

BASS REEVES
U.S. Marshall

Written by
Sam Bass

Based on the true story of a man, born
a slave, that evolved to a dynamic U. S.
Deputy Marshall working for the famed
Hanging Judge Parker's Court in Indian
territory.

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BASS REEVES
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Feature Film Teaser

FADE IN:

EXT. CONFEDERATE ARMY CAMP - PEA RIDGE ARKANSAS - SUNDOWN

The boom of three cannon blasts are heard and a tree is splintered by one of the balls.

3D SUPER - CONFEDERATE ARMY CAMP, PEA RIDGE ARKANSAS NEAR THE INDIAN TERRITORIES EASTERN BORDER, MARCH 1860.

A dozen period military tents are set-up, where about fifty soldiers lie on their bedrolls relaxing near a camp fire. A few Gunshots are heard and another cannon blast booms in the distance, then sparks fly across the sky.

INT. CONFEDERATE COMMAND POST TENT - PEA RIDGE ARKANSAS - SUNDOWN

Confederate COLONEL GEORGE REEVES (30's), a red faced average man with oily hair sits at a small make-shift card table playing poker and sweating, decked out in a confederate colonel's uniform with his collar open.

He puffs on a cigar and laughs with another man, Captain Laurel.

George takes a swig from a fifth of Southern bourbon as he looks at his cards grinning. He sets his bottle down on the table and yells to the guard standing by the entrance.

COLONEL REEVES
(heavy American Southern
accent)
GUARD, bring my valet.

GUARD (O.S.)
(American Southern accent)
Yes sir.

CAPTAIN LAUREL (20's), an average happy man, very neat, wearing an almost new uniform, watches his drunken commanding officer across the table.

Colonel Reeves looks at his cards and yells again.

COLONEL REEVES
 What the HELL I gotta do ta get
 some wood put in this tiny little
 stove.

GUARD (O.S.)
 Right away sir.

The Captain looks at his cards.

CAPTAIN LAUREL
 (American Southern accent)
 George, you're not going to make
 the darky play again are you?

COLONEL REEVES
 Damn right. Bass can liven this
 graveyard up.

Another cannon blast goes off and explodes near the camp. The
 Captain flinches.

CAPTAIN LAUREL
 (heavy Southern accent)
 I reckon those Yankees are goin to
 get enough soldiers together one
 day and finally attack us.

COLONEL REEVES
 I doubt it. They got nobody over
 there to egg'em on.

BASS REEVES (22), a six feet two, handsome black man steps
 inside sporting a heavy mustache dressed in red long handles,
 tattered canvas pants and brogans.

BASS
 (American Southern accent)
 You called me, sir.

The colonel stares at his cards thinking.

COLONEL REEVES
 Throw a couple sticks a wood on the
 fire.

Bass goes to a very small wood stove sitting in the corner of
 the tent, puts in a couple of sticks of wood and stokes the
 fire.

BASS (V.O.)
 My name's Bass Reeves. I's born, a
 slave outside Van Buren Arkansas in
 eighteen-thirty-eight.
 (MORE)

BASS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

My mother gave me her daddy's first name and my masta, William Reeves' last. Daddy Reeves moved his family and mine to Paris Texas when I's just a boy, that's where I grew up muckin stables and learnin blacksmithin. When the war broke out, Masta's son George was commissioned a Colonel in the Confederate Army and I's sent along with him to help out.

COLONEL REEVES

Grab a seat, Bass. We be needin another hand at our big time poker game.

(throws down his cards
face up laughing)

Three aces.

The Captain throws his cards down showing a losing face.

CAPTAIN LAUREL

Shit.

Bass looks at the Colonel then the Captain.

The captain shrugs.

BASS

Ya sure Colonel. Last time you made me play you got drunk and started cussin and beatin on anybody in sight.

The Colonel takes a drink.

COLONEL REEVES

That's all behind me Bass, my boy. I'll stake ya.

(He puts ten silver
dollars on the table in
front of Bass)

I was drinkin then, relax... Deal Captain Laurel.

The captain raises his eyebrows and deals as everyone puts a dollar in the pot. They look at their cards.

Bass smiles a little.

COLONEL REEVES (CONT'D)

What you so happy bout?

BASS
Nuttin, just happy to be in out of
the cold.

The Colonel smiles and looks at Bass with an unusually long
stare.

The Captain is a little nervous looking at the Colonel.

COLONEL REEVES
My bet? I bet a dollar.

The Colonel and the Captain puts a dollar in the pot.

Bass puts a dollar in the pot and then two more still
smiling.

The Captain cuts him a surprised look.

BASS
Raise ya, two.

The Colonel is put out, but bets.

CAPTAIN LAUREL
Cards?

BASS
Two.

The Captain deals.

COLONEL REEVES
One.

The Captain deals.

CAPTAIN LAUREL
Your bet Bass.

They look at their cards.

The Colonel puts three dollars in the pot puffing his cigar
and giving Bass an evil look.

COLONEL REEVES
Cost three to stay.

Bass and the Captain look at each other.

Bass waves the smoke from his face looking at Colonel Reeves.

BASS
Colonel? It's my turn.

COLONEL REEVES
What the hell, the bet's on the
table.

The Captain turns and coughs, then looks for a moment and puts in three silver dollars. He coughs again and speaks with his hand over his mouth while the Colonel takes a drink.

CAPTAIN LAUREL
(whispers)
Let it go Bass.

Bass smiles and drops in three dollars then two more.

BASS
There's your three, cost ya two
more to stay.

The Captain rolls his eyes.

The Colonel grins and throws two dollars in the pot and drops his cards down to show and takes another drink.

COLONEL REEVES
I'm gonna let you off light. A
boat, queens and duces.

Bass is amused as the Colonel starts to drag the money.

BASS
Wait Colonel.
(throws down three kings
and fours)
Looks like I's a winner.

The Captain appears worried and throws his cards in.

CAPTAIN LAUREL
Bass why don't you get us some
water from the spring.

The Colonel has fire in his eyes.

COLONEL REEVES
You son-of-a-bitch.

DISSOLVE TO TITLE:

ROLL CREDITS:

End of Teaser

INT. CONFEDERATE COMMAND POST TENT - PEA RIDGE ARKANSAS -
SUNDOWN

The Colonel is angry.

COLONEL REEVES

This is the thanks I get for being
good to your black ass all of these
years?

Bass looks at the Captain.

CAPTAIN LAUREL

George.

BASS

Colonel sir, it's just a game...
(pushes the pot money
toward George)
You can have the money.

COLONEL REEVES

You actin uppity now, like I's
cheatin or somethin?

The Colonel stands and glares at Bass. Bass stands, a little
uneasy.

The Colonel swings at Bass and Bass' strong hand stops the
Colonel's arm mid-air as they stare into each others eyes.

The Captain is concerned watching the altercation.

CAPTAIN LAUREL

Oh shit.

Abruptly the Colonel swings his other arm and Bass blocks
him.

BASS

Come on Colonel, You're drunk.
You'll be embarrassed tamarrow.

COLONEL REEVES

How dare you confront me. I'm your
Master. I will have you shot.

The Colonel breaks away.

CAPTAIN LAUREL

Sir, You've been drinking, Let it
go.

Colonel Reeves hits Bass with a surprise shot to the face.

Bass stares with a bloody lip.

COLONEL REEVES
Guard, arrest this ungrateful
peckerwood and shoot his ass at
first light.

CAPTAIN LAUREL
Sir?

Yelling to the Guard.

COLONEL REEVES
Obey my orders, by God.

The Colonel pushes Bass back.

BASS
Please sir, stop.

The Colonel picks up a two feet long wipe and raises it in
the air.

COLONEL REEVES
I gonna put some whelps on your
ass, you'll never forget, damn
ingrate.

Bass pulls back and the Colonel hits him with the whip. Bass
grabs his hand and the Colonel jerks away and hits him again.

Bass swings and connects to the Colonel's face, knocking him
to the ground with a bloody nose, out cold in his drunken
stupor.

The Captain backs up looking at the colonel.

CAPTAIN LAUREL
Get on out of here Bass, you done
it now. They'll hang you sure.

Bass leaves the tent.

EXT. CONFEDERATE ARMY CAMP - PEA RIDGE ARKANSAS - SUNDOWN

Bass steps outside as the Confederate CAMP GUARD (20's), an
average man is coming in. Bass hits the guard and grabs his
Colt Dragoon pistol as the man falls back.

Bass runs to a big black stallion tied to a line with the
other animals. He unties the horse and mounts up with just
the halter and a lead rope on the animal.

The guard recovers and charges toward him.

CAMP GUARD

Hey!

Bass rides hell for leather East as the guard takes a shot at him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ARKANSAS FOREST TRAIL - NIGHT

Bass speeds the big horse through the thick woods with limbs slapping him and the moon light lighting the way.

Two cavalry soldiers on horseback are right behind him. Suddenly they fire two shoots with their pistols.

Bass lies low on his horse and pushes him to go faster around a curve in the trail, out of sight.

The cavalrymen speed ahead and around the curve.

An average OLD CHOCTAW Indian man (60's), with long gray hair has a large tree limb pulled back waiting. He watches Bass pass by.

As the soldiers come around the curve the old Choctaw lets go of the limb.

The Confederate Cavalrymen meet the pulled back tree limb straight in the face and fall off their horses, hitting the ground moaning.

Bass stops his horse looking back.

The old Choctaw points at a narrow trail through the woods.

OLD CHOCTAW

(American Choctaw accent)

That way.

Bass looks for a moment as his horse fidgets and rides on through the deep woods.

The old Choctaw looks at the moaning soldiers and smiles.

OLD CHOCTAW (CONT'D)

(in Choctaw subtitled in

English)

That's gotta hurt, but... you're on
Choctaw land.

The two soldiers sit up and look at each other.

He turns and disappears into the woods.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. INDIAN TERRITORY BORDER - NIGHT

The moon is bright as Bass stops his sweating horse on the trail near a sign on a tree.

CLOSE ON - the sign - YOU are in Oklahoma Indian Territory at the Dead Line, cross this line and suffer the consequences.

Bass urges his horse across the line.

Three well-armed Choctaw American Indian men dressed in various parts of Confederate and Union Army uniforms with beads and feathers in their long black hair ride their horses out of the woods blocking the trail.

Bass stops his big black horse. He puts his hand on the handle of his pistol stuck in his belt.

RED-EAGLE WEATHERFORD (30's), a handsome and muscular dark Indian man looks Bass over as does BLACK DRINK (40's), a strong looking average Choctaw man and CRAZY BEAR (20's), a handsome fierce looking Choctaw. Red-Eagle finally speaks up.

RED-EAGLE
(American Choctaw Indian
accent)
What's your business here?

Bass studies the men.

BASS
I'll tell ya straight. I'm a run
away slave and I ain't going back.

The Indian men look him over again for a moment then Red-Eagle smiles.

RED-EAGLE
Welcome.

Bass is relieved.

BASS
Thank ya. I thought we were goin
at it for minute there.

Red-Eagle smiles and points to the men.

RED-EAGLE

This is Black Drink and next to him
is Crazy Bear. We are Choctaw.

(The two Choctaws nod and
grunt)

I am Red-Eagle.

BASS

I'm Bass, Bass Reeves from
Arkansas and parts of Texas.

RED-EAGLE

Come, we go to village, eat and
talk.

The Indian men turn their horses and ride down the trail with
Bass following.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ARKANSAS/INDIAN TERRITORY BORDER - AFTERNOON

Captain Laurel and three soldiers sit on the side of the road
under a tree resting holding their horses as they graze.

A robust CORPORAL PAINE (17), a light haired average boy is
on his hands and knees looking at tracks on the road.

CORPORAL PAINE

(American Southern accent)

He came this way Capan.

The Captain is relaxes staring into space..

CAPTAIN LAUREL

All right Private, take a break.

CORPORAL PAINE

Captain, shouldn't we be looking a
little harder for that slave?

CAPTAIN LAUREL

Nope, we're sittin right here on
our asses till sundown, then we'll
skedaddle for camp.

CORPORAL PAINE

But...

CAPTAIN LAUREL

We don't need to be chasing slaves
when we got bigger fish to fry.

CORPORAL PAINE
I hear it was the Colonel's fault
anyway, you know about getting his
ass knocked in the dirt.

CAPTAIN LAUREL
Shore was.

The corporal rakes the ground with a stick.

CORPORAL PAINE
That poor bastard'll probably get
shot in Indian Territory anyway.

The Captain nods.

CAPTAIN LAUREL
Probly.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHOCTAW INDIAN CAMP - INDIAN TERRITORY - EARLY MORNING

Bass is lying on a bear skin rug sleeping with a colorful
blanket over him near a campfire.

Three CHOCTAW CHILDREN (5-7) run past and stop looking at
Bass. One picks up a stick and pokes him with it. Bass moves
and mumbles something. The children laugh.

CLEAR-WATER SMITH (20's), A pretty Choctaw Indian woman walks
up with a large piece of cooked meat on a stick and shakes
Bass.

Bass wakes up. She pushes the meat toward him.

CLEAR-WATER
(American Choctaw accent)
Eat, you are skinny.

Bass smiles and takes the meat.

BASS
Thank ya ma'am.

CLEAR-WATER
I am Clear-Water, Red-Eagle's wife.
Red-Eagle says, you are to get
ready after you eat and go with
him.

Bass nods and sits up eating and then puts on his brogans. A
pretty little CHOCTAW GIRL (5) walks up.

BASS
Hello little gal.

CHOCTAW GIRL
Halito (hello).

Bass looks at Clear-Water.

CLEAR-WATER
She said hello.

BASS
Well hello sweet girl.

Clear-Water looks at the girl.

CLEAR-WATER
(in Choctaw sub-titled in
English)
Go play, our guest has to go.

The little girl smiles and runs away.

Bass picks up his pistol and stands. He sticks the pistol in his belt and goes to his horse that is grazing with a half-dozen tribal horses.

Clear-Water watches with a helpful eye.

Bass fashions some reins from the lead rope that he had on the horse's halter the night before and leads his animal to the middle of the camp.

Red-Eagle, Black Drink and Crazy Bear ride up and nod to Clear-Water.

RED-EAGLE
Are you ready?

BASS
Shore am.

RED-EAGLE
Come, we go to a white settlement that is not welcome here and take back two of our people, that they are using for slaves.

BASS
Hell yeah, I know somethin about that.

Bass mounts up and they ride out as Clear-Water watches.

Bass looks back to see the old Choctaw.

The old Choctaw smiles a little and nods while sitting in front of a small dug-out as he smokes a long colorfully decorated pipe.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE - INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Red-Eagle, Bass, Black Drink and Crazy Bear are lying on their stomachs watching the settlement below.

The settlement consists of two small wood-sided buildings and a corral where ELK-HORN (20's), a young muscular Choctaw man chops wood and BLUE JUMPER (18), an attractive Choctaw woman is feeding the horses under the watchful eye of a SETTLER (30's) with a rifle.

RED-EAGLE

I see Elk-Horn and Blue Jumper...
The white men will go out on a hunt soon, then we'll go in and get them.

Black is a little angry.

BLACK DRINK

(American Choctaw accent)
Those squatters are not suppose to be here. We should burn them out.

BASS

Ya know, that's a pretty good idea. I could sneak down there and set the buildin's on fire and when they are busy puttin out the fire, bingo you grab your people and skedaddle for home.

Crazy Bear smiles.

RED-EAGLE

Like it.

CRAZY BEAR

(American Choctaw accent)
Me too.

Black-Drink thinks about it.

BASS

You got matches?

They all look at each other.

RED-EAGLE
Get fire from their camp.

Bass is thinking.

BASS
Risky, but...

Bass moves down the long hillside watching for the hunting party.

When he gets close, the hunting party of three men ride out and away from the settlement.

EXT. SETTLEMENT - INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Bass moves to the back of a wood side building. He looks around and moves along the building. Bass stops at the corner and looks around.

The muscular tanned settler carrying a Winchester guards the Indian slaves standing next a coral full of horses. The man's eyes scan the area finally looking toward Bass, not seeing him and then back at the Indian slaves.

Bass pulls back and sees a kerosene lantern and an axe nearby.

He grabs the lantern and opens the bottom pouring the kerosene on the side of the building. He looks around and at the guard.

Bass sees a campfire in the middle of the yard of the two buildings.

He looks back behind him.

Red-Eagle is moving down the hill with Crazy Bear and Black Drink.

Bass sneaks out from the corner of the building carrying the axe and moving up behind the man with the rifle. He raises the axe waist high as he quietly moves.

Elk-Horn and Blue Jumper look toward him.

The man turns to see and Bass smacks him with the side of the axe putting a knot on his head instead of cutting it off. He looks at Elk-Horn and Blue Jumper.

BASS
Thanks for lookin.

Elk-Horn and Blue-Jumper freeze for a moment, then shrug.

Black Drink comes in and speaks to the two Indians in Choctaw.

BLACK DRINK
(in Choctaw sub-titled in
English)
Get a horse and head for home.

Elk-Horn and Blue Jumper go to the corral and get a horse each and ride out with just a lead rope around their nose.

Bass grabs a burning stick from the campfire.

A woman from the house shoots at Bass as he runs to set the kerosene on fire.

Bass dodges and takes cover. She shoots again; first at Bass, then at Black Drink.

They both duck for cover and Bass looks at Black Drink.

BASS
Go on back I'm right behind you.

Suddenly the hunting party of three men ride back in shooting at Bass and Black Drink.

Black Drink is hit in the leg. Bass pulls his pistol and shoots at the hunters.

He hits a hunter in the shoulder and the hunter falls off hitting the ground, then gets up and runs for cover shooting at Bass and Black Drink.

Bass goes to Black Drink as Black Drink shoots at the hunters that are dismounted and shooting at him.

Abruptly bullets fly all around Bass and Black Drink.

Bass tosses the burning stick on the kerosene and it starts to burn.

The remaining hunters rush to the fire and start putting it out with burlap bags that are lying nearby as the third hunter shoots at Bass and Black Drink.

Suddenly Red-Eagle and Crazy Bear ride in fast. They pick up Bass and Black Drink, then ride away under a hail of bullets from the hunters and the woman.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHOCTAW TRAIL - INDIAN TERRITORY - NIGHT

Bass, Red-Eagle, Black Drink, Crazy Bear, Blue Jumper and Elk-Horn ride down a woods trail on the way home.

BASS

You shore got a lot goin on out
here in the woods.

RED-EAGLE

Settlers and outlaws.

Bass looks back and sees a half dozen outlaws sneaking up on them from behind.

BASS

Highway men!

Bass and the Choctaws take off riding hard through woods. The Bandits follow them.

Bass stops and shoots from his horse.

The bandits stop and shoot back.

Red-Eagle looks at him.

RED-EAGLE

Let's ride we don't have the guns
to match them.

BASS

Go on, I got this.

RED-EAGLE

It is suicide.

BASS

For them maybe.

An outlaw rider charges shooting wildly.

Bass aims and shoots him from his horse.

The outlaw falls off and slams into a tree crashing to the trail.

Bass shoots again.

Another outlaw that thinks he is covered hiding behind a bush while he shoots is hit and falls from his horse rolling out in the road.

The other outlaws take a few shots and cut out.

Red-Eagle looks at him smiling.

RED-EAGLE

Maybe not.

BASS

Is everbody here a ass-hole or a outlaw?

RED-EAGLE

The low of the low, ride here, because your government leaves us powerless to stop them.

BASS

Ain't my government, I's a slave.

RED-EAGLE

Not here.

They ride on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHOCTAW INDIAN CAMP - INDIAN TERRITORY - EARLY MORNING

Two old Indian men and four women mill around the camp that has abandoned dug-outs and lean-twos, packing gear on horses pulling skids.

BASS (V.O.)

I had a good run with the Indian people, till eighteen sixty five when they ran into trouble. The war's over and the government says the tribes are traitors, cause some of them helped the South. These fine families were good to me, they just made a mistake, helping people that where their neighbors. The tribes best warriors taught me the languages and skills with knife and gun. I made a lotta good friends.

(MORE)

BASS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But, I learned more than skills
from them, I learned to be honest,
never lie and always be fair. They
are truly a valuable secret hidden
away in this harsh land.

Bass is sleeping on the ground, on top of a black bear skin
rug with another over him. His dog, Ofi a black and tan hound
sleeps next to Bass. Bass now sports a heavy mustache.

Clear-Water walks to Bass and shakes him as she speaks.

CLEAR-WATER

(in the Choctaw language
sub-titled in English)

Bass, vhonecety (wake up),
Vhonecety.

Bass slowly wakes up.

BASS

English.

CLEAR-WATER

(American Choctaw accent)

Why? You speak the language.

Bass smiles.

BASS

Don't know, just home sick fur my
people.

CLEAR-WATER

Red-Eagle said for you to leave,
come back when things settle down.

Bass fishes around under his bear skin cover and comes out
with a bone handle hunting knife sticking it in the ground
while looking around for his clothes.

BASS

Why, I done my part?

CLEAR-WATER

The war is over and some of our
band is considered traitors and for
that, the Union Army will take
revenge on all of us.

BASS

That ain't right.

CLEAR-WATER

If you have trouble go to any Choctaw Lighthorse Policeman, He will help you. The government allows them to continue being the law here.

BASS

Proibly, got a couple for the whole territory.

CLEAR-WATER

Three.

Bass nods and looks around.

BASS

Where's everbody?

CLEAR-WATER

Red-Eagle took the Bird Clan to a new place where the Army can't find them.

BASS

What about me? I'm one of ya now, I been here five years.

CLEAR-WATER

He says you are free, not a slave anymore.

BASS

Tell that to the people that wanta hang me.

CLEAR-WATER

Your government declared it, you a free. Go home to Arkansas and buy that land you want. We are finished here.

Bass is thinking.

BASS

But...

CLEAR-WATER

No argument, use the money from the work you did for the farmers and the Union Army. Red-Eagle gave you this to help.

She gives him a pouch of gold coins.

BASS

What's this.

CLEAR-WATER

Money, he got from the Confederates. He said it will help with your new life.

(Bass looks at her and she smiles pushing the bag toward him)

You are a good and honest man, go get your woman and be happy.

Bass gets up with the Bear rug around him.

BASS

I'll miss all of ya.

CLEAR-WATER

Go now, Big Black is ready.

Bass looks.

His big black horse is saddled and ready.

Bass puts on his pants, grabs his knife, boots and shirt, then his old pistol and holster.

He goes to his horse and Clear-Water walks with him.

BASS

I hate this.

Bass mounts up and looks down at Clear-Water and his horse.

Clear-Water puts a beaded tassel around his saddle horn and it hangs loose down by his leg.

CLEAR-WATER

Take this for luck.

BASS

I'll never forget you and Red-Eagle. Hell, everbody

Bass turns his horse and rides away as Clear-Water watches.

Bass looks back and whistles for Ofi.

She comes running.

Bass smiles and rides on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BORDER TRADING POST - INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Bass rides up and gets off of his horse looking around while putting the beaded tassel around his neck.

The old Choctaw from back on the trail and camp sits on the porch decked out in a mix of Choctaw Indian clothes and a Union Army coat. Ofi goes to the old man and they get friendly.

BASS

What you doin here?

OLD CHOCTAW

Bird Clan moved. I don't want to.

(Bass turns toward the
door)

Don't go in there.

BASS

Why not?

OLD CHOCTAW

They don't like slaves.

Bass frowns.

BASS

There ain't no slaves anymore.

OLD CHOCTAW

I don't think they got the word.

Bass steps up on the porch.

CLOSE ON - a sign - NO DARKIES OR DOGS ALLOWED, THIS MEANS U.

Bass' hand touches the door handle.

OLD CHOCTAW (CONT'D)

That sign says no darkies...

(looks at Ofi)

Or dogs.

BASS

Ya think they mean it?

The old man smiles.

OLD CHOCTAW

Your funeral.

Bass opens the door and walks in with his dog.

INT. BORDER TRADING POST - INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

A big, slick haired, homely CLERK (50's), looks up from reading a newspaper on the counter and looks down at Ofi then Bass.

CLERK
(American Southern accent)
What you want?

Bass is looking around the store.

BASS
Just a few supplies.

The Clerk's eyes narrow.

CLERK
We don't sell nothing to darkies
and there ain't no dogs allow
either.

BASS
The wars over, don't ya know, there
ain't no more slaves, or darkies.
But, you got me on the dog.

The clerk casually looks up from the paper.

CLERK
Don't mean nothing to me, git.

Bass walks to him and suddenly pulls his bone handled hunting knife and sticks it deep in the man's hand and the wooden counter top.

BASS
I'm stickin around.

The Clerk gasp and groans from the pain. He grabs for Bass. Bass dodges.

The Clerk flinches and grabs for the knife. Bass pulls his pistol and cocks it. The clerk settles down and stops, just looking at Bass and his hand.

CLERK
They'll hang you for this.

BASS
I should be hangin you for all of
your sins.

Ofi growls.

Bass looks at her and she gets quiet.

The old Choctaw walks in and Ofi goes to him.

OLD CHOCTAW
Thought I'd pick up a few things.

Bass smiles.

BASS
Come on in, we're open to all
people.
(looks at the Clerk)
Right?

The Clerk nods yes.

The old Choctaw smiles and start looking at merchandise.

Bass grabs two pieces of Jerky from a jar and gives them to Ofi. Bass then looks at a new pair of canvas pants. He takes his worn out pants off and puts on the new ones looking them over.

OLD CHOCTAW
Good fit, buy them.

Bass nods and tries on a new white shirt.

The old Choctaw man is looking at gloves trying them on.

The old Choctaw nods that the shirt looks good.

BASS
Lookin good.

OLD CHOCTAW
Good target in the woods.

The suffering Clerk starts to pull the knife out of the counter and his hand.

Bass puts his hand on his pistol.

BASS
Your lesson's not over yet. Lettin
the cat out of the bag is a whole
lot easier then puttin it back in.

The suffering and sweating clerk stops.

CLERK
You won't get away with this.

BASS

Who's gettin away? I'm shoppin.

Bass goes over and tries on boots. The Old Choctaw likes him.

OLD CHOCTAW

It's you.

BASS

Come on, git you a pair too.

The old man sits down and tries on boots.

OLD CHOCTAW

You want spurs?

BASS

No, my horse would take a dim view of that.

OLD CHOCTAW

Not to good with moccasins either. I heard you should never squat with spurs on.

BASS

Yeah, not a good idea to own'em.

Bass finds a pair of boots he likes and keeps them on, stomping the floor to test them.

The old Choctaw gives him a look. He then looks at Bass old boot and the holes in the sole.

OLD CHOCTAW

These old boots are so worn out you Couldn't strike a match without setting you foot on fire.

The old Choctaw tosses the old boot and looks at a leather vest then goes about trying on new boots again himself.

Bass notices the vest and tries on a gold colored vest, then a dark gray coat and a black overcoat. He sees another one like his.

BASS

Now there's a fine coat.

He tosses the old man the black overcoat that matches his own.

The old Choctaw has finished putting on his boots as he catches the overcoat and puts in on looking it over.

OLD CHOCTAW

I wonder if a woman can resist?

Bass takes a large pretzel to snack on as he goes to the gun case and pulls out a match set of forty caliber colt pistols that are mounted on the belt backward for a quicker draw. He puts them on and smiles, then takes a box of cartridges and loads the pistols.

BASS

This is so damn fine.

Bass hands the old man a pistol. The old man shakes his head and puts the pistol back and takes a double barrel shotgun and a box of shell.

OLD CHOCTAW

Eyes bad, shotgun good.

Bass nods to the old Choctaw. He looks himself over checking his overcoat and guns.

BASS

Most excellent.

Bass tries on a black hat with a leather band. He puts one on the old Choctaw gentleman.

They smile at each other admiring their looks.

OLD CHOCTAW

Like it. Makes me look good, woman fly trap.

BASS

I'm a new man.

Bass and the old man step in front of the hurting clerk. The old Choctaw goes in a candy jar and pulls out two licorice sticks and hands Bass one. They eat together smiling.

Bass takes a cigar from a cigar box, looking at it. The old Choctaw shakes his head no. Bass raises his eyebrows and puts it back.

OLD CHOCTAW

How much?

CLERK

Take it and go.

BASS
No, we be payin our way, this ain't
no hold-up.

The Clerk's face is distorted from the pain.

CLERK
Ah, fifty dollars.

Bass puts three gold coins on the counter.

BASS
Pleasure doing business with ya.

CLERK
I can't say the same.

Bass turns to see the door open.

A strong looking Choctaw LIGHTHORSE DEPUTY (30'S), walks in wearing a badge, six shooter and western clothes.

LIGHTHORSE DEPUTY
(American Choctaw accent)
That sure is a good looking hor...
horse outside.

The old man whispers to Bass.

OLD CHOCTAW
He's the Choctaw Lighthorse Police.

The clerk grimaces in pain.

CLERK
Do something.

The Lighthorse Deputy looks the situation over putting his hand on his gun handle, looking at Bass and the old man.

LIGHTHORSE DEPUTY
You robbing this man?

BASS
No.

OLD CHOCTAW
Hell no. When an Indian is around,
you always think he is the one
stealing.

The deputy raises his eyebrows.

LIGHTHORSE DEPUTY
Why has he got an Arkansas
Toothpick sticking out of his hand?

The clerk touches the knife.

Bass cuts him a look.

He stops.

CLERK
The buck attacked me.

The old Choctaw rolls his eyes and the Lighthouse Deputy looks at him.

LIGHTHORSE DEPUTY
Which buck?

CLERK
The black one!

The Lighthouse Deputy looks at the old Choctaw.

LIGHTHORSE DEPUTY
What you doing here, so far from
home?

OLD CHOCTAW
Shopping for new boots.

The Old Choctaw proudly models his new boots and Bass smiles.

BASS
Lookin good.

The Lighthouse Deputy raises his eye brows again.

Bass turns and pulls the knife out of the clerk's hand and the counter top. The clerk yelps from the pain.

CLERK
Shit. Shot that son-of-a-bitch.

The Lighthouse Deputy puts his hand on his gun looking at Bass and the knife.

Bass wipes the blade on the Clerk's white shirt and puts it away while the Clerk wraps his hand in a bar towel.

LIGHTHORSE DEPUTY
I say again, why was the knife in
his hand?

OLD CHOCTAW

Simple.

The deputy nods and smiles.

LIGHTHORSE DEPUTY

Don't you think a knife in the hand
could have been a little to much?

Bass thinks and shakes his head.

BASS

No.

OLD CHOCTAW

No. Had it coming.

LIGHTHORSE DEPUTY

Well, all right then. Looks like
the code of the West is in order
here. I don't see any tribal laws
broken. Go on about your business.

The clerks cradles his hand.

CLERK

What the hell?

Bass nods and walks outside and the old Choctaw follows.

The Clerk starts to say something else glaring at the deputy.
The Lighthorse Deputy points at him.

LIGHTHORSE DEPUTY

If you want to stay in business,
don't.

EXT. BORDER TRADING POST - INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Bass walks to his horse and the old Choctaw sits on the porch
steps looking himself over.

The Lighthorse Deputy steps outside.

OLD CHOCTAW

Son, could you bring an old man his
horse.

The deputy smiles and goes to the side of the store.

BASS

Son, is that your boy?

The old Choctaw smiles and nods.

OLD CHOCTAW
He makes me proud.

Bass is amused and mounts up.

The deputy is back with a paint horse and gives the reins to the old Choctaw.

LIGHTHORSE DEPUTY
You better get on home before dark.

The old man shakes his head and mounts up as does the deputy.

OLD CHOCTAW
I'm the father. You get on home
before dark.

BASS
See ya on the turn around.

The old Choctaw smiles.

OLD CHOCTAW
Thank you, I had a good day.

Bass smiles. They all ride off in different directions.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NELLIE JENNIE FARM - TEXAS/INDIAN TERRITORY BORDER - DAY

Bass rides Big Black up on a ridge where he overlooks the valley below with Ofi next to him.

He sees NELLIE JENNIE (20's), a pretty black woman plowing with a single mule.

Bass rides down toward her and stops looking at Nellie with Ofi following.

BASS
Well don't ya look so fine today.

Ofi goes to Nellie and gets a head rub.

NELLIE
(American Southern accent)
Bass Reeves, I thought you was
dead.

BASS
Just wounded from missing you.

NELLIE
Where the hell you been?

Bass gets off his horse.

BASS
I been buying land over in Van
Buren Arkansas. I want to marry ya
and go on to the ranch I bought,
and live happily ever after.

NELLIE
Ain't that all cozy, but your mamma
and her sister are here. You got
family obligations.

BASS
I know. I'll build a house and we
won't get in each others way.

Nellie smiles and pets Big Black kindly, then turns and
kisses Bass.

NELLIE
I missed you.

They kiss again.

BASS
I missed you too Jennie, but no
more.

NELLIE
Let's pack up and get off of this
rock pile.

They walk together toward her meager little cabin leading Big
Black and Ofi following.

Bass' mother and his Aunt see Bass. They start waving and
giggling, walking toward him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASS REEVES' FAMILY RANCH - VAN BUREN ARKANSAS - DAY

PEARLALEE REEVES (52), a happy big black woman is cutting up
potatoes in a big pan while sitting on the front porch of a
long wood sided house with her sister, JANE (55), another big
black woman that is helping.

BASS (V.O.)

Our family arrived at our new ranch and I built an eight room house with my own hands. I was so proud and we did well, raising cattle and horses. From time to time I would go to the Indian Nations to scout for United States Marshall's. Then the children started coming, we had ten before we knew it, everyone was a blessing. It was ten years after I left the Indian Nations in eighteen seventy five our lives changed.

Bass is standing next to a coral with six horses in it watching them with Nellie.

NELLIE

We done well here. Home is definitely where the heart is.

Bass is amused as he looks at ten children from one year to ten playing with Ofi.

BASS

We got as many kids as we got horses.

NELLIE

Bass, it's good here. Your mother and aunt er happy for the first time, the children love it.

BASS

We are blessed.

NELLIE

I ask you one thing for me and the kids... Quit scouting for the Marshall's office. You're gettin older now, be happy here.

Bass smiles.

BASS

Nellie, I always respected the law, even if it's uneven handed sometimes, that's why I help them Marshall's.

NELLIE

We want you home baby, not out in
the woods with a bullet in your
back.

BASS

Nellie, I never learned ta read or
write, I cain't do anything else.

Nellie shakes her head.

NELLIE

Sounds more like an excuse to go on
another damn trip.

Bass smiles and hugs her. They see U. S. MARSHALL FAGAN
(40's), a robust white man riding toward them.

Nellie watches him.

BASS

Well look whose a comin.

NELLIE

Trouble.

Fagan stops his horse.

MARSHALL FAGAN

(American Midwest accent)
Hello Bass, Nellie.

NELLIE

Marshall.

MARSHALL FAGAN

I got some good news for you. Judge
Parker down in Fort Smith, sent me
out here to appoint you as a Deputy
U.S. Marshall.

Bass looks happy. Nellie looks up at him and he frowns like
he's not interested.

NELLIE

Deputy U. S. Marshall? What for,
cleanin the jail?

MARSHALL FAGAN

No, A full fledged Deputy Marshall.

Bass looks kindly at Nellie.

BASS
Nellie quit... Ain't Parker the
hangin judge?

MARSHALL FAGAN
Yes, but he's a fair man.

Bass looks at Nellie.

NELLIE
Get on, you'd do it anyway.

Bass smiles and nods to Fagan.

MARSHALL FAGAN
Good, welcome aboard. Now Bass,
you're black...

NELLIE
No,
(She looks at Bass)
Damned if he ain't. I guess that
means you'll be gettin more money.

Bass is amused.

MARSHALL FAGAN
I just meant, be careful. These are
bad times for black people in the
South, with the turmoil over the
war and all.

BASS
I know Marshall, I'll handle it
accordingly.

Marshall Fagan tips his hat and rides away talking.

MARSHALL FAGAN
Be at the Fort Smith Court house in
two days. We'll swear you in.

Nellie looks at Bass and pulls him by the hand toward the
barn as Bass smiles.

BASS
What are you doin?

NELLIE
I'm stocking you up on some Nellie,
so there won't be none of it on the
trail.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - DAY

Bass rides his big gray stallion to the front of the court house, next to a hitching post and gets off looking around.

BASS (V.O.)

Big black got old and I turned him to pasture. I rode his son, Big Gray to the court house with my best tracker Ofi, that's Choctaw for Dog, I was now a U.S. Deputy Marshall, ain't that somethin. I didn't say anything to anyone that day, but I wondered how people would react to seein a black man with a Marshall's badge.

He sees a huge gallows with two men standing with nooses around their necks. The trap door springs and the men are hanged.

Bass is a little startled and looks away.

Marshall Fagan walks up with a hand full of warrants and a few gold coins.

MARSHALL FAGAN

I got your warrants and a hundred dollars in gold coin. You'll take a cook and two possemen with you. Each of these warrants pays fifty or so a head, all in Indian Territory.

(the Marshall looks the horse over)

Your new gray looks good.

BASS

Yeah, he's Big Black's colt.

The Marshall smiles.

MARSHALL FAGAN

Fine animal.

Bass is amused.

BASS

Listen Marshall, I'm sorry, but I can't read, or write, so could you read the warrants to me and let me see them, so I can member what goes where.

The Marshall hesitates.

MARSHALL FAGAN

You're a smart man Bass. Take some time and learn, it's easy.

BASS

I will, I shore will.

The Marshall smiles and starts to read the warrants.

MARSHALL FAGAN

The Brunter brother, no first names, there's three of them, wanted for rustling, murder and more bull-shit.

(hands Bass the warrant)

Bob Dozier, same as them.

(hand Bass the warrant)

Greenleaf, a Seminole, wanted for everything, been on the run for eighteen years...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVERY STABLE - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - MORNING

Bass is checking his saddle and his big gray horse as Ofi sits nearby.

Marshall Fagan watches three other men come in starting to do the same as Bass.

MARSHALL FAGAN

Bass, this your cook, William Leech.

WILLIAM LEECH (40's), a robust unkept man with a red alcoholic nose, nods and takes a drink from a half pint bottle of whiskey.

WILLIAM

(American Midwest accent)

Deputy.

BASS

Best put that away. They'll be no drinkin on this ride.

MARSHALL FAGAN

That's right Leech. Put it away.

Leech grumbles and puts the whiskey in his pocket.

BASS
Give it to me.

Leech bows up.

LEECH
I don't give nothing to no Black
bastard.

BASS
You're gonna be on the trail a long
time with this black bastard, ya
need to either quit right now or
get a handle on a new attitude.

Leech and Bass look at each other and leech looks away giving
up his bottle.

LEECH
Here. Sorry deputy, things haven't
been going good for me. I won't be
any trouble.

BASS
All right, forget it. Just remember
when you find yourself in a hole,
quit diggin.

MARSHALL FAGAN
This is Heck Stole and Tom Cotton.

HECK STOLE (20's), a tough looking average size man with a
five day old beard and TOM COTTON (30's), a big sweaty man
nod.

Bass rolls his eyes.

BASS
This is gonna to be good.

The Marshall smiles.

MARSHALL FAGAN
Head for El Reno and South to
Anadarko, then back here. I don't
want any trouble out of you Posse
men.

HECK
(American Southern accent)
There ain't gonna be no trouble.

The Marshall walks out and Bass mounts up.

BASS
Let's ride, we're burnin daylight.

The three look at each other then mount up and ride out following Bass.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ARKANSAS/INDIAN TERRITORY BORDER - DAY

Bass rides the front of the pack headed toward the Indian Nations Border.

Leech sports a big red alcoholic nose as he spits a wade of tobacco. The other two posse men ride along watching the trail and the brush.

TOM
(American Midwest accent)
Bass, we're comin up on the dead line, Them outlaws'll shoot ya just for crossin that border.

Bass glances back.

BASS
Then we best be careful as a naked man climbing a barb wire fence.

They pass a sign as they move into the territory.

CLOSE ON - the sign - YOU ARE ENTERING, FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES, INDIAN TERRITORY - a weathered DEAD LINE is craved on the bottom of the sign.

Bass hears the brush crack and he takes notice discreetly.

TOM
Did you hear that?

BASS
Shh.

Bass sees a slight shadow ripple through the woods near him.

Then he sees a supply wagon beside the road with supplies scattered around the ground and a man slumped over in the wagon seat.

Bass pulls up and gets off as Tom and Heck watch with rifles ready.

Leech takes another chew of tobacco.

Bass looks over the man in the wagon seat where there are bullet holes in the wagon boards.

TOM
Is he dead?

BASS
As a door nail.

Bass keeps looking and looks at the ground and sees tracks.

HECK
See anything?

Bass stands.

BASS
Yeah. I figure this man is wearin moccasins.

LEECH
Injuns?

BASS
No, it's Indians. Probably a Seminole.

LEECH
Injuns.

Bass cuts him a look.

TOM
What now?

BASS
Tom there's a Choctaw village bout a mile straight throw those woods. Get on over there and ask them ta come collect this wagon and the horses, then bury the driver. See if any of them know'em.

TOM
Why me, them Indians don't like me for some reason.

BASS
Get on now, take Cookie with you. Tell the Choctaw they can have the supplies for doing it... Heck, make a report and turn it in to Marshall Fagan when we get back.

(MORE)

BASS (CONT'D)

(Tom and Leech start
riding away)

Tom, you and Mr. Leech don't be
smart with them Choctaw, they got
rules about that, mess with them
and there won't be nothin left of
ya but a snort.

Tom nods and smiles, as he rides on and Leech spits while
following.

Heck looks at Bass and shakes his head.

HECK

That Leech is like a fartin skunk,
hard to be around.

BASS

Yeah, he's off his mental
reservation, some how... Heck,
check out the body and the area
round the wagon, I'm going to look
around.

HECK

I'll be here.

Heck nods and goes about his business.

Bass goes to his saddle and pulls out a heavy string. He
walks on into the woods.

BASS

Keep an eye out, there's outlaws
afoot.

Heck nods.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Bass is looking around for tracks. He then looks at a broken
limb and checks for scratches and talks to himself.

BASS

Who are you?

Bass turns and pulls down a tall sapling. He ties his string
around the top and continues to pull the sapling tight across
the trail and places it under another branch on the other
side. Finally he puts the broad loop on the trail.

Bass looks at a limb on a tree near the sapling. He pulls on it to check for flexibility. Bass lets it go with a swish and walks on moving through the forest.

GREENLEAF (40's), a muscular Seminole Indian man with long beaded black hair steps in the trail with a pistol drawn and a huge fixed blade knife in his belt.

GREENLEAF
(American Seminole accent)
You looking for somebody?

BASS
Oh Lord, an Indian man.

Bass takes off running acting a little crazy. Greenleaf follows trying to get a shot at him.

Bass passes his trap on the trail and slaps the sapling just as Greenleaf steps into the large loop.

The loop closes on Greenleaf's ankle and he is jerked off the ground, then flipped into the air and slammed back to the ground as the sapling springs him backward.

In a split second Greenleaf is surprised, but relieved the ordeal has stopped. The sapling springs back straight up again and jerk Greenleaf up, over and back, slamming him to the ground again.

Greenleaf stands up a little groggy.

He sees Bass with the tree limb that Bass had tested earlier pulled all the way back.

Greenleaf's eyes get big as he is slammed in the face with the limb and he falls back to the ground.

Greenleaf opens his eyes with a large whelp across his face.

Bass is standing over him.

BASS (CONT'D)
What a ride, huh.
(bass touches the huge
whelp across Greenleaf's
face as he flinches)
Whoa, that has got to hurt.

Greenleaf weakly acknowledges.

GREENLEAF
Who the hell are you?

BASS

I'm the law West of Fort Smith. I figure you shot that poor man in the wagon to steal his stuff.

GREENLEAF

You can't prove nothin.

Bass smiles with confidence.

BASS

Don't have to. There's at least a hunerd other charges against you back in Fort Smith... Greenleaf.

GREENLEAF

I'm not that fool Greenleaf.

Bass is amused.

BASS

The warrant, I got here in my pocket, says you carry a big-ass bone handled huntin knife and there it is. It says you got a half-moon scare on your neck.

(Bass moves Greenleaf's hair with the toe of his boot)

And damn, there it is.

Bass pulls his gun and cocks it. Greenleaf weakly gets up favoring his face.

GREENLEAF

I'm going. I could has beat you down, if you hadn't of used the limb.

BASS

Learn that from a friend. Put on your panties and deal with it.

GREENLEAF

I could have.

BASS

I know you're so bad, everbody shakes when you show up.

Greenleaf cuts him a look and walks off with Bass behind him.

EXT. TRAIL - ARKANSAS/INDIAN TERRITORY BORDER - DAY

Greenleaf comes walking down the trail near the supply wagon with Bass behind him.

BASS

Heck, meet Greenleaf, disgrace of the Seminole Nation. Been on the run for eighteen years.

(Greenleaf sneers)

Chain him up. We'll ride on and find Tom and Leech.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TRAIL - INDIAN TERRITORY - EVENING

Bass and Heck ride the trail cautiously as Ofi, the dog leads the way, with Greenleaf in tow, chained at the wrist to a rope.

Bass sees Tom and Leech.

Bass waves.

Tom and Leech ride up pulling four prisoners along, three men and a woman, all tied together with rope and chained at the wrist.

BASS (V.O.)

The Indian Nation's trail was hard and outlaws had a lot of places to hide. Me and my small posse have been traveling for nine years now, in and out of the territory. One day in eighteen eighty four when we were on our way back to Fort Smith, still deep in the nations, my life changed forever.

Tom gets off his horse and goes to Greenleaf and ties him to the other prisoners.

BASS

Looks like you had a good haul.

TOM

Yeah, a Choctaw Lighthorse Policeman was holding these bandits for us.

Tom mounts up.

BASS

Let's git as far as we can before
dark.

The group rides on pulling the prisoners along through the
wooded trail.

TOM

I heard from the Choctaws that some
outlaws put a price on our heads,
just like Judge Parker put on them.

BASS

It's true, keep your eyes open.

BUD STILES (40's), A rough looking outlaw gives his two cents
worth as he stumbles along.

BUD

(American Southern accent)
Dead or, alive, I hear.

MARCY GRAYSON (30's), A pretty, but rough looking woman walks
behind the others.

MARCY

(American Midwest accent)
Shut-up Bud and you might live
through this.

BASS

Both of you shut-up.

Bud gives him a crazy wild-eyed look as he walks.

Marcy just smiles and keeps walking.

Bass pulls up his fine gray horse in a small clearing and
gets off.

HECK

What's up?

BASS

We're makin camp here tonight.

They all get off their horses and start making camp. Heck
ties the prisoners to a tree.

HECK

I'll see if I can't find a deer or
somethin.

BASS
No shootin. We'll have bacon and
beans, Cookie.

Mr. Leech goes about the business of preparing the meal.

Bass looks around the area.

TOM
Poteau's just two miles from here.
We should stay there. They got a
hotel.

BASS
That's where the outlaws are. We'll
go get'em tonight. Just eat and
rest up.

Bass unsaddles his horse and relaxes.

Mr. Leech has a fire going and puts a pan of bacon on it. The
grease is popping and cooking.

Ofi sniffs the air and goes over by the pan.

LEECH
Git dog.

Leech begins to put bacon on a tin plate. Ofi watches for a
moment and steals a piece.

BASS
Ofi.

Leech is mad and his nose is red from drinking.

LEECH
Git that damn dog out of here, or
I'll kill her. She's always stealin
food.

Bass picks up his rifle and holds it looking at Leech.

BASS
You're ain't killin anyone.

Ofi goes toward Bass to eat the bacon.

Leech tosses grease toward her, hitting Ofi's back leg and
Basses leg. Ofi yelps. Bass jerks and his rifle goes off.

Leech is hit in the neck. He slowly looks at himself and his
bloody hand from holding the wound.

LEECH
You done it now.

Mr. Leech falls on the campfire.

Heck and Tom rush to him getting him off of the fire and putting him out.

Bass goes to him.

BASS
I'm sorry Mr. Leech. It was a
accident.

Leech gives him a blank look.

HECK
We better get him into town,
there's a doctor there.

Tom gets a horse and Bass saddles up.

Heck puts his handkerchiefs on the wound. He and Bass put the suffering Leech on the horse with Tom and Tom rides on toward town.

Bass mounts up.

BASS
Heck, stay here with the prisoners
and put some salve on Ofi while I'm
gone.

Heck nods and goes about his business as Bass ride away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - POTEAU COMMUNITY - INDIAN TERRITORY -
NIGHT

Tom rides to the Doctor's office. Bass rides up and dismounts helping get Leech off of the horse.

CLOSE ON - a sign - DOCTOR JACK STOWERS, Medical Attention
and Undertaking.

Tom raises his eye brows as he reads the sign.

TOM
Not much of an incentive to keep a
man alive.

DOCTOR JACK STOWERS (30's), a handsome curly haired man comes out. He looks at Bass' badge.

DOCTOR STOWERS
(American Eastern accent)
Marshall. What's wrong?

BASS
I shot this man by accident.

DOCTOR STOWERS
Bring him in.

They take him inside the office.

INT. DOCTOR STOWERS' OFFICE - POTEAU COMMUNITY - INDIAN
TERRITORY - NIGHT

Tom and Bass lay Leech on a medical table as the Doctor looks him over.

BASS
I'll pay the bill, it was my damn
fault.

The doctor nods continuing to check him.

DOCTOR STOWERS
I don't think it's to bad. Just
leave him here and you can pick him
up on your next trip through.

Bass nods and look at Tom.

BASS
All right Doc, thank ya.

Bass and Tom leave.

EXT. MAIN STREET - POTEAU COMMUNITY - INDIAN TERRITORY -
NIGHT

Bass looks toward a rundown saloon across the street.

BASS
The Brunter brother are usually in
there. Three of'em.

Bass takes his rifle from his saddle holster. Tom checks his
pistol for bullets.

TOM

Should we be doing this? I mean we got a lot going on.

BASS

This is what we came for.

Tom nods.

Abruptly the three BRUNTER BROTHERS (20-40), all robust men and heavily armed, step from the saloon into the dusty street.

ELDEST BRUNTER

(American Midwest accent)

What you doin here lawman?

BASS

I's just wonderin what the date is.

ELDEST BRUNTER

What the hell for?

BASS

I wanted to know what date to put on your warrant, when I bring you in... Dead or alive. Your choice.

The Brunter's are amused.

ELDEST BRUNTER

You ain't takin nobody in.

The eldest Bruntler gives him a tough look.

BASS

Tough talk. I understand, you think, you got to piss like a stallion and fart the froth off your beer, but that's just talk, ain't it.

The other two brothers laugh.

ELDEST BRUNTLER

That ain't funny.

BASS

Give it a minute.

ELDEST BRUNTER

Quit talkin and git to it.

Bass get a grime look and glances at Tom, then calmly takes a step towards the rough looking brothers.

The elder brother goes for his gun.

Bass abruptly starts shooting with his lever action Winchester rifle.

A bullet from the youngest Bruntler rips a button off of Bass' coat. The second tears across his belt buckle on his gun belt.

His bullets hit the youngest and the middle brothers in the chest.

Bass then turns to the eldest brother as he shoots and misses Bass.

The elder brother starts to shoot again. Bass is close enough to push the pistol in the air and then pistol wipes the eldest brother to the ground. Bruntler's gun falls to the turf and Bass kicks it across the street.

Tom is a little startled, everything happened before he could react. He snaps out of it and then checks the brothers on the ground.

TOM

They're done.

Bass watches the elder brother.

BASS

Get some chains on this one. We'll take him back.

ELDEST BRUNTLER

I'll get you for this.

BASS

Shut it.

The doctor comes out.

DOCTOR STOWERS

What's going on.

Bass tosses him a gold coin.

BASS

Bury'em. Wire the Fort Smith Court when your done.

The doctor nods. Tom puts a rope on the Elder Brunter's chains on his wrist. He and Bass mount up and ride out with Brunter in tow.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - DAY

Bass rides in with nineteen chained prisoners, being lead by Tom and Heck.

BASS (V.O.)

We got back to Fort Smith that summer and I found out, a new District Attorney that was a Confederate during the war, made it part of his job to push black people out of the Federal Court System and I was no exception.

Marshall Fagan walks up.

MARSHALL FAGAN

Good job men.

Bass looks at his men.

BASS

Take the prisoners over and book'em into the jail.

Bass dismounts as the deputies and the prisoners move out.

Marshall Fagan looks at him solemnly.

BASS (CONT'D)

What's wrong Marshall.

Marshall Fagan is sad.

MARSHALL FAGAN

Bass, your cook is dead.

BASS

What? He was fine when we left him. The Doctor said it wasn't serious.

MARSHALL FAGAN

That Doctor wired and said he's dead from complications.

Bass is thinking.

BASS

Damn, I didn't like him, but I sure as hell didn't think this would happen.

MARSHALL FAGAN

Bass, I got a warrant for you. The new District Attorney said he is cleaning up the Marshall's Service.

BASS

What? It was an accident.

MARSHALL FAGAN

I'm sorry, he's already charged you.

Bass looks firmly at the Marshall.

BASS

This is a railroad job.

MARSHALL FAGAN

They know about the man you killed back in the Seminole Nation when you lived there, and said it's a pattern.

Bass stays reserved, but he is mad.

BASS

This is not about shootin Leech. The Confederates are worming their way back in the government and pushing black people out.

MARSHALL FAGAN

Confederates or not. It looks bad for you, you've killed fourteen outlaws. They're saying, maybe you could have brought them in.

Bass is frustrated.

BASS

They want me in prison or better, hung, to set an example for the other freed slaves to get in line.

Two heavily armed U. S. Deputy Marshall's step up.

Bass looks at them harshly with his hand near his pistol.

The Marshall tries to appear not worried.

MARSHALL FAGAN

Come on Bass, don't make this worse, you gotta go to jail. I promise we'll sort this out.

Bass thinks for a moment and agrees.

BASS

Tell Nellie what's going on here.

The Marshall nods and Bass goes peacefully.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - JAIL - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - DAY

Bass is sitting in a big open cell with ten other prisoners and a two weeks growth of beard.

BASS (V.O.)

My case has been goin on for two years with me in and out of jail. First gettin out because there is no case and then back in because there is. I have exhausted all of our family money and now I sit here in jail, for three months, trying to raise more. All of my so called friends have forgotten me and the Marshall's service does not take care of their own. But, I still have Nellie.

WOLF-MAN BATES (40's), a tough looking part Cherokee Indian with curly hair is brought into the jail by a guard.

Wolf-Man walks in looking around and at Bass. He goes and sits down on a bunk still looking at Bass.

Carlo, a tough looking Mexican prisoner (20's) and another prisoner, MAYNARD MEACHAM (30's), a mean looking white man come up and greet Wolf-Man.

CARLO

(Mexican accent)

Wolf-Man.

WOLF-MAN

(American Midwest accent)

Carlo, Maynard.

MAYNARD

How ya doin?

Wolf-Man nods.

WOLF-MAN
Ain't that the nigra law.

MAYNARD
Looks a little like him.

WOLF-MAN
That black son-of-a-bitch killed
two of my friends, back me up.

Wolf-Man looks at Carlo and back at Maynard nodding for them to move toward Bass.

The two rough looking prisoners slowly move in on Bass.

Bass glances at them out of the corner of his eye.

Wolf-Man stands up and watches the other prisoners and moves nearer Bass.

WOLF-MAN (CONT'D)
Reeves.
(Bass looks)
I thought that was you. There ain't
a man in this jail that don't want
you dead.

Bass is a little amused.

BASS
Wolf-Man Bates, I see they finally
got your sorry ass...
(glances at Carlo and
Maynard)
And a lot of your friends in low
places.

WOLF-MAN
You're a dead man.

Bass smirks.

BASS
Don't make threats without
expecting consequences.

Wolf-Man charges and gets hit in the face as Bass gets up. Wolf-Man turns and hits Bass in the lip and it bleeds. Carlo Comes in from behind and Bass falls back slamming him against the bars with a clang and a rattle.

A mean looking, husky Federal JAIL GUARD (40's), just looks and does nothing.

Bass turns and Maynard is on him hitting Bass in the ribs and the face, splitting his eyebrow.

MAYNARD

Yeah!

Bass flinches, but slams his elbow in the man face and then hits Wolf-Man as he tries hit Bass from the side.

Bass stands solidly ready to fight sporting a bleeding lip and eyebrow, looking at the bloody prisoners.

Wolf-Man has a flowing cut over his eye, The Mexican has a bloody nose and Maynard has a big bleeding cut under his eye.

WOLF-MAN

Get'em, this ain't over.

Bass is watching the thugs closely as they circle him.

Maynard charges. He gets a boot in the balls from Bass and instantly farts while bending over holding his nuts talking with a squeaky voice like a little girl as he wilts to the ground.

PRISONER

You son-of-a-bitch.

BASS

It takes balls to do that.

Wolf-Man charges with Carlo.

WOLF-MAN

Get him.

Bass is entertained by the surprise and smiles.

Bass hits Wolf-Man in the throat hard as he can and Wolf-Man falls to the floor holding his throat coughing and gasping for air.

BASS

You should do somethin about that cough.

Carlo manages to grab Bass around the neck from behind, choking him. Bass flips Carlo over his shoulder and hits him in the face five times.

Bass stops and looks at the guard.

The guard turns away.

Bass then looks at the prisoners.

Wolf-Man is choking and gasping, holding his throat lying on the floor. He mumbles.

WOLF-MAN

I'll get you.

The Mexican is holding his bleeding face moaning, next to Wolf-Man and Maynard is still holding his balls moaning, rocking from the pain next to both of his friends.

Bass looks up to see Nellie walking in.

NELLIE

Bass.

Bass straightens himself and kicks Wolf-Man in the stomach as he walks away to Nellie.

BASS

Nellie.

They hug through the bars.

JAIL GUARD

(American Midwest accent)

No touching.

Bass cuts him a harsh look.

BASS

Mind your business.

The guard looks away ignoring them.

Nellie has tears in her eyes.

NELLIE

Bass, what's going to happen? You been in here a long time.

BASS

It's gonna be all right momma. This new prosecuting Attorney, is pushing the black people out of the Federal Court house jobs. That's what this is all about.

NELLIE

What happened to your face?

BASS

Don't worry bout it. Just a little accident.

NELLIE

Like those three morons on the floor?

BASS

Yeah, they are morons.

Nellie takes out her handkerchief and touches Bass' wounds through the bars.

The guard looks at Bass and Nellie about the say something.

Bass stares at him harshly.

The guard turns away.

Nellie raises her eyebrows.

NELLIE

I hope you know what you're doin.

BASS

I do.

NELLIE

I hired that lawyer, William Clayton like you said.

BASS

Good.

NELLIE

He'll be here later today, that was the last of our money.

BASS

I know this is hard, but do one more thing. Go to Judge Parker and ask him to let me out with no bail. Tell'em, I give my word to show up in court.

Nellie looks sad.

NELLIE

He hasn't done nothin for you in the last two years we been fightin this, I don't think he'll do anything now.

BASS

Do it Nellie. If I stay much longer
I might not make it out of here.

Nellie shakes her head yes.

NELLIE

All right, but the son-of-a-bitch
is white, he's gonna do nothing.

Nellie kisses him through the bars.

BASS

Get on now. He's not like that.

Nellie walks out and mouths, I love you.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - DAY

Nellie is walking toward the front entrance to the court
house.

A pretty YOUNG BLACK WOMAN (20's), walks to Nellie and stops
her.

YOUNG BLACK WOMAN

(American Midwest accent)

Mrs. Reeves, I just had to let you
know, your husband is a hero to all
of us around here. He represents
black people so well. We are all
proud of him.

Nellie is pleasantly surprised.

NELLIE

Thank you sweetie, he'll be proud
to hear that.

YOUNG BLACK WOMAN

Is he all right? Maybe we can all
go to the jail and demonstrate.

A white couple walk past looking at Nellie and the girl.

Nellie puts her hand on the girls arm.

NELLIE

Bass, is a law and order man. He
wouldn't want that. Prayer and the
fact that you all care is enough.

The young woman holds Nellie's hands and tears up.

YOUNG BLACK WOMAN
We'll have prayer for him at
church, and for you. Good luck Mrs.
Reeves.

Nellie smiles and walks on.

NELLIE
Thank you dear.

INT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - HALL - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - DAY

Nellie is walking down the hall looking at three criminals
and a Marshall waiting to go into court.

She stops at an office and looks inside through the glass in
the door with Judge Isaac Parker painted on it.

Nellie opens the door and walks in.

INT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - JUDGE PARKER'S LOBBY - FORT SMITH
ARKANSAS - DAY

A hateful, bun haired, pence faced secretary, MRS. VANCE
(40's), looks up.

MRS. VANCE
(American Midwest accent)
Domestic help, down the hall.

Nellie becomes stern.

NELLIE
I'm Nellie Reeves, here to see
Judge Parker.

MRS. VANCE
Colored's don't see the Judge. Go
down the hall to the domestics
office. There is a nice old black
man down there that will help you.

NELLIE
I'm surprised a black man still
works here.

Mrs. Vance gives her a look.

MRS. VANCE

You need an appointment, regardless
of your shade.

Nellie is proud, but pleads.

NELLIE

My husband, Bass Reeves ask me come
talk to the judge.

SECRETARY

With no appointment, I'm sorry. You
need to leave, your time is up.

Nellie leans over the desk toward Mrs. Vance to speak and
accidentally spilling an ink well in the woman's lap and on the
desk.

JUDGE PARKER (50's) A well dressed muscular man opens his
office door and sees the ink then Nellie.

JUDGE PARKER

(American Eastern accent)

Hello Nellie, come in...

(looks at Mrs. Vance)

Mrs. Vance that is a horrible mess,
please clean that up. You should be
more careful.

Mrs. Vance has an angry frustrated look on her face.

SECRETARY

Sir, I...

Nellie gives the secretary a humorous rude look and walks
toward the judge blocking Mrs. Vance view.

NELLIE

Hello Judge, thank you.

The judge looks past Nellie at his secretary and shakes his
head.

Mrs. Vance is more frustrated.

Judge Parker and Nellie walk inside the Judge's office.

INT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - JUDGE PARKER'S OFFICE - FORT SMITH
ARKANSAS - DAY

The judge walks to his chair.

JUDGE PARKER

Sit down Nellie, what may I do for you?

NELLIE

Judge, we need your help.

JUDGE PARKER

Are you talking about Bass' case? If so, I can't help, I'm the judge on that case. We should not be discussing anything.

NELLIE

Hang that, We've spent all of our money on lawyers and such, now we need Bass out and we don't have bail money.

JUDGE PARKER

Nellie, I can't get involved.

Nellie sternly leans forward.

NELLIE

This damn case has taken every dime we got, to do what the Marshall's service should have done. You can do better.

JUDGE PARKER

Nellie...

NELLIE

I guess the government don't defend their Marshall's, or is it just the white ones?

The judge looks at her for a moment thinking.

JUDGE PARKER

Go on home. I'll look into it and send him along.

Nellie nods and gets up.

NELLIE

Thank you.

Nellie smiles and walks out as the Judge sadly watches.

EXT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - JUDGE PARKER'S LOBBY - FORT SMITH
ARKANSAS - DAY

Nellie walks past Mrs. Vance with a towel cleaning the ink
from her dress.

NELLIE

Black is an attractive color on
you.

Mrs. Vance rudely smirks.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASS REEVES' FAMILY RANCH - VAN BUREN ARKANSAS - DAY

Bass is walking home down a shaded trail that leads to the
ranch house with his jacket slung over his back.

Nellie is brushing Big Gray inside the coral while a young
version of Ofi sits and watches.

Bass hurries down the road to the house.

His big Gray stallion nickers and the new Ofi barks.

BENJAMIN REEVES, (20's) comes from around the house and walks
toward Bass with new Ofi coming to Bass. Benjamin hugs his
dad and looks at him.

BENJAMIN

(American Southern accent)
Glad you're home poppy.

BASS

I missed you son.

Bass' eyes cut toward Nellie coming toward him with tears in
her eyes.

NELLIE

Your home, thank the Lord you're
home.

Nellie touches Benjamin's face and then hugs Bass and kisses
him.

BASS

I love you.

NELLIE

I love you too, Bass Reeves.

Bass pats his son.

BASS
It's good to be home.

They go and sit on the porch steps, then the children, now older come from the house and sit around their father and mother on the porch, hugging them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BASS REEVES' FAMILY RANCH - HOUSE - VAN BUREN ARKANSAS - NIGHT

Bass, Nellie, Pearlalee, Jane and the ten children all eat at a log oak table (all older now).

BENJAMIN
Glad you're home poppa.

BASS
Thank you Benjamin. I love you all.

Bass gives New Ofi a piece of chicken from his plate.

NELLIE
You're gonna spoil that dog.

Bass smiles.

BASS
What do you mean gonna?

JANE
(American Southern accent)
Bass, what's goin on at the court house?

NELLIE
Those bastards are trying to hang him for shootin his cook.

Jane grins.

JANE
You better be careful Pearlalee, you cooked this dinner.

Pearlalee shakes her head.

PEARLALÉE
Bass don't do things like that.

The children are passing food around the table.

BASS

It's more about the new District
Attorney pushin black people out of
the courts.

PEARLALEE

(American Southern accent)
Why'd ya shoot that cook, Bass?

Jane takes a bit of chicken.

JANE

Probably left the meat a little
pink.

Bass smiles.

BASS

It was an accident. He through hot
grease on Ofi and me. I was gonna
scare him by pointing my rifle at
the hateful bastard, but it went
off and shoot him in the neck.

NELLIE

What's worse, they took him to the
doctor and he died after the doc
said he'd be all right.

Jane puts some mash potatoes on her plate.

JANE

We better pack up and run. They'll
hang a black man for sure, even if
that cook was a no good.

BASS

We're stickin it out. I've done
nothin wrong.

PEARLALEE

Baby, you don't always have to do
something wrong.

Nellie pats Bass' arm, glad that he's home and proud of him.

They hear the voice of MAT LEECH (20's), a youthful muscular
young man from outside.

MAT (O.S.)

(American Southern accent)
Bass Reeves, I'm callin you out.

Everybody at the table looks at each other.

JANE

Holy Hell, the Devil has done
descended.

Bass gets up and puts his pistols on.

NELLIE

You be careful Bass.

BENJAMIN

What do you want me to do poppa?

Bass smiles and looks out the window.

BASS

Nothin son, stay put. This is for
me to do.

PEARLALEE

Maybe you should go out the back
baby.

BASS

That's not my way mamma.

Bass looks outside through the window. He walks out.

EXT. BASS REEVES FAMILY RANCH - HOUSE - VAN BUREN ARKANSAS -
DAY

Bass walks across the porch and into the yard.

Mat Leech is standing beside his horse.

MAT

I'm calling you out Bass. You
killed my father.

BASS

You must be, little Mat. You've
grown up.

(Matt nods)

Son, it was a straight up accident.
I harbored no hard feelin's for
your father. Lord, I worked with
him for nine years.

MAT

No matter, you killed him.

BASS

And I'm sorry for that, but I
 didn't mean too. I know how hard it
 must be to loose your father. I
 never knew mine.

Mat goes for his gun.

Bass draws and fires.

Two forty caliber shots hit Mat in both thighs. Mat falls
 back stumbling and firing his pistol wildly.

Bass quickly goes to him and takes his gun. Mat settles and
 looks at Bass.

MAT

Daddy's gone. I know he was an
 ornery old man, but he was my
 father.

Bass kneels to comfort him, putting his hand on the boy's
 shoulder.

BASS

I know son, I know. Ben! Get the
 wagon hitched, we need to take
 young Mat here to the doctor.

Mat suffers on the ground.

Benjamin comes out of the house with the rest of the family
 looking at Bass and Mat, then Benjamin rushes to the barn.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - COURT ROOM - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS -
 DAY

The court room has ten general spectators, Nellie, plus the
 ten children, Pearlalee and Jane, all sitting waiting and
 watching.

BASS (V.O.)

Finally in eighteen eighty seven we
 got into court to settle my
 affairs. That District Attorney
 tried his best to make me look bad
 with everybody he ran across. There
 was know doubt, he hated black
 people.

Bass and his attorney, WILLIAM CLAYTON (40's), a slick looking average man sits at a counsel desk near the Judge's podium.

The prosecuting attorney, TILLMAN (40's), an average dark haired man sits at another counsel table next to them.

Judge Parker walks in.

A heavy white BAILIFF (50's) stands.

BAILIFF

(American Midwest accent)

All rise, The United States Federal Court of the Honorable Judge, Isaac Parker is now in session for the case of the United States of America versus Bass Reeves.

(the people stand, the judge sits at the podium)

Be seated.

Everyone sits and the Judge looks at the court.

JUDGE PARKER

Bring in the jury...

(the bailiff motions and twelve white men walk into the jury box)

Is prosecution ready?

TILLMAN

(American East Coast accent)

Yes, the government is ready your honor.

Judge Parker moves some papers on his podium looking them over.

Bass looks around at the white jury and then across the court room.

He sees his former prisoners, Bud Stiles and Marcy Grayson sitting in the court room and near them are Tom and Heck.

Bass whispers to his attorney while looking at the white jury.

BASS

That juries all white.

CLAYTON
(American Eastern accent)
There are no provisions for black jurors, but, don't underestimate yourself. All of the jurors know you're an honest and just man.

Bass raises his eyebrows.

BASS
Yeah, like those prisoners are going to testify... for me.

Attorney Clayton glances toward them.

CLAYTON
Yes they are.

BASS
Now I know how Jesus felt when everybody helped him, right before they killed him.

Attorney Clayton is amused.

CLAYTON
It'll be all right.

Judge Parker looks at Attorney Clayton.

JUDGE PARKER
Defense?

CLAYTON
We are ready your honor.

JUDGE PARKER
Prosecution, start your opening statement.

Attorney Tillman stands.

TILLMAN
Thank you your honor.
(turns to the jury)
Gentlemen of the jury, today the government will show that Bass Reeves, did plan to kill his Posse cook over a dog. Bass Reeves own past history and our witnesses will prove out all of our filings for murder in this case. Thank you gentlemen.

JUDGE PARKER

Defense.

Attorney Clayton walks to the jury.

CLAYTON

Thank you your honor. Gentleman, my client is known far and wide as a good and honest man, but not just any man, but a lawman, protecting people's rights from criminals across this land. We will show our client's innocence, through eye witness accounts and his good character. Thank you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - HALL - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - DAY

Tom and Heck walk out of the court room and down the hall. Tillman exits and follows them.

TILLMAN

Gentlemen, may I have a word?

Tom and Heck stop.

TOM

Before you start, We don't know nothing.

TILLMAN

Gentlemen, surely you heard or saw something in the years you rode with him. I mean a testimony like that could get a man promoted to Marshall, instead of riding for a black.

HECK

Bass has always been good to me. He don't short cut the law.

TOM

You know he's innocent. You're just tryin to push him out cause he's a black man.

TILLMAN

I can clearly see you are not interest in doing the right thing, or becoming a Marshall.

Tillman walks away.

Tom and Heck smiles at each other as Tillman skitters down the hall.

EXT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - DAY

Nellie and Bass are sitting on a bench eating lunch from a picnic basket. Bass has his beaded tassel from Clear-Water around his neck.

NELLIE

I'm worried Bass. I don't know if you noticed, but there are no black people on that jury or in the court room, cept us.

BASS

Yeah, the bailiff, Mr. Chapman's gone. Looks like they got a meaty white boy in there to replace him.
(smiles)
Probably some Confederate Colonel's boy.

NELLIE

This is not looking good.

A white couple pass by giving Bass and Nellie a hateful look for sitting on the bench in front of the court house.

Bass just looks at them kindly.

BASS

I know. What ever happens, you and the kids stay together and if it goes real bad, get on to Indian territory.

NELLIE

What, I'm not leaving you.

BASS

Nellie, If they hang me, get on into the territory. Find a Choctaw Chief named Red-Eagle Weatherford. Tell him what happened and he'll look out for you and the kids.

NELLIE

I'm sure he's a nice Indian, but I'm not leaving you.

Bass smiles and hugs his wife.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - COURT ROOM - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS -
DAY

The court room is as it was before, except for one addition,
the old Choctaw sits near the front by himself.

Bass looks toward his old friend.

The old Choctaw smiles.

Bass is cheered up a little to see his friend.

Attorney Clayton looks at Bass.

CLAYTON

Do you know this man, Luther
Goodnight?

BASS

No.

CLAYTON

He is one of Bob Dozier's men.

BASS

I know Dozier. I shot him when he
tried to kill me back in the
territory.

LUTHER GOODNIGHT (40's), a trail worn cowboy with a big
mustache takes the witness stand.

The Prosecutor walks to him.

TILLMAN

Please state your name and
occupation for the record.

GOODNIGHT

(American Southern accent)
Luther Goodnight, doing nothing at
the present.

TILLMAN

Mr. Goodnight, do you know Bass
Reeves the man on trial here today?

Goodnight gives an overconfident grin.

GOODNIGHT

Shore do, he shot my friend, Bob Dozier, out in the Indian Nation's for no good reason.

TILLMAN

Tell us about that incident.

GOODNIGHT

What's to tell. My friend was herding horses south to Texas and Reeves gunned his down with out a word. Two bullets right in the heart.

Tillman looks at the jury.

TILLMAN

Can you tell us why you think he shot your friend?

GOODNIGHT

Hell no. He just shot him, straight out. Ain't no reason, besides sport.

Tillman looks at the Judge.

TILLMAN

No further questions, your honor.

Judge Parker looks at Clayton.

JUDGE PARKER

Your witness Defense.

Goodnight looks at the old Choctaw.

The old Choctaw drags his finger across his throat while looking at Goodnight.

Goodnight quickly looks away.

Attorney Clayton gets up and walks to Goodnight.

CLAYTON

Mr. Goodnight, you say Bass Reeves just gun down Bob Dozier for no reason, just sport as you say.

Goodnight is reluctant.

GOODNIGHT

Well yeah, that's right. Shot him twice, dead on in the heart.

Goodnight glances at the old Choctaw.

CLAYTON

Did Mr. Dozier ever shoot at Bass Reeves?

Goodnight looks at Tillman that is giving him the evil eye.

He looks at the old Choctaw at is also giving him the evil eye.

He and hesitates, then shakes his head no.

GOODNIGHT

Ah, nope.

CLAYTON

I have a Marshall's report signed by two deputies and a witness saying Bob Dozier fired ten shoots at Deputy Marshall Reeves before he ever shot back. Are you sure you never saw Bob Dozier shoot at Bass Reeves?

Tillman moves a little to get Goodnight attention.

Goodnight is nervous.

GOODNIGHT

Them Marshall's is covering their own asses,
 (looks at the old Choctaw
 and mutters)
 But maybe I'm not totally right.

The court room rumbles a little.

The judge slams his gavel.

JUDGE PARKER

Get quiet.
 (cut Goodnight a look)
 I'll have no more of that damn cussing in this court.

Goodnight looks at him a little startled.

GOODNIGHT

Well all right.

CLAYTON

Mr. Goodnight, in light of the
Deputy Marshall's report, do you
still say you're telling the truth?

Luther Goodnight squirms in his chair a little then settles
down as he glances at the old Choctaw then Tillman.

The old Choctaw continues to look.

Goodnight is a little more nervous now.

Tillman is staring.

GOODNIGHT

May the Lord strict me dead, if I'm
lyin.

Clayton looks at him for an awkward minute waiting.

Judge Parker leans forward looking.

JUDGE PARKER

Is there something wrong Counselor
Clayton?

CLAYTON

I was just waiting for the Lord to
do his good work.

Goodnight smirks.

The jury and court laugh.

JUDGE PARKER

Enough of the humor get on with the
case.

Attorney Clayton smiles.

CLAYTON

Sorry your honor.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - AFTERNOON

Marshall Fagan walks along beside Bass and Nellie with two
heavily armed deputies walking behind them.

NELLIE

I gotta give it to you Bass, that
lawyer shore knew his business.

BASS
It helps to be innocent.

Marshall Fagan is kind to Bass.

MARSHALL FAGAN
Congratulations Bass, your job's
waiting for you, when you're ready.

NELLIE
He may not want to come back. The
people that should have protected
him, tried him for murder. I say a
good go to hell is in order.

Bass kindly looks at the Marshall then Nellie.

BASS
We're broke. I gotta work baby.

Nellie shakes her head.

NELLIE
I know, I'm just a little over come
from sellin the house to pay the
lawyer and rent our new place in
town.

MARSHALL FAGAN
I'm sorry. Get some rest, you'll
feel different tomorrow.

BASS
Thanks Marshall, you stuck with me
through the thick and thin. I won't
forget it.

The Marshall give him a kind smile.

MARSHALL FAGAN
We got your horse and guns ready
over at the livery.

NELLIE
I'm sorry too, Marshall. I am
grateful.

BASS
I'll check in with you in a few
days...
(the Marshall nods)
I got to get home for now.

Bass nods. He and Nellie walks on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LIVERY STABLE - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - AFTERNOON

Bass and Nellie are walking toward the stable.

NELLIE

That Goodnight is all-out trash.

BASS

That whole bunch is.

Goodnight steps from the livery stable doorway holding a colt pistol.

GOODNIGHT

Hello Convict. I see you're out of jail with a little help from some friends.

Bass and Nellie are quite, just looking.

BASS

Let it go Goodnight.

GOODNIGHT

Cain't do that. I'm here to collect that Indian Territory bounty. The Court thing was just a little cover to get close to you.

A young STABLE BOY (12), comes from the livery.

STABLE BOY

(American Southern accent)
You want your horse Mr. Reeves?

Goodnight looks.

Bass grabs Nellie and they fall behind a water trough while Goodnight looks at the boy.

Goodnight starts shooting at Bass and Nellie.

The stable boy drives back in the livery for cover.

Bullets fly all around Bass and Nellie as water splashes.

Goodnight is walking and shooting.

GOODNIGHT

You can't hide.

He stops to reload.

Bass jumps up and charges him. Goodnight finally is loaded and Bass is on him.

Goodnight hits him with his gun butt and then shots at Bass as Bass rolls away unharmed.

Bass gets up and falls to the side when he sees Goodnight is going to shoot.

Goodnight shoot again and misses.

Bass grabs a pitchfork that is leaning on the wall. He throw it.

The pitchfork hits Goodnight in the chest with a thud and Goodnight shoots wildly as he spirals to the ground.

Bass looks at his own shirt. A large Rip is across his shoulder and pocket where the bullets tore them open.

The old Choctaw is standing in the livery stable door way holding his shotgun unnoticed, just watching. He walks away.

Goodnight lies dead with the pitch fork sticking out of his chest and his eyes open.

Nellie goes to Bass and embraces him.

NELLIE

Where's a Marshall when you need one?

Bass smiles as they look at Goodnight.

BASS

Those some-bitches are gettin braver.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - HALL - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - DAY

Judge Parker is walking down the steps of the court house. Marshall Fagan is walking toward him. They stop to talk.

MARSHALL FAGAN

Judge, I was just served with a petition from the District Attorney's office to fire Bass, cause he can't read or write. They say he can't make a proper report or serve a warrant.

JUDGE PARKER

Ignore it. Bass can serve a warrant like know other and makes no mistakes. His posseman makes all of the reports and I double check them. Tell the District Attorney to go to hell.

MARSHALL FAGAN

Yes sir, right away.

JUDGE PARKER

I'm late, I have got to go.

Marshall Fagan smiles and the judge walks on, then looks back.

JUDGE PARKER (CONT'D)

Bass has had enough bad luck. I want him protected.

Marshall Fagan nods and the Judge walk on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASS REEVES' FAMILY RENT HOUSE - FORT SMITH ARKANSAS - DAY

Bass is walking home toward his rent house carry a canvas bag with some groceries in it.

BASS (V.O.)

The trial was over and my family got settled into Fort Smith. We were happy, but broke, then one day in eighteen ninety six, I was reminded of an old saying; "All good things must come to an end." And in my later years, I've learned it is true.

He sees a black wreath on his front door where New Ofi sits on the front porch watching.

Bass hurries down the street toward his rent house.

Benjamin comes from the side of the house and walks toward Bass.

Benjamin hugs his dad and looks at him.

BENJAMIN
She's gone poppy.

Bass' eyes fill with tears as he looks at his son.

BASS
What happened?

BENJAMIN
She got sick in the kitchen and,
just died. It was so fast.

Bass appears stressed.

BASS
Where is she?

BENJAMIN
The doctor had her taken to the
hospital morgue. Grandmother and
Aunt Jane went with her.

BASS
Dear God, she don't desire that.

Benjamin is up-set too.

BENJAMIN
Let's put momma away properly
poppa, then take that transfer to
the Muskogee territory and get the
hell out of here.

Bass nods and gazes for a minute.

BASS
Yeah, we need a fresh start. This
place is not for us anymore.

They go and sit on the porch steps, then the children, now much older, come from the house and sit around their father on the front porch, hugging him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BORDER TRADING POST - INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

The sun is high in the sky.

Bass stops and looks at the familiar trading post and gets off his horse as new Ofi catches up.

BASS
Come on pup.

His old Choctaw friend sits on the front porch smiling. New Ofi takes a leak on the corner of the porch and goes to the old Choctaw and they get acquainted.

OLD CHOCTAW
Hello old friend.

BASS
(in Choctaw sub-titled in
English)
Halito kowi (hello friend).

OLD CHOCTAW
Don't go in there. The sign is
still up.

BASS
The war's over.

The old Choctaw grins and raises his eyebrows in a doubtful manner.

Bass looks at the signs tacked all over the trading post.

CLOSE ON - signs - Hot bath 5 cents, beer 2 cents, whiskey 10 cents, Root beer 3 cents, pretzels 1 cent and finally No Negras or dogs.

OLD CHOCTAW
(in Choctaw sub-titled in
English)
Sobah (horse).

BASS
What?

OLD CHOCTAW
My name, Sobah.

Bass smiles.

BASS
Mighty stallion.

The old Choctaw smiles with pride.

OLD CHOCTAW
I still got it.

BASS
Now you're braggin.

Bass grins and takes some wanted posters and a cloth bag of tacks from his saddle bag.

Bass smiles and touches the door knob.

OLD CHOCTAW
You don't learn so fast do ya?

Bass smiles and walks inside with Ofi.

INT. TRADING POST - INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Bass shuts the door behind his dog.

HARRY BOATS (50's), a balding man looks up from wiping his oak counter top down.

HARRY
(American Midwest accent)
Howdy. New around these parts?

Harry nods toward a sign.

CLOSE ON - the sign - No nigras or dogs in the store. Served round back.

BASS
What does it say?

HARRY
No nigras or dogs, go round back.

Bass puts a grin on.

BASS
There was once a sign there that said, no darkies, period. These modern times sure are a changin.

HARRY
Yep. Makin strides.

Bass appears suspiciously friendly.

BASS
What happen to the big slick haired man with the scare on his hand?

HARRY
He suddenly sold out. Said Indian
Territory was just to bad for him.

BASS
To bad.

HARRY
You forget about the sign?

BASS
No.

Bass looks at him for a moment and spits on the floor.

HARRY
Hey?

He turns toward Harry and his badge becomes visible from
under his vest.

BASS
I'm to damn tired to walk round
back. Give me a five pounds of
jerky and a box of those forty
caliber cartridges.

HARRY
You must be that Marshall from Fort
Smith, sorry.
(smiles)
How ya likin Muskogee?

Harry goes about getting Bass' goods. Bass takes a jerky and
gives it to new Ofi.

BASS
It's all right. Mind if I put up
some wanted posters?

HARRY
Why not. Just tack'em on the
building right outside.

Bass lies the posters on the counter top.

BASS
Thank you.

ARKANSAS JOHN JONES (30's), an average evil eyed man with a
mustache walks in wearing a fancy gun and holster.

Harry looks a little nervous.

HARRY

Howdy.

ARKANSAS JOHN

(American Southern accent)

Harry.

Arkansas John is looking around the store.

The front door clicks and everyone looks.

The old Choctaw comes in.

OLD CHOCTAW

What? Just thought I'd pick-up a few things.

Bass is amused.

The old Choctaw starts looking at store goods. He smells some toilet water and sniffs some talcum powder.

Bass glances at the wanted posters lying on the counter and sees one on Arkansas John Jones that looks like the man that walked in.

CLOSE ON - the poster - ARKANSAS JOHN JONES, wanted dead or alive for murder and bank robbery, \$300.00 Reward.

Arkansas John is looking at Bass.

BASS

Don't I know you?

Arkansas John gives him a ruder look.

ARKANSAS JOHN

Ain't you and the Injun suppose to be out back with that damn dog?

The old Choctaw points to himself with a question on his face.

BASS

Ain't you suppose to be in jail?

HARRY

This is Indian Territory you can't bar Injuns from the store.

ARKANSAS JOHN

Shut up Harry.

Arkansas John goes for his gun.

The old Choctaw and Harry dive for cover.

Bass draws and shoots.

He misses Arkansas John's body, but shoots off his finger when his bullet hits Arkansas John's gun, but not before John gets off a shot that shoots the front rim off of Bass' black hat.

Arkansas John's gun hits the floor. He holds his bleeding hand and then looks at it.

His finger is gone. His eyes get bigger.

ARKANSAS JOHN (CONT'D)

You ruined me, my damn fingers
gone.

Bass' eyes look up at the brim of his hat, then at John.

BASS

Sorry, I was aimin for your heart.

The old Choctaw looks up and goes about his shopping. He see a red shirt and holds it up to his body looking it over forgetting about the gun battle.

Arkansas John looks at him suffering.

The old Choctaw shakes his head.

OLD CHOCTAW

To slow.

ARKANSAS JOHN

Shut-up old man.

Bass looks at Harry looking up from behind the counter.

BASS

Patch him up Harry. We'll be
travelin soon.

(smiles)

I don't know why, but that name
fits you so well.

ARKANSAS JOHN

I can't travel like this. You shot
my damn finger off.

Bass rolls his eyes.

BASS

My God man, it's just a finger.

The old Choctaw walks up to Bass with a new hat in his hand.

Bass smiles and takes it, then tosses his old one away and puts on the new one.

OLD CHOCTAW

Looks good, buy it.

Harry finally finds an old rag and goes to Arkansas John rapping his hand.

Bass looks at the old Choctaw and puts a new hat on him. They admire each others good looks wearing their new hats.

Bass looks at Arkansas John.

BASS

You owe me for this hat.

Arkansas John raises his eyebrows.

HARRY

Old man, go get some fresh water.

BASS

Show some respect. Get it yourself.

Harry rolls his eyes and goes after the water.

HARRY

First a store clerk, now a doctor,
probably a cook next.

The old Choctaw is pleased.

OLD CHOCTAW

I always like it when you come.

Bass smiles at his friend. He sits on an oak chair at a table relaxing while he holds his gun on Arkansas John.

BASS

Arkansas John Jones, worth three
hundred dollars. You should have
worked harder. I heard Wolf-Man
Bates is worth a thousand now.

ARKANSAS JOHN

Bull-shit. He ain't worth spit.

The old Choctaw drapes a leather belt across the table with a star buckle.

OLD CHOCTAW

It's you.

Bass smiles.

BASS

I like it.

He looks at the old Choctaw now trying on more hats.

The old Choctaw finds one that looks more like the one Bass has on. He puts it on looking at Bass gesturing toward the hat.

OLD CHOCTAW

It's me. A hungry woman's mountain
lion meat.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TRAIL - INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Bass is riding toward the frontier community of Muskogee that he can see in the distance with Arkansas John in tow, chained and bandaged.

BASS (V.O.)

I moved my family to Muskogee and got settled in not long after Nellie died and I was policing my range in Muskogee territory. The outlaws decided us Marshall's were doing to good a job and put bigger bounties on our heads.

He passes a sign.

CLOSE ON - the sign - MUSKOGEE, 2 MILES.

BILL DOLAN (20's), a rough looking trail worn outlaw rides to the middle of the road.

BILL DOLAN

(American Midwest accent)
Hold up there.

Bass and Arkansas John stop.

BASS

Who would you be?

BILL DOLAN
I be Bill Dolan. Looks like you
done captured Arkansas John Jones,
(smiles)
scourge of the West.

Arkansas John smirks.

Bass smirks.

BASS
Let me guess, you're here to
collect your friend and a bounty on
me.

BILL DOLAN
He ain't my friend. But, while I'm
here, let him go.

BASS
Don't think so.

BILL DOLAN
Well, I guess I'll just collect
that three hunerd dollars for Bass
Reeves, then let him go.

Bass turns a little in the saddle to position for a fight.

BASS
Might be harder than ya think.

Bill Dolan smiles.

BILL DOLAN
No.

Bill raises his pistol to aim and cocks it.

BASS
Oh my god.

Bass immediately faints from his horse and hits the ground.

Bill and Arkansas John look at each other then Bass on the
ground and laugh.

BILL DOLAN
I can't believe it.

ARKANSAS JOHN
What the hell kinda faintin law is
that?

BILL DOLAN
Scared him so bad, he just fell
out.

ARKANSAS JOHN
Get me out of these things.

Bill looks and then starts to raise his gun again to shoot Bass for good measure, when Bass comes up shooting. He hits Bill in the chest two times and Bill falls to the ground.

Bass points his gun at Arkansas John.

BASS
Don't even think about it.

Arkansas John freezes.

ARKANSAS JOHN
I ain't doin nothin.

Bass goes to Bill. He is breathing hard. Bass kindly wipes dirt from his face.

BASS
Hang on, I'll go to town and get a
doctor.

Bill whispers loudly.

BILL DOLAN
You were fakin...
(smiles)
I'll give it to ya, you're a crafty
som-bitch.

Bill closes his eyes and dies.

Bass shakes his head.

BASS
Poor bastard.

Bass loads the body on his horse and mounts up with Bill and Arkansas John in tow riding away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - MUSKOGEE COMMUNITY - INDIAN
TERRITORY - DAY

Bass rides in with Bill Dolan over the saddle and Arkansas John in tow.

He see a slim built YOUNG MAN (18), tending horses nearby.

BASS

Son, take this man over to the undertaker, tell him I'll be along.

The young man walks to him.

YOUNG MAN

(American Southern accent)

Sure thing Mr. Reeves.

(starts walking away and stops)

Mr. Bass, the undertaker said when you bring'em in over their saddle like that, they go stiff in a u shape and he has to charge three dollars extra to straighten'em out.

Bass touches him a silver dollar and the boy catches it.

BASS

All right. There's a little extra for your trouble. Tell him ta charge the court.

YOUNG MAN

Thanks, I shore could use this.

Bass smiles.

BASS

You might as well keep his horse and saddle. There's nobody around here to claim it.

Arkansas John gets off his horse.

YOUNG MAN

Thanks, Mr. Reeves. I shore could use a good animal like this. You want me to take your horse and that one's to the livery?

BASS

Shore. Take good care of your horse and he'll take care of you.

Bass walks toward the court house with his prisoner.

Arkansas John looks the court house over.

ARKANSAS JOHN (O.S.)
 This is not right, I'm a fine shot
 and look at me, arrested with no
 finger...

BASS
 Yeah, look at you.

The young man walks on leading the three horses toward the stable.

EXT. CAMPSITE - RURAL MUSKOGEE COMMUNITY - INDIAN TERRITORY -
 SUNDOWN

Three men sit around a campfire. BOB LONG (30's), a handsome husky man needing a shave, sits with SPURS CURTIS (40's), a slim wiry man. Across from them is CUTTER LOONEY (20's), an average man with wide crazy eyes.

Bob is clean his pistol.

BOB
 (American Midwest accent)
 We got to do something to get rid
 of Reeves. He's arrested nearly
 everybody in this neck of the woods
 since he got here.

SPURS
 (American Midwest accent)
 I'm about to starve out, pickins
 are slim.

Cutter eats some jerky.

CUTTER
 (American Southern accent)
 Well it's sure, the bounties ain't
 workin. We'll have to do it
 ourselves.

BOB
 Hell, he's arrested or killed
 nearly everybody.

Spurs stands.

SPURS
 We ain't getting it done sittin
 here.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASS REEVES' FAMILY RENT HOUSE - MUSKOGEE COMMUNITY -
INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Bass looks older as he sits on his front porch dressed in a suit coat and silver colored vest sporting his twin Colts, and his Deputy Marshall's badge.

He watches a young pup play with a ball.

MARSHALL BENNETT (40's), a handsome long haired man rides up and gets off his horse.

BASS (V.O.)

It's nineteen and two and I been able to stay alive, but changing locations didn't make things any better. My life seems to be on a run away train.

MARSHALL BENETT

(American Southern accent)

Bass.

BASS

Hello Marshall Bennett.

MARSHALL BENETT

Taking a little time off?

BASS

Yeah, letting these old bones rest. I was on the trail to long this last trip.

Marshall Bennett hangs his head a little.

MARSHALL BENETT

I hate to tell you this, but I just got a warrant for your son Benjamin.

BASS

First me, now my boy?

The Marshall shakes his head.

MARSHALL BENETT

It's not like that Bass. The warrant say's he killed his wife in a jealous rage.

Bass speaks up before he thinks.

BASS

That whore probably had it comin.

MARSHALL BENETT

Nobody deserves that.

BASS

You're right, I'm sorry. I need to handle this affair for Benjamin, he doesn't understand the ways of the white man's law.

Marshall Bennett looks at him kindly.

MARSHALL BENETT

I'll handle it, so he doesn't get hurt, and you don't get in trouble.

Bass is thinking.

BASS

Give me the writ. It's my duty.

The Marshall thinks for a second and hands him the writ.

MARSHALL BENETT

Do this right, everybody's watching.

BASS

By the book.

Bass is sad as the Marshall mounts up and rides on.

Bass walks to the porch and sits down as a couple passes on the street and nods a hello.

Bob, Cutter and Spurs are riding down the street three abreast. A rider has to stop and move over to let them pass.

They stop in front of Bass' house. Bass puts his son's warrant away and looks at the three outlaws.

BOB

If it ain't Bass Reeves.

Bass looks a little closer.

BASS

Who be inquiring?

BOB

The Devil's disciple, here to send you straight to hell.

Cutter draws his pistol and shoots.

Bass grabs a Winchester rifle leaned on the wall next to him and shoots as Cutter's bullet smacks into the wall.

Cutter is hit between the eyes and falls to the ground with his eyes open.

Spurs has drawn his weapon and fires at the same time Bass shoots. Spurs is hit in the chest and falls.

His bullet goes wild and splinters the wall behind Bass.

Bob shoots. Bass has turned sideways and his badge flies off from Bob's gunshot.

Bass shoots again.

Bob's earlobe is cut away.

Bob shoots.

Bob's bullet cuts across the top of Bass' hat blowing it off.

Bob is hit as Bass fires again. The bullet explodes in the side of his throat and he falls to the ground struggling against death.

Bass walks to them looking at the dying men.

BASS

What's wrong with you people? Don't
you have morals?

An unattractive heavy WOMAN NEIGHBOR (30's), runs out of her house looking.

WOMAN NEIGHBOR

(American Southern accent)
I'm moving. This happens to often.

BASS

Send your boy after the undertaker.
(the woman just looks at
him)
Git.

The woman goes to her son that is coming out of the house and talks to him.

Bass walks down the city street leaving three bodies lying next to their horse in the roadway.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LIVERY STABLE - MUSKOGEE - DAY

Bass is mounting his horse. ROBERT BREWER (50's), graying small man walks up with his son HENRY BREWER (20's), a muscular quiet man.

ROBERT
(American Midwest accent)
Bass Reeves.

Bass turns in his saddle to see.

BASS
Robert, Henry.

ROBERT
It ain't right you bringin your own
son in. He killed my Linda Kay.

BASS
We'll have to let the law sort that
mess out.

ROBERT
If you let him go. There will be
know place he can hide.

Bass looks at Robert, then Henry.

BASS
Henry you're young and don't know
better, keep your hand away from
that gun.

ROBERT
You been callin my baby girl a
whore, you bastard. She was sweet
and kind.

BASS
Robert, I'm sorry she's dead, this
has nothing to do with name callin.
The law will deal with Benjamin.

Bass rides past Robert and Henry.

ROBERT
I lost my little girl. You be sure
Benjamin gets in front of a judge.

Is is obvious Henry is thinking about shooting Bass off his horse.

Bass glances back at Robert and Henry.

Henry relaxes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OLD WOOD SIDED HOUSE - RURAL MUSKOGEE COMMUNITY -
INDIAN TERRITORY - DUSK

Benjamin Reeves sits on the front porch of the old house with
a rifle on his lap.

Bass rides up on his big gray horse and gets off.

BASS

Hello son, how are you?

Benjamin is depressed, his eyes red from crying.

BENJAMIN

Not to good poppa.

BASS

You want to tell me about it?

Benjamin's eyes tear up.

BENJAMIN

They're going to hang me poppy.

BASS

Why did you kill her son?

BENJAMIN

I got to the end of my wits.

Bass sits on the porch.

BASS

I know son, Life is hard sometimes.

BENJAMIN

It is, She had been trifling for a
long time and I finally saw her. It
was just to much. I went mad.

BASS

I know Benjamin. Don't be up-set.
I'll be with you every step of the
way. We got to go in now.

Benjamin cries.

Bass gets up and puts his arm around his son, then gently walks him to his horse and puts Benjamin in the saddle. Bass quietly walks away leading the horse with his son on board.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASS REEVES' FAMILY RENT HOUSE - MUSKOGEE COMMUNITY - INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Bass is on the front porch cutting an apple and eating it while sitting with his new wife, WINNIE SUMTER (50's), an attractive average size black woman.

BASS (V.O.)

It's nineteen three and I missed Nellie, but it's been seven years since Nellie past and I needed someone. That's when I met Winnie.

Bass smiles at Winnie.

WINNIE

(American Southern accent)
What are you so happy about?

BASS

I'm glad I met you.

WINNIE

Me too, Bass. Getting married by a judge is not my idea of a wedding, but at our age, what the hell.

Bass cracks a grin.

BASS

What the hell. The only unfinished business I got left is Ben.

WINNIE

Well at least they didn't kill him.

Bass is thinking about Ben.

BASS

Thank God. But, prison is a tough place for a tender hearted man like him.

WINNIE

I heard a bunch of people got a petition up, to pardon him, maybe he'll get out soon and can get back to living.

Bass is in thought. He looks at her seriously.

BASS

I got a note from Marshall Bennett, early this morning before you woke up.

WINNIE

When where you going to tell me, next Christmas?

BASS

Indian Territory is petitioning to become a state, and the government'll be retiring all of the Marshall's soon. My jobs over.

WINNIE

Just like those ungrateful son-of-a-bitches, just throwing you away after all you've done.

Bass hangs his head and smiles a little.

BASS

Pretty typical.

Winnie takes a breath.

WINNIE

To hell with them. Talk to Chief Ledbetter, you know he'll hire you. You served as Marshall's together.

Bass smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - MUSKOGEE COMMUNITY - INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Bass rides up to the Muskogee Federal Court house and gets off tying his horse.

A husky, MUSKOGEE POLICEMAN (30's), walks past eyeballing Bass.

Bass just looks at him and walks on to the building.

INT. POLICE STATION - MUSKOGEE COMMUNITY - INDIAN TERRITORY -
DAY

Bass walks in the lobby.

A big headed butch hair cut DESK SERGEANT (30's) looks him
over and point to a clerk.

DESK SERGEANT
(American Southern accent)
Pay your fine over there.

BASS
I'm here to see Chief Ledbetter.

The desk sergeant looks closer.

DESK SERGEANT
Hey, you can't be carrying a gun,
especially a nigra.

The sergeant puts his hand on his gun.

Bass looks at him for a moment, but is ever ready to pull his
weapon.

CHIEF LEDBETTER (50's), an average man with a mustache walks
out of his office.

CHIEF LEDBETTER
(American Midwest accent)
Sergeant, what the hell are you
doing?

DESK SERGEANT
That Nigra's got a gun.

Chief Ledbetter looks at Bass.

CHIEF LEDBETTER
Stand down... Hello Bass, how the
hell are you?

DESK SERGEANT
Chief?

Bass nods.

CHIEF LEDBETTER
He's a Marshall, you better leave
his ass alone. This is Bass Reeves.

DESK SERGEANT

Sorry.

The chief starts walking away.

CHIEF LEDBETTER

Come on Bass, I heard the
Marshall's department is being cut.
Have I got a deal for you, working
black town.

Bass gives him a look.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASS REEVES' FAMILY RENT HOUSE - MUSKOGEE - AFTERNOON

Bass walks out of his house dressed in a nice dark suit,
crossing his porch and down the sidewalk.

Winnie opens the screen door yelling after Bass.

WINNIE (O.S.)

Be careful, that's a rough part of
town.

Bass smiles.

BASS

Get your gun and come along.

WINNIE (O.S.)

Go on to work and quit being funny.

Bass is still smiling as he walks on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - MUSKOGEE COMMUNITY - INDIAN TERRITORY -
NIGHT

Bass is walking down the street through the segregated part
of town generally looking things over.

He sees a saloon with Blues music playing.

Bass passes a rough looking black THUG (20's).

THUG

(American Midwest accent)
What you wanta do the white man's
dirty work for?

Bass stops and looks at the young man.

BASS

Son...

THUG

I ain't your son.

BASS

You're somebodies son, so listen
up, big shot.

The thug smirks.

THUG

You a preacher?

BASS

No, I'm closer to hell than heaven.
Listen boy, don't make your life
about hating, live it with dignity
and a respect for others.

THUG

Good talk, Uncle Tom.

Bass is amused.

BASS

You're thicker than an anvil. Can't
you just be somebody?

THUG

Get on now. I'm tired of hearing
your shit.

BASS

Look at you, don't just be what the
white people think you are.

THUG

I'm who I want to be.

Bass gets closer to the thug.

BASS

Get some respect about you, I do
this job, so people can be free to
go about their life in peace
without fear, not to worry about
fools like you.

The thug is amused.

THUG

What job? You're just hangin out
old man.

(the thug pushes Bass)

Get on out of here.

Bass punches him hard in the stomach. The thug bends over
gasping for air.

BASS

Don't you want to be a proud black
man and act like somebody?

(the man gasp trying to
talk)

What?

The thug struggles to speak.

THUG

I want to be a...

BASS

Proud black man?

The thug coughs and holds his stomach while spitting and
trying to nod yes. Bass pats him on the back.

THUG

Yeah.

BASS

Good man.

Bass walks on as the thug gasp and speaks still holding his
stomach.

THUG

Who are you?

BASS

Bass Reeves, the law around these
parts.

The thug acknowledges.

Bass has a sudden pain in his back and grimaces, but walks on
down the street.

He sees two people, a BLACK MAN (30's), robust and slick
looking and a BLACK WOMAN (20's), pretty and slim come out of
the Blues Bar. Then a SECOND BLACK MAN (20's), tall and slim,
comes out and attacks the first. The woman is fighting with
the second man.

Bass walks up watching.

The second man gets knocked off the first and looks at Bass.

SECOND MAN
(American Midwest accent)
What you want old man?

BASS
I want you to get quite and go on
home. There's no fighting.

The first black man and woman just watch.

BLACK MAN
We don't want no trouble.

The second man comes out with a knife.

SECOND MAN
You get on home old man, this ain't
none of your business.

BASS
Oh, it's my business.

SECOND MAN
I'm gonna gut you like a carp.

BASS
You talk to much.

Bass, like lightning pulls his pistol and puts it cocked
between the man's eyes.

The man moves a little and Bass slugs him across the top of
the head with his pistol barrel and steps into him taking his
knife away.

The second man glares at him with blood running down his
face.

SECOND MAN
I'm gonna send you to hell for this
old man.

Bass confidently smiles and slaps him again on the head with
his gun barrel, then puts his gun away. Bass puts the sharp
knife up the second man's nose and the man's eyes get big.

BASS
You first, smart-ass.

SECOND MAN

All right, all right.

The man and woman take off. The second man gives up, putting his hands up in surrender. Bass takes the knife away and stumbles down the street.

Bass watches shaking his head. He puts the knife in a crack in the wall and snaps the blade, suddenly he favors his back that is still hurting.

BASS

It's going to be a long night.

Bass suddenly has a deeper pain in his back again and goes to one knee grimacing. Bass manages to get up still hurting and walk on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BLUES SALOON - MUSKOGEE COMMUNITY - INDIAN TERRITORY - NIGHT

Bass sits on a bench out front of the saloon recovering from his back pain.

The old Choctaw walks up.

Bass smiles.

BASS

Sobah, what's you doing here?

OLD CHOCTAW

I came to warn you.

BASS

What the hell you talkin about?

Bass grimaces a little from his back pain.

OLD CHOCTAW

There's a big Cherokee man, by the name of Wolf-Man. He's coming to kill you.

BASS

What's new?

OLD CHOCTAW

I am your friend, I will help you.

BASS

No you go on home. We're both
getting to old for this.

OLD CHOCTAW

He has many men with him.

Bass is amused.

BASS

Thank you, Sobah. You are always a
damn pleasant surprise.

OLD CHOCTAW

You need to get off the street.
(a big ugly man walks from
the shadows carrying a
shotgun)
To late.

The man raises his shotgun.

The old Choctaw comes out from under his colorful wool cape
with a short double barrel shotgun and shots him.

The shotgun blows the man against a wall and he bounces off,
dead.

BASS

Damn good shootin for a scattergun.

Bass stands. He pulls out his pistols and shoots when he sees
two men immerge for a dark alley.

The two men shoot at the same time. Bass' bullets hits them
both.

They fall back into the darkness.

A dozen bad men with Wolf-Man in the lead fill the dim street
from the darkness, in front of Bass and the old Choctaw.

OLD CHOCTAW

Look.

They all start shooting.

The old Choctaw pulls a pair of pistols and starts raking
them off.

Gun smoke fills the air as Bass and the old Choctaw blaze
their pistols away at their enemies.

Many of the outlaws drop to the street bleeding and dying.

Splinters from the walls behind Bass and the old Choctaw splatter through the gun smoke rocketing across the scene as more bullets smash into the wood wall behind them.

FREEZE FRAME:

A SCROLL ROLLS DOWN THE SCREEN - Bass Reeves, born a slave into a life of harsh realities became the first black U. S. Deputy Marshall at the age of thirty-seven.

He was an exemplary father and a model citizen dedicated to the U. S. Marshall's Service and the public at large. Bass was known for his courage and honesty. He is considered to be the best lawman that ever lived, having over three thousand arrest and fourteen notches on his pistol during thirty-two years of service.

Marshall Reeves died at the age of 72 at home of a kidney disorder. The only recognition for his dedication is a bronze statue erected May 26, 2012 in Pendergraft Park, Fort Smith Arkansas where his life as a Marshall began.

FADE OUT.

THE END