

DRY-RIVER

by

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1 EXT. DESERT COUNTRY, NEAR MEXICAN BORDER - BLAZING NOON 1

Way down, beyond giant rock formations, a vast landscape boils in arid stillness.

A faint whistle of wind, the only sound, lifts dust from the crest of jagged rocks and whips them up like silent spirits.

INTO VIEW, through the gasoline like haze, a lone HORSE RIDER makes tired tracks through the barren endlessness.

We HOLD -

2 EXT. DESERT, CLOSE ON RIDER, MOVING - NOON 2

His face is lowered, inert. His body slouched. His skin and clothes caked with dry desert dust.

Beneath a rimmed black hat, black hair frame two soft brown eyes. A chiselled face lies sucked in, dehydrated beneath a layer of dirt and stubble.

He is ALONZO MURRIETA, (30's). A Mexican man sculpted by a life to match his upbringing: Asperous and terrestrial like the rocks, and thin and weathered like the lone pine trees of the Sierra Madre Mountains from where he has long travelled -

He is right now a man in desperate need.

His tired horse passes, witnessed by the empty eyes of a dear skull. A bag falls from the saddle and hits the ground.

Alonzo rides on. Too tired to care.

Towards the nothingness.

3 EXT. RIVER PASS, LATER - DAY 3

The RIDER appears above slopes that descend to a flat and colourless dried out river bed. Alonzo, hunched over with weary grief, can only watch as the ground passes beneath the horse.

Cracked mud. Baked bones, white as chalk, glide by as Alonzo's eyes slowly draw in.

The horse stops. Stock still. Even the air ceases to whisper as we see the rider from wide within the pass.

And now, Alonzo, his senses shot, slowly collapses from the horse and hits the ground in the middle of the drained river

bed.

For several beats he does not move.

Then CLOSE:

He opens his eyes. There is a puddle of water just feet from the horse. Alonzo desperately claws his way closer - INTO FRAME looking down at his own reflection.

There is blood on his face. Not his own. An echo from a tormenting memory. Then gone.

With a pained cry he punches the water.

Then he drinks to stay alive.

4 EXT. TOWN - DUSK

4

Stark static compositions introduce a village mostly turned to rubble; elevated on higher ground, where the wind faintly whistles through the abandoned streets. It is little more than a ghostly white relic.

This is the town of Dry River.

Alonzo, riding slow, surveys the ruins. Having just barely recovered his wits, he becomes anguished upon looking at the sorry scene.

This is not what he had been led to believe he would find. A sad twist tarnishing his father's legacy.

He rides on, passing small GATHERINGS OF PEOPLE that stand like statues watching.

His dismay grows - the wiry people, some American, some Mexican, are living in squalor.

ALONZO
(firmly to various)
Murrieta. Do you know the house
Murrieta? (with subtitles) Murrieta.
Conoces la casa?

The mention of the word Murrieta causes a stir and people begin to whisper, but none dare to reply.

Alonzo rides on, his shouts seemingly rebounding off the hostile walls.

Very much alone, he sees a YOUNG BOY, JUAN, (10), standing beside a wall. Juan is watching him, whilst simultaneously brushing away several flies that persist in landing on his arms and face.

Alonzo nods to the boy, a friendly gesture.

ALONZO

They say that when flies are
persistent, means a storm is brewing.

The boy swipes again at the bothersome fly.

Then runs away.

5 EXT. STREET, MOMENTS LATER - DUSK

5

Alonzo turns a corner, on foot now as he leads his horse by its lead. To his surprise he sees Juan wiping dust from the wall of a house.

Juan has revealed a stone plaque that reads 'Murrieta'.

Alonzo stands looking at the house. The door splintered. The windows darkened. It is as if the shame and guilt inside him have found form in the world around him.

Lost in the moment, he nearly misses Juan, again running off.

ALONZO

Como te llamas?
(what is your name?)

JUAN

Juan.

ALONZO

Tell me Juan, why has nobody taken
this house for their home?

JUAN

A good man once lived here Señor.
There are not many... Not here.
(beat)
Besides, there is a hole in the roof.

Alonzo looks up at the roof.

He then steps into the doorway. Into shadow. His back turned to the boy.

JUAN
Señor, who are you?

ALONZO
Soy Alonzo... Alonzo Murrieta.

The boy gasps, and scrambles off up a dusty slope.

6 EXT. DRY RIVER TOWN - DAWN

6

The sun is rising over the ruins of the crumbled town. A snake curls across a rotten chair beneath a tree.

7 INT. ALONZO'S HOUSE (MURRIETA'S HOUSE) - DAWN

7

ANGLE UP at the hole in the roof. Beyond it the sky as the sun begins to creep in.

Alonzo awakens, looks to a chair beside his bed. Loose pieces of rubble have fallen over his neat folded jacket. Inside the collar the embroidered initials 'P.M' are just barely visible.

Alonzo swipes away the dust. His father's precious clothes.

8 EXT. TOWN, LATER - DAY

8

Lean, hard-bitten MEXICANS are working on a barren crop field. Some cutting dead wood; most gathering stones, piling them onto one side as if to make a wall. A solemn dance.

Alonzo is watching this. He turns and looks at the town with growing disappointment - The ruins of buildings - The abandoned church tower - It's like a war zone. Far worse than the poverty-ridden Mexican mountain region that he has emigrated from.

A cowboy, OLD WESCOTT, (70'S) passes, head down, struggling with two water buckets.

ALONZO
Sir, I can help you with that.

Old Wescott scurries past, not raising his eyes. Alonzo sighs, bored by this now. This soulless atmosphere is nothing new to him. Disillusioned with himself for allowing hope in, he kicks away a curl of snake skin lying in the dust.

9 INT. ALONZO'S HOUSE, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

9

A dusty painting in a decayed frame raises into shot against

the stone wall. Alonzo stares at it as he fixes its hanging. It portrays a proud looking man, Alonzo's father, smartly dressed. Holding a rifle. The painting is signed. 'P.M.' Pedro Murrieta.

Alonzo marks the sign of the cross on his chest.

ALONZO

(to the painting)

I was born alone, and I will surely
die alone if I'm to stay here. Forgive
me.

10 EXT. ALONZO'S HOUSE, CONTINUOUS - DAY

10

The horse saddle lands firmly on the horse; water bottle. Rifle. Leather bags. All being strapped on by Alonzo who is clearly departing.

He goes to jump up on the horse.

But suddenly a GUNSHOT rings out with a strange metallic shrill. Then another shatters the quiet of the ghostly white town. Alonzo turns, trying to locate the direction of the sound.

As he moves towards, several FRIGHTENED VILLAGERS, some holding buckets, gather together behind a wall. Others run past like fear maddened animals.

11 EXT. WATER WELL PLAZA, CONTINUOUS - DAY

11

REID RYLES, (35), a ragged American cowboy is the source of the gun fearing terror.

He is the youngest of the Ryles brothers who, together with their raging mother, are like pesky flies to the decomposing corpse of the town. Solidly built, Reid comes across as a downtrodden and flamboyant mis-fit. Well-natured, if a little bit full of hot air, he has been trying very hard to be a bit meaner with each passing day.

Reid is taking target practice: Firing his pistol from a cross-legged position high up on a mound that overlooks a prominent well, and beyond that a smaller church building with a pointed bell tower.

Reid raises his pistol and aims at the church tower bell.

With a childish glint in his eye, he squeezes the trigger and the bullet cracks against stone-work, just missing the bell.

Reid scoffs. Fidgets. Flicks a fly from his face.

Beneath the bell tower, OLD WESCOTT stiffens in fear. He is stuck; attempting to fill his bucket from the water well as Reid continues to fire pot shots high over his head.

Reid carefully aims once more and fires; the bullet finally striking the bell with a spark, and a ricochet echo.

Another shot, and it's too much for Wescott, who loses grip on the rope - The bucket barrelling down into the well - but caught firmly by another man's much larger hand.

COOPER, (43), a hardened cowboy, and older brother of the clan, holds himself as the leader, a chief conqueror of the town and owner of all its poor inhabitants. With only a single tiny bone of good left in his soul, he pretends to be God.

He stands looking at frail Old Wescott as he slowly hands him back the rope and bucket.

COOPER

You are greedy. And greedy men have no place in Dry River.

WESCOTT

I draw only what you allow. Once a day. Just like the rest.

Cooper leans back on the well, steaming coffee cup in hand.

COOPER

Finish up old man.

Frightened Wescott, eager to get going, and hands shaking, spills the water, and has to re-lower the bucket.

Reid, still on his perch overlooking the well plaza finishes reloading his pistol. He fires at the church bell again and misses.

Emerging slowly from the darkness of the opened church door, a third brother, VERNE, (40), comes into view. He stands drinking from a coffee cup beneath the church doorway.

Verne is the middle of the Ryles brothers. He has a cool, calculating look. He is unapproachable and mysterious in a bad way; the way your guts would twist having Death come to call.

He watches as various TOWN FOLK gather at a safe distance. TWO are distinctive, BOONE, (75) a blind man with a kind face, leaning heavily on a cane, and CLARISSA, (25) Boone's wild-eyed beautiful daughter.

Clarissa is the only woman of her age around, and holds herself strong. One would even think she is ruthless. Definitely, she is a stoic figure, and very much a human cane to her aged father.

Reid fires another shot, it's closer this time, but still not on target.

COOPER

Reid, your coffee's as bad as your aim.

REID

This time I'll make the bell sing for ya' brother.

Wescott, trembling, finishes at the well and hastily scurries away, weighed down by his buckets that hang across his shoulders on a rack of wood.

Reid fires one more time and we see a spark scar the bell as the bullet ricochets with a swirling whine. Reid jumps up like an excited child. Cooper turns and looks at something. Verne lifts his hat.

Old Wescott has been hit by the ricochet. He staggers paralysed; his arms outstretch between the water buckets like a crucified man.

His face whitening, he drops the water and falls into a man who is just arriving. It's Alonzo.

WESCOTT

(dying whisper to Alonzo)
Pedro...

Alonzo, seeing in the eyes of the dying man a glint of hope in believing he is 'Pedro', takes his weight as he collapses to the floor.

WESCOTT

I always knew you would return
(gripping Alonzo's collar)
Help us...

Near by, blind Boone, his ears alert, clutches his daughter

tight to his arm.

CLARISSA

It's Wescott. They shot Old Wescott!

Boone smells the air intently. Clarissa tears away from Boone and runs to help.

She kneels down beside Alonzo, both beside dying Wescott.

Looking up, they see the three brothers, COOPER, REID, and VERNE, all on slightly higher ground beside the well. Guns in holsters, they look down with menace.

REID

It was an accident. It was God's work.
I swear it.

Cooper, ignoring Reid, steps closer to the ashen faced TOWN'S FOLK.

COOPER

Let this serve you all as a warning!
Not even fate has any sympathy for
rule breakers. Here we decide who
drinks and who dies.

Alonzo and Clarissa look back down to the dying Wescott, his lips turning pale.

WESCOTT

(faintly)

Water!

Alonzo goes to stand, but Clarissa beats him to it. He sees her stride towards the well, up past Cooper, snatching his coffee cup from his hand as she forces the three brothers to part for her steps.

Locking eyes with Cooper now, she makes sure he sees as she wipes the cup clean with the hem of her dress, before filling it with water.

She grabs the rope at the well, heaving up the bucket, and poring water into the cup.

Alonzo looks on, impressed.

Clarissa walks back, defiantly. Cooper grabs her arm but she rips free, returning to Wescott. There, she kneels down, about to put the water up against his waiting lips.

A sudden gunshot sounds close, and Wescott jerks dead from a second bloody wound. Alonzo and Clarissa turn, horrified to see Verne, coldly pointing his smoking pistol.

Verne stands tall, arrogant, eyeing the small crowd with hard, implacable eyes.

VERNE

Seems some folks got themselves a problem with authority. I guess Old Wescott got no problem no more.

As Verne casually returns to his coffee, the sorrowful CROWD begin to disperse. Clarissa, her eyes frightened but full of hate, backs away and is gone.

Alonzo watches her; in Wescott's death he has found life in the form of Clarissa.

12 EXT. ALONZO'S HOUSE, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

12

Alonzo slowly approaches his horse, which is still laden ready to leave. In Alonzo's eyes we sense the trauma from the events he just witnessed - Both Wescott and Clarissa playing heavily on his mind.

He mounts the horse and moves slowly on, but soon he slows, and then stops - pausing, head down in thought.

He turns his horse.

And heads back.

13 EXT. CLARISSA AND BOONE'S HOUSE, PATIO - DAY

13

A spartan Mexican patio where only stones grow on top of other stones. Clarissa is threshing corn kernels into a large ceramic bowl; a firm hand with fast, angry fingers. Her arms are lean but strong. Her stern face hides two sad looking eyes.

She looks around, feeling unsafe under the fading light of day. Boone, his face angled slightly up to the last of the sun, sits beside her on an old chair, blindly peeling potatoes.

Clarissa gravely empties the remaining corncobs into the bowl. Boone pricks up his ears, paying good attention to the sounds all around him. He grabs his walking cane by his side and pokes the basin twice, attentively hearing its sound.

CLARISSA
 (understanding his actions)
 There's enough for a few weeks of
 muddy tortillas Papa. Don't you go
 worryin'.

We follow Clarissa, whose hands are always busy.

14 INT. CLARISSA AND BOONE'S HOUSE, CONTINUOUS - DAY

14

A plain living area. Basic kitchen and fire-place. A well-used table in the middle of the room, facing a deep window.

Clarissa walks around making sure doors and windows are closed. Boone wobbles in, aided by his cane, holding a bucket with the potatoes and their peels. Very slowly, he reaches a chair by the table.

BOONE
 I hear they raise prize cattle
 midwest. That's what you need... I'll
 be able to live on what you leave me,
 and don't worry child. Rains will
 come.

Clarissa draws the curtains, making the room dark even though there is still some daylight outside. After double-checking that there are no breaches in the house-fort, her expression softens, suddenly appearing more human.

She begins to lay the table, starting with a jar of water. Now that she feels out of danger, she proceeds to also change a conversation on a subject she didn't want to hear.

CLARISSA
 Father, talk to me about Ma?

BOONE
 Ma?

CLARISSA
 Ma, father. Was she bony?

BOONE
 (lost in thought)
 Hmm...

Boone tries to find the water jar on the table surface.

Clarissa places it in his hands. Both of them perfectly synchronized in their interactions. Boone drinks straight

from the jar. With shaky hands, he sits back.

BOONE

Don't know why I'm so damn thirsty all
the time.

Clarissa grabs Boone's bucket. The potato rinds that he has
been cutting are full of potato meat and all badly cut. She
takes as many as she can and throws them in the fire to
roast.

CLARISSA

I shall build us an oven. So that we
can bake bread when the weather cools.
It will heat the house and...

BOONE

Her hair, silky and ebony, shinning
red when the sun was low... Oh she
sure was beautiful.

Clarissa listens, head half turned from the fireplace.
Boone's words are food for her soul. Her face glows,
reflecting the fire burning.

BOONE

She loved the mud. Oh was she naughty.
Boone Boone, she'd call me from behind
the potato mound, swinging her panties
in the air. I told her I was busy
planting. Boone Boone, she'd call
again and then hurl her dress at me,
caught on the hoe. And so we wallow
back and forth on...

CLARISSA

(enjoying this)
Boone Hawkins!

BOONE

Back and forth on the ground. Her face
red and we are so wet, sweating like
hogs. And then we hear a noise, and
would you believe the priest was
standing there! He had eyes for Ma,
Clarissa, oh yes, but he was as ugly
as a burnt boot.

Clarissa moves to a chair, close to Boone, listening
intently.

BOONE

When we buried her he was drunk as a saddle tramp. We had to drag him to the graveyard, made a fool of

himself...

(saddening)

Ma would have been crying if she'd seen that. She hated to see people suffer. Do you remember that child? The day we buried ya momma?

CLARISSA

No Pa, I don't remember.

We focus on Boone as Clarissa dreamily stands up to go and check the cooking.

BOONE

At the well earlier. There was a stranger?

CLARISSA

A man... Just another man.

BOONE

A gentle soul.

CLARISSA

Well I ain't caring either way Pa.

BOONE

He smelled of honesty Clarissa.

Clarissa angrily takes the rinds from the fire with bare hands, quickly as she burns the tips of her fingers. She throws them on the plate.

CLARISSA

I ain't interested in no light footed stranger. He'll be goin' on like all them others.

Clarissa stops at the deep window, looking out.

CLARISSA

Father if you love me then why do you want to send me away?

She turns to look at Boone and sees he is asleep. She turns back to the fire and stokes the hot ashes that rise up and

crackle, reflected in her eyes.

15 INT. ALONZO'S HOUSE, LATER - SUNSET

15

Alonzo sits staring at his empty water canister which is on the floor in the dust. A drip falls from the rim and dampens the dusty floor.

In front of him on the table is an empty bucket, and besides that a gun.

Alonzo stands - His right hand open by the side of his body, tense. In a decisive movement he reaches forward and walks to the door.

THE GUN is left on the table but not the BUCKET.

16 EXT. WATER WELL PLAZA, MOMENTS LATER - SUNSET

16

The water well stands proud and menacing against the orange sunset. Tall and assured, Alonzo walks across the open space towards the well, empty bucket in hand.

Seemingly impassible he reaches the well. In the silence of the early evening the pulley gives a high-pitched sound as he raises the water to fill his bucket.

His eyes scan for the brothers.

All clear.

17 EXT. TOWN TRACK, MOMENTS LATER - SUNSET

17

Mexican dwellings in ruin pass by in silence.

Alonzo walks slowly down the middle of the track, all his senses alert and straining. The bucket hangs from his hand, the water slopping and splashing, making him unpleasantly self-conscious.

Up to his side, on higher ground, he now sees the figure of Verne, sleek and menacing like a black comanche arrow. Vern begins to shadow him - his gun prominent against the bright sky beyond.

In front of him, at a distance, Cooper now steps into his line of sight and stops to face him. Alonzo has been waiting for this. He turns and looks back; Reid is there, rushing in to join his brothers like an excited puppy-dog.

Soon all three surround him and he stops. The four of them

will communicate through glances, understanding each other beyond words.

Alonzo's new clothes contrast sharply with the brothers' dull outfits.

COOPER

Don't damned as hell know who you are
mister, but that's our well you're
stealin' from.

Alonzo slowly lowers the bucket. Reid, trigger happy, cocks a pistol and holds it up to Alonzo's head.

ALONZO

My grandfather built that well.

COOPER

That so?

(beat)

Well I say you ain't nothin' but a
thievin' trespasser.

(to Reid)

Search him.

Reid checks Alonzo for a gun. Finds nothing.

REID

He's unshucked.

Reid relaxes his gun, but this doesn't exactly reassure Alonzo.

COOPER

(re positioning his hat)

Your grandfather you say eh?

ALONZO

Should imagine that gives a man a
right to a drink.

COOPER

Depends on what side of town he might
be from. Last I heard, we gone and
shifted the border. That's to go say,
we ain't in no Mexico no more boy.

Alonzo doesn't move. Cooper looks him up and down, checking out his neat clothes. As he does this, Alonzo's attention is drawn to Verne who slowly walks in from the side.

Cooper snorts, contemptuous.

COOPER
What brings you here stranger?

ALONZO
(measured)
Business.

COOPER
(amused by this)
Town like this needs business. Maybe
we can do a deal eh? Keep talkin'.

ALONZO
I'm here to retrieve my father's
possessions. Pedro Alonzo Murrieta. It
was his last dying wish that I reclaim
his house.

REID
Bean eater eh?... Look at him Cooper,
Look at him? He may even be rich.
(to Alonzo)
Did you come in a wagon? Or a horse?
Hell ain't this one lucky day, ha ha
ha. Wo ha ha.

COOPER
Shut up Reid. You can't tell skunks
from house cats.

REID
I ain't shuttin' it Cooper. Mother's
already diggin' a grave for this lyin'
squatter.

Verne cocks his rifle and raises the barrel to Alonzo. His
grip tight, with whitened knuckles.

COOPER
(to Alonzo)
Suppose you tell us what you're really
doin'? Coz I ain't seen shit worth a
Boston dollar round here.

ALONZO
The house. Ruined as it may be, I'm
making a claim.

Without loosing eye contact with Verne, Alonzo very carefully

lifts his right arm.

ALONZO

May I?

Only hard stares answer his question. Risking being shot, he opens his jacket and takes out a folded piece of paper.

Reid snatches it. Like an excited child, he unfolds it clumsily. He looks, and looks again, but clearly he can not read so passes the paper to Cooper. Cooper holds it for a touch too long. He cannot read it either but would never admit it. Lowering his rifle Verne silently takes the paper from Cooper and scans it closely.

VERNE

Mexican bosh.

ALONZO

The house deeds.

Verne refolds the paper very carefully ignoring the old creases, and making an exact square with it. He then moves uncomfortably close to Alonzo and, facing him, slides the paper back into Alonzo's jacket pocket.

He then steps back behind the cold comfort of his rifle.

COOPER

So we're are neighbours now you and I
eh?

ALONZO

Appears so.

Cooper fixes Alonzo with stern eyes. Alonzo challenges him back with a collected silence. It's clear they want something from him, and he expects to know it soon. Reid comes close to Alonzo, sniffing him like a distrusting dog.

REID

He hides something doesn't he Verne?
Thinks himself clever he does. He is
lyin' Cooper, bet he is. I bet he
killed that man.

(to Alonzo)

Did you kill that man you call your
father, you yellow screw?

ALONZO

Came to take my house, and my share of

water.

Cooper is not convinced.

COOPER

A man dyin'... busy business that of death. House or no house, why would a man think of this cursed place when he is busy dyin'? Makes no sense.

(to Verne)

Verne? Makes no sense. Whatya' you think?

Verne looks up from behind his black stetson hat.

VERNE

I think I'll strip him outta' those fancy clothes and put him in a wooden suit.

Alonzo stands tall, tense and alert but quiet, gathering as much information as he can. Reid is still woofing around him.

REID

(thumbing Alonzo's jacket)

Beautiful. Beautiful. Ha. Ha. Ha.

(to Cooper)

I can kill him now, yes?

Cooper has just seen Clarissa up on higher ground, looking down astride her horse. There are also a few SHADY FIGURES watching timidly from windows and doorways.

COOPER

Later.

REID

Later will be no good brother, he'll wreck his pants in this place. Such a waste of fine cloth.

Cooper fakes a smile. He glances back to Clarissa, making sure she is still watching. He clearly wants to impress her.

COOPER

(to Alonzo, flamboyant)

You want some water ah? Take some water my friend! Adam's ale is for everyone.

Alonzo, surprised by the change of Cooper's tone, surveys the

background. His eyes find Clarissa. He looks at Cooper, understanding.

COOPER

Water for everyone. Today you take what you need.

(to the town)

Sure! There is plenty of water. We are all friends here. Friends and neighbours.

Alonzo takes his bucket slowly and after glancing at Verne, he walks away, giving the brothers his back. In the background, Clarissa also leaves. Verne walks towards Cooper.

VERNE

That bastard knows somethin'.

The brothers watch Alonzo walk away.

18 EXT. TOWN TRACK, CONTINUOUS - SUNSET

18

Alonzo walks down the track, the brothers behind him watching. The water in his bucket again splashes loudly. His face shows the strain and the tension of the moment, his eyes looking ahead without seeing. At any time he expects to be shot in the back.

19 INT. CLARISSA AND BOONE'S HOUSE - DUSK

19

The place is steamy, afresh with ample water. It boils in pans on the fire, cooking food, and it drips from clothes hanging to dry. In amongst this, Clarissa is washing Boone's feet as he sings softly.

BOONE

Days old days of sand and dust mighty
wind will bring us lust. From old
ebony books tales of fertile lands,
golden wheat and green woodlands...

Clarissa dips to the door of the house and slings out the dirty water from the bowl. She pauses to see the brothers, Cooper, Reid, and Verne, galloping past on horses that cause TOWNSFOLK to jump clear.

Returning to Boone, she mixes hot with cool water and refills the basin, ready to scrub his face.

CLARISSA

Hold still.

Boone stops singing abruptly. He feels uncomfortable that he can't wash himself.

BOONE

Whatever in hell do I need to be clean for?

CLARISSA

Shush father.

20 INT. ALONZO'S HOUSE - DUSK

20

Alonzo has also been washing and there are signs around the living room. A bucket on the table with a wet sock that has been used as a cloth. A shard of mirror on a shelf. A chunk of soap.

A sound outside alerts him. He grabs his rifle and waits behind the door. He opens the door. Clarissa is there in the shadows, with an intense expression on her face.

CLARISSA

That was bold what you did earlier.

ALONZO

Not a match for the courage you showed yesterday.

Their eyes meet and hold. And a world of hope is in their gaze.

Alonzo invites her in with a gesture and stays near the door. Clarissa strides to the middle of the room which is lit from a single low burning lantern.

ALONZO

(self conscious)

There is much to do here.

CLARISSA

If we could just live on dust...

There is a moment of silence as Clarissa observes Alonzo slipping a shirt over his bare back.

He takes the lantern from a hook. The light passes the wall painting, allowing Clarissa to see the man with the rifle.

CLARISSA

The man that died at the well. He recognized you?

ALONZO

It was my father he recognized. I wear
the same face...

(buttoning up his shirt)

His clothes also...

CLARISSA

(examining the painting)

The same eyes...

(seeing Alonzo's rifle)

And the same gun.

ALONZO

They best work together when you come
from a family of hunters.

Alonzo re-hangs the lantern, bathing the two of them in a
soft golden glow. He relaxes, transfixed with Clarissa's
appearance, whose hair, washed and slightly wet, radiates
warmth.

ALONZO

Some water?

(passing her a glass)

Take it, I have enough.

CLARISSA

There is no such luxury here. Not
normally.

ALONZO

Then I travel with good luck on my
side.

CLARISSA

Good luck doesn't go by the name of
Dry River. There's nothing but ruin,
and beyond that only desert.

ALONZO

This town... Well this town is not how
I imagined it.

CLARISSA

(softening)

My father loves the desert. He refers
to it as it were his lover most
times... He says that it tempers a
good man's spirit and makes a mean one
think twice.

(looking Alonzo in the eye)

Which one are you?

They stand, eye to eye in a moment of closeness. Then Clarissa, self aware of having let her guard down, recalibrates her posture.

CLARISSA

I must get back to my father. He'd like you to eat with us. If you'd care to?

ALONZO

If she'd care for me to oblige, then I may be more than willing to accept.

CLARISSA

(warmly)

She would.

Clarissa walks towards the door and leaves, as decisively as she came in.

Alonzo stays put. Almost frozen in still-life enthrallment. He glances at his father in the painting.

Whatever happens, there is no way out now - He is in love.

He glances at his father's portrait.

21 INT. CLARISSA AND BOONE'S HOME - NIGHT

21

Boone is sitting on a chair facing away from the fireplace. With the end of his cane he feels Alonzo studiously.

Standing up in front of Boone, Alonzo is a perfect portrait of patience, letting the blind man get acquainted with his physical presence.

In the background, Clarissa is stirring and seasoning the food in a cauldron, her back to us.

With the cane Boone summons Alonzo to stand closer to him, and again probes him. Seemingly satisfied, with great effort, Boone tries to stand up. Alonzo reaches out to steady him. Boone shouts.

BOONE

What ya' think you are doing? Back the hell away!

CLARISSA
Stubborn like a mule!

Laboriously Boone finally gets up, Alonzo keeping a caring eye on him.

Clarissa paces around busily, serving plates and cutlery on the table. Every time she goes back and forth, Alonzo and her glance each other eagerly.

Boone heavily leans on his stick with his left hand while he raises the other hand to Alonzo's face.

BOONE
Let me see that face.

Boone feels Alonzo's face. His eyes smile in recognition.

BOONE
(overwhelmed)
Murrieta, sure thing.

Clarissa grabs the heavy cauldron from the fire and places it on the table. She stops for a second to glance at the door and windows, then looks at Boone and Alonzo.

She has been almost feeling happy all day in anticipation, but a well sedimented distrust prevents her from smiling.

CLARISSA
Let's eat.

Clarissa helps Boone to the table. She serves his plate and gives him a spoon. Ready to eat now, Clarissa suddenly pauses and looks to Alonzo quizzingly.

CLARISSA
Are you a man of faith?

BOONE
Faith my ass!

Alonzo can't help a smile.

ALONZO
Sir, with my respect, if you don't mind, I will say a prayer.
(beat)
Bendícenos, Señor, y bendice los alimentos que vamos a recibir. Por tu bondad, por Cristo nuestro Señor.

Amen.

Alonzo drops his shoulders and looks at Clarissa. She hasn't done any praying gestures and has kept quiet.

BOONE

No God around these dry skies went
sweating to put any of this sweet food
on the table.

Clarissa looks to Alonzo, and neither look amused.

Outside, a haunting wind picks up and softly howls. It causes a window shutter to swing suddenly open with a loud slap.

Alonzo's hand automatically whips down to his gun holster ready to draw.

Clarissa watches as Alonzo, gun visible in holster, gets up and walks to the window, cautiously closing it, and returning to his seat.

CLARISSA

(Almost playfully)

A gentleman should remove his gun if
he's to dine at table.

ALONZO

My apologies Miss.

Alonzo unbuckles his gun belt and places it near by. He sits and starts to eat, unable to disguise his hunger.

He feels Clarissa's eyes on him.

ALONZO

This is as delicious a meal as I can
recall eating all year.

CLARISSA

Kind words.

They eat in silence, the moist-starved logs in the fireplace burning effortlessly. Clarissa leaves the fork in the plate, brusquely.

CLARISSA

(to Alonzo)

You were lucky those jackals didn't
kill you today.

BOONE

Don't be so blunt child! Be kind to our handsome guest.

CLARISSA

Balls! There ain't no social merriments no more in Dry River father! Don't you go now pretending.

ALONZO

It's alright Sir. I've crossed men like them before... That's why I've been wondering the same thing. Settlers, are they?

CLARISSA

Meddlers, more like. Worst kind. They came when this drought was already set in.

ALONZO

Why are they here?

BOONE's hand moves around the table, trying to find something. Clarissa moves a cup of water silently near to his hand so that he can find it. Boone takes the glass and rests back in his chair. We can see him thinking.

BOONE

(hushed, to himself)

Pedro... Pedro Murrieta... Him and I were friends then... Good friends. He welcomed us in after the war, then...

The wood of Boone's chair begins to creak as he adjusts his weight. He closes his eyes - As if to see -

BOONE (CONT)

Eighteen fifty one or thereabouts, and not a sniff of rain for two years... Like rats we were at the well. Not enough to go round... Brothers turning on brothers...

(beat)

We buried the dead bodies... Your father and us... Breaking wood from the roofs of houses to make coffins to bury our mothers... To bury our wives. Hell, that was the worst of them droughts.

Boone re-opens his eyes and they are moist from tears. Clarissa takes his hand. Alonzo looks at Boone, his own grieving having taken hold of him. In Boone's voice, his father is alive.

BOONE

He said he'd come back.

ALONZO

(visibly moved)

It's a privilege to be in the presence
of someone who knew him Sir.

Boone lets go of Clarissa's hand, uncomfortable to show emotion to their guest.

BOONE

He said he'd go find where the rain
had gone. The mountains... A quiet
soul he was.

ALONZO

Wide open spaces don't breed no
chatterboxes. That's what he used to
say.

BOONE

Did he make it, to the forests?

ALONZO

Yes he did. Married a fine American
woman, had only one son, me. Kept a
... mostly quiet life in the woods.

BOONE

He is alright then. Alright...

Alonzo looks into the distance, hesitating to speak for a moment.

ALONZO

I'd have brought him here, I was...
Men came, landowners. Empowered by
Porfirio Diaz's regime. Took his
land... And his life.

BOONE

(saddening)

That ain't good to hear.

ALONZO

I sorted them. I did.
 (glancing at Clarissa)
 And with that, I wish for no hunting
 no more.

Sensing Alonzo's guilt in his voice, Boone reaches over until he finds Alonzo's arm.

BOONE

You did alright son, you did him
 proud.

Alonzo nods, closing his eyes. When he opens them he finds Clarissa's piercing stare. Boone raises his glass of water, his milky dark eyes somewhere far away.

BOONE

See you in hell ol' fella'.

- and drinks. He bangs the glass down on the table.

ALONZO

He never spoke of this place, not
 until we were left homeless and...

BOONE

Did he ever mention the burial of a
 priest. A priest with a passion for
 gold.

ALONZO

No Sir. Only name he mentioned was
 before his last breath. That of Miguel
 De' Sandoval.

Boone's shoulders tense up on hearing that name. He raises his right hand midair, his eyes widening. Next to him, Clarissa's eyes tighten.

BOONE

The ghosts speak tonight. I can feel
 the pain of change. Of hope.

Clarissa picks up Boone's spoon from his plate and places it in his hand.

CLARISSA

Eat father, or you'll soon be a ghost
 yourself.

(to Alonzo)

Do you know where Don Miguel rests?

ALONZO

I do not Miss.

CLARISSA

Then it's for the better good.

ALONZO

I figure this is in relation to those settlers?

Clarissa looks at Boone. Boone nods a sign of approval.

CLARISSA

Don Miguel. The priest. He beguiled the villagers to his faith, convinced them that the statue in the church would turn to gold if they followed him in prayer. One day the town woke up to find exactly that.

ALONZO

Heard similar tales... Mainly from men with a crazy yellow gleam in their eye.

CLARISSA

Fools gold, maybe, but it don't much deter the likes of those that come lookin'.

Clarissa studies Alonzo's reaction to her words and Alonzo sees this.

ALONZO

I assure you, an empty home with a hole in it's roof is as much as I lay claim to stake.

Clarissa considers this, finding his lack of further questioning reassuring.

BOONE

I too came to here once to find my home. And I never once thought of goin' back my old place in Sacramento.

(pause)

That trunk in the stable, is it still there?

CLARISSA
Why it's rotten thru, pa!

BOONE
(to Alonzo)
I gathered some of Murrieta's things.
To keep safe.
(leaning into Alonzo)
Don't get me wrong, I was gonna give
it all back to him.

CLARISSA
We'll find it.

Clarissa takes a lamp and walks through a door. As Alonzo walks past Boone, Boone stops him with his cane, raising it against Alonzo's chest and listening for his heart. Alonzo obliges.

BOONE
Do you see a future son?

ALONZO
I lost my future when I bloodied my
hands with my father's murderers. All
I hoped to find here was peace... I
guess there is no such a place.

Alonzo leaves and we stay with Boone. The fire is dying down and the room becomes heavily impregnated with darkness. Like a dungeon.

22 INT. STABLE - NIGHT

22

The bulky lid of a wooden trunk cascades open with a resisting croak.

Alonzo's hand swipes the dust from the air as Clarissa watches, holding the lantern.

Inside, there is not much to see: a rusty oil lamp. Rolled canvases and sketch books wrapped in oilskin for protection against moths. Paint brushes. A pair of binoculars. Some items of clothes.

Alonzo eyes meet with Clarissa's. His struggle to hide his emotions shows in his face - His fathers' death and Clarissa's existence colliding like stormy clouds in his soul.

ALONZO
I'm grateful to you.

23 INT. CLARISSA AND BOONE'S HOME, MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

23

Through the view from a window, Clarissa watches the lonely figure of Alonzo walking away from the house into darkness.

Boone sits in his rocking chair. A dense silence floods the room, both of them digesting the soul stirring dinner they just had with the stranger.

CLARISSA
Tell me father. Do you still believe
he is honest?

BOONE
His heart beats strong. But for love,
or gold, I neither know.

Boone closes his eyes while resting his head back. He starts rocking his chair with his feet, back and forth, back and forth. Clarissa, pensive, puts a blanket over him, kissing him affectionately on the cheek.

She watches Boone rocking back and forth. Her eyes tracing down to the curved wooden chair rails that press trails in the dust on the floor.

The sound morphs; like wagon wheels. Suddenly, a spark in her eyes: Hope.

Decisive, she marches towards the door.

Boone opens his eyes, and gives the ceiling something that resembles a smile.

24 EXT. TOWN TRACKS, MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

24

Wrapped in a cloud of dust, and with her hair trailing, Clarissa rides fast on her horse until she catches up with Alonzo who is reaching his house.

CLARISSA
Follow me.

A pleasantly startled Alonzo mounts his horse, following Clarissa. Soon the derelict buildings of Dry River, lit by a soft silver glow are left far behind.

25 EXT. OPEN LAND, CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

25

We PAN the two figures on horses riding free from the town and out among scrub desert and wild landscape.

26 EXT. HERMITAGE, CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

26

A white painted, well preserved hermitage building stands alone in the vastness of the moon-lit desert. Clarissa and Alonzo come to a stop, their horses whine, restless.

Understanding this to be a location with a hidden, obscure past, Alonzo crosses himself in respect, before removing his hat.

Clarissa nods to him to join her as she stands looking out over the vast desert plains.

CLARISSA

See those tracks? The supply wagons
use this route. They used to stop here
but gave up on us a few years ago now.

Alonzo's face lights up, and he gives the road a good long hopeful glance. He then looks at Clarissa, understanding why she has brought him there; a glimmer of hope and ambition.

CLARISSA

It's like waiting for the rain.

ALONZO

Then they are sure to return.

Clarissa looks hard at Alonzo. A clear request in her eyes.

CLARISSA

They will come, but not while word is
out that robbers are among us.

Alonzo observes the tracks, distracted, his mind already considering the options.

ALONZO

How far are the nearest towns?

CLARISSA

About five full days ride that way to
Nogales, and seven the other way, to
El Paso... I used to travel to El Paso
often before Boone lost his sight.

ALONZO

Mi nona (*grandmother*), she also went blind. From a flash of gun-powder from a faulty round.

CLARISSA

My father, he likes to say he lost his from staring incessantly straight at the bright blinding beauty of my mother.

With a slow deep breath Clarissa looks at Alonzo, their faces glowing softly under the moonlight. She is surely as beautiful as her mother before her.

CLARISSA

What will a hunter prey in a starved country like this?

Suddenly, the high pitched howl of coyotes sounds not too far off. It scares the horses who become agitated.

ALONZO

We are the ones being hunted tonight.
We must go back.

27 EXT. TOWN STREETS, CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

27

As they both reach a ruined street they slow their pace, riding side by side.

They pause at a crossroads, the simmering light of a far away bonfire glowing in the background. Mexicans are heard singing to the warm sound of a guitar.

Clarissa looks at Alonzo longingly, then takes her road home with a fast pace.

Alonzo watches her as she goes. Then he looks up to the vast ruined church that dominates the old Mexican town and is reminded of the story of the sacred gold statue.

28 INT. CHURCH, CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

28

The sound of night birds flapping and echoing disappear somewhere into the distant ceiling vaults.

Wrapped in an eery silence Alonzo walks down towards the altar. He passes benches thick with dust, except one, which is shiny, polished by regular use.

A dry bouquet of flowers hangs from a cross. Alonzo holds it with one hand, raising it to his nose to try to imagine its forgotten scent.

His eyes open to find a distinctive religious icon embossed over an empty alcove on a wall, where a statue could have once stood. Curious, he moves to take a closer look.

Alonzo stands in front of the empty alcove, thick with dust. He runs his hand through the dust and it covers his palm.

He sharply claps his hands together, and a peculiar brightness captures his attention - A faint sparkle of gold in the air that dissipates and vanishes.

A creak of a bench alerts him and he turns to see a ELDERLY WOMAN, dressed in black, making her way to the one bench that is cleared of dust.

ALONZO

Good evening Ma'am.

The woman, ETTA, (80's), acknowledges him with the slightest grin on the side of her mouth. She is the fanatically religious mother of the outlaws, Reid, Verne and Cooper. Ambitious, hostile, and highly bold, she revels in grandiosity and entitlement. Together with her sons, she keeps Dry River under siege.

As she kneels to pray, holding a rosary bead necklace in her hands, we notice her rough red knees.

Uncomfortable, Alonzo leaves. As he passes by, Etta's face disappears beneath a blackened veil.

29 INT. ETTA'S HOUSE, LATER - NIGHT

29

A semi opulent living room, compared to the others we've seen. The room is populated by shadows, like a chiaroscuro painting.

Verne leans on the back of a chair by the door, cold as the moonlight shinning down on his face.

A dead rabbit lies on a blood stained table in the middle of the room, it's scrawny body laced with a half dozen bullet holes.

REID

It's no damn joke you ungrateful bastard.

COOPER

This ain't no time to go round wasting bullets.

(grabbing the rabbit)

Better lead than meat!

REID

Yeah, I have enough bullets to make a colander outta' your ugly face.

VERNE

You idiots. Wasting bullets and wasting time, we can't afford to do neither.

Etta, stark and colourless, suddenly is present in the room. She looks at the bloody handed Cooper and Reid.

ETTA

(stern)

Clean yourselves up. Damn' disgrace.

Verne smirks as he slides from the back of the chair and removes Etta's shawl from around her shoulders.

VERNE

(mocking)

Reid went hunting.

ETTA

Stupid asses. Get it on a plate... And wipe that blood off the table!

Reid grabs a cloth and begins to scrub the table.

Verne returns back to the door, rifle lazily hanging from his moonlit hands.

COOPER

Good Verne. Always sat on ya' scrawny arse.

VERNE

Thinks himself some kind of a Sheriff that one. I trust him as much as I trust you Cooper.

ETTA

Shut up, the three of ya!

Reid laughs to himself, still scrubbing the blood stain.

ETTA

At least he has the decency to visit
the church.

COOPER

He knows somethin'. That's why.

ETTA

If he does then the Lord God brought
him to us.

VERNE

Me I don't believe in nothin'
(holding up his gun)
Only this.

REID

Mother's becomes so damn' religious
she's trainin' the town rats to stand
up and pray.

Cooper and Reid laugh. Etta swipes at them with a shoe as all
hell breaks lose.

ETTA

Tomorrow you'll get an early start.
Dig out the last section the way we
planned. We are close now. You'll
see.... Once the news spread, these
borders will bring people from far and
beyond. Women will come, they will
claim their homes and make communities
here, under new laws. Hear me when I
say they will come, all the war
widows. And they will turn this dirty
wastelands into fertile child rearing
plains.

VERNE

I'll take my share and head on Kansas.

Reid, silent, seems to be wanting for the same thing.

30 EXT. ALONZO'S HOUSE - DAY

30

Alonzo is on the roof again, mending the hole which is now
almost fixed. He looks down to see Clarissa arriving carrying
the items from the trunk.

31 INT. ALONZO'S HOUSE, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

31

Bare chested and dirty, Alonzo joins Clarissa. She is caring for the room - But avoiding his eyes.

CLARISSA

This place has much improved.

Alonzo steps in front of her, gently urging her to acknowledge him. He sees now, the upset in her eyes.

ALONZO

I had in mind to come and find you,
soon as I ...

CLARISSA

(anxious)

It's not safe for me to stay.

Alonzo closes the window shutters, leaving the room partly dark.

CLARISSA

Couple of days ago they did it again.
A man got knocked galley-west for
taking two buckets of water.

ALONZO

I have heard this. From the boy
Juan... A boy of that age should not
have to witness such savagery.

Clarissa sits on a chair and begins to turn through the pages of one of Pedro Murrieta's old drawing books. On the pages we see vibrant colour drawings of Dry River, before it was ruined.

Alonzo's eyes fall on Clarissa. She seems vulnerable and alone. More alone than himself.

CLARISSA

(lost in the drawing book)

It was beautiful here once.

She looks up at Alonzo, a smile in her eyes. Clarissa hands him the book and stands up. Walking towards the door, she stops and looks up at the ceiling.

CLARISSA

You really do think the rains will
come.

32 EXT. TOWN GRAVEYARD - DAY

32

Clouds of fine dust sweep back and forth over a few unmarked graves. Human bones and old belongings scatter the ground, unearthed through a systematic desecration of the sprawling graveyard.

The Brothers are digging.

REID
(singing)
Montana is too cold for me, and
winters are too long. Before the
round-ups do begin, our money is all
gone...

A bothered Cooper breaks off as Verne and Reid carry on. Cooper lights a cigar. We stay on his face as he grimly surveys the desolated cemetery.

REID
Take this old hen-skin bedding, too
thin to keep me warm, I nearly freeze
to death, my boys. Whenever there's a
storm...

After a moment of lugubrious harmony -

The sound of a shovel hitting something solid causes Cooper and Verne to turn their heads and look back. Reid has unearthed something. He seems excited.

REID
(holding up a human skull)
Howdy stranger.

Verne shares something that resembles a smile with Reid.

COOPER
Make way.

Taking over from Reid with steely professionalism, Cooper digs around a now headless skeleton, tossing the bones to one side with mounting frustration.

Verne and Reid, look down on him, enjoying his irritation.

COOPER
(angry)
It's all damn comin' a cropper!

He throws the spade down.

REID

Our Priest. Looks like he was as crooked as a dog's hind legs.

COOPER

Try tellin' sweet mother that.

VERNE

We got one spot left to try boys.
That's it.

As the three brothers pause, they hear the sound of a horse and look up to see Alonzo, passing the graveyard, his head held high as he looks back at them.

COOPER

Who in the hell does he think he is?

REID

He ain't been doin' much but mending his roof. Ol' Reid, he's been watchin'.

Cooper nails his shovel hard down.

COOPER

Damn' this.

Verne's eyes are following Alonzo. His image etched into deep into his eyes, black like the hole where his soul should be.

33 EXT. OPEN LAND, LATER - DAY

33

On a high mound overlooking the town of Dry River, Alonzo is kneeling down, his back to us. Near him, we see his leather bag, water container and rifle.

Watching through his father's binoculars, he is comparing the coloured drawings in the sketchbook to what he sees through the lenses.

Past and present. At the flick of a page.

Alonzo repositions the binoculars, he can see now the ghostly figures of Cooper, Reid, and Verne, appearing like a mirage as they dig in the graveyard.

He rolls over and looks at the book, flipping the pages until he finds the one he is looking for. It's a picture of a

cemetery - But not the one where the brothers are.

34 EXT. ORCHARD - DUSK

34

With a wide, eccentric gait, Alonzo paces across the dry orchard. Measuring it up.

We see that it is Juan watching this as he sits on a wall chewing on a wild liquorice root. Juan is amused.

JUAN

Señor, you look strange.

Alonzo, deep in concentration makes a mark in his book. Then he turns to Juan and pulls a silly posture. Juan loves it.

ALONZO

You go on now. It will soon be dark.

Juan slides off the wall and disappears between ruined walls and buildings. We dwell on Alonzo, perplexed by his findings within the orchard.

35 DRY RIVER TOWN - NIGHT

35

Pale blue under moonlight, the ghostly ruins stand silent. Nothing stirs but the glimmer of stars.

Somewhere distant, a baby cries.

36 EXT. TOWN GRAVEYARD - DAY

36

Cooper and Reid, without Verne, are digging. They say nothing for a long while. Too tired to move their dust caked dry mouths.

Finally.

REID

See yourself livin' here?

COOPER

Don't wan't no small talk. Just dig.
Find the damn statue.

REID

Way I see it, there is nowhere else...
Hell we don't even damn' know for sure
what side of the border we're on...
May as well be diggin' our own graves.
But a man needs a worthwhile ambition

to call himself a man.

REID (CONT)
 (slinging dirt)
 Man needs a woman too. Real pretty
 like...
 (teasing)
 Pretty like Clarissa Hawkins.

Cooper suddenly slings a shovel load of dirt in Reid's face.
 Reid is left spluttering.

COOPER
 Don't even dare dream of her you
 filthy rat.

Reid's eyes smile underneath the dirt.

37 EXT. OPEN LAND, CONTINUOUS - DAY

37

Alonzo lowers his binoculars. He has been watching the
 brothers, digging as just seen.

His concentration is interrupted as he notices the SHADOW OF
 A MAN darkening the ground beside him. Still but tense, he
 cautiously moves his hand towards his gun. He sees the shadow
 remove its hat and he relaxes his hand.

VOICE (O.S)
 Good day brother.

Alonzo turns and eyes a MEXICAN MAN. (50's). He is disheveled
 and clearly undernourished, yet he carries a mischievous
 smile that keeps all of Alonzo's senses alert. He carries a
 cloth sack loaded for travel.

MEXICAN MAN
 May I ask for some water?
 (offering a small wooden carving)
 I trade with you. It will bring you
 good fortune Señor. Here take... It's
 all I have.

ALONZO
 With respect old man. Doesn't look
 like it brought you much luck.

The Mexican recognises Alonzo's accent and points at himself
 then at Alonzo in an animated way.

Dialogue in this scene partly Spanish:

MEXICAN MAN

You and I are brothers. Sorry to be nosy, I saw you riding up here and I followed you.

ALONZO

(suspicious)

You are leaving... On foot?

MEXICAN MAN

Yes brother. I surrender to my fate. There is nothing here left for me to hold on to. I die if I stay, I may die if I go. I prefer to die while walking. Yes, walking. I rather feed the vultures than dying down there from bullets.

They both look down at the brothers digging, distorted by the intense heat - We HOLD on this -

MEXICAN MAN (O.S)

Greed.. Fools... Digging for nothing.

ALONZO (O.S)

Maybe. Maybe not. Perhaps they dig in the wrong place.

MEXICAN MAN

You can't eat gold, or soil. So it makes no difference.

ALONZO

The human soul doesn't just thrive on food and water.

MEXICAN MAN

Ah, you come here with good intentions, this I have heard.

(hand to his heart)

But beware, to bring honour to this town.. That Señor may cost you your life.

Alonzo, feeling sorry for the impoverished Mexican, hands him his water canister which he eagerly drinks from.

MEXICAN MAN

(cringing at the taste)

When did you draw this water?

ALONZO

Sun up.

MEXICAN MAN

I have tasted this before.

(spitting it out)

And it was not a good sign señor.

Too thirsty to care, the Mexican goes to take another drink, but as the canister touches his lips, a sudden close gunshot blows the container out from his hand.

We now see Verne, galloping towards them on his horse, wielding a gun. Alonzo goes for his rifle. But Verne has the upper hand.

VERNE

Hold up Sheriff, or I'll put a bullet
between those pretty eyes.

Alonzo's hand hovers over his rifle, then reluctantly retreats. The Mexican, panicking, begins to back away.

VERNE

You, farmer? Where da' ya' think ya
goin'?

MEXICAN MAN

Sir, he is not to trust sir.

(pointing to Alonzo)

Me I was just on my way out. I have
nothing. Nada de nada.

VERNE

(matter of fact)

That so?

(to Alonzo)

I'll take the rifle. Nice and slow
now.

Alonzo hesitates for a moment. He looks at the book. His options aren't many but now he has a hell of a reason to live. He obeys, handing the rifle slowly to Verne.

VERNE

(bowing perversely)

Time we all got properly acquainted.

38 INT. OLD PRAYER BUILDING, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

38

A fly circles over the low buzzing of Etta's muffled voice.

Kneeling in front of a bench, head down, she is buried in deep concentration praying the Rosary.

ETTA

Hail Mary, full of grace, the lord is
with thee; blessed art thou among
women, and blessed is the fruit of thy
womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God,
pray for us sinners, now and at the
hour of death. Amen. Hail Mary, full
of grace...

Voices can be now heard from the outside, quickly turning into a full-mouthed, desperate pleading discourse.

Immensely bothered, Etta turns around to see the heavy church doors swinging open as -

The Mexican lands on his knees in a swirl of dry dust.

Behind him, the stoical figure of Alonzo is followed in by Verne, whose's right hand is still on his gun. In his left hand he holds Alonzo's father's sketchbook.

Something that resembles a smile appears on the side of Etta's mouth after seeing Alonzo.

The Mexican coughs, struggling on the floor on his hands and knees. Verne, silent, leans against a wall with his arms crossed over his chest - His frozen stare fixed on Alonzo.

Alonzo stands next to the baptismal pile. Vigilant of Verne. It almost feels like Verne is casting a spotlight on him with his piercing gaze, which Alonzo has to perform to. Soon enough, all the eye-stare spotlights will fall mercilessly on him.

Etta looks at the Mexican man struggling on the floor and approaches him calmly.

ETTA

Stand up.

The Mexican hastily obeys. Etta steps closer and begins to swipe the man's clothes free from dust; but she can't help an expression of disgust at his smell.

ETTA (CONT)

You're safe here. We all are.

Happy to find himself alive, the Mexican pleads quietly and

directly to Etta, as Alonzo and Verne continue their stare out.

MEXICAN MAN

I ain't earned it to be here. Señora.
I got married here. I was baptised
here too.

(beat)

Soy Manuel, para servile. My name is
Manuel, to your service.

(to Verne)

Sir, I am nothing to do with this
man... I am just a poor farmer. A
farmer with nothing to farm no more.
Have some compassion!

COOPER

(arriving)

And ya'll be soon farmin' maggots if
you don't stop your mouthin'.

Cooper and Reid have arrived, but stay by the door, blocking the exit. This fact doesn't scape Alonzo's attention. Reid throws down Alonzo's saddle and then his pistol.

REID

We got everythin' he owns right here.
This sucker ain't worth a can of
corned beef no more ma.

Etta gives Cooper and Reid a nod of approval. Then she walks to face Alonzo. Hers is an unsettling presence. She is 'nice'; yet there is a gut feeling of ploy and non transparency about her.

ETTA

So you are Alonzo Murrieta? Son of
Pedro Murrieta, a man who buried the
dead.

ALONZO

You've been well informed.

Etta studies his face for a moment.

ETTA

It is a pleasure to meet you. You
couldn't have come at a more perfect
time. We have so much to talk about...
You and I. Cooper, give this man a
cigar.

Cooper steps up and shoves a cigar in Alonzo's mouth. In the meantime Etta takes a candle and lights the cigar. As she stands in the encircling smoke, Verne hands her Alonzo's father's sketchbook.

ETTA

(turning pages)

Fine drawings... A worthy document.

(raising her eyes to him)

Pedro Murrieta was a man of many talents. Must have been a good father.

ALONZO

Brought me up well enough to know a family of jackals should I run into them.

Alonzo stubs his cigar out in the altar water. Etta pauses to watch as the ripples swell out to the edge of the basin. She closes the notebook calmly and brings her hands together to hold it.

She is clearly enjoying the provocation. She hands the book back to Verne and begins to slowly walk back down the church isle towards the altar.

ETTA

It must be tiresome being so alone. I don't blame your bitterness.

(lighting candles)

Us humans are not born to be alone, wouldn't you agree?. Family is the most important institution for humans. And families need rules. Without them, life descends into a spiral of sin. Sin and madness.

Reaching the altar, she stands in front of it. She is an imposing figure against it, a hell of a vicar.

ETTA

You, I wonder, so handsome, so young. Why come to a decayed and thirsty town that belongs to the dead?

Etta looks at Alonzo. All eyes are on him now.

ETTA

Almost like... Like a deer wondering straight into a hunter's den.

ALONZO

Seems to me that you are very
protective of this 'decayed' town,
despite not having any ancestry in it.
Why you'd come here?

ETTA

You ain't the one authorized to ask
the questions.

Alonzo gives a few steps towards the center of the church.
Etta is faced away, facing 'God'.

ALONZO

Madam, I am here to honour my father.
And the town that he, and his father,
and his father's father before him
helped to build.

COOPER

He's lyin'.

Etta turns around and is caught off guard by Alonzo's
appearance. A ray of sunshine illuminates his hair behind
him, giving him an ethereal quality, like an angel.

ETTA

(enchanted smile)
Destiny has strange ways.

She begins to slowly walk back towards him.

ETTA (CONT)

I'll be honest with you. I have lived
much, been shoved around, stolen from,
pushed to wield a gun. When I heard
about this place a vision came to me
of a town where history could be
rewritten. I just knew then. I. I was
the one. No one else cared.

(reaching Alonzo)

So it is me, here and now, trusted by
God with the task of rebuilding this
town, and transcend this town, I will.

ALONZO

Quite some work to be done against the
odds.

ETTA

There are no odds that won't shrink at

gun point son.

(staring at him)

I very much believe we share a common
ambition, don't we?

ALONZO

Except my ambition for this place
doesn't allow room for thieves and
murderers.

They stare at each other's eyes. Etta tightens her fist,
displeased.

ETTA

I think it's time you told us your
interest in our business.

Alonzo doesn't answer.

MEXICAN MAN

I ain't got no business with him! I
was just asking for charity. He was
watching' you he was. I saw him. He's
got it all mapped out in that.. thing.

VERNE

(looking through the book)

Sure looks that way. But don't mean
shit to me none.

Cooper and Reid walk towards Alonzo, closing in on him.

COOPER

What's it all about stranger? You're
gonna' tell us now, ain't ya boy?

ALONZO

I ain't got nothing to tell you.

Cooper punches him hard in the stomach. Alonzo cripples
forward in pain.

COOPER

If somethin' gets my balls on fire
it's a man playin' it cool.

VERNE

I say we give him five seconds to
explain what's in these fancy
pictures.

REID
 (cocking a gun)
 Blow his bloody brains out that's
 what.

ETTA
 Unload that pistol in here my boy and
 you'll have me to answer too.

REID
 Damn' holy spirit just ain't no party
 mama.

Reid reluctantly un-cocks the gun. Alonzo is still bending
 down.

ETTA
 So what'll it be?

Alonzo lowers himself down a bit more, and, gathering
 momentum, he stands up in a flash, punching Cooper in the
 mouth. Cooper flies back through the church doors.

39 EXT. OLD PRAYER BUILDING, CONTINUOUS - DAY

39

Cooper crash lands in the dirt. Dazed, bloody, but happy to
 engage, he stands as Alonzo steps out from the church door
 and hangs up his jacket, raising his fists.

Reid and the Mexican man follow Alonzo outside, watching as
 Alonzo and Cooper trade heavy blows.

Etta stands in the frame of the doorway, half in shadow.

Reid, hoping with excitement, follows the action, whilst
 Verne hangs back, taking to a chair that he swings around
 back to front.

As the punches continue, Etta's face becomes more and more
 twisted with disappointment. Finally she nods to Verne and
 Reid who step in and drag the two men apart.

Cooper held by Verne, and Alonzo by Reid, look at each other
 with contempt - A field of hatred born between them.

ETTA
 Enough of this vulgarity.

She takes the pistol from Reid and checks it for bullets.

ETTA

(holding gun to Alonzo)

I was starting to like you, son of a grave digger. But now I can see how dirty your blood is underneath that pale skin.

(cocking the pistol)

I ain't got no more than five seconds of time left for ya'. Explain what's in that book you've got. Now.

ALONZO

They're my father's drawings, of old Dry River's town. Shows how the town was before the drought.

COOPER

(grabbing him)

Son of a...

VERNE

Let him speak Cooper.

Cooper rids himself from Verne.

Alonzo collects himself, wiping blood from his mouth as he stands pressed up against the well. Etta steps back, still aiming the gun.

ETTA

(to Reid)

Give him water. But not too much. People round here've been treating the place like some kinda' candy store.

MEXICAN MAN

Sir, the water table is low. I tasted the silt. This is not good.

VERNE

Shut ya mouth. My Mother is talkin'.

Alonzo, held back against the well, takes some water.

COOPER

(to Alonzo)

Talk!

ALONZO

The few that didn't die of thirst and left, buried what they had so they

could come back for it later...

ETTA

Don't care for none other than Miguel De Sandoval and what is buried with him.

ALONZO

There is no record of no Priest... And no statue!

REID

Hell, he's lyin' like a rug Cooper.

MEXICAN MAN

He is! He told me. He told me you were diggin' in the wrong place. I swear it.

ETTA

(to Alonzo)

This true?

COOPER

(yanking Alonzo's head back)

You'll tell us now boy, coz I'm just about done diggin' you hear?

ALONZO

(in pain)

The cemetery... It isn't the only place they got buried.

Etta presses the gun tightly against Alonzo's heart.

ETTA

Spit it out boy.

ALONZO

The Orchard. They used the Orchard.

With this, Cooper relinquishes his grip and Alonzo gasps air. Etta, a smile of success on her face, lowers the gun.

ETTA

Say, for the common interests of all - we need strong men. For the town. For those that will come... You work with me and in return, God willing, when all is said and done, peace will prevail. You can then live a decent,

earned life. This is what you desire.
Is it not?

ALONZO
Peaceful will be the day that sees you
riding out of here.

ETTA
Well ain't he charming?
(beat)
Anything else you wanna' get offa' ya'
chest?

Alonzo says nothing.

ETTA
Good.
(to her sons)
Now show our new partner some
homegrown respect.

REID
Ha, ha, first neighbours, now
partners.

ETTA
Not too rough on him boys.
(with emphasis on Cooper)
Give him some breathin' space, you got
that?
(to Cooper)
Agreed?

COOPER
Yeah damn' it.

ETTA
(to Verne)
Son?

VERNE
Sure mama.
(to Alonzo)
I'll look after ya.

ETTA
(to all)
Show him home. We start at dawn in the
Orchard.

Cooper, Reid, and Verne, all stand back allowing Alonzo to

straighten up. Alonzo walks forward, as they all follow closely behind.

ETTA
(to Verne)
Not you.

Verne stops beside his mother as the others make tracks. Etta puts her arm around Verne's shoulders and watches them go.

ETTA
(calling out to Alonzo)
Just one thing Murrieta. We kill deserters.

As Alonzo, Cooper and Reid walk on, the Mexican man turns and looks at Etta wide eyed.

CUT TO:

40 INT. OLD PRAYER BUILDING, SECONDS LATER - DAY

40

Verne drags the Mexican into the shadowy church as Etta coolly closes the door. The Mexican is struggling but he is no match for Verne's strength.

VERNE
(to the Mexican)
Vaya con Dios. (*Go with God*)

As Etta returns to her Rosary prayers, her back turned, Verne dunks the Mexican in the baptismal pile.

He hold him there drowning him, softly singing a lullaby as if to soothe the man's agony.

41 EXT. ORCHARD - DAWN

41

The sharp sound of a shovel striking the soil breaks off a steady background of raunchy laughter.

The target of the laughter is Alonzo - Digging on his own in the middle of the Orchard; his hair covered in soil. His once white shirt now dirty brown.

Cooper, Verne and Reid are positioned around him in a triangle, slacking off work. Cooper and Reid are watching Alonzo, enjoying the power they have gained over the stranger.

Verne is not quite engaging - He is playing Russian roulette

with a spider in a web that had made its home in-between dry weeds. Every time, he fires a blank shot - Then tries again.

Alonzo's face is wet with sweat; drops falling from the tip of his nose onto his hands, making the grip of his shovel sloppy and lose.

Spade after spade full of dry soil gets piled loosely on the side while Cooper and Reid laugh. Cooper throws a rock into the soil heap, sending some soil back into the grave that Alonzo is digging.

Alonzo tries to keep the situation above his skin. Inside, he knows he needs to keep his energy. He dries his hands on his trousers and sends a quick glance to Verne, cautious of his little game.

Reid, reclining over a rock, picks a small branch from a dry weed and puts it in his mouth. He leans back on one arm while he scours his teeth with the other.

REID

Ahh... Ain't it a fine thing to own a diggin' toff for yourself.

He picks up a white, discolored snail that has retreated far inside itself, aestivating. He throws it away and putting both hands behind his head, lies back; head facing the sky.

REID

Wake me up when you get my share
weighed up... Phew... Damn' heat.
(groggy)
Year from dry hell they will call this
roaster. Year from dry bloodied damn'
hell. Yes Sir, I'd eat me own boots
for a taste of rain.

A sudden hard kick sends Reid thumping to the ground below him. Verne is the culprit.

VERNE

Shut ya cock holster and dig.

As Reid clambers up, the sound of turning wheels calls for attention. Alonzo stops; catching his breath as he turns around.

The four men look as a cart passes by, pushed along by TWO MEXICAN VILLAGERS. On the back, lying flat out is the DEAD MEXICAN that was drowned by Verne. His eyes are bulged out -

A terrifying death mask that seems to penetrate a warning to Alonzo.

Alonzo looks at Verne grimly. Verne returns the stare; his eyes alight with a crazy savage joy.

Cooper grabs his shovel and heads down to a marked patch of soil. He stops by it, and looks towards the bone-dry orchard, then to Alonzo.

COOPER

Hey 'hermano' Good choice here for burial spots, don't you think? Which one takes your fancy?

ALONZO

You're never gonna' live to see me buried Cooper.

COOPER

Don't think that knowin' where the priest lies gives you any right to live my friend. You only get extra time.

Cooper walks towards Alonzo. From above he looks down at him, in a high-handed way but pretending pity.

COOPER

If it were me in there I'd put a bullet in my brain. So might as well tell me now and forget all the diggin'. Where is it?

Alonzo looks at Cooper, his face taugth with dehydration. He squints lightly and fixes his eyes on Cooper's forehead, as if looking to shoot a prey.

ALONZO

Six feet under your rotten shadow.

Cooper's eyes smile, his face serious. He enjoys Alonzo's troubled expression. He draws his gun and throws it to Alonzo provocatively. A very serious eye-stare between them follow.

Alonzo takes the gun; weighing up his chances if he were to use it. Realising that Reid and Verne are watching, he throws it back to Cooper, who smiles triumphantly.

Alonzo wipes his face from sweat as the sound of the brothers shovels start-off shrilling.

He scans the withered stomping ground in front of him. Not finding solace for his ragged nerves, he searches for peace into the inconsequential desert beyond.

And there, through the corner of his eye, he sees Clarissa, passing between two collapsed houses.

He looks back to the brothers - they haven't noticed her and are now some distance away. Alonzo, thirsty and tired, watches as Cooper snatches the water canister away from Reid and drinks it dry with Verne.

Reid looks more scared than angry.

REID

Won't be so clever when we're all
shrivelled up like snake skin.

COOPER

Whatta' you talkin about?

REID

You heard what that farmer said.

COOPER

Heard him clear enough. He was a
scared man. Just like you Reid.

Alonzo looks back to where he saw Clarissa passing. He feels relieved - The brothers are not watching.

42 EXT. TOWN STREETS, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

42

Alonzo hurries through Dry River's ruins, his hair weaving in the hot whispering breeze.

His eyes and feet follow Clarissa, who disappears around a corner carrying a heavy water bucket.

We cut to Clarissa, who frightened, feeling the presence of someone following her, rushes into the doorway of a derelict building.

There she stands tight against the wall, embracing the bucket with both her hands as if to stop the rapid beating of her heart from giving her away.

Alonzo steps in.

They look at each other paralyzed in sheer relief; they are prisoners in their own home.

Clarissa looks at Alonzo's face, dry with cracked lips. Overcome by a feeling of guilt, she can't help tears from welling in her eyes.

CLARISSA

You should have never come to this place.

ALONZO

This is where I have met you Clarissa. That is all that matters.

Alonzo is desperate to hold her. Whenever she is around darkness and fear dissipate like fog under the midday sun.

Clarissa pulls him closer and they crouch down near the water bucket. She scoops some water with her hands and raises them to his mouth.

Alonzo once again drinks for the sake of his life.

He firmly takes her hands and presses them to his face. His silent pain melts as he feels the cooling warmth of her palms.

43 INT. CLARISSA AND BOONE'S HOME, LATER - NIGHT

43

A single low burning lamp lights the scene from one side.

Alonzo, sitting on the edge of a chair, holds his hat in his lap. He watches Clarissa as she stands beside the closed window shutters; her back turned to the flickering light.

She turns - fear and guilt etched in her face.

CLARISSA

I wish you turned around when you had the mind to. Far away from this hell - Where no one can breathe.

ALONZO

Those men talk like they have no calling to stay here. They will move on. But not until they either do, or do not find what is inside that grave.

CLARISSA

Etta will never leave.

(beat)

Not even if her sons were to die.

ALONZO

No killing. You, your father and others need to be safe. They will leave.

CLARISSA

It's a cruel life. To give a glimpse of hope, just to rip it away.

ALONZO

Clarissa look at me. I am not dead. Not yet. I intend to survive. You have. Your father. And many more.

CLARISSA

(looking away)
And many have died.

Alonzo looks at Clarissa, understanding her fear.

ALONZO

The darkest hour is always just before dawn.

Clarissa stares into Alonzo's eyes for a seemingly long time. Looking for a sign of truth and hope that she can't find in herself.

CLARISSA

The desert is vast. That is certain. But dreams?...

Alonzo stands and walks towards Clarissa firmly.

ALONZO

My heart is beating and I hope yours is too. I call that love. My heart is feeling also, and no one can stop that now. Not me. Not you. I call that a gift.

CLARISSA

I am scared.

ALONZO

Despite all the oppression, believe me, I would rather die here, with you in my sight, than anywhere else. If you just give me your blessing.

Clarissa grabs Alonzo's hand and places it on her racing heart.

CLARISSA

Promise me that you will fight Alonzo,
fight for your life. For if you go now
that I have found you I will be dead
too.

They look at each other, both holding onto a faintly glowing
light in their souls.

44 EXT. CLARISSA AND BOONE'S HOUSE, WINDOW - NIGHT

44

The cool dark of night is slashed by light spilling out from
Clarissa's closed window shutters.

Cooper's profile comes into view. Under his hat, he hides a
deep bitterness. He smokes a cigar, watching how Alonzo grabs
Clarissa's hand to kiss it and how she won't let go of it.

A long embrace follows. An excruciating display of tenderness
that makes Cooper's blood curdle further into despair.

With his face distorted by anger he steps silently back into
the shadows as he watches Alonzo leaving.

Then he stubs out his cigar and moves sharply off.

45 EXT. TOWN TRACKS, MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

45

We follow Cooper in the darkness as he follows Alonzo.

He pulls out a gun. His pace accelerating ready to kill

- But a HEAVY FIGURE grabs him and swings him away, hard up
against the crumbling facade of a house. It's Verne.

VERNE

(restraining Cooper)

Hold your horns Cooper.

Cooper struggles, his throat compressed as Verne grips his
knife wielding arm. A show of strength entails. The knife
pressured to move from one brother to the other. A
competition since birth.

Finally they separate. No winner. No loser.

COOPER

(livid)

Whatta we need him for damn it?

VERNE

We need him! And I've gone invested way too much sweat to have you take it all from me for the infatuation of a woman. Yeah I'm lookin' at you Cooper.

COOPER

What would you know about feelings?

VERNE

Sort yourself out. Or I'll be taking this gun.

COOPER

Over my dead body.

The two brothers linger in a taught face off.

46 INT. ETTA'S HOUSE - DAWN

46

Cooper sits underneath his hat at the table, his head hanging over a cup of steaming coffee that he holds with an excessive grip. The steam is smothering his face. His eyes are shielded.

Guns are spread out on the table. Sitting astride, Verne is cleaning them. He looks at Cooper then grabs Alonzo's rifle to clean next.

Etta enters looking bothered. She scowls at Cooper.

ETTA

(to Verne)

He sick?

Verne bends down until his cheek touches the table's surface, so that he can see Cooper's face. Cooper doesn't react, his eyes bathed in absent madness. Provocatively, Verne, still bent down on the table, pushes off Cooper's hat with the tip of Alonzo's rifle.

VERNE

That bonny girl he set his sights on. She got eyes for the Sheriff.

Etta looks down at Cooper disapprovingly, disgusted even. She picks up Cooper's hat from the floor.

ETTA

Stay focused ma' boy, coz if ya' go down the heart's route, chances are

the last thing that'll go through ya'
head will be made of lead.

(slapping the hat back on Cooper's
head)

My lead, if you don't get of ya' lazy
arse.

Cooper re-adjusts his hat, heaving himself up as Verne eyes
him with a certain cruel tease.

COOPER

I don't believe that filthy mountain
mule knows any more than we do.

ETTA

Even if you're right, we can still
make good use of his intuition.

VERNE

(to Etta)

And if he's wrong? You gonna' share
it?

ETTA

If you have food, share it with those
that are hungry.

Verne considers this. Not convinced.

Reid ambles out from a door, his hair a mess, adjusting his
garters. He yawns.

REID

Is there coffee?

VERNE

Sure there is princess.

Verne, playing on the words of his mother's last sentence,
pours out a coffee for Reid. It's barely a thimble full.

REID

You think that's funny do ya'
crowbait.

VERNE

Get some water. We're gettin low.

REID

Hell, I ain't even dressed. Besides, I
ain't gonna be told whatta' do no

more. Ain't that right Mother?

ETTA

Do as ya' brother told ya'. But put
some clothes on or ya'll scare the
darn horses.

Verne raises his eyebrows at Reid.

47 EXT. THE ORCHARD - DAWN

47

A splash of yellow liquid is landing beside Alonzo's face. He
is waking up inside a hole he has been digging since dawn.

He looks up to see Cooper urinating down from above; the
splash getting rapidly closer to his dried out face.

COOPER

Looks like this one's gone caught that
yella' fever.

Alonzo quickly rolls to the side of the hole to get clear.
Looking up, he sees Verne, also standing looking down, guns
in holsters.

VERNE

On ya feet.

Alonzo clambers up and walks away. Cooper watches him,
concealing a raging jealousy.

COOPER

Their ain't even no remains in this
ditch. But I could easily change that.

Verne looks at Cooper, wanting him to ease off. He lights a
cigar and hands it to him. Cooper draws in the smoke.

VERNE

Where next Sheriff?

Alonzo doesn't answer. He is thinking; standing in the same
place where Juan had been watching him.

COOPER

Hey, we're talkin' to you mountain
man.

Alonzo, enraged, strides over to Cooper.

ALONZO

Let me tell you about those mountains
Cooper. They are full of animals. Some
big. Some small. But all of them have
sharper brains than yours. That's why
you've been rotting away for months
here, gaining nothing, for no one. You
got me?

Cooper throws down his cigar, and grabs Alonzo by the shirt.

VERNE

(stepping in-between)
Easy brother.

Alonzo walks back to where he came from. Cooper watches him,
his hand resting on his gun holster.

Reid appears, ambling towards.

VERNE

(exasperated to Reid)
These men need water. Where ya been?

REID

I...

Without warning, Cooper suddenly fires six rapid shots in the
earth all around Reid's body. Reid is left frozen in a choke
of dust.

REID

(shocked)
You could have killed me!

Reid, deeply hurt in a way not seen before, turns and heads
away. From this moment on, he will start feeling strangely
separated from his family; a constant grudge stewing in his
belly.

VERNE

(angrily to Cooper)
What the hell is wrong with you?

Alonzo, watching from a short distance, drives his shovel
hard down and begins a fresh dig.

48 EXT. WATER WELL PLAZA, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

48

Reid approaches the water well. He is still shaking from
anger; he feels like an outcast.

At the well he grabs the bucket and lowers it down. As he slowly hauls it back up, he idly looks over his shoulder, seeing Etta perched on a ladder against a dry fig tree some distance away.

He rubs his mouth, anticipating the thirst he is about to quench - But with the bucket back in his hands he stands shocked; the bucket is nearly empty and covered in sludge.

Reid peers down over the wall, seeing way down below his own broken reflection in the vanishing water line.

REID

Hell!

49 EXT. ETTA'S HOUSE, CONTINUOUS - DAY

49

Etta is on top of the ladder beside the tree. Her robust figure standing in high contrast against the squalid branches.

Whatever it is that she is searching for, it is not there. As she descends the ladder she sees Reid rushing towards her, agitated. She sighs and stops to hear what he has to say.

REID

The well! The well is nearly empty.
That thing ain't gonna get us to
winter.

The words travel to Etta's ears like a poisoned arrow, one that hits straight to the target centre of her fear.

Immediately, she fights her own reaction with indifference. She climbs down showing an apparent calmness to Reid - Then hands him the ladder, avoiding eye contact.

ETTA

It ain't good no. But then it's never
been.

REID

What are we gonna do?

ETTA

We carry on son.

Etta walks along towards the house. Reid Follows her with the ladder. She looks up studying the top of the house, walking alongside the wall.

She picks a spot and signs Reid to lean the ladder there. She climbs. Standing on the last step she proceeds to lift roof tiles on the edge.

Etta is determined in her movements; she knows what she is doing. Reid stays below, pacing up and down restless, not appeased.

REID

I have a bad gut feeling about this we're doin'. This ain't right. We should go while the horses are still healthy.

ETTA

You don't want to do that Reid... Think about it. It is the devil talkin' into you. You don't want to abandon what you've been sweating' so hard on, do you? Going back to being no-bodies, with no money, laughed at?

REID

I don't care for anyone's laughter. I don't need nothin' mother, nothin' else than to be alive. And my gut tells me...

(trying to find the right words)

It just ain't right. Messin' with the dead n'all.

ETTA

I ain't liking the way you are talkin' Reid. We, the Ryles, we keep close you hear me? Through good and bad we stick together.

Etta has found something underneath a roof tile. A bird's nest with eggs in it - A wild smile appears on her face.

ETTA

A ha!

Carefully she takes the eggs in her hand. Then she eats one.

ETTA

Catch Reid!

She throws one of the eggs down to a suddenly excited Reid, but without much warning or a real intention for him to catch it.

The egg crashes on the dusty ground in front of him. Muddled but still excited, he scoops it with his hands and eats the dusty egg mess.

ETTA

Go now. Tell your brothers that we must hurry.

As Reid departs, Etta looks across to the well.

50 EXT. WATER WELL PLAZA - NOON

50

Loud metallic bangs.

Etta, in the middle of the well plaza, is banging some sort of bell in her hands. A wicker basket rests next to her on the ground. The standing cross from the church's altar is now by the well. TOWN'S FOLK have gathered around her at a very cautious distance.

Clarissa is among them.

ETTA

(to ALL)

Now is the time to plead to God. For the water in the well is vanishing... We must plead with truth and piety. We must unite our voices together. To invite God to reconsider his resolution and to grant our prayers worthy.

She takes her rosary from the basket, then starts handing stones one by one to the confused villagers.

ETTA

These are blessed stones, taken from the holy church. With our naked feet we will summon God's attention down to the Earth. Do as I do. Pray as I pray. May God hear us and perform the miracle of rain.

It comes to Clarissa's turn to receive a stone from Etta. She has been looking at the whole scene worried and disapproving of Etta's controlling behavior. Etta walks to the well and holds the rosary above it.

ETTA

Dear Lord, we are facing a severe drought and we plead with You to open

the heavens and send rain on this dry
and water-less town. We pray in your
name.

She then drops the rosary into the well and signals to the
villagers to approach. After removing their shoes obediently,
the villagers step up to the well, dropping their stones into
the dark water hole.

Each villager by turn recites the last fragment of Etta's
vocal lead -

ETTA AND TOWNS PEOPLE
Lord, In Your mercy send rain on this
dry and water-less town. We pray in
your name...

REPEAT:

Behind Etta and the villagers we see Clarissa hurriedly
departing.

51 INT. CLARISSA AND BOONE'S HOME - DAY

51

Clarissa hurries into the house; her eyes are frightened.

CLARISSA
The well is nearly empty!

Boone wakes up startled.

BOONE
What is it you say'?

CLARISSA
The well father, it is down to the
silt.

Boone takes a moment's pause, during which we can only hear
Clarissa's rapid breathing.

CLARISSA
(impatient)
Father!

Boone takes Clarissa's hand.

BOONE
Here...
(placing his hand on her ear)
Listen.

Another moment of silence follows.

CLARISSA

I hear nothing. Only my breathing.

BOONE

That is just right. Only your fear...
Do not worry, we will live on. As we
have always done.

CLARISSA

We have no means. Etta is the priest
returned. She holds the town. We must
leave!

BOONE

(agitated)

Those ain't no Hawkins' words.

(firmly)

Look at me Clarissa.

CLARISSA

I am looking. I am right here.

BOONE

I am at the wrong end of life. I
didn't make it all the way to this age
by choosing to follow fear.

(beat)

Every scar, every ache and every white
hair you see I have earned it hard
every day. By not giving up. Every
day.

He softens, remembering Clarissa's childhood.

BOONE

Some of them, belong to you Clarissa.

(firmly again)

Now, you let me take those with me.
Let me take the worry and the fear
with me my child. You just make sure
to be free. Dare to go with your heart
and give me pride. That is all I ask

BOONE (CONT)

from you.

Boone strains to get up from the old chair.

Clarissa quickly moves behind his back and tries to lift him

up. Boone resists, like an old proud bull, holding himself down with the arms of the chair.

BOONE

No!

Clarissa leaves him, frustrated.

Boone stands up by himself very laboriously. He grabs his walking cane and throws it in the fire.

CLARISSA

Father!

Clarissa, distraught, rushes to save the cane, but Boone manages to hold her back. Very soon the cane bursts into flames.

They stand there, hugging. Clarissa's tormented eyes watching as the cane burns.

BOONE

You must trust Alonzo. And now my child. You must fight for your future.

Clarissa looks at him, trying to understand the nature of his words -

BOONE

Show me to the stable.

52 INT. STABLE, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

52

Observed by Clarissa, Boone runs his hand along the wall until he finds a rusty hook. He then feels down the wall, past seven bricks until his fingers locate a small gap.

BOONE

Here.

Clarissa takes over. Her hands removing a large stone that reveals a secret hole. She delves inside, retrieving a long heavy object that is wrapped in decaying cloth, marked with yellow stripes - A familiar American Army uniform.

On the floor, she unwraps the bundle; her hands running over the barrel of a shotgun, a revolver and many bullets.

BOONE

Load the pistol.

CLARISSA

(hesitant)

I am not minded to do no killing
father.

BOONE

They were never meant for you. Now do
as I say.

Clarissa carefully takes a bullet and slides it into the chamber of the Colt Walker pistol. Before Boone has a chance to speak, she cocks and aims it at the thick stable door.

She pulls the trigger. The mechanism fails.

BOONE

Needs oil. Try the Peace Maker.

Clarissa picks up the heavy double barrelled shotgun and loads it with a cartridge. She locks-down the barrel and Boone hears this.

BOONE

Hold it firm. You got it?

CLARISSA

I got it.

Clarissa raises the barrel and aims again at the door.

She pulls the trigger - The round exploding with a bright flash, loud bang, and blasting a large hole straight through to the sunshine outside.

As the smoke clears, we see Boone gently smiling.

53 INT. CHURCH - DAY

53

The light of a candle burning inside the church's alcove on the wall flickers as we hear doors opening. It illuminates the iconic symbol we had seen before that shows above the alcove.

Steps are heard approaching, then Clarissa comes into view, her eyes searching for something or someone.

Coming to the altar she stops by the standing cross. The dry bouquet of flowers call her attention. She is about to touch it when Etta, seemingly coming out of nowhere, coughs.

ETTA
Come and pray.

CLARISSA
It is not God I come to find.

ETTA
I see.

Clarissa chooses her words carefully.

CLARISSA
I heard you at the well... I wish to
tell you me and my fathers thoughts.

ETTA
And why should I be interested in what
you think?

CLARISSA
Forgive me, Etta, but waiting for God
to do something seems...

Clarissa awaits for a reaction from Etta. Gets none.

CLARISSA
It would make more sense that we send
the men away for help. To El Paso, or
Nogales.

ETTA
And who do you think will want to help
if there is nothing of value here?

CLARISSA
Human lives. They are valuable. If the
God you serve has reached those towns
they will show us mercy.

PAUSE:

ETTA
Hmm, until today, I have only ever
seen you under shadow, like so many
here.

CLARISSA
We have land. Then the men can go. Ask
for a loan to dig the well deeper.

ETTA

I can see when a young body exuded
love. You ain't cut to grow old and
lonely here. This is all about Alonzo
ain't it?

CLARISSA

I knew you wouldn't listen.

Clarissa walks away past her, keeping her head high.

ETTA

Faith, young woman. We must prove our
faith. It is all or nothing. I assure
you, no one will give you anything if
you have nothing to offer.

CLARISSA

(walking without turning)

Then that God you speak off is just as
dead as your heart.

ETTA

Clarissa Hawkins!

Clarissa turns.

ETTA

(stern, cold)

No one leaves.

With anger in her eyes and firm determination, Clarissa turns
around swiftly and strides towards the door.

54 EXT. ORCHARD - DAY

54

Alonzo, ravaged by fatigue, hunger and thirst is digging on
his own. His skin is burnt and dry. His muscles strained.

Cooper sits close by holding a gun, and Verne and Reid stand
so that the three form a triangle around Alonzo.

All four appear like dried out clay.

Each time Alonzo's strength fails, Cooper fires a shot into
the ground beside Alonzo's feet.

Alonzo finally falls.

COOPER

Get up!

(firing the gun)
DIG! DIG! DIG!

Verne steps forward and determinedly takes over the digging from Alonzo.

Alonzo crawls away and collapses under the shade of a tree.

Reid, retched and weary, staggers to a rock, lays back and looks up at the sky to where several small fluffy clouds are floating in the blue.

He feebly points a childish finger at them mimicking a gun.

REID
(softly to himself)
Rain you sully bags of fog.

Meanwhile, Cooper watches Verne dig. Verne is like a mad dog.

COOPER
How many more graves do you wanna' dig
before we're all lookin' up from one
eh?

VERNE
That coffins' here and I'm gonna find
it.

COOPER
(singing)
Montana is too cold for me, and
winters are too long. Before the round
ups do begin the water is all gone.

REID
You gone all wrong headed since that
woman got into ya.

COOPER
She just plays it tough. But she'll be
mine.

VERNE
Wrong sweet brother. She'll be his.
(nodding to Alonzo with his nose)
No amount of gold can fix that mud
fence ugly face of yours.

Cooper gets up, dusting himself down as he walks over to Alonzo.

COOPER

(to Verne)

Ya mean this sorry bastard, that who
you mean?

He kicks Alonzo hard in the stomach. Alonzo doubles up in pain.

COOPER

I should have beefed this brown liver
trash when he rode into this hellhole.

Cooper kicks him again, sending Alonzo rolling out from the shade and into the hot dusty dirt.

Alonzo's face has landed beside the sketchbook - And as he anticipates a third painful blow from Cooper, something registers in his eyes. Something in the drawing that is showing on the page just in front of his face.

It shows a tree. A tree how it was eighty years back.

Alonzo reaches his dry sun-baked hand forward and pushes the drawing aside. Behind it in the orchard is the remains of the same tree. Alonzo worms his way across the ground, watched by Cooper, who has picked up the book and is seeing what is happening.

The angle of sunlight through what is left of the forked tree trunk is casting a simple shadow on the ground -

It's the ICONIC SHAPE that we have seen above the alcove inside the church. Verne steps up. Then Reid. All the brothers standing over the shadow above Alonzo.

ALONZO

(barely audible)

De' Sandoval.

The Ryles turn to each other, and in a moment they are all re-united.

Verne, his face like dry stone, whips out his gun and fires a series of shots into the air.

A coded sequence of sorts.

55 EXT. THE WELL, CONTINUOUS - DAY

55

Etta, blankly looking down into the empty well, hears the last of the gunshots. In a moment of pure heady joy, her

knees give way and she leans off-balance against the well.

56 EXT. ORCHARD - DAY

56

Reid stares down into the grave pit; he seems uneasy as he sees a wild dance of hands scratching and scrapping at the top of a half rotten coffin. The hands are revealing the familiar symbol, made of metal on top of the coffin lid. There is no mistake now.

VERNE

Son of a gun!

Alonzo, laying half dead alone away from the brothers, watches as the excitement grows.

His eyes move to the rock where Reid had been positioned. Reid's gun is still there on top of the rock.

Alonzo hesitates, then inches forward, his eyes on the gun - Then Etta suddenly rides in-between and dismounts her horse. The moment lost.

ETTA

(standing over the coffin)

The perfection of all matter; mind,
spirit and soul is granted to us. Oh
Lord we praise you...

She clambers down, and we now see ALL the Ryles from the point of view of the coffin as the lid is ripped off.

Their faces drop.

Inside the coffin a skeleton wrapped in some silky purple material and half empty bottle of whisky is all that is there.

We cut to Alonzo - A lone figure watching as Etta, Cooper, Verne and Reid are reduced to a crushing silence.

ALONZO

(loudly)

Now leave this town! And tell those
that you meet that there is no hidden
gold in Dry River.

ETTA

And what will you do Alonzo Murrieta?

ALONZO
We will live our lives.

ETTA
Without water?

ALONZO
I will ride to Nogales. Bring help.

ETTA
And then?

ALONZO
I will marry the woman I love.

Etta smiles, then looks at Cooper who is drinking the whiskey. Cooper hands the whiskey to Verne. Verne takes a large swig.

COOPER
I say we hang this mountain mule from
this here Apache Pine.

Verne spits out the sour liquid, then strides to Alonzo and grabs him by the throat.

VERNE
Whiskey just ain't my tippie.

ETTA
(firmly)
Hold up!

ETTA
We will do this. But we'll do it
proper.

She walks up close to Alonzo face.

ETTA
You're gonna hang where the whole town
can see ya. Might deter any such folks
squealing tales of grave robbing
outlaws.
(to her sons)
Pack your war bags and gather the
horses. Any water you can find. We'll
hang him in the morning... Then we'll
ride on.

57 INT. MEXICAN HOUSEHOLD - DAY

57

A door is kicked in. Verne storms in as a MOTHER and FATHER shield JUAN in their arms.

Verne sees several buckets of water stored up under shade. He goes to grab one but Juan's father leaps at him, desperately clutching at the water buckets.

Verne pushes him aside, and raises a bucket up to his face, pouring the water all over his mouth.

He shakes his head like a wet dog, then walks out the door, a bucket in each hand.

58 INT. ETTA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

58

Cooper turns Alonzo and drives a brutal right to his jaw. Alonzo is tied to a chair; his hands behind his back.

Cooper, his eyes widened in hatred, spits whiskey in Alonzo's face.

Etta stands next to him, holding the bottle of whiskey.

ETTA

(to Cooper)

Keep him pretty. We don't wanna' spoil the spectacle for no tearful onlookers. You go and offload somewhere else... This my son, won't get the message through to her.

Cooper cleans his mouth with his hand.

COOPER

This is not about her anymore.

Cooper goes to grab the whisky bottle but Etta swings it away from his reach.

ETTA

Of course it is son.

COOPER

(to Alonzo)

It's about me!

ETTA

I see. Our kin never did like to feel humiliated. Go, tell her you love her.

Etta, Verne and Cooper are surrounding Alonzo in the dimly lit room.

Reid stands to one side, not engaging with the action. A somber look on his face as he glares at his family: Like vultures surrounding Alonzo, they treat him like he is already a dead piece of meat.

He and Alonzo cross eyes. A glimpse of awareness strikes Reid; there is not much difference between them really.

ETTA

(to Cooper)

I made you a brain damn it. bloody use it! think about it! He'll die. She'll weep. Then she'll forget about him. But she won't forgive you. She is young Cooper. It is life. She'll move on.

COOPER

What are you sayin'?

ETTA

If your desire to hurt her is real - Killin' this rodent won't do it. And since you won't be forgiven no how. I'd go take another road.

Cooper walks to one side, thinking. A sinister spark shines in his eyes as he lights his last cigar.

Etta, pleased, hands him the bottle of whiskey back, and watches him as he walks out into the night.

VERNE

(to Alonzo)

Thought you could get outta this with some dignity did ya boy. You sure got it wrong.

ALONZO

(with malice)

You'll run out of water. Then you'll have three days. Three days before your skin starts to shrink. Your blood starts to thicken... And your organs start bleeding.

Verne reaches forward and pins a home made tin-metal Sheriff's badge onto Alonzo's lapel.

VERNE

I like it when ya thinkin' of me.
Sheriff.

He stands back and admires it.

VERNE

Come the dawn, you will swing. And
that's an stiff fact. Yes Sir.
(to Reid)
Watch him brother.

Verne and Etta exit.

Reid is left standing facing Alonzo on the chair in the
gloomy room. Reid closes his eyes.

REID

You hear it?

Alonzo listens very carefully. Far away, very faint, both he
and Reid listen to distant simple music.

REID

(opening his eyes)
They celebrate the news of our
departure eh?. They have you to thank
for that.

ALONZO

Untie these ropes Reid.

Reid closes his eyes again.

REID

(pulling out a knife)
Hate is the one thing I know.

Reid slashes the ropes that bind Alonzo.

Alonzo goes free.

59 EXT. TOWN STREET, SAME - NIGHT

59

Clarissa walks down the street holding the double barrelled
shotgun across her chest. She is steely determined. A rage
burning inside.

In the distance, Cooper emerges out of the shadows walking
towards her. As he gets close, she sees he is unsteady on his
feet.

They stop, twenty feet between them, but a whole world apart.

COOPER

I come to you unarmed.

CLARISSA

Then you made a mistake.

COOPER

Made a few. But now I wanna make good.

CLARISSA

Then you'll turn around and take me to Alonzo.

COOPER

You're to leave with me Clarissa. I'm offering you a chance to start over.

CLARISSA

You're drunk.

COOPER

I'm askin' for your hand?

CLARISSA

Well I would sooner be dead than go with you.

Cooper, having walked closer, takes this in; seeing in Clarissa's eyes that she does not love him.

COOPER

Put the gun down Clarissa.

Behind Cooper, we see that his pistol is tucked into his belt out of view.

Cooper now sees Boone, blindly heading towards his daughter by feeling alongside a wall.

Boone has the Colt Walker pistol in his free hand.

BOONE

CLARISSA!

Clarissa turns, and at that moment Cooper pulls out the gun from behind his back -

He shoots Boone in the heart.

Boone falls down dead.

CLARISSA
FATHER!

Clarissa runs to Boone, releasing a loud, guttural cry.

On his last breath, Boone smiles. His indomitable spirit setting free, immune to Earth's evil.

Clarissa kneels down and holds his lifeless body as she dissolves into a silent writhing agony.

At the same time Alonzo appears up above the street on the slopes. Alonzo runs at Cooper, knocking him down to the ground - Then punching him hard in the face several times.

With his gun sent spinning out of range, Cooper staggers away into the night, bloody and battered.

Alonzo picks up his gun -

And joins Clarissa in the cold painful moonlight.

60 EXT. DRY RIVER TOWN - NIGHT 60

Somewhere in the darkness where small fires have been burning, the music stops.

61 INT. CLARISSA AND BOONE'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT 61

Boone's body lays on the bed, his American Army trousers on.

Clarissa sits next to him, grabbing tightly onto Boone's bloodied trousers.

62 INT. CLARISSA AND BOONE'S HOME, CONTINUOUS - NIGHT 62

Downstairs, guarding the front door, Alonzo slides bullets into a leather bullet belt.

Two Pistols. One shotgun. He loads them up.

63 INT. CLARISSA AND BOONE'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT 63

Clarissa stands in front of the wardrobe mirror. She is naked in the milky glass.

She slips Boone's bloodied trousers on, then opens the wardrobe. One side is messy, the other neat; dresses and blouses falling together on well aligned hangers.

Her fingers slide through her father's clothes, choosing a shirt which she carefully lays out over a chair. She returns to the other side of the wardrobe. Her mother's clothes. Untouched for years.

Clarissa unfolds a blouse. She holds it up to her face, lost in a moment, before slipping it on.

64 EXT. DRY RIVER TOWN - BLEEDING DAWN

64

The sun, scarlet red, rises beyond a hangman's noose, swinging gently, from a tree.

65 EXT. DRY RIVER TOWN, STREETS - DAWN

65

FOUR HORSES under FOUR RIDERS, blunt the tainted dawn with blackened shadow.

Etta, Cooper, Verne and Reid are making tracks down through the silent town.

The horses move slowly, weighed down by heavy loads. Religious ornaments can be seen poking through.

The family look tired, hungover, unwashed and broken - A series of portraits.

Cooper, his head bloodied and his shoulders slouched, leads the procession.

Not a word is spoken.

They turn a corner, seeing at the end of the street the exit of the town, where the walls separate to show vast desert landscape beyond; their destination.

They ride on.

Slow towards their exit.

Getting close now, a GROUP OF MEXICAN VILLAGERS wielding pitch-forks, clubs, and anything to fight with, step into view ahead.

The RIDERS stop.

ETTA

Step aside. Your weapons are no match
for our guns.

The villagers do not move. Instead, more appear; up on the

slopes, in-between houses, standing on walls.

COOPER

Our fights' not with you. Lead us to
Murrieta and we will ride on.

A stone hits Cooper's chest. Thrown from off-screen.

Cooper, enraged, goes to pull out a rifle that is strapped to
the horse. But he is made to pause as -

Alonzo steps out pointing a rifle.

ALONZO

I'm right here Cooper.
(cocking the rifle)
Now throw down your guns. Do it
slowly.

Cooper, surprised, at first doesn't react. He then sees
Clarissa, stepping up with a shotgun aimed at his face.

CLARISSA

You heard what he said cowboy.

Cooper looks at Clarissa, dressed in her dead parents
clothes. In her face, he sees her raw anger.

Slowly, Cooper allows his shotgun to slide back into its
saddle sock.

Etta looks at Clarissa, then around to the villagers.

Her face is grey. Her eyes ringed with darkness.

ETTA

(loud to the villagers)
This what we get for all our hard
work?
(beat)
You've all seen what's been goin' on
here. And yet.. Look at you! None of
you willing to do do what had to be
done! This town. This town has been
dealt a tremendous disservice. A great
disservice to both town and country.
We have worked tirelessly, every
single day on this lawless southern
border. To rebuild. To establish
rules. To make all of you more
respectable human beings in the eye of

our Lord...

(beat)

And you!

(looking at Clarissa)

Your blasphemous father got what he had coming. Neither you or he possessed the guts to honour this land. And you dare call yourself an American?

(beat)

Well I tell you now, this town belongs to the Union.

She pauses to look around at the people and houses. The decay and poverty seem to reflect in her eyes.

ETTA

There are no principles here. There is no respect. The warning has passed. This is Satan's last stronghold.

ALONZO

Enough! Now step down off that horse Etta Ryles, real slow.

Etta, highly reluctant, slowly begins to make moves to dismount.

COOPER

You stay right there mother.

Etta pauses. Cooper now holding eyes with Clarissa, and the gun that points up at his face.

COOPER

Two guns. Ain't no match for four.

CLARISSA

Well we ain't the ones staring down the wrong end of a barrel.

COOPER

You ain't grateful either. Ain't ya' glad we're leavin'? Glad to have your town back?

CLARISSA

You ain't leavin'. You gave up that right when you murdered my father.

Cooper takes this in, weighing up his options as he looks up

to the villagers looking down like gargoyles.

VERNE

Looks to me like we can't agree none.

REID

I think we should just do as they say?

ALONZO

He's right. Etta? Get off the horse,
or Verne gets it first.

Etta turns her head and looks back at Verne, her favourite son. After a brief pause she steps down from the horse.

ETTA

(to Alonzo)

I am not armed son.

Alonzo checks that Etta is clean. He then slides the shotgun out from the sheath on Cooper's horse.

ALONZO

Vern, Reid. Drop your weapons. Do it
now.

Reid, then Verne, slowly drop their guns down beside their horses.

CLARISSA

(to Cooper)

You! Get off that horse. And make one
move and I'll blow your damn face off.

Cooper finally submits. He slowly dismounts the horse and drops to the ground very close to Clarissa.

ALONZO

(to Verne and Reid)

Now you.

Verne and Reid dismount. Verne, icy cold, slowly walks and stands with his mother.

Reid, sweating and frightened, looks at Alonzo. A plea in his eyes.

Alonzo picks up a rifle from the floor. It is the one belonging to him; taken from him, but now returned.

Cooper's eyes are fixed on Clarissa as she holds the gun to

his face.

ALONZO

Word is, Confederate State Army are
five days from here. You'll be handed
to them when they pass through.

Cooper, his eyes still fixed on Clarissa, licks some blood
off his lips that has trickled down from his head wound.

Reid, edgy, steps closer to Alonzo.

REID

I'm takin my horse and I'm ridin' on.
That's right ain't it Sheriff?

ALONZO

Can't let you do that Reid.

Cooper, Verne and Etta exchange glances, their suspicions
confirmed.

ETTA

(to Reid)

You filthy coward.

REID

Shut ya mouth.

(backing away)

You ain't no family.

Etta scowls, and in a flash, a small blade catches the
sunlight as it crosses Reid's throat.

Etta has opened his veins.

Cooper looks away in repulsion. Verne doesn't flinch.

Reid falls to his knees, blood pouring from his neck. In the
shock of the moment he grabs a gun from the floor and fires
at a cloud at the sky as he rolls over dead.

The horses bolt - separating Clarissa from her hold over
Cooper. Cooper grabs two guns and throws one to Verne.

All hell breaks loose.

66 INT/EXT DRY RIVER TOWN, CONTINUOUS - DAWN

66

Alonzo and Clarissa, armed with bullet belts, pistols and
shotguns gather their senses. They are both okay.

Both ready.

Clarissa sees Cooper making his way through a building. She looks at Alonzo. An understanding between them. Then she follows after Cooper. Finger on trigger.

Alonzo splits. He runs across the old cemetery, desecrated by digging.

Verne is there behind the walls of a building. Verne begins to fire at him.

Alonzo fires back.

Verne makes a break. The Ryles family broken apart now. Each one for their own.

Alonzo sprints to follow Verne. Etta runs the other way.

Alonzo runs across a deserted street. Villagers are watching from behind rocks and trees.

Shots ring out from all around. Dust sparks the air. Stone cracks and chips.

Alonzo dives into the doorway where Verne had just been. He passes through a room where a MEXICAN WOMAN is paralyzed in fear as she breast feeds a BABY.

She nods to the back. Where the sunlight beats down between fallen roof beams and rubble.

Alonzo aims his gun.

Moves forward.

67 EXT. DRY RIVER TOWN, CONTINUOUS - DAWN

67

Clarissa, shotgun ready, turns a corner into a narrow dirt track. We follow her moves, past shady doorways, careful and silent in the maze of the ruins.

She sees blood on the floor and stops.

Cooper is near.

CLARISSA
(yelling)
COOPER!

At the crest of a slope, Cooper emerges looking down at her.

His demeanour somehow broken. His voice has a slight echo in the open space.

COOPER
I'm done runnin'.

Clarissa looks up at Cooper, her eyes challenging him to make a move.

COOPER
(With regret)
You brought this on yourself. If you'd've loved me just a little bit, your Daddy would still be alive.. Look at the bright side, he's in a better place now.

CLARISSA
Where my father is, and where you're going, are two different places.

Clarissa fires a heavy round up at Cooper who disappears from sight.

She reloads the shotgun, ensuring both barrels are stacked; then she runs up the slope to the area where Cooper was moments before.

She slowly turns a full circle, both barrels of the shotgun levelled with her, like a sped up clock.

Nothing but the shrill whistle of wind.

Clarissa moves up to higher ground, overlooking the edge of Dry River, where the desert reaches away to the mountains far off. She now sees Cooper sat on a rock, his back facing her.

She raises the shotgun.

COOPER
You won't shoot. I know you
Clarissa... Your kindness is your
weakness.

CLARISSA
Stand up and turn around.

Cooper stands, turns around, blood running down his face like red sweat.

COOPER

I told you Clarissa, I'm done runnin'.

CLARISSA

Yes you are.

She fires a round into Cooper's stomach. Cooper clutches at his bloody wound, shocked that she has pulled the trigger, and gasping for air.

Clarissa steps closer, grimly determined.

CLARISSA

Marry me in hell Cooper Ryles.

The second round explodes through Coopers's chest, jerking him back over the ridge.

Clarissa walks calmly to the edge of ridge. She looks down at Cooper's lifeless, blood-caked carcass, lying at broken angles in the dry river bed below.

From below, we see Clarissa looking down.

Then Clarissa glimpses Etta, escaping far away in the distance. Clarissa reloads the gun.

Makes tracks to follow.

68 INT/EXT. RUINED HOUSES, CONTINUOUS - DAWN

68

Alonzo, gun in hand, steps into the blistering daylight.

Close by, he sees the hangman's noose hanging from the tree.

Verne creeps out from cover. He has seen Alonzo, but Alonzo has not observed Verne.

The baby is heard to cry -

It distracts Verne who turns to the sound. In this instant, Alonzo spots Verne. Then they turn to each other: Like two hawks, face to face across the dry plain, all muscles enlarged.

VERNE

Come noon Murrieta, you will swing
from that noose, either dead or alive.

Verne looks up from under the brim of his black stetson hat we see the arrow headed look in his eyes.

At the same time, both Alonzo and Verne begin walking towards each other, their rifles at the ready.

Out of nowhere, the young boy Juan appears, running into the space between Verne and Alonzo, who come to a standstill only feet apart.

A cold, reptilian grin distorts Verne's lips, as he moves the aim of his own rifle from Alonzo to Juan.

VERNE
(to Alonzo)
Throw down, or the kid gets it.

Slowly, without hesitation, Alonzo lays his gun upon the dusty ground.

VERNE
Let's see those nobby hands.

Alonzo raises his hands above his head.

ALONZO
Now let the boy go.

Verne smiles dangerously at Juan once more.

VERNE
Sorry kid. this ain't no place for no middlemen.

We see Verne's index finger, applying pressure to the trigger of the rifle.

Alonzo dives at Juan, as the shot goes off, bundling Juan to the ground. As he does so, the bullet meant for Juan penetrates Alonzo's shoulder.

Verne, now walks to where Alonzo lays seething in pain from the bullet wound. Crouching down over Alonzo, Verne rests the end of the rifle barrel under Alonzo's chin.

But before Verne can pull the trigger, we see Juan scoop up a handful of sand and dust, throwing it up into Verne's eyes.

Momentarily blinded, Alonzo kicks the rifle out of Verne's hands, and pulling Etta's knife from his boot, he lunges at Verne, slashing him across the chest. Verne smiles -

Swings a knife from his belt.

VERNE

Come on hunter, show me your skills.

Alonzo and Verne circle each other, taking turns with vicious lunges and slashes of blades.

It's a long wretched challenge; and in Alonzo's eyes, we will learn that this was how he had killed his father's killers.

But Alonzo, although the more skillful, is weakened by his shoulder wound - And moment by moment his stamina begins to fail.

Outdone by Verne, Alonzo is reduced to a desperate crawl towards a gun on the floor.

And as his hand reaches for the weapon. Verne's boot crushes down on his fingers - Verne reaching down and taking the gun.

ALONZO

So kill me, it doesn't matter now. I
leave this world with love in my
heart. What will you leave with?

VERNE

The satisfaction of shootin' sunshine
right through your skull.

With that, Verne raises the gun and points it at Alonzo who closes his eyes. But death does not come.

Instead, a splash of blood lands on Alonzo's hand and he looks up, relieved.

Verne has a pitchfork embedded in his back - and clutching at the other end of it is JUAN'S FATHER, enraged with a swell of deep hatred and anger.

Juan's father yanks out the pitchfork and Verne staggers forward, swinging violently at Alonzo with crazy swipes, aimed at his head.

Verne still has the gun. He raises it with the last of his energy and points it at Alonzo - But Alonzo has picked up his gun and squeezes the trigger -

Once.

Twice.

Three times into Verne's ruptured torso.

Verne falls to his knees, his bloody hand outstretched towards Alonzo, and his jaw taught with a mournful groan.

Verne finally rips something from Alonzo's jacket and falls smashing to the dirt.

Alonzo looks down at Verne: In his hand he is clutching the tin Sheriffs' badge that he had made the night before.

Alonzo watches as Verne takes his last breath and dies.

Then Alonzo looks away, a painful need to know Clarissa is still alive.

69 EXT. DRY RIVER TOWN, MOMENTS LATER - DAY

69

A churning heat haze.

And somewhere through it - The faint figure of Etta, ghost like, way out in the desert as she drops a golden cross but blindly staggers on, holding on tightly to her water canister.

We can hear her distant ramblings. Incoherent. A madness.

Alonzo steps up and we see that Clarissa has been watching Etta from the crest of a rock.

Clarissa has the Colt Walker pistol raised, aimed at Etta.

But she hesitates.

Alonzo gently raises his hand and guides the gun down.

Wrapped in an eerie silence, Alonzo and Clarissa watch Etta vanish into the vast unknown.

She will die of thirst. That they both know.

CUT TO:

70 EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

70

On top of the desolate graveyard the people of Dry River gather around a fresh grave. Clarissa, Juan, Alonzo... they are all there. Their silhouettes in sharp contrast with the blue of the sky.

The graveyard appears healed: The villagers have spent some time covering all the graves opened by the Ryles. The Earth is restored.

A rudimentary coffin is being lowered into the grave with ropes held by some very rough hands. Silence follows as the grave finds its home.

We pan across the chiseled faces of the cortege, who seem to have exhausted their words. They did what they had to do: Boone deserved no less.

They stand straight, and for the first time they hold their heads high. But life is pitiless, and as always, someone who didn't deserve it had to die. And so, their pride is swaddled by sadness.

The sound of shovels again. This time though, Alonzo is not digging. His wounded shoulder not permitting.

He wears different clothes. No longer his fathers black suit.

He looks at Clarissa, holding a big plank of wood with 'John Boone Hawkins, 1811 - 1888' carved in the grain.

She catches his eye. In another time there would have been a smile. Now all she can do is cry quietly.

As if on cue, the villagers start singing a ranchera song. Clarissa joins them after the first couple of lines.

TOWNSFOLK

(singing)

Por quien cantan las alondras a quien
despiden llorando, por quien cantan
las alondras, a quien despiden
llorando. A un hombre que fue dejando
polvo y sudor tras su sombra, polvo y
sudor tras su sombra, a un hombre que
fue dejando.

Doblado estan las campanas, añorando
su presencia, doblado estan las
campanas, añorando su presencia.
Hombre como el no hubo valiente, de
norte a sur de la sierra, hombre como
el no hubo valiente, de norte a sur de
la sierra.

*(Who are the larks singing for, who
are they crying farewell for. To a man
who was leaving behind, dust and sweat
over his shadow)*

(Bells are ringing, missing his

*presence. A man like him you wouldn't
be able to find, from North to South
of the mountain range)*

Then she hands the wooden plank to a villager and joins them as they finish packing in Boone's earthly blanket.

Clarissa crowns the grave with the wooden plank while the down-reaching song continues filling the air.

On one side, Juan appears distracted. A couple of flies insist to stay on his arm no matter how many times he swats them away.

Wait. Isn't this what Alonzo had told him? 'When flies were sticky that was a sign for a storm brewing'.

He turns around and looks up at the sky studiously.

Behind the ruins of Dry River, still far away, a dark grey band thickens the horizon line on an otherwise blue sky. This can not be possible!

Rain clouds.

He tugs his mother's skirt and points at the sky. She turns around, her singing coming to an end. She pulls her neighbour's arm. One by one, they all turn around to face the horizon, the voices in the choir thinning out until only Clarissa sings. Lastly, she turns around.

And there she stands with Alonzo, awestruck, looking up to the skyline. Their backs to Boone's grave, their feet on the edge of the soil, their hearts in sublime pause.

Thunder breaks.

Like statues they all remain still for some time, not daring to take their eyes away from the dark band of approaching clouds.

The wind picks up, lifting the women's skirts and the men's sombreros.

The storm is here! Furious rain drops start falling on Boone's grave. Now there is nothing holding back the joy of Dry River's people.

They all cheer to nature's thunderous orchestra.

All but Alonzo and Clarissa. Standing by Boone's grave as the

rain becomes heavier, she cries. Her lament soon morphs into a pained laugh. For the first time, she laughs. Or is she crying?

It doesn't matter.

Her heart is free.

71 EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

71

In the graveyard, from a distance, a pastoral picture where all the villagers are celebrating the rain. Not only the villagers; the stones, the church tower, the barren trees, all seem to be dancing to the rainfall.

CUT TO

72 EXT. HOUSE IN RUINS - DAY

72

A ruined house is welcoming the shower like a thirsty sponge. The rain drops bounce off the stones piling on the ground creating an ethereal halo.

73 EXT. DRY RIVER STREET - DAY

73

Water runs down the street, through a meandering groove on the ground, carrying dead weeds. A tumbleweed sails, twisting and rolling.

74 EXT. ALONZO'S HOUSE - DAY

74

Rain falls on the shrivelled cactus outside the door.

75 INT. ALONZO'S HOUSE - DAY

75

The door is wide open exposing a sheet of rain outside.

Static, in the realm of his painting, Pedro Murrieta seems to smile down.

76 EXT. WELL PLAZA - DAY

76

Rain hammers hard on the plaza. Life is coming back to the well.

77 EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

77

Alonzo looks at Clarissa as the rain falls over her.

The light that blinded Boone is there, next to him, radiating from Clarissa.

But Clarissa is not returning his gaze. Instead she moves closer to her father's grave, where she appears to engage in an silent conversation with him.

Villagers come into view, dancing and laughing with the rain.

Lost in her own reverie, Clarissa is snapped back into reality by a noise next to her. She turns around.

Alonzo is gone. Like all the others.

78 EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

78

Mud squirts onto Clarissa's legs, as she makes her way hurriedly past all the happy, wet faces still celebrating the rain in the graveyard.

Cutting swiftly across the barren dirt, she reaches the crest of the graveyard hill. Her heart is breaking with a newfound loss, for now she is certain of her love for Alonzo.

She stops, distraught, rain hammering on her face.

Clarissa scans far away into the horizon. Only the rain answers her silent calling.

The rain, and a nearby metallic, water dripping sound.

As she falls onto her knees, her eyes are taken into the direction of the sound.

Her face lights up.

79 EXT. DRY RIVER STREET - DAY

79

A metallic bucket is filling with water. A hand appears, placing another container next to it. Then another, adding up to create a randomly harmonic symphony.

Alonzo is collecting the water that is falling from the roofs of Dry River, unaware of Clarissa running towards him, his back to her.

CLARISSA

Alonzo!

Alonzo turns around just in time to catch Clarissa, who throws herself to him.

And there, under the much awaited rain, they kiss.

80 EXT. DRY RIVER TOWN - DAY

80

A very slow pan:

Alonzo and Clarissa stand innocently in the drenching rain, kissing.

We leave them behind, until we come to an uneven old stone wall.

The wall rests on a bank of soil that is washing away under a torrent of backwash.

Weakened by the pouring water the wall gives way, stones collapsing on top of each other.

The wall falls.

As the mud tumbles away unhinged from the bottom of the bank
-

A glimmer of gold starts shining through.