss and brains.

Grigg turns to run when he sees several members of Griffin's gang standing just inside the back door. Grigg recognizes a few of them... dark celebrities in their own right.

GRIGG

Jesus-- Gatz Brown... Alonzo  
Bunker... Bill Chick...

GRIFFIN

I want you to write that Roy Goode  
has betrayed me... and that I will  
kill any man, woman or child who  
harbors him...

Grigg quickly pulls a pencil from behind his ear and starts scribbling on his pad...

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

The good people a Creede let him  
walk their streets and now they  
have no streets. Or people, for  
that matter.

30

**EXT. ALICE'S RANCH - DAWN**

30

Alice exits the cabin pulling on a pair of deerskin gloves.  
Truckee trails behind...

TRUCKEE

Sure you know how to do this?

ALICE

I watched your father do it lots a  
times.

She pulls a rope from the rail and opens the gate to the paddock. She slips in with the horses.

TRUCKEE

There's watchin' and there's doin'.

She eyes one of the horses, starts moving towards him.

TRUCKEE (CONT'D)

Too bad Roy ain't here.

ALICE  
*Isn't here. And we don't need  
 anybody.*

Alice ropes the horse round the neck. Truckee watches as the horse rears up, but she hangs onto the rope, gets dragged.

TRUCKEE  
 You okay?

Alice gets to her feet, but she's caught between the horse and the rail. The horse smacks against her, once, twice, a third time, breaking the rail and now ALL OF THE HORSES RUN OUT OF THE Paddock.

Alice watches them run, throws the rope onto the ground...

ALICE  
 God-DAMMIT!

She turns and sees Truckee standing there, looking at her. He quickly turns to go...

TRUCKEE  
 I think I'll go dig some in the well.

31      **EXT. LA BELLE - MORNING**

31

A few women on the street wave as the black stagecoach, escorted by Logan and his men, pulls out of town.

The small procession passes McNue walking in the street, his kids holding his hands. Valentine doesn't look up, but Logan and the other men in his retinue give McNue a long once over from on high as they go by.

32      **EXT. MARY-AGNES MCNUE'S SHANTY - MORNING**

32

One of the identical little shanties at the edge of town. McNue and his kids walk up. McNue raps on the door...

MCNUE  
 Maggie?

He walks up to the door and knocks.

MCNUE (CONT'D)  
 You in there?

The door opens and Callie Dunne stands there, wrapped up in a blanket, clearly naked beneath it. For a moment, neither of them knows what to say. Young William gawks at his teacher.

CALLIE  
 Mornin', Sheriff.

MCNUE  
Miss Dunne. Is uh, is my sister  
about?

CALLIE  
(indicates the field)  
She's out yonder, tryin' to shoot  
some grouse for breakfast.

We hear a loud BOOM and McNue and his kids turn, look off  
behind the house, see Mary-Agnes walking with her shotgun.

33

**EXT. MARY-AGNES MCNUE'S FIELD - SAME**

33

McNue approaches Mary-Agnes who sits down on a stump and  
reloads her shotgun. ONE DEAD BIRD already hangs from her  
belt.

MCNUE  
You wanna tell me what Callie  
Dunne's doin' over here?

MARY-AGNES  
I assume her mornin' toilet.

MCNUE  
Jesus, Maggie--

MARY-AGNES  
I get lonely same as you, Bill.

McNue turns away, shakes his head.

MARY-AGNES (CONT'D)  
Where you runnin' to this time?

MCNUE  
I ain't *runnin'* nowhere. I'm gonna  
help Marshall Cook bring in Frank  
Griffin.

This gets her looking up at him. He's serious.

MCNUE (CONT'D)  
Don't look at me that way. I been  
known to kill a man or two.

MARY-AGNES  
So's lightning.

MCNUE  
I wanna see if I can't do one last  
thing right as a lawman, afore the  
whole damn world goes dark on me.

She just shakes her head. He watches her load the shotgun.



WHITEY (CONT'D)  
 (indicates the spread)  
 Sweet or savory. Take your pick.

McNue looks to the cell where Roy Goode, his own mouth full of pie, nods at the Sheriff who moves to the rack of RIFLES on the wall.

MCNUE  
 Interesting how the women round here all seem to believe that a man's emotions ebb and flow right along with his digestive juices.

He pulls a rifle down from the rack, checks it.

WHITEY  
 Where you goin'?

MCNUE  
 I'm gonna bring in Frank Griffin.

Roy looks up at the Sheriff. Whitey stops chewing.

MCNUE (CONT'D)  
 Quit standin' there with your mouth open like a flytrap and pass me a box a them shells...

Whitey grabs a box of cartridges from the desk and hands them to McNue...

WHITEY  
 Shouldn't I at least go with you?

MCNUE  
 No, you should not. Marshal Cook's on his way up to Olagrande to fetch the army. Once I pick up Griffin's trail, I'll meet up with them, and we'll go after him together.

Roy watches as McNue now tries to snick a cartridge into the barrel of the rifle, but has trouble inserting the bullet, has to bend close to the rifle to see it.

MCNUE (CONT'D)  
 The meantime, you keep an eye on Mr. Ward here 'till we get back. You understand?

Whitey knows better than to argue and nods. McNue tucks the rifle under his arm, moves to the door and opens it.

MCNUE (CONT'D)  
 I'll be a week or two at the most.  
 (pausing)  
 Try not to eat yourselves to death.

36      **EXT. ANNA MCNUE'S GRAVE - DAY**

36

As McNue, leading the mare he borrowed from Alice, rides past his wife's grave, the wildflowers he'd left now dried up and shriveled. He nods, touches the brim of his hat, then spurs his horse into a gallop...

37      **EXT. ALICE'S RANCH - DAY**

37

Truckee, on the old mule, tries the best he can to herd the stray horses. The boy's not so comfortable around the big animals.

Alice comes around the back of the barn and drives two stray horses back into the paddock when she sees the pack horse Roy rode in on, grazing nearby. She walks over, pets the docile animal...

ALICE  
Hey, girl...

She once more takes in the poultice that Roy had earlier placed on the animal's injured leg.

TRUCKEE (O.S.)  
Mama?

Something about this small act of kindness keeps her staring, even after Truckee calls to her. She finally looks up and sees A CLOUD OF DUST out in the pasture.

She steps back and watches as a few dozen of the stray horses race back towards the ranch. Bill McNue is at the rear of the herd, driving the animals back into the paddock. He leads the mare over to Alice.

MCNUE  
I'm returning your horse...  
(indicates the corral)  
Long with a few others you seem  
to've lost.

ALICE  
(sees his bedroll)  
You goin' somewhere?

MCNUE  
There's still a dozen animals up in  
the hills by the creek. Whitey and  
Hiram can help you fetch 'em all.

He's looking everywhere but at her. She steps closer.

ALICE  
Why don't you come inside, Bill,  
have a cup of coffee?

MCNUE

I better not.

Though he would like nothing more. He smiles the best he can and says:

MCNUE (CONT'D)

I won't be in your road no more,  
Alice.

(turns his horse)

You take care now.

Alice watches him go, suddenly overwhelmed with sadness, turns and looks at all of the horses in the corral. She marches to the house, reaches inside the door, grabs her rifle, then walks back to the mare and gets on her.

ALICE

Tell Iyovi I'll be back late.

Truckee watches as she rides off across the pasture.

38

**INT. JAILHOUSE - DAY**

38

Roy lies on the pallet in his cell. He hears Whitey chuckle, leans over and sees the young deputy -- feet up on the desk -- reading a dime novel. "*Left for Dead!*" He sees Roy looking at him, holds up the book...

WHITEY

My mama used to say that "A good book's like a garden in your pocket." That there ain't no ill an hour a readin' can't fix.

ROY

Your mama live in town?

WHITEY

No. She died a Typhus, on the way out here, I guess it's four years now.

ROY

Your Pa?

WHITEY

In the mine along with everybody else.

(looks at the book)

I really miss her...

(looks at Roy)

I ain't no mama's boy, though.

ROY

No, I wouldn't say so.



JIM  
 You sure we allowed to be diggin'  
 in here?

UNCLE DUNCHEE  
 It's a graveyard, ain't it?  
 (then)  
 Go on, then, put him in the hole.

The two boys exchange a look as they move to the back of the wagon where A BODY IS WRAPPED IN A BLANKET. Jim jumps in and drags one end to Young Roy.

JIM  
 Got him?

Young Roy nods and Jim grabs the other end and they haul the body out of the wagon, get maybe a couple of steps when Young Roy's legs buckle under the weight of it and he sits down in the dirt, the blanket coming off to reveal his DEAD FATHER'S FACE STARING AT HIM FROM HIS LAP.

UNCLE DUNCHEE  
 Careful there, son. Poor man's been  
 through enough already.

Roy covers the man's head and together he and his brother drag the body over to the hole and roll him in. The boys stand there staring down into the grave.

JIM  
 Woulda been good, don't you think,  
 he was in a box?

UNCLE DUNCHEE  
 Woulda been good you could afford  
 one.

JIM  
 U.S. Army supposed to've sent  
 twenty dollars somewheres.

UNCLE DUNCHEE  
 I checked the Moses post. Only  
 thing from the government was the  
 writ to quit on your homestead.  
 Guess your Daddy didn't prove it up  
 enough.

JIM  
 He was sick.

UNCLE DUNCHEE  
 Rules is rules.

Jim looks at him, but holds his tongue as Dunchee, unable to make any use of the clothing, shoves it all back into the carpet bag and tosses it into the hole.

DUNCHEE

Now, come on, get him covered. I told your aunt we'd be there by noon.

The boys pick up the shovels and set to burying their father. Roy hesitant at first, until his brother elbows him and he begins covering the face in the hole with dirt.

WOMAN'S VOICE

He's a bit of a runt, ain't he?

41 **EXT. UNCLE DUNCHEE'S FARM - DAY**

41

Young Roy and his brother Jim bounce about the back of UNCLE DUNCHEE's wagon as he starts up a rutted road to the ugliest farm ever put on film.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Now that I look at him, the other one ain't so big neither.

Roy takes in the sea of mud and broken wagon parts that litter the drive, the few horses, still in their winter coats, looking back at him. He waves.

42 **EXT. UNCLE DUNCHEE'S FARMHOUSE - DAY**

42

AN OBESE WOMAN stands just inside the doorway eyeing the two filthy boys standing in front of her. MRS. DUNCHEE. She sees all the dirt and mud all over them.

MRS. DUNCHEE

They certainly know their way around the muck, don't they?

UNCLE DUNCHEE

They just buried their pa. A war hero I might add.

MRS. DUNCHEE

So were lots of folks. Man died a tramp, way I imagine most of them in that particular outfit did.

UNCLE DUNCHEE

It ain't contagious.

MRS. DUNCHEE

Well, they ain't gonna stay in the house, not looking like that.

She studies them, hands on massive hips.

MRS. DUNCHEE (CONT'D)  
We'll keep the older one, but the  
other's too runted, be of any use.

UNCLE DUNCHEE  
Maybe not now, but he'll grow.

JIM  
My brother's a good worker, ma'am.

She looks at Jim a moment like he's some kind of giant Locust  
that just landed in her cornfield.

MRS. DUNCHEE  
Is he now?

JIM  
Yes'm. He'll do whatever you tell  
him without complaint.

MRS. DUNCHEE  
Will he lick my vaginy if I ask him  
to? Without complaint?

JIM  
(beat)  
Uh, s'cuse me, ma'am? Your what?

MRS. DUNCHEE  
(points)  
My little madge, my doodle sack, my  
crinkum, my tuzzy muzzy, I'm askin'  
will your brother lick it if I put  
it to him?

JIM  
I don't rightly know--

MRS. DUNCHEE  
Will you?  
(lifts her dress)  
Come on then. Whatta you say?

JIM  
I really don't--

The woman slaps Jim, nearly knocks him out of his boots.

MRS. DUNCHEE  
They can sleep with the stock.

43

**INT. BARN - DAY**

43

They follow Uncle Dunchee into the barn.

UNCLE DUNCHEE  
You boys make yourselves at home.

Roy walks over and takes in a WHITE HORSE.

ROY  
That is one fine horse.

UNCLE DUNCHEE  
He is. I keep him in here separate from the rest of 'em, so they don't teach him no bad habits.

ROY  
Them horses out there seemed okay to me. Bit underfed is all.

UNCLE DUNCHEE  
(looks at Roy)  
Mind your own beeswax and keep yourself away from my pony.  
(points)  
Fact, you two sleep over there so's you don't disturb him.  
(turns to go)  
I'll see you both bright 'n early.

Roy waits for him to leave, then goes ahead and climbs up and pets the horse.

ROY  
Hi there, pardner. You are a looker. But then you know it, don'tcha?

He jumps down into the stall with the horse, starts to walk around it when the animal whinnies, THEN KICKS HIM, KNOCKS THE KID THROUGH THE STALL.

JIM  
Roy!

Jim comes running over, drags Roy away from the animal, holds onto his little brother while he tries to catch his breath.

JIM (CONT'D)  
Well, you learned *that* lesson.  
(looks up at the horse)  
He's a mean one, ain't he.

ROY  
Nah. He's a good horse. He's just bein' sporty.

Roy looks off towards the house, then--

ROY (CONT'D)  
He don't look much like Pa.

JIM  
Who?

ROY  
Dunchee. And Pa never said nothin'  
about no brother. And that woman...  
she'd put a fright into a bobcat.

JIM  
S'alright. We ain't gonna be here  
long.

ROY  
Where we gonna go?

JIM  
California.  
(looks at him)  
You ever hear a the Pacific Ocean?

ROY  
What's that?

JIM  
(smiles)  
You'll see.

44           **CUT TO ROY IN THE PRESENT**

44

Lying on the iron bed in the jail cell. He hears A DOOR OPEN  
and turns his head as...

WHITEY (O.S.)  
Why, Miss Fletcher, what a nice  
surprise.

45           **INT. JAILHOUSE - NIGHT**

45

As Whitey kicks his feet off the desk and sits up. He turns  
to see...

...Alice Fletcher standing there with her Henry rifle tucked  
under one arm. She glances over at Roy who now moves to the  
bars to see what's going on.

ALICE  
Open up the cell.

WHITEY  
Sheriff McNue says Mr. Ward ain't  
s'posed to have any visitors.

ALICE  
Mr. who?

She looks at Roy who nods slightly.

WHITEY

Now, you can leave any baked goods you brung with me, but that's all.

ALICE

I didn't *bake* anything for him, I wanna take him home with me.

WHITEY

You and every other lady in this town, but I can't let you--

She raises the gun so that it points at his chest, keeps her voice calm, almost bored.

ALICE

Open the cell, Whitey, or you're gonna be awful damn sick from a bullet in your chest.

She levers the rifle and Whitey now does as he's told.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Take off your gunbelt.

WHITEY

Ma'am, please...

ALICE

Take it off.

He does, holds it out to her. She sets it down on the desk.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Now Mr... Ward, you come on outta there. And Whitey, you go on in.

ROY

Ma'am--

ALICE

Do it.

They trade places. She closes the door. Roy looks in at a now very sad looking Whitey, then looks at Alice. She wags the pistol at him and he reluctantly moves for the door...

46

**EXT. WAGON CAMP - NIGHT**

46

A couple of wagons parked beside a fire. TWO LARGE FAMILIES eat their supper and rest from a long day's travel. CHILDREN run in the fading light. A MOTHER breastfeeds an INFANT on a log nearby.

Suddenly, the hobbled OXEN all stop grazing and stare into the woods at the edge of the clearing.

The TWO MEN in the group get up from the fire, one pulls a rifle from a wagon, and cautiously approaches the trees. The leaves toss as A POSSUM darts out from the brush. The men relax, but then...

We HEAR A HORSE SNORT and they turn and see Frank Griffin and his gang of men sitting their horses, downwind from the oxen, on the opposite side of the clearing. Griffin smiles.

GRIFFIN

Hey, there.

47

**EXT. ALICE'S RANCH - NIGHT**

47

Roy reins up the horse and they both get off. She looks off at the dark house...

ALICE

The Paiutes say that you either live with the land or you die. Well, I can't seem to live with *this* land, but I'm stuck.

She turns to him, sees that he just watches her and she realizes she's not making sense.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Look, I don't know who you are or what you done, but you got a way with horses.

She indicates the dark shapes in the corral behind her.

ALICE (CONT'D)

And I got forty-some animals need to be broke and no one to help me do it. Truckee's still just a boy and he won't admit it, but he's afraid of horses. Seems his father died before he could teach his son how to be a proper Indian. Anyway, I'd go to the Paiutes, but then Chief Narrienta would send me one of his sons, and there'd be, well, certain strings attached.

She lets that sink in, moves up to him now.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I can't pay you, but I'll give you the best horse when you're through. Animal strong enough to carry you to California, see that brother you're so angry with.

ROY

Lady, I don't mean no offence, but you don't want me anywhere near you or your boy.

ALICE

Because you're so dangerous?

ROY

You were right the first time, you told me I couldn't stay.

(then)

You don't know who I am.

ALICE

You're the terrible Roy Goode.

She reaches into her coat, takes out THE LETTER he left behind. He stares at it in her hand.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You got a letter with the man's name on it. But then again, it hasn't even been opened. So maybe it's not yours.

He says nothing.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Look, I don't know who you are or what you done. But I look you in the eye, and you don't seem so stone cold to me. You just seem lost. Maybe a little sad.

ROY

I am who I say. And it ain't gonna be long 'fore someone comes lookin' for me.

ALICE

Like who? Bill's gone for a while.

ROY

That deputy ain't gonna wake up happy.

ALICE

I'll handle Whitey.

Roy's running out of arguments.

ROY

Ma'am, I'm bad luck.

ALICE

We got that in common then.  
Do we have a deal?

He looks this way, then that, finally shakes his head.

ROY

No, ma'am.  
(then)  
If I was to stay and break all a  
them horses, there'd be somethin'  
else I'd be wantin' from you.

She gets uncomfortable, crosses her arms tight. She looks at him like maybe she has him wrong, tries not to sound bitter.

ALICE

And what would that be?

He looks at the letter in his hand, then--

ROY

Teach me how to read.

There's a moment, and then--

ALICE

I could do that.

48

**EXT. WAGON CAMP - NIGHT**

48

Frank Griffin sits at the fire with the two men and their wives, the children quietly sitting at their parent's feet. The rest of the Griffin gang waits in the darkness that surrounds the camp. Frank places a mug on the ground.

GRIFFIN

That's some delicious coffee,  
ladies. I thank ye.

The women smile nervously back at the one-armed "preacher." He looks at a LITTLE BOY and smiles...

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Why, you're no bigger'n a minute,  
are you little fella?

Frank reaches out with his good arm and pulls the kid onto his knee.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

There ye go...  
(looks at the men)  
What'd you folks say your names  
were?

MAN

(Norwegian accent)  
I'm Nicholas Gustavson and this is  
my brother, Jacob.

GRIFFIN

Where y'all from?

NICHOLAS

Norway.

Griffin nods, looks at the faces staring back at him.

GRIFFIN

Well, I admire y'all for makin' the  
journey west. It's a hard run. I  
know, I done it. I come out west on  
a wagon train, from Arkansas when I  
was just a boy...

(to the boy)

...not much more'n yore age.

(to all)

Trip was goin' jes fine til we all  
hit a little knot in the road in  
Utah, place called Mountain  
Meadows.

Griffin speaks as if he's telling the kids a bedtime story.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

See, my mammy and pappy and most  
everybody else were all kilt. By  
Indians it looked like. Cept when  
these Indians washed their faces,  
their skin was white. Turns out  
they was all from the great Salt  
Lake. Men of religion they said.  
Well, some of these religious men  
applied themselves to my sister  
before they kilt her, got their  
pretend war paint all over her real  
skin. My baby brother, Liam,  
wouldn't stop fussin' while they  
was rapin' an' killin' my family,  
so they grabbed him by the feet'n  
smashed his head on a wagon wheel,  
like that one there.

(then)

They kilt over a hundred people  
that day including my Mammy and my  
Pappy, Liam and my older sister,  
Lorie, and my aunt and uncle and  
their little girl, cousin Phoebe.

The folks around the fire just stare back at him. Griffin  
smiles at the little boy on his knee...

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

One of them, Mr. Isaac Haight, was all the time preachin' to the men doin' the killin' about how all things are purified with blood. How without the shedding of blood, there is no remission. He said how they was givin' us all eternal salvation by spillin' our gentile blood in the dirt. I heard him say how killin' gentiles was a means of grace and a virtuous deed, and I thought to myself, *hmm*.

(then)

After he "saved" my family, Mr. Isaac Haight became my new pappy. And one of his wives became my new mammy. My family, like all of the families we were travelin' with, had a considerable amount of gold and personal property. All of which my new family took right good care of. Mr. Haight gained ten pounds just so he could fit into my old Pappy's clothes. I remember seein' one of Mr. Haight's fourteen wives wearin' one of my mammy's skirts in church.

Griffin stares into space.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

But the image I have a my family is looking back at them as Mr. Haight took us away, their bodies left to fester and corrupt in the hot sun.

The kids around the fire don't move. The adults are sick.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

I learned to love Mr. Haight. He taught me with the stick and the bullwhip and the knife how to love. Same as I love Roy Goode now. For he's my son. I chose him and that's more powerful bond -- a more powerful love -- that bein' born into it. I aim to show him that love when we meet up again.

He smiles at the two men, that dreamy smile that comes without mirth or warmth behind it.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

We know he came through this way. A skinny fella... kind you might mistakenly underestimate.

JACOB

We've not seen anyone.

GRIFFIN

Course he may be dead, but then  
he's been dead before.

We hear laughter from the men in the shadows. Griffin studies all of the scared faces around him.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Well, I think that tonight, we'll  
bed down just over there. In the  
morning, we'll move on, leave you  
folks be.

The Gustavsons seem to relax a bit.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

But, before we do, I need you two  
gentlemen to decide which of your  
lovely wives is gonna visit me in  
my blankets.

Jacob goes pale. Nicholas starts to lurch, but his wife sees Frank's gang lurking just beyond the firelight and holds onto him. Griffin smiles at the women...

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Course if both a you wanna come  
along, you're more'n welcome.

49

**EXT. SAN MARCOS TRAIN DEPOT - MORNING**

49

Nothing more than a shack in the middle of nowhere. McNue rides up and dismounts.

A covered wagon with SOLOMON'S HOUSEWARES AND NOTIONS painted on the side is tied up out front.

McNue walks to the TELEGRAPH OFFICE. A sign reads "BACK AFTER BREAKFAST." McNue doesn't seem to notice it, tries the door and, of course, finds it locked. He sighs, thinks a moment, then walks to the little depot cafe and heads inside.

50

**INT. CAFE - SAME**

50

No one else in here except the owner of the rig parked out front, a dapper dude who reads the newspaper while he eats his eggs, napkin tucked into his vest.

He smiles at McNue as the sheriff takes a seat at a table. A YOUNG WAITRESS comes out of the back and smiles at him.

WAITRESS

Mornin' Mr. Law. Coffee?

MCNUE

Thank you.

(as she pours)

Any idea when the wire man's gonna show up?

WAITRESS

What the sign say?

MCNUE

Sign?

WAITRESS

He's usually there by nine. Ten at the latest, depending on the night before.

MCNUE

(takes that in, then)

What's for breakfast?

She nods to a board on the wall. McNue squints at it. Clearly can't read it.

MCNUE (CONT'D)

I'll take whatever's good.

WAITRESS

Nothing's good. But you can't go wrong with fried eggs and grits.

MCNUE

I'll have that.

WAITRESS

Bacon?

MCNUE

Sure. Why not. It's Saturday.

He takes a sip of the coffee and winces. Would spit it out if he could.

MCNUE (CONT'D)

Sweet Jesus, that's strong enough to float an egg.

WAITRESS

So they say.

MCNUE

Hang on.

(she pauses)

A large party of men come through here anytime recent?

WAITRESS

Sadly, no. Truth is nobody much comes through here. Unless it's Wednesday and the train's coming.

MCNUE

You know of a place called Doubtful Canyon? Supposed to up this way.

WAITRESS

I think it's a few miles east.

MCNUE

Can you be more specific?

WAITRESS

Rudy can. He knows every rock and crag within fifty miles.

MCNUE

Where can I find Rudy?

WAITRESS

Telegraph office.

MCNUE

Of course.

She moves off and now McNue sits there staring at the coffee.

VOICE

Friend?

McNue looks up to see the dude standing there. He extends his hand.

DUDE

Edward Solomon.

MCNUE

(hesitates, shakes)  
Bill McNue.

He sits down without being asked, nods to the coffee as Bill attempts another sip, winces.

SOLOMON

That is one fearful conglomerate. Myself, I made it three sips and abandoned all hope.

McNue just nods at him. Waiting.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

You may have seen my rig out front.  
(smiles)  
Or not given your condition.

McNue looks at him.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)  
I believe I have just the thing.

Solomon reaches into his coat and comes out with a PAIR OF SPECTACLES. Another smile:

SOLOMON (CONT'D)  
Try these.  
(McNue hesitates)  
Go on, Sheriff. Your life is about to change.

McNue puts the glasses on. Looks around the room.

51

**HIS POV**

51

He can see the menu board now. Can see a lot more. But...

MCNUE  
(takes them off)  
I'm a bit dizzy...

SOLOMON  
Yes, they are rather powerfully magnified. That's why I would only wear them for reading and such. And even then, not for too long.

McNue looks at him.

MCNUE  
How much?

SOLOMON  
For you, sir, an officer of the law? Twenty-five cents. Half the cost of your breakfast, but will last you twice as long.

McNue fishes in his pocket, flips a quarter to the man.

MCNUE  
(pockets them)  
Thank you.

He doesn't get up. McNue looks at him. *What?*

SOLOMON  
I was in Trinidad not that long ago. Maybe a month.

MCNUE  
Trinidad?

SOLOMON

Colorado. Just over the border. I was playing cards -- a vice I'm rather prone to, I admit -- when a large group of gentlemen came into the saloon there.

MCNUE

How large?

SOLOMON

At least twenty-five men. Most went upstairs to the whorehouse -- they have a good one there.

MCNUE

Another vice you're prone to?

SOLOMON

(smiles)

I'm a married man. Anyway, one of the gents came and sat down at the table. Of course, I had no idea who he was, but I could see the others at the table was all afraid to win.

MCNUE

He say anything to you?

SOLOMON

He had some unusual thoughts on religion. I was particularly amused by his assertion that the original Garden of Eden, according to him, is to be found in Independence, Missouri.

MCNUE

I assume you didn't share your amusement with the man, or you wouldn't be here to tell me.

SOLOMON

I did not... The well worn phrase "died in a saloon argument" being foremost in my mind.

MCNUE

He say where he was headed?

SOLOMON

No, but he did speak at some length as to the beauty of a place called "Bald Knob." One had the feeling he was anxious to get back there.

MCNUE

Any idea where that might be?

SOLOMON

Couldn't say. And I didn't ask. I sensed a broody turn in the man at that point, and so I bid the table good-night, and got the hell out while I still could.

52        **EXT. TRAIN DEPOT - SAN MARCOS - DAY**

52

McNue stands at the telegraph office, finishes scribbling out a message which he then passes to the old OPERATOR.

OPERATOR

(reads it)

*To Marshal John Cook. STOP. Have RG in custody in La Belle. STOP. Will meet up in Olagrande. STOP. Signed Bill McNue.*

(looks up at McNue)

Who's "RG?"

McNue drops a coin on the counter, turns away.

MCNUE

Just send the damn thing.

53        **CLOSE-UP OF FRANK GRIFFIN**

53

Eyes closed but twitching to the sound of FAINT GUNSHOTS.

54        **EXT. MOUNTAIN MEADOWS - DAY**

54

A field of rotting corpses. MEN, their faces painted, move through the dead pulling dresses and jewelry off dead women, breaking open the strong boxes in wagons that are massed in the center of the field.

Every now and then a GUNSHOT is heard as one of the men finishes off someone who ain't quite dead.

We hear a CHILD CRYING. A LITTLE BOY steps into frame, bawling right at us. We hear the beat of HOOVES and the little boy is suddenly scooped off the ground by a RIDER in a long duster and carried off... his screams echoing as we...

55        **CUT TO: FRANK GRIFFIN**

55

As he opens his eyes. A BEE buzzes his face and he sits up, disoriented, calls out:

GRIFFIN

Papa!

Griffin rolls over and we see Jacob Gustavson's WIFE beside Griffin, nude, curled up in fetal position. She faces away from him, shaking. Griffin stares at her, tries to remember where he is. He reaches out to touch her and she flinches.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Dear Lord...

Floyd Wilson, the tracker walks up and looks down at him with that milky blue eye.

FLOYD

If he come this way, he didn't  
leave no trail.

Griffin comes out from his blankets, his gunbelt over his shoulder, walks to the middle of camp in his longjohns...

GRIFFIN

So what you sayin' you ain't got no  
idea which direction he's headed?

FLOYD

Maybe we come along before the  
rains.

It's eerily quiet, aside from a BUZZING SOUND. Griffin looks around the camp, brushes a BEE from his face, then he hears sounds coming from the wagons. Human sounds. He peers into one and sees...

The children are huddled in the back, listening to the soft whimpering sounds coming from the wagon next door.

Frank moves to that wagon, throws back the tarp and sees TWO OF HIS MEN have got NICHOLAS' WIFE pinned beneath them, one of them grinding into her...

Griffin looks over and sees the Devlin Twins on the far side of the camp have got the two husbands tied up at gunpoint.

Griffin stands there, confused, upset. Finally...

GRIFFIN

Damnation...

He reaches in with his one remaining arm and yanks one of the startled men out of the wagon, the man falling onto knees.

MAN

Jesus--

Griffin kicks him in the face and the man goes down and stays down. Griffin looks into the wagon as the other man quickly pulls his britches up.

GRIFFIN

Get on out of there!

The FIRST MAN reaches for his gun and Griffin, faster than one would expect, pulls the pistol from the holster draped over his shoulder and shoots the man in the forehead, then spins and shoots the SECOND MAN.

Griffin then storms across the camp to where the Devlins hold onto the two men. The Gustavson brothers stare up at him in horror. Griffin stares back at them and shakes his head.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

You call yourselves husbands and fathers? Why ain't neither of you dead or at least beat some around the face? Why don't you fight? Good book says, Man lays down like a lamb, stays down!

Griffin turns to walk away.

NICHOLAS

You are no man of God!

Griffin stops, turns and stares back at him, something in his eyes makes Nicholas scoot back an inch.

GRIFFIN

God? What God? Mister, you clearly don't know where you are!

(crouches down)

Look around. There ain't no higher up around here to watch over you or your young'ns. This here is the paradise a the locust, the lizard and the snake. It's the land of the blade and the rifle. It's Godless country, and the sooner y'all accept your inevitable demise, the longer y'all gonna live. If you think about--

We hear a commotion OS and Griffin watches impassively as Jacob's Wife wields a rifle and tries to shoot Frank from across the camp. Dyer Howe grabs her from behind, causing her to fire an errant round into the trees.

Griffin shakes his head, stands up, looks down at the two of them. Continues...

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

If you think about it, the same God that made you and me, also made the rattlesnake. That just don't make no sense. All a man can count on is hisself. That's the truth.

Griffin turns, swats at the BEES that still swarm around him.

                  GRIFFIN (CONT'D)  
                   What's with all these infernal  
                   bumble bees?!

He listens a moment, then walks to where the horses are all picketed, the BUZZING GETS LOUDER. He stops at the row of saddles, looks at his own.

BEES are swarmed all over the long length of canvas on the ground beside it. Frank reaches out with one foot, gently rolls the canvas over with his toe, slowly unwrapping his SAWED-OFF ARM.

56

**ON FRANK**

56

As he stares down at it, then looks off.

                  GRIFFIN  
                   Floyd, what town's *that* way?

                  FLOYD  
                   North...  
                             (he looks off)  
                   Olagrande.

                  GRIFFIN  
                   Well then...

As Griffin crouches down, we see that the arm is covered with bees. Griffin looks at the index finger, subtly pointing off. He smiles. A "sign."

                  GRIFFIN (CONT'D)  
                   Let's go to Olagrande.

He rewraps the arm and scoops it up and we then--

**CUT TO BLACK**