

DEMON CREEK

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. DEMON CREEK - DAY

Surrounded by tall trees, a rolling creek cuts through rough terrain.

Three weather-worn, dusty prospectors, FRANK (50s), PETE (30s), and BURT (50s) pan the silt.

A ragged awning droops over a well-patched tent, while a simple dinner simmers in a black kettle dangling over a low fire.

The prospectors are lost in their work -- their eyes glued to the sifting pans.

A loud EXPLOSION rocks the land!

FRANK

Damn it!

BURT

They get closer every day.

Frank SHOUTS to --

FRANK

This is my claim, you bastards!
Stay the hell away from it!

Frank tosses his pan to the ground and heads for a bottle of whiskey at the tent.

FRANK

Sons of bitches!

PETE

They're at least two miles away,
Frank.

FRANK

How do we know the vein of gold
from my claim don't spill into a
motherload where they's blastin'!?

PETE

We ain't found no gold yet.

FRANK

We're gonna! Don't you second
guess me -- we're gonna!

Frank grabs the bottle and guzzles.

BURT

We can talk to them in town
Saturday night -- see how far they
plan on blastin'.

FRANK

I'll tell ya how far -- till
they're right up our ass -- that's
how far!

PETE

Your claim's all legal-like. You
got nothin' to worry about.

FRANK

What the hell you know, Pete?
That's Vanderberg Minin' company
blastin' over there! They're big!
A lot bigger'n me!

PETE

Frank, your claim is protected.

FRANK

All they got to do is pay off that
crooked Mayor and guess what? They
take my claim by immigrant domain.

PETE

Eminent Domain.

FRANK

Don't correct me when I'm pissed
off! I'm an American! I fought for
Jefferson Davis and got a slug in
my chest to prove it, and no Dutch
highwayman is gonna swindle my
claim!

He takes another guzzle.

FRANK

Bad enough we's in this haunted
place anyways.

BURT

It ain't haunted.

FRANK

I think it is. That's why's it
called "Demon Creek!?"

BURT

It got that name 'cause there's
rapid's five miles off down there.
Kill ya, sure as hell.

Frank takes one last swig and watches in the direction of
the blasts.

EXT. A VALLEY - DAY

Majestic mountains tower over the lush land filled with
trees and a flowing creek.

KA-BOOM! A huge EXPLOSION erupts on the side of the
mountain sending black smoke and dust toward the sky.

EXT. DEMON CREEK - CONTINUOUS

The echo of the blast reverberates through the camp.

FRANK

Son of a bitch!

BURT

Let's get back to pannin'. When we
find gold them foreigners won't be
able to take your claim.

FRANK

Why not?

BURT

Because you'll be able to bribe
the Mayor, too.

EXT. TOWN OF "NO CHANCE" - DAY

On the outskirts of the town, a sign announces the dreary
clump of buildings looming a distance away:

"NO CHANCE. 1874. Population - 125." The "5" is "X'd" out
and a "4" is painted sloppily next to it.

A small, dusty town made of dry lumber and glass.

The ghostly lilt of a piano wafts over the night air from
an unseen saloon.

INT. SALOON - DAY

A dark, uninviting space with several empty tables.

Slumped over the bar is NOLAN WEATHERBEE (50's) his vacuous, blood-shot eyes sunk into a gaunt, unshaven face. His clothes are dusty and extremely wrinkled.

A bottle is before him. His hand clutches an empty glass.

NOLAN

Del -- put a head on this, will ya?

DEL GIVENS (40s), the balding bartender in a white shirt, arm garter, and a stained apron, wipes the bar with a towel.

DEL

You got the bottle in front of you, Nolan.

NOLAN

That's dead, too.

Del lifts the bottle.

DEL

That was full a half hour ago!

Nolan lifts his watery eyes to Del.

DEL

Damnit, Nolan. Are you trying to kill yourself?

NOLAN

I'm not tryin' too -- but this rotgut of yours is.

Del furrows his brow as he turns to the bottles on the shelf behind him.

DEL

One of these days you're going to be sitting there and drop dead.

He puts the new bottle in front of Nolan.

NOLAN

Won't I be the lucky one?

The doors swing open as MAYOR SULLIVAN (60s), a portly, mustachioed, dapper gentleman, enters with an air of bravado and authority.

MAYOR

Good morning, Mister Givens.

DEL

Good morning, Mayor Sullivan.

MAYOR

My usual morning libation, if you please.

Del disappears off to the side.

MAYOR

A bit early in the morning to be
tippling the rotgut, isn't it,
Weatherbee?

NOLAN

It's morning?

MAYOR

You are a sorry case, sir. Whiskey
is getting the better of you.

Givens returns with a cup and a pot of coffee.

He pours, takes a bottle of whiskey from the shelf, and splashes a shot into the cup.

MAYOR

Much obliged.

A distant EXPLOSION booms.

MAYOR

The sound of progress.

DEL

They keep blasting and there won't
be any Bearhat Mountain left!

MAYOR

You enjoy their business every
weekend, don't you, Givens?

DEL

Ten of 'em came in last night.
They got into a fight, busted a
few chairs and cracked two of my
best tables.

MAYOR

Place looks all right to me.

DEL

Because my busted tables and chairs is out back to be chopped into kindlin'!

MAYOR

Nothing wasted.

DEL

They're drinkin' me out of business! You know how long it takes to get a shipment of whiskey from Billin's? And they got to order it from Chicago!

MAYOR

Order more at a time.

DEL

I can't front that kind of money! You and me both know there ain't no gold up there.

The Mayor gazes at the countertop.

MAYOR

Not for a fact, we don't.

DEL

It's just a matter of time 'fore they close up operation and pull up stakes.

MAYOR

Givens, you should not let customers place their cigars directly on the bar. It's full of burnt holes.

DEL

That ain't from cigars, it's where the whiskey spilled.

Del leans in close so Nolan can't hear.

DEL

I need to make my stock last, so I cut the whiskey with turpentine and gunpowder.

The Mayor responds in a blasé tone.

MAYOR

Well, whatever is in it, it makes
your coffee bearable.

He takes a sip.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NO CHANCE - DAY

A handful of citizens busy themselves with the day.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

The room is sparse with a single jail and a few "wanted" posters nailed to the wall.

SHERIFF JIM HOLDEN (45), dozes behind his desk. A square-jawed lawman with charismatic features, he's friendly with a no-nonsense attitude. You know he's the Sheriff.

The door opens and in comes EMILY HOLDEN (40s), picnic basket in hand. An attractive woman, her elegance belies the toughness of her being.

She clears her throat to get his attention.

He opens a heavy, groggy, eye.

HOLDEN

Just resting my eyes.

EMILY

Did you sleep in that chair all night?

HOLDEN

The cot in the cell.

He reaches for her. She leans in for a kiss.

EMILY

I thought you would come home last night.

HOLDEN

There was some trouble at the saloon.

EMILY

There's always trouble at the saloon.

HOLDEN

It's that kind of a saloon.

EMILY

Weren't we happier in San Antonio?

HOLDEN

I don't know. Were we?

EMILY

Happier than here. At least there were people to be miserable with.

Holden laughs.

HOLDEN

You're not miserable -- are you?

EMILY

A little lonely, perhaps.

He touches her cheek with a soft caress.

EMILY

You should have retired, John.

HOLDEN

And do what? I ain't no farmer.

EMILY

There's other things besides farming.

HOLDEN

Ranch hand? Cattle? That's not for me, Emily.

EMILY

There must be something.

HOLDEN

I've been a lawman since I was seventeen. It's all I know how to do.

EMILY

Every night when you don't come home, I'm worried sick that you might be lyin' dead in the street.

HOLDEN

In No Chance? Nothing ever happens here except drunks from the mine getting a little rowdy.

Emily opens her mouth to speak --

HOLDEN

That's why we came to this piss-
ant town... so you wouldn't have
to worry.

EMILY

John, you were shot in Virginia
City! You almost died!

HOLDEN

Virginia City is a tough town with
a lot more people. The population
of No Chance couldn't even fill a
church.

EMILY

That's supposed to make me feel
better?

HOLDEN

It's a good, easy, job Emily. We
make enough money to live on,
there's no shoot-outs or
robberies... hell, most of the
territory don't even know we
exist.

She composes herself with a deep breath and changes the
subject with an unassuming smile.

EMILY

I brought lunch for you and Cal.

She glances around.

EMILY

Where is your deputy?

HOLDEN

I don't know. Haven't seen him
today.

Emily makes her way to the potbellied stove and pours two
cups of coffee.

HOLDEN

I told him there's no need to
patrol as much as he does.

EMILY

Even quiet towns have lots of
shadows.

HOLDEN
Looks can be deceiving?

She nonchalantly hands him his coffee.

EMILY
Exactly.

Holden shows a hint of a smile as he takes a sip.

HOLDEN
Not in this town.

EXT. THICK WOODS ON OVERLOOK - DAY

POV - THE CREATURE

Heavy footsteps crush the underbrush as the trees give way to a clearing on a steep cliff. The distant Bearhat Mountain comes into view.

KA-BOOM! Another EXPLOSION of dynamite on the side of the mountain shoots dirt and rocks into the air.

A deep, low, GRUNT answers the explosion.

INT. SALOON - DAY

The Mayor finishes his coffee as Givens approaches with the large pot. The Mayor holds up a hand.

MAYOR
No, no. Three is all I allow
myself. I thank you.

The swinging doors part as DEPUTY CAL RUSSELL (21), enters. Handsome, upbeat, confident.

CAL
'Mornin, Givens.

DEL
Deputy.

He approaches Nolan Weatherbee, and ignores the Mayor.

This does not go unnoticed by His Honor.

CAL
Mister Weatherbee -- I didn't
expect to see you still sitting
up.

He turns to Cal.

NOLAN

You're early.

CAL

I saw you sitting here when I walked by two hours ago... thought you might need some help getting home.

NOLAN

Not for another bottle or two.

He swigs a drink.

NOLAN

I might want to stay at the jail tonight... save me the long walk home, eh?

CAL

Think you'll be able to find the jail?

NOLAN

If not, I'll be in the middle of the street, somewhere.

Cal controls his exasperation.

He turns and heads for the door.

MAYOR

Ahem!

CAL

Mayor Sullivan. I didn't see you there.

MAYOR

The hell you didn't! Cal Russell, I am sick and tired of the attitude you have been showing me.

CAL

I was deputy under Sheriff Olan for two years! I should have been made sheriff when he retired!

MAYOR

The town votes for Sheriff, and you lost! How is that my fault!?

CAL

Because I was the only one
interested in the job until you
wrote to Holden in Virginia City!

MAYOR

I am not having this discussion
with you again. He has more
experience, and you need to accept
the voters' decision.

Cal shoots him a look of mild disgust as he plows through
the swinging doors.

EXT. NEAR DEMON CREEK - DAY

POV - THE CREATURE

The woods are dense as heavy footsteps CRUSH the
undergrowth and advance forward.

Deep, heavy breathing is the only other sound. The woods
are void of birdsong.

KA-BOOM! Another EXPLOSION rocks the woods.

The advance stops.

A distant voice yells out.

FRANK (O.S.)

Son of a bitch!

The advance continues as the breathing grows more
aggressive and short.

The dense leaves and brush thin out. In the distance, the
three prospectors sift with their pans in the creek.

EXT. DEMON CREEK - DAY

Frank tosses the contents of his pan onto the bank.

He mutters under his breath.

FRANK

No luck. No luck. We need to get
some of that dynamite, that's what
we need.

The men work in silence for several moments. The only
sound is from the creek.

Three WOOD KNOCKS echo through the silence - as if someone were slamming a large branch against a tree.

WHOO! WHOOP! Reverberates from the woods.

This gets the attention of the prospectors. They scan the dense area around them.

PETE

What the hell was that?

WHOO! WHOOP! Echoes again.

BURT

Jesus. Injuns.

FRANK

Get the guns.

Burt and Pete drop their pans and race for the tent as Frank continues to study the woods. He watches with wide eyes as a treetop sways as if being shaken.

FRANK

What the hell...

He spots a large, DARK FIGURE, partially hidden by brush and trees.

FRANK

Gimme the rifle! Gimme the rifle!

Pete hands Frank a rifle.

PETE

Wait! It ain't doin' nothin'!

Without haste, Frank raises the gun and fires - BANG!

The dark blur lets out a long, drawn-out INHUMAN SCREAM that chills the bones.

PETE

You didn't kill it, Frank.

The men stand fast in shock as they hear the heavy THUMPS of running footsteps fade deep into the woods.

BURT

We goin' after it?

FRANK

Are you loco?

PETE

That weren't no bear, and now it's
pissed off.

He turns to Burt.

PETE

You want to go after that!?

Burt's eyes are locked on the Woodline.

BURT

Yeah... maybe not.

Frank glares ahead as he mumbles under his breath.

Pete speaks in a hushed tone.

PETE

What the hell was that?

FRANK

You sure this place is called
"Demon Creek" 'cause of them
rapids?

EXT. PORTER HOME - NIGHT

An isolated, simple homestead nestled in a clearing. The windows radiate a soft, flickering, orange glow.

The door opens and IDA PORTER (17), emerges onto the porch. Dressed in gingham, she's a plain girl, but with a fresh face and laughing eyes.

LEE NORMAN (18), follows her out, closing the door behind him. Dressed in his Sunday best with slicked-back hair, hat in hand, he is all manners.

IDA

I had a lovely evening, Lee.

Lee reaches to take her waist, when the door opens to reveal SILAS PORTER (40s), pleasant face and a pipe in his mouth. He casts his eyes to the sky.

SILAS

Looks like rain. Best get back to town before you get soaked.

Lee glances at the star-filled sky.

LEE

There ain't a cloud in the sky!

He catches the icy glare of Mister Porter.

MRS. JANE PORTER (40s), attractive, and wearing her best dress and hair in a bun, rushes to the door.

JANE

Now, Silas, you get in here and leave them alone.

As she ushers Silas back into the house --

SILAS

Ida, you don't stay out there too long!

Jane SLAMS the door shut.

Ida sees Lee's nervous expression.

IDA

Don't worry about Papa.

Lee manages a smile. He spies Silas at the window.

LEE

Well, goodnight, Ida.

He unhitches his horse.

She hurries up to him and leans in close.

IDA

You're leaving!?

Lee glances at the window.

Ida shoots a look at the window.

IDA

Papa!

JANE (O.S.)

Silas! Get away from that window and give your daughter some privacy!

Lee extends his arm.

LEE

Walk a spell?

She puts her arm in his, and they stroll... the horse lags carelessly behind them.

The door CREAKS open as Silas watches them depart. Jane pulls him back in and closes the door.

EXT. WOODS AT PROPERTY'S EDGE - NIGHT

The horse is hitched to a low branch.

Ida and Lee embrace. They kiss long and romantic. Ida lingers, then breaks off.

IDA
I should get back home.

LEE
Just a little longer.

They kiss again. Ida melts into his arms. They can't get enough of each other.

Three loud KNOCKS interrupt their passionate kiss. They pull apart with alarm.

The KNOCKS sound as if a heavy wooden branch were slamming against a tree trunk.

Again -- KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK!

IDA
What is that?

They listen. The woods are silent. No night sounds.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK!

His agitated horse WHINNIES and kicks.

LEE
Wait here.

IDA
Let's get back to the house!

LEE
In a minute. I want to see who that is.

He disappears into the woods.

IDA
Lee!

The horse continues to WHINNY and kick.

The night air cracks with a blood curdling, inhuman SCREAM, followed by Lee SCREAMING in death throes.

Ida rushes towards Lee's cry.

A CLEARING

Ida races through the dark. She trips and tumbles to the ground.

She lifts herself to see Lee's body in a pool of blood. His chest has been torn apart and his throat ripped open.

Ida SCREAMS!

An animalistic GRUNT and a GROWL drowns out her cry as a Dark Figure looms over her. A tremendously loud THUD silences her.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Nolan is slumped on the bar with an empty bottle before him. Del Givens wipes down the countertop.

TWO DRUNK MEN stumble out the door with a wave to Givens.

Cal enters.

DEL

I ain't never seen a man drink as much as he does. Why do you help him every night?

CAL

I feel sorry for him.

DEL

So do I... but that Injun attack was twenty years ago.

Cal pulls Nolan up from the bar, throws the virtually unconscious man's arm over his shoulder, and helps him to his feet.

CAL

I think there's some things you can never let go, Del.

With effort, he heads for the door.

CAL
See you tomorrow.

They exit.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NO CHANCE - CONTINUOUS

The street is dark and empty as Cal struggles to pull the deadweight of Nolan Weatherbee.

CAL
You're staying in the cell
tonight, Nolan... I can't do this
all the way to your house...

He sees Sheriff Holden seated outside the office. Holden rises and heads towards him.

HOLDEN
Need a hand?

CAL
I'd welcome it.

Holden grabs onto Nolan's other side, and they make their way to the office.

Nolan's motionless feet drag in the dirt.

CAL
I've seen him drunk, but tonight
he topped himself.

HOLDEN
Taking him home?

CAL
It's quite a walk.

HOLDEN
He can sleep it off in the cell.

EXT. PORTER HOME - DAY

An anxious Jane Porter paces in front of the house.

She hears the GALLOP of a horse. Silas reins in his horse and dismounts.

SILAS
Rode to Lee's house. He never came
home neither.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Rode as far as the creek and the
east valley. Couldn't find a
trail.

She holds back tears.

JANE
Oh, my God.

SILAS
I'm going to search towards
Bearhat Mountain.

The CLOP-CLOP-CLOP of a horse draws Jane's attention.

Lee's horse walks towards the house.

JANE
Silas!

SILAS
That's Lee's horse!

EXT. MAIN STREET - NO CHANCE - DAY

Holden and Emily drive their wagon past the front of the
Sheriff's Office and turn into the alley next to it.

EXT. ALLY NEXT TO SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Holden reins in for a stop. He jumps down, walks to the
other side, and helps Emily.

HOLDEN
You headed for the ladies' meeting
now?

EMILY
It's not for a half hour yet.

He tethers the horse to the post.

HOLDEN
Cal should have the coffee on.

They enter the building.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Holden and Emily enter to see Nolan Weatherbee, out cold,
on the cot in the cell.

Emily is taken aback at the sight of Nolan.

HOLDEN
He's just sleeping one off.

The coffee pot is cold. Holden opens the stove.

HOLDEN
Didn't even get a fire going.

EMILY
I'll take care of it.

Emily takes charge and tends to starting the fire.

HOLDEN
I wonder where Cal is!?

EMILY
He must be busy with something.

HOLDEN
That would be unusual.

He looks at Nolan.

HOLDEN
And this poor bastard.

EMILY
I think it's shameful.

The door opens and Cal enters.

HOLDEN
Where have you been?

CAL
At the schoolhouse. Mrs. Porter never showed up today -- never sent any word.

EMILY
That's not like Jane. She would have sent Ida to take her place.

CAL
The Mayor ordered me to watch the kids, and if she didn't show up in a hour, to let them go home.

He shrugs.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Brothers, MARTIN (10), and ANDY (11) CLARK, schoolbooks in hand, amble along without a care in the world.

MARTIN

Let's cut a switch and go fishin'!

ANDY

Nah.

MARTIN

We got the whole day! We gotta do somethin'!

ANDY

I just want to go home.

MARTIN

For extra chores!?

A loud WHOOP WHOOP cries out from the woods. The boys freeze in place. The woods have gone silent. No birds, no animal sounds. Silence.

They see distant branches move.

ANDY

Probably some of the kids from school trying to spook us.

Andy runs into the woods. Martin doesn't budge.

A loud, harsh, piercing, animalistic SCREECH rings out! Andy SCREAMS!

ANDY (O.S.)

Martin! Run!

He SCREAMS again! Martin snaps his head in all directions for help that isn't there -- and rushes towards the screams of his brother.

IN THE WOODS

As Martin races to his brother, he sees a large Dark Figure, hidden by trees, brush, and branches, run parallel to him.

Branches SNAP, and the brush SWOOSHES aside as the THUD-THUD-THUD of heavy footsteps boom and crush the ground.

Martin stops. The large black figure stops. The boy turns and runs back towards the road.

THUD-THUD-THUD of the heavy footsteps behind him.

EXT. NO CHANCE - MAIN STREET - DAY

A few ladies and men are busy about the town. Several school kids play in the street.

BEN WAINWRIGHT (60s), a wiry, bespectacled shopkeeper, makes his way across the street -- His face grave with concern that draws the attention of the townspeople.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Cal pours himself some coffee as Ben enters. He shakes as if he has seen a ghost.

BEN
Sheriff...

HOLDEN
Ben? What's wrong?

Ben tries to form words - nothing comes out.

HOLDEN
What is it?

BEN
I... I can't... never seen the
like. Never...

CAL
Seen what?

Ben shakes as he scrapes his hand through his hair.

HOLDEN
What's wrong, Ben?

BEN
Come... quick.

Holden, Cal, and Emily follow Ben and exit.

EXT. BEHIND THE GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

A DEAD MAN lies on blood-soaked ground. His face is disfigured, an arm has been torn off, and his chest is ripped apart exposing bone and guts.

A pistol lies near the severed arm.

Holden arrives and recoils back a step. He quickly hides the shock of what he is seeing. Cal looks sick, as Emily turns away.

EMILY

Oh, dear God.

CAL

I ain't never seen a man torn apart like that.

BEN

When I unlocked the back door here... there he was.

CAL

I can't tell who it is.

Holden kneels next to the body. He reaches into the coat pocket, and pulls out a bloody billfold.

HOLDEN

It wasn't a robbery.

EMILY

Who could have done this?

HOLDEN

A bear... or a mountain lion.

CAL

Damn.

Holden examines the ground around the area.

CAL

Mountain lion. Must be as big as a horse.

The dead man's hand is clenched. Holden pries the fingers apart and sees a clump of black fur.

CAL

A bear?

HOLDEN

Can't make out any tracks. Looks like he put up quite a struggle.

CAL

Did you hear anything, Ben?

BEN

No...

He points to a second floor window.

BEN

...and I sleep right upstairs!

Holden opens the chamber of the dead man's pistol.

HOLDEN

Chamber's full. He never got a shot off.

He turns to Cal.

HOLDEN

Go get Doc Tyler.

CAL

Don't you mean the undertaker?

HOLDEN

The doctor. Tell him to bring his wagon and a tarp... we don't want the body seen by anyone.

Cal nods "yes."

HOLDEN

See if he can tell what these claw marks are from.

CAL

Yes, Sir.

HOLDEN

I'm riding out to check on Mrs. Porter.

CAL

Right.

Cal departs.

EMILY

I'm going with you.

Holden agrees with a nod.

EXT. A RIVER - DAY

Silas rides, rifle in hand as he scans his surroundings. A short distance from the river is the woodline.

POV - THE CREATURE

Silas is seen from a distance as he calls out --

SILAS

Ida! Ida!

BACK TO SCENE

Silas FIRES his rifle into the air.

SILAS

Ida! Lee!

A long, drawn-out terrifying SCREAM booms from the woods.

Silas's horse becomes impatient.

SILAS

Steady, boy! Steady!

EXT. PORTER HOME - DAY

A horse and wagon wait next to the house. Holden's horse is hitched to the post.

Jane is seated next to the front door. Emily is next to her, holding her friend's hand.

Holden listens to Jane's trance-like reply.

JANE

...when he returned the first time... that's when Lee's horse walked up to the house... Silas rode off into that direction...

HOLDEN

How long ago, Jane?

JANE

I'm not sure... three, maybe four hours.

She turns to Emily.

JANE

Ida and Lee... never returned.
They never came back, Emily...

Emily gives a compassionate nod.

HOLDEN

I'll have a look. Might be gone
for a while.

JANE

You'll find them?

HOLDEN

I'll try.

EMILY

Be careful, Jim.

HOLDEN

Stay with her, Emily.

He mounts his horse.

HOLDEN

Which direction, Jane?

Jane points. Holden spurs his horse and they depart.

JANE

He'll find them -- won't he,
Emily?

The ladies watch until he disappears into the woods.

EMILY

How about I make us some tea?

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Cal waits uncomfortably in the sparse office. His eyes study the bottles of medicine lined up on shelves. A framed diploma rests at a crooked angle over a cluttered rolltop desk.

The examination room door opens, and out steps DOC TYLER (70s), a refined, respected, likable gentleman. His silver hair neatly combed.

Shaken, he rolls his shirt sleeves down as he takes a seat and regains composure.

CAL

Well, Doc?

TYLER

I think... I'm pretty certain...
it's Del Givens.

CAL

What!?

TYLER

Had a rather nasty scar on his
left leg from the war. Bayonet, I
think.

CAL

Del Givens. He would lock up the
saloon at night and leave out of
the back door. He'd walk home
behind the buildings.

TYLER

Behind them?

CAL

So he wouldn't run into drunks
wanting a last drink.

TYLER

I see. Well, last night he ran
into something.

CAL

What was it?

TYLER

I can tell you what it wasn't.
Wasn't a bear... wasn't a mountain
lion... claw marks don't match to
either of those.

CAL

We looking for a man?

With hesitation, Tyler nods "no."

TYLER

Death came quickly. Those are not
knife cuts. From what I can
determine, he was clawed apart
with bare hands... but a man
couldn't do it.

CAL

So what are we looking for?

He hesitates --

TYLER

I don't know.

CAL

Jesus, Doc...

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

Holden rides at a walk -- his eyes fixed on the ground. He sees a spot of blood, and dismounts.

Taking a few steps forward, he sees more blood splattered over the ground.

Reins in hand, he leads his horse forward.

EXT. PORTER HOME - DAY

Seated outside, Emily sips from her teacup. Jane remains quiet in her chair - a cup of tea on a table next to her.

EMILY

Jane, you should try and take a sip.

A whisper --

JANE

I can't.

She turns to Emily.

JANE

Did you know I was superstitious?

Emily smiles.

EMILY

No.

JANE

Very much so. But... I think that's changed. I don't believe superstitions are real anymore.

EMILY

Why not?

JANE

When we moved here, I told Silas I wouldn't live in a town called "No Chance."

EMILY

Oh, that's just a silly name the gold seekers gave it years ago. I bet they didn't think the town would last -- that's why they called it "No Chance."

JANE

You live in a town called "No Chance," and that's just what you end up with. So, we built this house... a few miles from town. I thought we'd be safe. Now the town is safe, and my family is gone.

EMILY

They're not gone, Jane. Jim will bring them back.

Deep in the woods - three KNOCKS echo. KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK!

Puzzled, the ladies turn toward the sound.

Emily furrows her brow and listens...

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A sign over door reads: Dr. L. TYLER - PHYSICIAN & SURGEON. The door opens and Cal emerges.

He closes the door and makes his way across Main Street. A quick glance and he sees a stationary RIDER a distance outside of the town.

He is WICASA (30s), a Lakota warrior turned Army scout. Wearing buckskin trousers and a US Cavalry jacket, at this distance, his features cannot be seen.

The horse stands sideways -- the rider's head turned toward the town.

Cal stops and looks at the mysterious man.

MAYOR (O.S.)

Russell! Deputy Russell!

Cal turns away from the rider to see the Mayor hobble towards him.

MAYOR

Russell!

The Mayor comes face to face and speaks in a quiet tone.

MAYOR

Is Sheriff Holden in his office? I have to see him right away.

CAL

He's not in town, sir.

MAYOR

Where the hell is he?

CAL

He rode out to the Porter place to make sure everything is all right.

MAYOR

Yes, of course. The minute he returns, send him to my office.

CAL

Is it something I can help you with, Mayor?

The Mayor leaves the deputy as he found him.

Cal has another look at the rider outside of town -- but he's gone. A slight expression of befuddlement, and he continues on his way.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

Holden continues to lead his horse as he follows the blood drops.

The BUZZ of flies grow louder with each step.

He flinches into a sudden stop. As his face winces, his lips curl into a grimace.

Holden stares at the remains of the headless Lee Norman. The clothes around his torso are ripped to shreds. One of his legs has been broken and pulled back to his shoulder.

His other leg and one of his arms have been severed and lie close by.

A distance away, he sees the head - the face turned away from him.

All of the remains are covered with flies and ants.

With the reins of his horse still in hand, he walks towards a clump of bushes.

Two badly clawed legs, under a blood-soaked dress, protrude from behind a fallen log.

Holden backs away, leans his back against a tree, and sinks to the ground.

Helpless to do anything, he buries his head in his hand.

A distant haunting of wood hitting wood --

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

The horse WHINNIES.

Holden is alert! He listens...

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

The woods are silent of noise and animal activity.

Another call from far away...

WHOOP! WHOOP!

It bounces off of every tree in every direction.

The horse grows restless and claws at the ground.

Holden pats the animal's head.

He mounts, draws his pistol, turns the horse, and rides back in the direction he came from.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Jane, emotionless near the desk. Emily is next to her as Holden takes two ammo boxes from a drawer.

Cal waits at the door.

JANE

I want to go back home.

HOLDEN

Later, Jane.

JANE

Why did we come here?

HOLDEN

It's not safe at your house right now.

EMILY

Why the extra ammunition?

HOLDEN

I'm going after the man responsible.

EMILY

Man?

They lock eyes.

HOLDEN

Yes. You and Jane check into the hotel. You'll be safer there.

EMILY

No.

Holden's eyes widen as Emily stands.

EMILY

We're not staying in that hotel. I hear it has fleas. Jane will stay at our home this evening.

HOLDEN

I'm going to be out on the trail. You're not staying there alone tonight.

EMILY

Nonsense. Whatever was "whooping" and "tree knocking" in the woods had their eyes on the Porter home. Not ours. And we won't be alone.

Emily takes a rifle from the rack.

EMILY

Don't argue with me, Jim.

She holds out her hand.

HOLDEN

All right.

Holden hands her the boxes of ammo.

HOLDEN

Just be sure you don't shoot me if
I come back early.

Cal chuckles until he catches an icy glare from Holden.

HOLDEN

I want to see you outside.

CAL

Yes, Sir.

Cal exits.

HOLDEN

Have another cup of tea. We'll be
leaving soon.

Emily smiles.

Holden exits, closing the door behind him.

Emily loads her rifle.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Cal leans on the hitching post as Holden joins him.

HOLDEN

I didn't want to ask in front of
the ladies. What did Doc Tyler
have to say?

CAL

It was Del Givens.

HOLDEN

Could he tell what killed him?

CAL

He didn't know. Did you find Silas
Porter?

HOLDEN

Not yet.

MAYOR (O.S.)

Sheriff!

CAL

I forgot to tell you, the Mayor wanted to see you when you got back.

MAYOR

Deputy. I see you informed the Sheriff that I wanted to see him immediately --

CAL

I'm sorry. I didn't have time, Mayor Sullivan --

MAYOR

For the Mayor, you make time, son.

HOLDEN

I've had my hands full since I got back, Mayor.

MAYOR

So have I. The town is on edge about the murder. What are you doing about it?

HOLDEN

I'm getting ready to head out now.

MAYOR

Out where? The murder was here in town!

HOLDEN

The Porter girl and Lee Norman were killed the same way, about three miles out.

MAYOR

Oh, dear God. Three murders? You're telling me three murders?

HOLDEN

That's what I'm telling you.

The Mayor is speechless.

An EXPLOSION in the distance -- KA-BOOM!

Holden, Cal, and the Mayor turn toward the ominous blast.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Emily peers out the window.

JANE

Emily. Do you think Silas is
alive?

A hesitation --

EMILY

Yes.

JANE

I have hope... but inside, I know
he's dead.

EMILY

Jane, you've been through a lot.

JANE

I can feel it. I can't explain
how, but I can.

EXT. A RIVER - DAY

Silas lies on the ground, his head bloodied and a gash in
his chest. His horse is gone.

The rifle lies a short distance from his grasp.

A far-off EXPLOSION -- KA-BOOM crashes like thunder.

The primal SCREAM of the Creature in response!

In agony, Silas moans and tries to move his legs.

SILAS

Goddamn! My legs are broken! You
damned hairy bastard!

Heavy FOOTSTEPS approach.

SILAS

You Goddamn hairy bastard!

Two large legs, covered with black fur, walk into view.
Loud, brutish GRUNTS and heavy breathing cause Silas's
body to tremor... his eyes bulge with terror.

In a broken voice --

SILAS

God damn... hairy... bastard...

In a desperate attempt, he rolls onto his side and reaches for the rifle... his hands grasp the stock.

The Creature lets out a hideous, earth-shaking SCREAM!

Silas tries to pull the rifle closer to him as the Creature's legs STOMP forward.

A large foot slams Silas' arm into the ground as a hairy hand reaches and grabs his arm at the shoulder and pulls!

Silas SCREAMS as he turns away and hears his arm torn from his body.

Two giant hairy hands grab his head and muffle his SCREAM. The head is twisted with the CRACKLING of bone.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

The Mayor continues to lecture Holden.

MAYOR

It's an election year, Sheriff Holden.

HOLDEN

I don't think you have anything to worry about. It's a small town and no one else wants to be mayor.

MAYOR

Well... be that as it may. The bottom line is, I run this town fairly and honestly, and I believe in the law. Now, you bring him in for a hanging, or shoot him on the trail, I don't care which -- just get the bastard.

HOLDEN

Fairly and honestly.

MAYOR

Precisely. See to it.

The Mayor departs.

HOLDEN

Cal, bring the wagon up, will you?

Cal turns and exits.

EXT. ALLEY NEXT TO SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Cal comes around the corner of the building and sees GRACE OLSON (20), a pretty girl with beguiling eyes and a smile that captivates... and self-fortitude that is to be reckoned with.

CAL

Grace!

She throws her arms around his neck and they kiss -- an intense kiss -- Cal pulls away.

CAL

The sheriff is waiting. I have to bring the wagon around.

GRACE

Are you still coming by this evening?

He hesitates.

GRACE

Chicken and dumplings.

CAL

I'm not sure.

Cal holds back.

GRACE

What's wrong?

CAL

Three murders. Del Givens, Lee Norman, and Ida Porter.

GRACE

Oh, God!

CAL

Grace, I don't want you out at night... and make sure you have a gun at all times.

He climbs onto the wagon.

GRACE

What about you!?

CAL

We're going to find the killer.

GRACE

In a wagon!?

CAL

We're bringing the ladies.

He flicks the reins and the horse pulls the wagon.

GRACE

What ladies!?

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Holden escorts the two ladies from the office as Cal steers the wagon around the corner.

Doc Tyler hails him as he hastens across the street.

TYLER

Sheriff!

HOLDEN

Doc.

Cal hops down from the wagon and helps the ladies climb into the flatbed as Holden takes a few steps to meet the Doctor out of ear shot.

TYLER

The Mayor just came to see me.
He told me you found two more
victims.

HOLDEN

That's right.

TYLER

I'd like to examine the bodies --
make sure it's the same killer.

HOLDEN

I was on horseback, Doc. I
couldn't bring them in without a
wagon... they were torn up pretty
bad. Partially eaten.

TYLER

I see.

HOLDEN

Once I drop the women folk at my house, I'll take the wagon and retrieve what I can.

The ladies are on the wagon.

Cal climbs into the drivers seat.

HOLDEN

'afternoon, Doc.

TYLER

Yes. Of course.

Holden climbs onto the wagon next to Cal. He takes the reins, flicks them, and the wagon lurches forward as the small group departs.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF TOWN - DAY

With the town behind them, Cal notices a figure a distance away watching them -- the scout, Wicasa.

Holden catches a glimpse and remains silent as they continue on their way.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - DAY

A plain one-story building with few windows.

Holden steers the wagon towards the side of the house.

HOLDEN

Whoa...

Holden pulls on the brake. He and Cal climb down to assist the ladies.

HOLDEN

Emily, I want you to reconsider.

EMILY

I'm not staying in town. That's the end of it, Jim. I'll be perfectly safe here.

She picks the rifle up from the wagon bed.

EMILY

You know I'm a pretty good shot. Stop worrying.

He walks them to the front door.

HOLDEN

Stay inside. Don't venture out no matter what.

EMILY

Mm-hm.

HOLDEN

Keep the door bolted.

EMILY

I will.

HOLDEN

And keep the curtains drawn.

EMILY

Yes.

Cal opens the front door and enters with Jane.

EMILY

Now you promise me...

They kiss.

EMILY

Be careful.

They kiss again.

Holden speaks quietly.

HOLDEN

We're going to collect Ida and Lee -- take them into town. I'll be back as soon as I can.

Emily nods in agreement, and they kiss once more -- a long, loving kiss.

Cal appears in the doorway, and clears his throat.

The kiss ends.

Cal tips the brim of his hat as he passes them.

CAL

Mrs. Holden.

Emily smiles, touches her husband's cheek, and enters the house. Holden waits and listens until the bolt slides into place, and he heads for the wagon.

EXT. DEMON CREEK - DAY

The three prospectors pan for gold in the creek. Their guns close by.

PETE

I don't know, Frank. I think it might be time to try further down the creek.

FRANK

I'm all for gettin' the hell out of here.

Burt gestures to the far side of the creek.

BURT

But we ain't panned next to them large rocks.

Burt takes several steps across the creek.

FRANK

Let's pack up.

BURT

Gold likes to gather under rocks.

Wood knocks on trees - KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Frank hears it first and looks toward the direction of the sound.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Burt freezes mid-stream as Pete shoots up straight and drops his pans. It floats downstream.

A high-pitched WHOOP WHOOP rings out.

The men make their way to their guns.

FRANK

I'll go take a look.

PETE

What if it's that big thing we saw yesterday?

BURT
Frank killed it.

PETE
We don't know that.

BURT
Let's say he wounded it. You think
it would come back for more?

FRANK
You two stay here and keep an eye
on the tent. Might be a
distraction for someone to come in
and rob us.

Frank crosses the creek and disappears into the thick woods. Pete and Burt keep a watchful eye, their rifles clutched in their fists.

They wait... and they wait.

In the distance, they hear Frank SCREAM!

A gunshot -- BANG!

The long, guttural SHRIEK of the Creature.

PETE
Jesus...

Pete and Burt shake -- their legs grow restless and ready to run.

BURT
Take cover!

Pete scrambles behind a large rock. Burt kneels in firing position next to a barrel outside the tent.

The unseen Creature lets out with an ear-piercing SHRIEK!

Pete and Burt are terrified.

PETE
Son of a bitch!

Heavy FOOTSTEPS shake the ground with a THUD-THUD-THUD as they draw close to the creek.

The men see a huge, dark SHAPE through the dense brush and branches.

Pete fires! BANG!

POV - CREATURE

Rifle smoke curls in the air. The footsteps break into a heavy RUN as the Creature charges forward.

The Creature sees a panic-stricken Pete try to reload as Burt FIRES - BANG!

THUD-THUD-THUD - the footsteps crush into the earth and charge forward.

BACK TO SCENE

Burt turns to run. He stumbles and falls on his side.

The men CRY OUT for help!

BURT
My arm! I broke it!

The huge, dark mass of the Creature blocks him out for a moment - then the DEATH SCREAM of Pete - the sound of CRUSHING BONES and TEARING FLESH.

Burt is sprayed in a shower of blood.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Holden and Cal ride the lumbering wagon -- the creaks and cranks of the wood and wheels echo into the woods.

CAL
Doc's been known to tip a few at the saloon.

HOLDEN
Everyone tips a few in the saloon.

CAL
Yes... but... Doc tips a lot.

Holden turns to him with a blank stare.

CAL
A lot.

HOLDEN
You're doin' a two-step around a stump, Deputy.

CAL

Doc says that an animal didn't
kill Del Givens... and a man
didn't kill him... so...

HOLDEN

You think all that rotgut's
clouding Doc's judgement.

CAL

I like Doc. I hate to say anything
against him... but I think it's a
possibility.

Holden pulls on the reins.

HOLDEN

Whoa...

-- and brings the wagon to a stop.

Holden jumps down from his seat, followed by Cal. He
takes a few steps forward and sees schoolbooks lying in
the middle of the road.

Cal picks them up.

Holden sees footprints from small shoes headed into the
woods. Cal follows. They move slow and careful as Holden
scans the ground for tracks.

They hear the RUSTLE of the brush. They turn and see a
small figure behind a leafy bush.

Holden steps forward, and brushes the leaves aside to
reveal Martin Clark. He is catatonic -- unable to speak,
unresponsive, frozen in shock.

CAL

Hey, Martin.

(to Holden)

That's Martin Clark. I saw him
this morning at the school with
this... Martin, where's Andy?

Holden is puzzled.

CAL

Andy is his brother.

CAL

Martin? Do you know where he is?

HOLDEN

Stay with him.

Holden heads back to the tracks.

The carpet of plants, flowers, and grass soon show signs of blood splats... which turn to a streak of blood dragged across the surface.

THE KILLING SITE

A torn, bloodied shirt... a shoe... a hat... an arm.

Holden arrives. The bodies and body parts are barely visible through the thick brush.

HOLDEN

Oh, my God.

He stares at the gruesome sight.

HOLDEN

Who the hell did this...

WICASA (O.S.)

Chiye Tanka.

Holden turns to see Wicasa behind them. He holds a powerful single-shot rifle.

WICASA

And he is angry.

HOLDEN

Wicasa. The great scout for the cavalry.

WICASA

Until they pulled up stakes.

HOLDEN

What is "Chiye Tanka?"

WICASA

A legend to my people. It means "Big Elder Brother." He is a spirit.

HOLDEN

A spirit.

WICASA

He appears as a warning.

HOLDEN

Warning of what?

WICASA

Against evil. A warning from the creator of our disregard for all that is sacred.

HOLDEN

This isn't the work of a spirit.

Wicasa offers no response.

HOLDEN

Have you seen him before?

WICASA

Never.

HOLDEN

What does this Chiye Tanka look like?

WICASA

Taller than any man. Covered with hair. His eyes are red and can be seen in the dark.

HOLDEN

Whatever it is, I'm going to get a posse and track it down.

WICASA

That would not be wise.

HOLDEN

It needs to be stopped and that's the only idea I've got.

WICASA

You must follow after him alone. A posse will make much noise and he will disappear.

HOLDEN

As in "thin air?" That's hard to believe.

WICASA

You cannot kill a spirit.

EXT. TOWN OF "NO CHANCE" - DAY (SUNSET)

The sun sets low in the sky -- the shadows are deep.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY (SUNSET)

Mayor Sullivan is behind the desk in his sparse and plain office. An uneasy Holden faces him. The schoolbook is on the desk.

MAYOR

You stay away from that Injun!
Never heard of such nonsense.

HOLDEN

I don't believe in a spirit or Big
Elder Brother -- but that's not
saying something like it isn't out
there!

MAYOR

That makes no sense.

HOLDEN

You should see the little Clark
boy. He's in shock! He can't
speak! What could cause that!?

MAYOR

How would I know!?

HOLDEN

What if it's some kind animal
we've never seen? Some kind of --
abnormal thing.

MAYOR

What do you mean!?

HOLDEN

There could be some kind of
creature out there, and the Injuns
just "think" of it as a spirit.

MAYOR

A creature? You're developing
quite an imagination, Sheriff.

HOLDEN

Those people weren't killed by
"imagination," Mayor.

A KNOCK on the door.

MAYOR

Yes? Come in!

The door opens and MR. CLARK and MRS. CLARK (late 30s), enter. They are tired and disheveled.

MAYOR

Yes? Ah! Mr. And Mrs. Clark.

MRS. CLARK

We were looking for the sheriff.
Your deputy said we would find you here.

HOLDEN

What can I do for you?

MRS. CLARK

Our children are missing. Andy,
and Martin.

Holden grows tense.

MRS. CLARK

We heard school was let out late
morning... they ain't come home
yet.

MR. CLARK

I been out lookin' all day... and
with night comin' on...

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY (SUNSET)

Doc Taylor and Holden watch as Mrs. Clark holds Martin in a tight embrace. The boy remains catatonic.

The schoolbook rests on the desk.

Mr. Clark's eyes are on the Mayor and Holden.

MR. CLARK

Andrew?

HOLDEN

I'm sorry.

Mrs. Clark bursts out with a tormented CRY. Mr. Clark, tears in his eyes, kneels next to her.

MRS. CLARK

No! No! My baby... my baby...

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Holden closes the door and faces Main Street. He listens to the muffled sobbing of the grieving mother, and briskly makes his way across the street.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Cal waits with a coffee in hand.

Holden enters and opens a drawer and grabs a box of ammo.

CAL

What did the Mayor say?

HOLDEN

It's almost sundown. Get two rifles.

Cal hurries to the rifle rack --

CAL

Where are we going?

HOLDEN

Hunting.

EXT. THE KILLING SITE - DUSK

The woods grow dark from the shadows of the oncoming night. Leading their horses, Holden and Cal approach the blood-soaked ground where the boys were found.

Holden, eyes to the ground, moves beyond the blood range.

HOLDEN

There has to be tracks. Wicasa was here before we were. He was looking, too.

They advance further. Holden spots something. He hands the reins of his horse to Cal.

HOLDEN

Wait here.

He advances through the dense trees.

A SMALL CLEARING

In a spot where dirt is exposed from the plants and dead leaves, he sees a large footprint.

He places his foot next to the print. The print is at least twenty-one inches long.

He sees several more prints that disappear where the grass and plants cover the ground.

Cal approaches with the horses.

CAL

Did you find anything?

Cal sees the giant footprint.

CAL

What the hell!?

HOLDEN

Headed north.

CAL

Demon Creek is about a mile ahead.

Holden takes his reins, and leading their horses, continues toward the creek.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - DUSK

Grace Olsen arrives and knocks on the front door, a small stewpot in hand.

She hears a large wooden bolt slide from its position.

Emily opens the door.

EMILY

Grace! What a surprise!

She calls back to Jane.

EMILY

It's Grace Olson.

GRACE

I made some chicken and dumplings and thought Mrs. Porter might like some.

EMILY

That's very kind of you, Grace.

From the woods - three TREE KNOCKS - KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

A high-pitched WHOOP! WHOOP!

The echo alarms Emily as Jane, seen through the doorway behind her, jolts up from her chair.

JANE

Oh, God!

GRACE

What is that?

EMILY

Come inside, Grace.

Confused, Grace enters the house.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

The door bolt slides into place.

EXT. DEMON CREEK - DUSK

Holden and Cal arrive at the creek - still on foot, leading their horses.

A speck of fading sunlight reflects onto Holden's face. He turns to see a tin panning plate lodged behind a wood root on the bank of the creek.

He lifts it up. He glares upstream.

HOLDEN

Mount up.

They mount, and advance at a slow walk.

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

Cozy and rustic. Kerosene lamps reflect a warm glow into the main room. Jane is seated next to the fireplace -- her hands grip the chair arms.

The curtains have been drawn on the windows. Emily peeks out through one of them.

GRACE

Mrs. Holden, what is it?

JANE

The wood knocks. The whooping sound... it's the animal that killed my Ida.

EMILY

I didn't think it would come here.

She turns to Grace.

EMILY

We thought it would return to Jane's house. At least we have the rifle.

Grace reaches into her dress pocket, and withdraws a Colt .45 pistol.

GRACE

And this.

Emily's mouth opens in a silent gasp.

GRACE

Cal told me I should carry a pistol.

EMILY

Know how to use it?

A distant, primal SCREAM booms through the muffled walls.

EMILY

It's all right... we're safe in here.

Pensive --

JANE

How do you know?

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

The sun has set, woods are quiet.

The deep THUMP -- THUMP -- THUMP of heavy footsteps crush into the ground.

A Dark Figure momentarily blocks out the view of the house as it passes by with a resounding GRUNT.

A RUSTLE of leaves.

The Creature lets out a SCREAM.

EXT. DEMON CREEK - NIGHT

With pistols drawn, Holden and Cal ride into the prospectors' campsite.

An eerie silence hangs over the area.

The tent has been destroyed. Dark streaks spread over the white canvas.

Holden calls out.

HOLDEN

Hello!?

No response.

HOLDEN

Hello!?

Silence.

They dismount.

Cal takes a few, cautious steps -- catches himself from tripping on something.

CAL

What the hell...

He strains his eyes to see in the dark.

Holden finds a lantern in the debris field of broken barrels, tables, and chairs around the tent.

He reaches into his vest pocket for a match and lights the candle.

The lantern casts a haunting, orange glimmer onto the tent. The dark streaks are blood.

Holden makes his way to Cal.

CAL

Careful, Sheriff. There's some big rocks around here.

Holden lowers the lantern. The face of Pete stares up from the ground. His dead eyes wide open with terror -- his bloody mouth agape in a silent scream.

There is no body.

CAL

Jesus!

Holden walks through the site -- the lantern illuminates small patches of annihilation.

A headless body, clothing torn and drenched in blood.

More steps...

The leg of a horse.

More steps...

The crushed head of Burt.

CAL

Any idea who they were?

HOLDEN

I don't think their own mothers would recognize them.

Cal strains his eyes to see.

CAL

What's that?

Holden shines the lantern in the direction Cal points.

They see a rifle, broken in half.

Cal picks it up. The barrel is split in half.

CAL

That's impossible...

He hands Holden the rifle. Holden opens the chamber.

HOLDEN

Still loaded.

Holden moves back to the tent.

He lifts the canvas and looks underneath.

HOLDEN

Three cots. We're missing a man.

CAL

Sheriff... I think we should go.

Holden is focused as he studies the scene.

HOLDEN

Scared, Cal?

CAL

Scared? No. Me? Scared? You bet
your ass I'm scared!

Holden makes his way toward the creek.

CAL

These men were armed! And look
what happened!

HOLDEN

Tracks.

He stops.

CAL

What?

HOLDEN

Look.

Cal hurries next to him and checks the ground lit by the
lantern. A trail of huge footprints.

CAL

Looks like they come from out of
the creek. These prints are huge.

They follow the footprints to the edge of the creek.

Holden steps into the creek and walks to the other side.

The footprints exit the stream and are seen in the mud
for three steps before they disappear into the grass.

HOLDEN

I'm guessing that the third man
was carried off.

CAL

We're not going to follow are we?

Holden turns to Cal with a stony expression.

CAL

It's not that I'm afraid or
anything... well, I am... but...
we can't track in the dark. Right?

HOLDEN
I know someone who can.

EXT. WICASA'S HOME - NIGHT

A small shack-like home that has seen better days.
Holden and Cal ride up to the front door.

HOLDEN
Wicasa? It's Sheriff Holden.

They wait.

Holden dismounts.

The door opens. Wicasa stands in the doorframe.

WICASA
More killings?

HOLDEN
A camp of three prospectors at
Demon Creek. The large footprints
were there.

WICASA
Chiye Tanka.

HOLDEN
I'm going to need your help.

WICASA
I told you, Holden. You cannot
kill the Big Elder Brother. He is
a spirit.

CAL
I didn't think a spirit left
tracks twice the size of a man's.

HOLDEN
You just leave that part of it to
me.

WICASA
The best time to hunt for Chiye
Tanka is at night.

CAL
How can you track at night?

WICASA

We leave now.

Cal turns to Holden with a confused shake of the head.

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

Jane has not moved from the rocker. Emily waits by the window, curtain closed.

GRACE

I should be getting home. My parents will be worried.

EMILY

That's not a good idea, Grace. It's out there.

GRACE

I'm a good rider. My horse can outrun anything. Besides, we haven't heard anything in a while.

Emily contemplates this. She turns to Jane.

EMILY

She's right. It has been quiet out there.

Jane doesn't respond.

EMILY

I suppose we can have a look.

Emily and Grace approach the front door. Emily lifts the thick, wooden bar that spans the back of the door.

They exchange a glance, and with slight hesitation, Emily opens the door.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Grace steps outside as Emily waits in the doorway.

There are no night sounds.

Grace's eyes scan the surroundings. She sees what looks like two red specks in the woods.

She whispers.

GRACE

Emily... do you see?

Emily steps forward and follows her gaze.

GRACE

It looks like... red eyes.

The primal SCREAM blasts the night air.

Emily grabs her shoulders and pulls her towards the door.

GRACE

What was that!?

INT. HOLDEN HOME - CONTINUOUS

Emily and Grace scurry into the house.

EMILY

Jane - the lamps!

As Jane turns out the lamps, Emily and Grace slide the door bar into place.

GRACE

Was that a bear!? It didn't sound like a bear!

Emily goes for her gun.

JANE

It's going to kill us! It knows we're here and it's going to kill us!

EMILY

It's not going to kill us, Jane. We're armed.

Emily pulls a corner of the window curtain back.

JANE

What are you doing!?

EMILY

Just having a look.

Emily sees the woodline. A large DARK SHAPE emerges from the trees.

It's very tall. In the blackness there are no features.

The Creature arches its back and lets out a terrifying, gut-wrenching SCREAM!

THUD-THUD-THUD! The Creature moves towards the home with its earth-pounding footsteps.

EMILY

It's coming this way.

JANE

Get away from the window, Emily!

BAM! BAM! - the side of the house shakes!

A picture falls off the wall. BAM! BAM!

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - CONTINUOUS

The Creature POUNDS its fists against the side of the house. BAM! BAM! BAM! He SCREAMS!

INT. HOLDEN HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jane SCREAMS! Emily has the rifle pointed at the door. The banging stops.

The side wall erupts with a pounding BAM! BAM! BAM!

EXT. ON A TRAIL - NIGHT

Wicasa, Holden, and Cal ride at a walk.

HOLDEN

This Chiye Tanka. You said he was angry. Why?

WICASA

Chiye Tanka has lived among our people for many years in peace. Now he has killed... he seeks revenge.

HOLDEN

But you said he appears as a warning.

Wicasa does not respond.

HOLDEN

You're holding something back.

WICASA

It has been said that long ago,
when the white settlers first
arrived, one of them hunted and
shot at Chiye Tanka. There was
great revenge. The Big Elder
Brother killed many white settlers
and many of my people. His rage
was blind.

CAL

But that was a long time ago. Why
would he attack and kill now?

WICASA

It's possible he has once again
been harmed.

HOLDEN

Wicasa... could it be that such a
creature exists, and it's not a
spirit?

Wicasa turns to Holden.

HOLDEN

What if your forefathers
discovered this thing and thought
of it as some mystical being...
when in fact it's real... and when
it encounters humans, it kills
them - not out of revenge, but
instinct.

WICASA

You ask me to doubt the beliefs of
my people.

HOLDEN

No, I ask you to admit I might
have a point.

Wicasa turns to the front and rides in silence.

A beat.

HOLDEN

I'll take that as a "yes."

INT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

In darkness, the women are huddled in a corner. Emily
aims the rifle at the door.

EMILY

I think it's gone.

GRACE

It's been quiet for a while.

JANE

What if it comes back?

EMILY

If it comes back, I don't know how much longer that door will hold.

Grace turns to Emily.

GRACE

My horse is saddled.

EMILY

Don't you give it a thought.

GRACE

I can get help.

EMILY

It's too dangerous, Grace! I won't allow it!

GRACE

Scout's the fastest horse in town. I can outrun that thing if it's still out there.

EMILY

Jim and Cal will be here soon.

GRACE

We don't know that.

Emily contemplates.

GRACE

We need help.

Emily breathes a SIGH of surrender with a gentle nod "yes." Grace heads for the door. Emily follows.

They lock eyes in a tense exchange.

EMILY

You're sure about this?

Grace nods "yes."

Emily puts the rifle down, and takes hold of the door bar, along with Grace.

EMILY
As quiet as you can.

With care, they lift, and remove the bar.

EMILY
I won't put the bar back in place
until I hear you ride away.

Grace gives an acknowledged nod.

Emily opens the door -- a slow CREAK.

Grace feigns a brave smile, and steps into the night.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - CONTINUOUS

The door closes behind her. There are no night sounds.

She waits... listens... bites her lips... and careful to make no noise, takes slow, measured steps.

As she arrives at the corner of the house, her eyes divert to see two red dots that burn in the darkness.

Grace freezes in place -- her eyes widen in an unfocused gaze as they lock onto the red dots.

The red dots blink.

THUD-THUD-THUD-THUD... footsteps run -- crushing the ground like bones. The red dots come closer and closer.

The trance is broken!

GRACE
Emily!

She races for the front door -- BANGS her hand on it as the door swings open.

INT. HOLDEN HOME - CONTINUOUS

Grace spills into the house as she sees the Creature closing in. Emily SLAMS the door shut!

GRACE
That wasn't the best idea!

In a panic they fumble with the bar and drop it into place as the Creature CRASHES into the door.

Jane SCREAMS!

The Creature BANGS on the door.

Emily raises the rifle.

The BANGING stops.

Silence.

Grace rushes to a window in the kitchen.

She lifts a corner of the curtain and peeks through.

SMASH! Glass SHATTERS as a huge, muscular, hair-covered arm crashes through!

The hand grabs her by the neck as the Creature blasts out a long, high-pitched CRY.

Grace SCREAMS as Emily raises the gun. Grace struggles and blocks Emily from firing a shot.

Emily runs to the window, raises the rifle to shoot. The Creature's hand relinquishes its grip as Grace falls out of the way and Emily fires - BANG!

The THUD-THUD-THUD of footsteps fade away.

Emily and Jane help Grace up from the floor. Her neck bears red marks from the strong grasp.

The ladies help her into a chair.

Emily returns to the window and fires a shot into the dark -- BANG -- and another -- BANG!

In a shaky voice --

GRACE

It was waiting for us.... It was
waiting for us!

EXT. ON A TRAIL - NIGHT

Wicasa rides a few paces in front of Holden and Cal.

He reins in his horse.

HOLDEN

Why did you stop?

Wicasa listens -- the night sounds of the woods.

WICASA

Chiye Tanka is not here.

CAL

How do you know?

WICASA

The woods speak. They are silent when Chiye Tanka is near.

CAL

I thought you could track at night?

WICASA

We are following his trail -- but he is far from here.

Wicasa turns to Holden.

WICASA

He is leading us away.

CAL

Away from what?

WICASA

He has backtracked.

CAL

An animal doesn't think like that.

WICASA

Chiye Tanka knows we follow. Knows we have rifles. He will strike elsewhere when we are far away.

Holden ponders this.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

A huge rock CRASHES into the side of the house - BAM!

The unseen Creature GRUNTS and SCREAMS!

BAM! Another rock hurls into the wall.

The Creature trudges up to the house, GRUNTS and POUNDS on the wall where the rock just hit.

The Creature turns and heads back.

BAM! A large rock batters against the wall.

INT. HOLDEN HOME - CONTINUOUS

Grace and Emily have their weapons at the ready. Jane holds a poker from the fireplace.

Outside, the Creature SCREAMS!

BAM! A rock hits the wall.

Emily rushes to a side window, flings the curtain aside and opens it.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - CONTINUOUS

The Creature advances towards the wall of the house as Emily appears in the open window.

She aims and fires - BANG!

Blood flicks into the air from the Creature's shoulder.

Emily slams the window shut.

INT. HOLDEN HOME - CONTINUOUS

Emily pulls the curtain over the window. She heads towards the others as a ROCK SMASHES through the same window -- it rips the curtain from the rod and hurls it onto the floor.

Grace fires at the window - BANG!

The Creature SCREAMS!

Continuous POUNDING on the front door!

JANE

Stop it! Stop it! Go away!

The POUNDING intensifies. The door RATTLES -- the bar shakes in its wooden latches.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - CONTINUOUS

The dark shape of the Creature backs up several steps.
It lets out its primal SCREAM.

INT. HOLDEN HOME - CONTINUOUS

The ladies return to a corner, guns aimed at the door.

EMILY

It's wounded. It can't stay out
there much longer.

GRACE

Where did you hit it?

EMILY

In the shoulder, I think.

The voices grow heated.

JANE

The size of that thing -- a bullet
probably made him more angry!

EMILY

What would you have done, Jane!?
Tell me! What would you have
done!?

JANE

You can't kill something like that
with a gun! It was a stupid thing
to do, and when that door gives
out, we're all dead!

GRACE

It's not getting into the house
and we're not going to die.

EMILY

It's no one's fault! That Creature
was going to attack us no matter
what.

GRACE

I thought I heard...

EMILY

What?

GRACE

Shh --

Silence - they listen.

The doorknob RATTLES.

The ladies react with a start!

A knock on the door.

HOLDEN (O.S.)

Emily?

There is a sigh of relief in the room as they rush to the door. Emily lifts the bar from the slots.

Grace opens the door to reveal Holden and Cal.

Grace squeezes by Holden, throws her arms around Cal's neck, and kisses him.

EMILY

Jim!

Emily and Holden embrace and kiss.

He notices the broken windows and gently releases himself from Emily's embrace. He approaches the window as glass CRUNCHES under his boot.

HOLDEN

What happened?

EMILY

That -- thing attacked the house.

GRACE

It was tall and covered with hair!

CAL

You saw it!?

GRACE

Yes!

Jane returns to her chair and lays the fireplace poker across her lap.

HOLDEN

Are you all right!?

EMILY

We're not hurt -- just shaken up.

In another corner of the room, Cal helps Grace into a chair. He kneels next to her and holds her hand.

CAL

Grace... I love you... and I'm glad you're not hurt... but what the hell are you doing here?

GRACE

I brought some food for Mrs. Porter.

CAL

We agreed you were going to stay home tonight.

GRACE

No, Cal. You agreed I was going to stay home tonight.

CAL

I wish you had listened to me.

GRACE

Well... I brought my father's pistol, so I listened to that much.

Her lips curve into a slight smile. They kiss.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

Wicasa stares at the woodline.

There are no night sounds.

Holden exits the house and approaches.

HOLDEN

We were out looking for this animal, and he attacked my home.

WICASA

Was anyone hurt?

HOLDEN

No, thank God. There should be fresh tracks here. I want to kill this thing by morning.

Holden moves to the side of the house. He sees the small boulders under the wall and tries to roll one with his foot. He can't.

He runs his hand along the wall but pulls back quickly as if stung.

He returns to Wicasa.

HOLDEN
That Creature dented the
sideboards of my house with
boulders. Is that something you
heard before?

No response.

HOLDEN
Do they throw boulders?

No response.

HOLDEN
Wicasa.

WICASA
We are being watched.

HOLDEN
How do you know?

A beat.

From the woodline -- KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK echoes over the night air.

WHOO! WHOOP!

Cal, Grace, and Emily exit the house.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

GRACE
What's that sound?

CAL
He's hitting a branch against a
tree.

WICASA
Communication. A signal.

HOLDEN
He's sending us a signal?

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Wicasa glances at the women... and to Holden.

WICASA

We should leave.

HOLDEN

Keep an eye on the woodline.
Emily, wait in the house.

EMILY

What are you doing?

HOLDEN

Hitching up the wagon. Go on.

Emily hesitates, but takes Grace's arm, leads her back inside the house, and closes the door.

HOLDEN

(to Wicasa)

You see anything come out of that woodline, shoot it.

WICASA

Chiye Tanka can not be killed.

HOLDEN

Try it. You might be surprised.
Cal, with me.

Holden and Cal head for the barn.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - NIGHT

POV - THE CREATURE

The THUD-THUD of huge footsteps booms and tree branches are pushed aside as the home is seen a distance away.

Holden drives the wagon to the front of the house as Cal walks beside it.

GRUNT - the Creature's breath is seen on the night air.

EXT. HOLDEN HOME - NIGHT

Holden climbs off the wagon -- hitched and ready. Cal races to the front door.

The ladies exit and head for the wagon.

Cal helps Jane into the wagon, Holden assists his wife on the other side.

HOLDEN

We'll be riding right next to you.

Emily takes the reins as Grace arrives with her horse.

HOLDEN

Whatever you do -- don't stop.

Cal, Holden, and Wicasa unhitch their horses from the post, and mount. Guns in hand, they depart the homestead.

EXT. ROAD TO TOWN - NIGHT

Holden and Wicasa ride in front of the wagon as it lumbers onward. Cal and Grace ride behind.

The mood is pensive.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK bangs loudly from Holden's side of the road. WHOOP! WHOOP! WHOOP!

Holden shows no expression -- the butt of his rifle poised on his thigh.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK - branches slam against trees on Wicasa's side.

The scout keeps his eyes on the woods.

A RUSTLE in the trees alongside the road... the rapid THUD-THUD-THUD of running footsteps.

Holden and Wicasa each watch the side of the road.

They see the dark, hidden Creature as it runs between trees and keeps pace with the wagon and riders.

A long, threatening SCREAM!

SWOOSH! A rock hurls towards them -- BAM -- it hits the side of the wagon.

The riders continue on.

EXT. TOWN OF "NO CHANCE" - NIGHT

The wagon and riders approach the edge of town. The familiar upright piano bangs out a song.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

The swinging doors part and out steps Mayor Sullivan -- sober, but with a slight glow on.

Across the street he sees the wagon and riders in front of the Sheriff's office.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Emily and Jane climb down from the wagon. Holden lends an arm for support. Wicasa tethers the horses to a post.

Cal dismounts, Grace remains mounted.

The Mayor hurries towards them.

MAYOR

You're back! Where's the body!?

HOLDEN

'evening, Sheriff.

MAYOR

The body. Where is it?

Holden gestures.

HOLDEN

Out there - still walking around.

MAYOR

You didn't kill it!?

HOLDEN

Not yet. It also killed three prospectors up at the creek.

MAYOR

Oh, God. Oh, my God.

HOLDEN

And attacked my house.

The Mayor glances at the ladies.

MAYOR

Well, what is it?

JANE

The Devil!

The Mayor loses his bluster as he sees the wild eyes of Jane Porter.

MAYOR

It's got to be a grizzly.

HOLDEN

Grizzly's don't throw small boulders at houses.

MAYOR

You're going back after it?

HOLDEN

Yes.

CAL

We headed out now, or in the morning?

WICASA

Now.

Cal glances to Holden, who nods in agreement.

HOLDEN

Mayor, would you walk my wife and Mrs. Parker over to the hotel?

MAYOR

Of course... yes, of course.

EMILY

Jane, you go. I'll be long in a few minutes.

Jane nods, and departs with the Mayor.

Holden exits into the office with Emily.

Grace dismounts. She and Cal take a few steps out of earshot from Wicasa.

GRACE

You'll come and see me tomorrow... after you kill those things?

CAL

I will.

GRACE

I'm being serious, Cal. I want you to promise me.

CAL
I promise I'll come and see you
tomorrow.

GRACE
Don't get killed.

Cal grows serious.

CAL
I ain't planning on it, Grace.

They draw closer together... their voices grow softer.

GRACE
If anything happened to you, I'd
die inside.

CAL
You would?

Staring into each other's eyes... they kiss.

CAL
I'll be all right. Don't worry.

GRACE
Of course I'm going to worry. What
a stupid thing to say.

She mounts her horse.

GRACE
Tomorrow. Don't forget.

She kicks her horse and gallops down Main Street.

Cal watches until she turns a corner and is gone.

WICASA
She's a good woman. Marry her.

CAL
'tend to.

Cal climbs onto the wagon.

CAL
I'll get this in the barn and
unhitch the horses.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Holden opens a desk drawer and pulls out a small whiskey bottle and shot glass. He fills the shot glass.

Emily raises an eyebrow.

HOLDEN

Medicinal.

He hands her the glass, and bottle in hand, they toast, and drink.

Emily puckers and winces.

EMILY

Medicinal? That will kill you!

HOLDEN

Rumor is, it's cut with turpentine and gunpowder.

EMILY

Oh, dear Lord!

He caps the bottle and shoves it into his coat pocket.

EMILY

Jim... don't go. Send for help.

HOLDEN

No time.

NOLAN (O.S.)

You've seen him.

They both turn to see Nolan Weatherbee, sober, seated on the cot in the open jail cell.

NOLAN

I know that look in the eyes...
when you see something that defies
reality.

They step toward the cell.

Nolan is calm and speaks with no emotion. He is somewhere else... he is in another place.

NOLAN

It ain't no devil... and it sure
as hell ain't an Injun Spirit.
It's a monster. Plain and simple.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Sounds loco...it's one of those things that people never believe... until it walks up and bites you on the ass. October seventeenth... twenty years ago. A calm night with a hint of rain in the air... you know how the air gets just before it starts to rain... a kind of "heavy feeling" looms over everything. We were just sittin' down for supper... fried chicken... my wife's fried chicken was so good that a chicken would just hop into the oven because he wanted to be a part of something great...

(he smiles from a
fond memory)

I just made that part up for my kids... they always laughed at that. So, there we were... me, my wife, my boy and my girl... one of them cold October evenings... and the wind picked up... picked up a lot. WHOOP! WHOOP! That's what it sounded like... WHOOP! WOOP! Sent shivers down my spine... still does to this day whenever I think about it. I rushed over to the window expecting to see a Sioux war party charging at us. Instead, it was a big, black shape... darker than the night... and two, red, glowing eyes... and the eyes got bigger... 'cause it was moving closer. Got my rifle... damned thing misfired. Never was reliable...plenty of turkeys escaped with their lives when I had that rifle. Before I knew it, this thing came crashing through the door... teeth were sharp and long... leathery skin under all that hair... and hands as big as the supper plates on the table. This thing hit me under the chin... hit me so hard it broke my jaw. Through a blurry haze... that haze you get as you're about to lose consciousness... I saw my family ripped to shreds... literally... ripped to shreds. Couple months later... when my jaw was mended...

NOLAN (CONT'D)

I told people it was Injuns. I couldn't tell 'em what I actually saw... they'd lock me up for losing my mind... I don't know what made that thing do what it did... but I can tell you this much, Sheriff... you're going to need more than rifles out there... you're going to need the hand of God on your shoulder.

EXT. THE EDGE OF TOWN - NIGHT

Alone, Wicasa rides out from the town.

He reins in and looks out over the open land to the trees in the distance.

A far-off KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK rings out.

The distant SCREAM of the Creature.

WICASA

Are you no longer a friend... or
are you not Chiye Tanka?

Holden and Cal ride up behind him and rein in.

Wicasa spurs his horse forward. Holden and Cal follow.

EXT. CLOSE TO THE WOODS - NIGHT.

About to enter wooded terrain, the riders stop.

HOLDEN

What is it?

WICASA

The night sounds have returned.

HOLDEN

The creature isn't around?

WICASA

He wants to draw us in.

CAL

You act as if it thinks like humans. It may be intelligent, but it's still an animal.

Holden turns to Cal.

CAL

I just think we're putting too much stock in it's intelligence. Track 'em and kill 'em.

WICASA

When eyes do not see, they walk into a trap.

CAL

All due respect, there's no trap. It followed us here, knocked on a few trees, got bored, and left.

Wicasa doesn't respond.

A kick of the heels and his horse advances.

HOLDEN

You might be right.

CAL

Thanks, Sheriff.

HOLDEN

But I'm not sure you are.

Holden follows Wicasa and leaves a befuddled Cal.

A beat -- and Cal follows.

EXT. SPARSE WOODED AREA - NIGHT

The terrain is smooth. The woods are thicker ahead.

Wicasa reins in and dismounts.

HOLDEN

See something?

WICASA

Wait here.

Wicasa leads his horse and moves towards the trees.

CAL

I don't know how he can he track at night.

HOLDEN

The moon's bright enough. It's something he's good at.

CAL
Sheriff, will these rifles kill
those things?

HOLDEN
Of course.

CAL
But those bodies... the way they
were torn up... that takes an
incredible amount of strength.

HOLDEN
Are you starting to think these
monsters are spirits, like Wicasa
does?

CAL
No. But... them prospectors had
rifles. Didn't do them any good.

HOLDEN
I don't think the prospectors had
time to use them.

CAL
Like they was ambushed?

HOLDEN
Maybe.

Wicasa returns.

WICASA
I believe the Chiye Tanka could be
near the lake ahead.

HOLDEN
Lead on.

Wicasa mounts. They depart.

EXT. LAKE FRONT - NIGHT

They ride past a lake. Moonlight reflects off the water.

HOLDEN
You gonna marry that girl?

CAL
I want to. Been courtin' for two
years.

HOLDEN
What's holding you back?

CAL
I was hopin' to earn more money
when I got elected Sheriff... but
then you came to No Chance.

HOLDEN
Sorry to hear that.

WICASA
Nerves.

CAL
What?

WICASA
Money is not holding you back.
Nerves are.

CAL
That's not true.

WICASA
It is -- otherwise you would have
already married.

CAL
What do you know about it?

HOLDEN
Wicasa is wise.

WICASA
Damn right, I am.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The horses are tethered. Cal throws a log on the campfire he has started.

Holden wraps a cloth with a strip of rawhide around a thick wooden stick.

He pulls the bottle of whiskey from his coat pocket and drenches the cloth.

Cal watches.

Holden takes a small pouch of gunpowder from his pocket and pours some into his hand.

He rubs the powder onto the soaked cloth.

CAL

Why are you making a torch?

HOLDEN

Maybe it's afraid of fire... or
maybe we'll need it if we have to
chase it into the woods.

CAL

Or if it chases us, you mean.

Wicasa stands where the light from the fire fades into
pitch blackness.

Night sounds fill the woods.

CAL

Are we supposed to get some sleep
in this camp, or are we bait?

HOLDEN

You could sleep?

CAL

No.

Holden lights a cheroot.

CAL

We hope they attack us. That the
plan?

HOLDEN

Best get the rifles out of the
saddle holsters. Keep 'em close.

CAL

I will.

Holden rises and approaches Wicasa.

HOLDEN

Why here?

WICASA

I found fresh tracks of Chiye
Tanka near the lake. He would be
close. He will smell the smoke.

HOLDEN

I know you think of this thing as
the Big Elder Brother...

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
but I want to make it clear that I
intend to kill it.

WICASA
If he dies, then I was wrong.

In the distance - KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

WHOO! WHOO! WHOO!

The night sounds dissipate.

Holden and Wicasa turn in the direction of the knocks.

Cal rises to his feet, pistol in hand.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

The horses are restless - they WHINNY and kick.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

A huge rock hurls out of the darkness and CRASHES into
the fire! SPARKS and FLAME shoot upward as Cal ducks and
steps backwards.

THUD-THUD-THUD -- a tall Creature covered in hair, bolts
out of nowhere and SLAMS into Cal!

It shoves him into the fire.

He instantly rolls out of it.

The Creature has disappeared into the dark.

Holden and Wicasa rush to him. Holden fires -- BANG!

Blood flows from a gash in Cal's arm.

CAL
I think he got a claw into me...

HOLDEN
He did.

The Creature SCREAMS.

The horses rear up, break their tethers, and gallop into
the woods.

Holden runs a few feet after them, and stops.

He returns to the camp.

HOLDEN

The horses are gone, along with
our rifles and extra ammo.

The Creature SCREAMS in the distance... along with the
WHINNIES and DEATH CRIES of the horses.

A silent pall hangs over the camp.

Holden sees Cal's arm.

HOLDEN

Here...

He removes his neckerchief and wraps it around the wound.

A larger rock flies out of the woods and SMASHES into the
ground, inches from Holden and Cal.

Wicasa ducks and fires -- BANG!

CAL

Look at the size of that rock. It
would take two men just to lift
it.

The camp is PELTED with rocks as the unseen Creature
SCREAMS and GROWLS!

The men duck and cover their heads. They attempt to fire
back as the rocks continue to fly.

HOLDEN

Hold your fire! Conserve your
ammo!

More small rocks are thrown.

Wicasa lays his rifle next to the log, grabs the torch
and holds it to the campfire.

With the lighted torch in one hand, Wicasa draws his
pistol and races into the dark woods.

HOLDEN

Wicasa! Get back here!

EXT. THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The torch sheds little light on the ground that lays
before him as he takes quick steps forward.

WICASA

Chiye Tanka! Chiye Tanka!

A gargantuan, ape and human-like face, covered with hair, lights up from the torch as Wicasa collides with the Creature.

The red eyes stare directly at Wicasa as the mouth opens and SCREAMS! The teeth are yellow and sharp.

The Creature grabs him and lifts him up! Wicasa fires his pistol - BANG! The Creature SCREAMS and BITES into his shoulder. Wicasa drops his pistol and YELLS in pain.

Holden hollers --

HOLDEN

Hey!

BANG! BANG!

The Creature drops Wicasa and bolts into the dark.

Holden arrives, helps Wicasa to his feet... the scout grabs his pistol as he rises.

WICASA

How could you miss that close?

HOLDEN

I fired over it's head.

WICASA

Why would you do that?

HOLDEN

It's pitch dark and I didn't want to hit you.

WICASA

That was a good idea.

He leans on Holden as they back up with caution, pistols at the ready.

WICASA

I fired as he grabbed me. I think I hit his arm.

EXT. CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS

Cal builds up the fire best he can with one arm, as Holden and Wicasa appear out of the dark.

Wicasa lets go of Holden's shoulder and is able to walk on his own.

HOLDEN

We should have a look at that shoulder.

Wicasa pulls a rag from his pocket and sticks it under his coat at his shoulder.

WICASA

My coat is very thick. I am not in much pain.

CAL

What happened?

HOLDEN

He got bit. You sure you don't want me to take a look?

WICASA

We have other things to worry about.

CAL

The shots... did you kill one?

WICASA

No.

A distant WHOOP! WHOOP!

HOLDEN

We need to move -- someplace with more shelter.

EXT. ROUGH TERRAIN - NIGHT

Holden, Wicasa, and Cal make their way along uneven ground strewn with large boulders and trees.

They stop to survey the surroundings.

THUD-THUD-THUD -- heavy FOOTSTEPS close in on them.

Wicasa continues forward, Holden and Cal follow -- they watch their flanks with guns in hand.

EXT. NEAR ROUGH TERRAIN - NIGHT

POV - CREATURE

Moving forward through the woods - the THUD-THUD booming as he stomps down with each step.

EXT. A RIVER - NIGHT

Wicasa signals "stop."

The ground is wet with blood.

Wicasa strains his eyes to see ahead. In the dark, there is a lumpy shadow on the ground.

WICASA
Something is there.

They proceed with slow caution.

The lumpy shadow takes form with each advancing step and reveals itself as the mangled remains of a man.

Their advance stops where the ground is painted in blood.

CAL
God...

Holden sees another dark object off to the side. He heads towards it.

Jammed onto the top of a small, young tree broken off in the middle, is the head of Silas Porter.

HOLDEN
We found Silas Porter.

Holden stares at the hideous sight.

A shocked Cal approaches from behind, his stare fixed on the head.

CAL
His horse and rifle are gone.

WICASA
This is unlike the other kill sites. Your friend is telling us to leave.

HOLDEN
Our friend is dead -- like all the others.

WICASA
You do not see this as a warning?

HOLDEN

You said that Chiye Tanka is a spirit who brings messages to your people. Is this the message!?

WICASA

I no longer believe it to be Chiye Tanka, or of the Spirit world. I shot one. He screamed. He is not a spirit.

HOLDEN

Glad you finally think so.

WICASA

But it is intelligent.

He gestures to the severed head.

WICASA

This requires thought. Reason. It is meant to deliver fear.

CAL

And it's working.

HOLDEN

Intelligent or not, it's killed and we have to stop it.

CAL

We're short on rounds. Maybe we should go back to town, re-supply, get a posse together, and come back.

HOLDEN

Do you think that thing will let us out of here alive?

CAL

If this is a warning... maybe it will. Why give a warning to something you're going to kill anyway?

HOLDEN

We must be at least twenty miles from town. I think our chances are better if we find a place to hold out and fight.

Cal doesn't respond.

HOLDEN
You don't agree?

CAL
You're the one who got elected.

HOLDEN
Let's keep moving.

Holden fords ahead. Wicasa follows.

Cal gives a last glance at Silas.

POV - CREATURE

Quiet, heavy breathing as it sees Cal turn from the decapitated head, and follow the others.

A loud GRUNT!

EXT. NATURAL DEFENSE SITE - NIGHT

Holden, Cal, and Wicasa come across a cluster of boulders and fallen tree trunks that create a fort-like setting.

HOLDEN
This will do.

The Creature rushes from nowhere and GRABS Cal, who struggles in this grasp.

The Creature SCREAMS!

Holden fires -- BANG!

The Creature is shot in the leg and lets out a HOWL.

BANG! Holden fires again and hits the Creature in the shoulder as it flees the camp.

Cal collapses to his knees. Holden helps him up, and they take cover in the makeshift fort.

HOLDEN
Are you all right?

CAL
Knocked the wind out of me...

With his rifle rested on a tree trunk, Wicasa looks to his front.

CAL

I sure do wish we had our rifles.

They remain vigilant and quiet.

All is still.

CAL

I think the quiet is worse than anything...

Cal scans the woods before them.

CAL

What's it waiting for?

Holden lights a cheroot.

Cal loads two bullets into his pistol's cylinder.

CAL

My last six rounds. How many do you have, Sheriff?

HOLDEN

Three. Wicasa?

WICASA

Two for my rifle. Seven for my Colt.

Holden furrows his brow.

Rocks are thrown from the dark - BAM! They hit all around and inside the "fort."

CAL

Son of a bitch!

Holden, Cal, and Wicasa shield themselves from the flying missiles by keeping their heads down.

Holden peers over the "barricade" -- he sees nothing.

The rock barrage ceases.

Again -- silence.

They hear a SCREAM from deep in the woods.

HOLDEN

That was further away.

CAL
It's leaving?

HOLDEN
I think so.

CAL
Let's get out of here.

WICASA
To leave now would give the
creature the advantage of
darkness.

HOLDEN
It won't hurt to wait.

Cal leans his back against the fortification, takes hold of his wounded arm, and closes his eyes.

Wicasa rises and steps over the barricade. He sits on the fallen tree trunk as he stares at the woods.

Holden joins him.

HOLDEN
I don't know how a creature like
this could go undetected for so
many years.

WICASA
Maybe it didn't... and those who
found it never lived to tell.

HOLDEN
You know Nolan Weatherbee?

WICASA
The drunk?

HOLDEN
Yeah.

WICASA
I know his family was killed by
the Sioux many years ago.

HOLDEN
Before we left... he told me that
it wasn't the Sioux... he said it
was this creature.

Wicasa turns to Holden.

HOLDEN
Described him pretty good.

WICASA
Easier to blame the Sioux, than to
tell the truth.

HOLDEN
You have to admit it's a more
reasonable explanation.

Wicasa turns back to the woods.

EXT. THE SKY - EARLY SUNRISE - DAY

A thin sliver of orange-yellow cuts through the dark blue
of a night that is dying away.

EXT. NATURAL DEFENSE SITE - DAY

Before the sun gains any strength or beauty -- when
everything is gray, ugly and cold.

Dirty and bloody, Cal sleeps.

Behind the protection of the barricade, Holden and Wicasa
continue to watch the woods.

HOLDEN
It's quiet. I say we head out.

WICASA
Once we leave here, we will be
exposed on open ground with very
little ammunition.

HOLDEN
It's the only way back to town.

WICASA
It's a great risk.

HOLDEN
You got a better idea, now's the
time.

WICASA
The creature killed the horses not
far from here. I will scout the
area, and retrieve the rifles and
ammunition.

HOLDEN

Why don't we all go? Safety in numbers.

WICASA

If he is still nearby, he will hear three of us. He will not hear me alone.

Holden contemplates as his eyes scan the woodline.

HOLDEN

All right.

Wicasa tightens his grip on his rifle.

HOLDEN

Be careful.

Wicasa steps over the barricade, crouches low, and sprints forward.

Holden watches as he disappears into the morning mist of the woods.

CAL

In case we don't make it out of here... I was pissed off to no end when you were elected sheriff.

HOLDEN

So you said... in so many words.

CAL

Well... I think they ended up with the best man for the job.

Holden shows the hint of a smile.

HOLDEN

I appreciate that. But the job ain't what it's cracked up to be.

Cal is puzzled.

HOLDEN

I came to No Chance for some peace and quiet.

A slight chuckle from Cal.

BANG! Wicasa's big buffalo gun cracks through the stillness in the far distance.

Holden and Cal snap to full alert -- their eyes glued to the woods.

CAL
Should we go see?

HOLDEN
No.

CAL
Wicasa might need help.

HOLDEN
Stay right where you are.

From the dark of the woods, a large rock hurls toward them -- CRASH -- it slams against the defense wall.

Holden glances over the wall and sees a large projectile headed straight for him.

He ducks as it soars over him and slams onto the ground.

It is Wicasa's head.

The dead eyes of the scout stare at Holden.

Cal panics!

CAL
Son of a bitch! What the hell!?

Rocks pelt the "fort."

Dodging airborne rocks and branches, Cal and Holden open fire at the woods.

THE WOODS

Bullets SLAM into trees.

Bullets whistle past and into oblivion.

NATURAL DEFENSE SITE

Cal fires -- CLICK.

His face sinks with despair.

CAL
I'm out.

Holden hears a dull, heavy THUD-THUD-THUD...

Holden and Cal gaze over the barrier to see the Creature advance towards them.

Holden and Cal sink to the ground.

THUD-THUD-THUD!

CAL

Damn.

The plodding THUD-THUD-THUD draws closer.

Holden reaches into his coat pocket and produces the whiskey bottle.

He rips a strip from Cal's torn sleeve, and jams it into the bottle.

CAL

What are you doing!?

Holden takes his matches and lights the cloth.

The cloth fuse burns. He jumps up and faces the oncoming, growling Creature.

He hurls the whiskey bottle!

It SMASHES against the Creature and EXPLODES into flames!

The Creature SCREAMS in agony as it is engulfed in fire. It turns in all directions, arms flailing.

The Creature heads for Holden and Cal... and falls to the ground in a burning heap.

HOLDEN

Son of a bitch. Givens really did cut that stuff with gunpowder and turpentine.

Holden and Cal watch as the flames consume the Creature.

EXT. TOWN OF "NO CHANCE" - DUSK

Emily waits at the edge of town, looking at the distant woods. A soft wind blows as she pulls the shawl over her shoulders tighter.

Grace approaches.

GRACE

Mrs. Holden?

EMILY

Grace. All last night and all of today... not a word.

GRACE

They may have tracked it quite a distance.

EMILY

That's what I keep telling myself. I didn't think it would take this long.

GRACE

Wicasa is the best tracker, and Sheriff Holden is pretty good himself. Hunts like this take time.

EMILY

I suppose you're right.

She turns to Grace.

EMILY

What happened at the house... is anyone going to believe us?

GRACE

Would you?

EMILY

Probably not.

Emily smiles.

EMILY

Happier things... is Cal going to ask you to marry him?

GRACE

He better!

EMILY

You're not sure?

GRACE

So many times I thought he was about to propose... and then he didn't.

EMILY

Why?

GRACE

He has a bad case of nerves when it comes to marriage.

EMILY

Maybe it will be different this time.

GRACE

Maybe.

A beat.

GRACE

But I don't think so.

They both snicker in amusement.

GRACE

I think I'll have to propose to him.

Emily feigns shock.

EMILY

It just isn't done!

They laugh.

Emily is distracted as she looks towards the distant woods. Her eyes narrow as she strains to see in the failing twilight.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF TOWN - DUSK

Two figures have emerged from the woods and walk with tired, uneven steps toward the town.

EXT. TOWN OF "NO CHANCE" - DUSK

Emily's eyes sparkle and gleam.

Grace's lips curl into a smile.

They rush forward.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF TOWN

Emily and Grace hurry past the weather-beaten NO CHANCE sign as they race toward the woods.

Holden and Cal see them.

EMILY
Jim! Jim!

GRACE
Cal!

An exhausted Holden and Cal, quicken their pace.

CAL
Grace!

The men look a mess. Cal's arm soaked with dried blood and a torn sleeve, and Holden covered with dirt mixed with sweat.

The ladies fall into their arms -- hugs, kisses, happy tears, shining cheeks, tighter hugs, and more kisses.

EMILY
My Lord, Jim. What happened!?

GRACE
Where's Wicasa?

The expressions of Holden and Cal give the answer.

EMILY
Oh, no...

GRACE
Did you kill the creature?

HOLDEN
It's dead.

Another embrace.

From the woods behind them KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! -- echoes over the night air.

Holden turns to the woods. Cal is shocked. Emily and Grace's eyes open wide with fear.

In the distance - KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

WHOO! WHOO! WHOO!

The night sounds dissipate.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK -- from another direction.

Further away -- KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! - a primal SCREAM!

EXT. MAIN STREET - NO CHANCE - CONTINUOUS

- The Mayor exits the saloon -- drink in hand.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! -- from a distance.

- Doc Tyler steps out of his office...

WHOO! WHOO! WHOO! -- from the side of town.

- In the jail cell, Nolan Weatherbee's eyes well up with tears. He closes the cell door, backs up, and falls onto the cot.

A new primal SCREAM -- much closer.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF TOWN - CONTINUOUS

Holden and Cal draw their ladies close and hold them -- their heads turn in all directions as the WHOOPS and KNOCKS surround them.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Another SCREAM -- far away.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! -- deep in the woods.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! -- closer.

Holden mutters under his breath.

HOLDEN
What the hell...

FADE OUT.