

**DESPERATE HOURS**

by

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*"One man with courage makes a majority."*

--Andrew Jackson

OVER BLACK;

The sound of HOWLING WIND builds with MUSIC, growing louder and louder as the following words appear:

**AUTUMN, 1918.**

**The deadliest year in American history is drawing to a close. At home, more than 675,000 people have died from *Spanish Influenza*; a devastating plague that will ultimately claim more than 50 million lives around the world.**

These words fade. Replaced by:

**In Europe, soldiers fighting in the brutal trenches of World War I have perished at a rate unrivaled in modern warfare. Those fortunate enough to see Armistice Day have started to come home...only to discover their communities in ruin.**

These words fade. Replaced by:

**The nation is in mourning, more people have died in the past twelve months than in all American wars *combined*. In many parts of the country, schools and churches remain closed and public gatherings, even funerals, are strictly prohibited.**

These words fade. Replaced by:

**It is a dark, terrible time...for everyone.**

The wind and music continue to build. Finally, they crescendo together, like the cries of ghosts in agony--

CUT TO:

**EXT. SULLIVAN RANCH -- DAWN**

And then -- suddenly -- everything is quiet and peaceful.

The sun rises over a distant ridge, revealing a lonely RANCH nestled in the valley far below.

This place feels safe and remote; a tiny island in an ocean of green, far away from the horrors of the world.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS**

FRANK SULLIVAN (45) wakes up and slowly climbs out of bed. He struggles at first; stiff and sore. Once a rugged cowboy, Frank is now approaching middle-age in the 20th century; a man used up and no longer relevant.

*But there is power in him, yet.* A lifetime of farming has left his body in better shape than most men half his age.

Frank makes his way through the quiet house; sad and lonely--

PICTURES of his FAMILY (wife, daughter, & son) decorate every room and line every hallway. But they are nowhere to be seen.

Frank Sullivan is all alone.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- MORNING**

Frank brews a pot of coffee and fixes some breakfast, listening to the silence as it weighs heavy all around...

In a nearby window, a GOLD STAR BANNER shines brightly in the morning sun; a timeless symbol of sacrifice and loss.

In addition, two BLACK SILK CREPES hang over the front door, letting us know death has visited this house recently.

And on more than one occasion.

**EXT. SULLIVAN RANCH -- LATE MORNING**

Frank is hard at work, repairing a broken fence. Each hammer strike echoes and fades, the only sound for miles...

Frank suddenly hears a distant *rumbling*. He slowly looks up--

A MODEL-T FORD appears over the hill, bouncing along at ten miles an hour. Frank squints, recognizing the driver--

FRANK

For God's sake...

The car pulls over and comes to a stop. TOM DONOVAN (40s) climbs out, wearing a sheriff's uniform--

TOM

Heya, Frank...

FRANK

Finally bought one, huh?

TOM

Nah, belongs to the city. Being mayor has its perks. You should come into town more often. They outnumber horses, now.

FRANK

That's not something I care to see.  
(Then, noticing)  
What's with the uniform?

Tom glances at his shirt as he pops the trunk of his car...

TOM

Oh, yeah...guess you wouldn't have heard. I took over for Bill Stevens after he passed.

FRANK

You're the *sheriff*, now?

TOM

Just until they find a replacement.

FRANK

I didn't realize it was legal to hold *two* public offices.

TOM

It probably isn't.

Tom bends over and lifts out a large BIRTHDAY PRESENT--

FRANK

What the hell is that?

TOM

Think I'd forget?

FRANK

Think I need a reminder?

TOM

You know, a simple 'thank you' would do. This isn't the easiest place to get to.

Frank nods and reluctantly takes the package--

FRANK

It's heavy...

TOM

Yeah, it's a nice gift, Frank.

Tom shuts the trunk and turns to face his friend. BEAT.

FRANK

You drove all the way up here just to give me this?

TOM

Seemed like a good time to stop by, see how you're doing...

FRANK

And how am I doing?

TOM  
I don't know. You tell me.

Frank hesitates, not sure what to say.

FRANK  
You wanna cup of coffee before  
heading back?

TOM  
(a moment, then)  
Sure, that'd be great.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank sets the birthday present down on the kitchen counter and starts to brew another pot of COFFEE...

Tom stands nearby, his eyes quietly roaming--

He sees the GOLD STAR BANNER hanging in the window. And two black SILK CREPES draped across the front door...

And then Tom notices a MILITARY SWORD mounted in a glass case; sheathed and locked away...from an era long ago--

TOM  
'Get that in Cuba?

Frank looks up as he pours some coffee. Finally, he nods--

TOM (CONT'D)  
'Thought so. You ever hear from any  
of the old guys?

Frank shakes his head as he walks across the room...

TOM (CONT'D)  
Me, neither. Too bad. I hear  
Roosevelt's not doing well.  
(Takes the coffee)  
Thanks...

Tom takes a sip and nearly spits it out--

TOM (CONT'D)  
God, that's awful...

FRANK  
I know. I don't make it as good as  
Emily used to.

Tom hesitates, then takes another sip...this time without complaint. He nods at the birthday present--

TOM  
C'mon, open it.

Frank takes a deep breath and tears away the wrapping paper  
...revealing a brand new VICTROLA PHONOGRAPH--

TOM (CONT'D)  
You seen these things? Everyone's  
got 'em. Here, let me show you...

Tom places a RECORD on the wheel and lowers the needle...

Softly, suddenly-- *MUSIC FILLS THE HOUSE;*

It floats down empty hallways and creeps into vacant rooms,  
hanging gently in the air beside pictures and portraits of  
people who have left, never to return.

Frank's eyes well with emotion--

FRANK  
Emily and I used to dance to this.

TOM  
I know. Thought you'd like it.  
Got ya some others, too...

Tom hands over a collection of RECORDS. Frank shuffles  
through the titles, stopping at one in particular--

*AFTER YOU'VE GONE by Marion Harris*

Frank stares at the record, suddenly overwhelmed. He looks up  
at his friend and finally says--

FRANK  
Thank you, Tom.

Tom slowly nods as the song comes to an end. He carefully  
lifts the needle and silence fills the room.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
What's new in town?

TOM  
You mean *besides* the horseless  
carriage? A lot, actually. Most of  
the construction that was going on  
before the flu hit started up  
again. Think the car's impressive?  
You should see some of these  
buildings that are going up. The  
world's changing before our very  
eyes. I still can't believe it...

FRANK  
'Quarantine lifted?

TOM  
Yeah, couple months ago. Stores are  
back in business. Church is in  
session. Even re-opened the school.  
(Off Frank's look)  
Rosaleigh's teaching class until  
they find a replacement.

FRANK  
It's always amazing to see how  
quickly people move on...

TOM  
Nobody's forgotten Emily, Frank.  
The kids tell Rosaleigh everyday  
how much they miss her.

Frank slowly nods, then finds the courage to ask--

FRANK  
How's the *rest* of your family?

TOM  
(Hesitates)  
They're fine. *Everyone's* fine. I  
was about scared to death when  
Rosaleigh got sick, but...she  
pulled through. 'Seems to be  
getting stronger everyday. And  
Edward's due in on Sunday...

FRANK  
(a moment, then)  
That's great, Tom. Really.

TOM  
Eh, we got lucky. I'm just glad the  
troubles are over.

FRANK  
It's what we were all praying for.

TOM  
Yeah...

Tom glances at the GOLD STAR BANNER hanging in the window.  
And the SILK CREPES draped across the front door...

TOM (CONT'D)  
...it's just too bad it couldn't  
have happened a little sooner.

**EXT. SULLIVAN RANCH -- LATER**

Frank walks Tom back to his Model-T Ford. A cold wind blows through the valley. Tom winces, Frank does not.

TOM

You know...we're having a little celebration tonight. Dancing. Fireworks. Should be a good time. No flu masks allowed...

(Beat)

You should come.

Frank glances up at the cloud-riddled sky--

FRANK

You may be in for some rough weather...

TOM

Yeah, well...rain or shine, folks would still love to see ya.

(Off Frank's look)

C'mon, no one should be alone on their birthday.

FRANK

I'm not much good around people these days, Tom.

TOM

(Disappointed)

Alright. It's an open invitation, in case you change your mind.

Frank watches his friend climb back into his car...

FRANK

Tell Rosaleigh I said thank you for the thoughtful gift.

TOM

Tell her *yourself*. She'll be there tonight. Just think about it, okay?

Frank hesitates, then finally nods. Tom starts the engine, puts his car in gear...and slowly drives away.

**EXT. SULLIVAN RANCH -- LATER**

The wind blows, rattling branches like skeleton bones.

Frank is back at work, torquing a hammer to remove a set of rusty nails...*the hammer's shaft suddenly snaps!*

Frank falls to the ground with a dull thud. He sits up, dusts himself off...and stares down at his broken tool.

**EXT. SULLIVAN RANCH -- STABLE -- LATER**

Frank pulls open the door and steps inside. A torrent of excited rustling erupts in the stall up ahead...

Frank grabs a SADDLE and walks over to his HORSE, its tail swishes back and forth in hopeful anticipation...

FRANK  
Hey, Fella...

Frank strokes the animal's mane, wondering aloud--

FRANK (CONT'D)  
What do you say? Should we go see  
what's new in town?

The horse's dark milky eyes give him the answer--

**EXT. OPEN RANGE -- LATER**

Frank soars across the empty landscape, an expert rider comfortable being a spec in God's country...

*But then, suddenly, he brings his horse to a stop--*

The wind blows, carrying sounds of a *modern town* just beyond the ridge. Frank hesitates, intimidated...

He slowly rides over the hill, revealing--

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- CONTINUOUS**

A world transformed by asphalt and steel. Buildings are reaching skyward, automobiles outnumber horses...

Frank takes it all in as he makes his way into town. His horse sidesteps awkwardly, weaving between cars...

**INT. SALOON -- CONTINUOUS**

PATRONS fill a modern bar, wearing faded jeans and cotton shirts; as well as a few lingering FLU MASKS...

CHARLIE FOSTER and BEN SANDERFORD (40s, both "regulars") look up as Frank passes by their window...

CHARLIE  
You see that?

Ben shrugs, dumbfounded. *Couldn't be...could it?*

**EXT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

ELI PETERSON (60s) sits at his desk, quietly working. Something outside suddenly catches his eye...

Eli sets down his pen and goes to the window. His eyes fill with stoic pain as he watches Frank ride into town...

**INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM -- CONTINUOUS**

ROSALEIGH DONOVAN (40s, Tom's wife) stands before THIRTY STUDENTS, writing a lesson on the CHALKBOARD...

From the corner of her eye, Rosaliegh sees Frank's reflection in the window. The chalk in her hands suddenly *breaks*...

STUDENT

Mrs. Donovan? Are you alright?

Rosaleigh walks across the room, as if floating on eggshells. She peers quietly out the window. And then--

STUDENT (CONT'D)

Look! It's Mrs. Sullivan's husband!

The entire class rushes to the window--

**EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

NATHAN MILLER (18, town deputy) comes walking down the street with a brand new BOOK tucked under his arm...

PATRICK BONNER (32, town deputy) waits outside the sheriff's office. He sees his partner approaching and *nods*--

PATRICK

What ya got there?

Nathan smiles and holds up the FRONT COVER-- ***ATTACK OF THE RED BARON: THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES!***

PATRICK (CONT'D)

God, not another one. How many of those stupid things ya gonna buy?

NATHAN

I dunno. I was too young for the draft. Sounds pretty exciting...

Nathan starts flipping through the pages. Suddenly, Patrick gives him an urgent nudge. The young deputy looks up--

Frank Sullivan rides by on his horse. The two deputies stare, dumbfounded. Then, suddenly, they hear a voice from behind--

TOM (O.S.)  
What the hell's going on out here?

Patrick and Nathan both turn to face Tom Donovan. BEAT.

NATHAN  
Hey, Sheriff...or do you still want us to call you 'Mr. Mayor'?

TOM  
Hell, Nathan, I don't know. You ask me that every day. Just call me *Boss*, alright?  
(Confused)  
What's everyone looking at?  
(Then, seeing *Frank*)  
Well, shit. That didn't take long.

**INT. LEONARD DUSCHENE'S APARTMENT -- SAME TIME**

LEONARD DUSCHENE (28) stands in the gloomy shadows of his tiny bedroom, a haunted man living in exile--

He watches Frank stop just outside the SUNDRY STORE...

**EXT. SUNDRY STORE -- SAME TIME**

Frank glances briefly at a SILK CREPE hanging in the window, then opens the door and steps cautiously inside--

**INT. SUNDRY STORE -- MOMENTS LATER**

PROPAGANDA POSTERS still hang on the wall, looming above stacks of RED BARON NOVELS trumpeting the glory of war...

Frank ignores them as he heads down the aisle. He grabs a new HAMMER off the shelf and walks over to the counter...

KAY ANDERSON (40s, store owner) watches Frank approach. She smiles sadly through warm, gentle eyes--

KAY  
Will that be everything, Frank?

FRANK  
Hello, Kay...got a newspaper that's current?

Kay nods and slides one across the counter. Frank glances at the BOLD HEADLINE-- **ARMISTICE DECLARED; PEACE AT LAST!**

KAY  
'Guess I don't have to ask if you want to buy war bonds, huh?

Frank slowly shakes his head. Kay rings up his total--

KAY (CONT'D)  
That'll be sixty-seven cents.

Frank hands her a DOLLAR BILL and waits for change...

FRANK  
You running the store, now?

KAY  
Yeah, since Daniel passed. It's been hard. But Spencer's coming home soon. So at least I have *that* to look forward to...  
(Then, changing subjects)  
'Coming to the celebration tonight?

FRANK  
No...don't think so.

KAY  
Oh, that's a shame...  
(As she bags his things)  
May be best, though. They're saying a big storm's heading our way...

Frank smiles politely and reaches for the bag. Kay suddenly tightens her grip, refusing to let go--

KAY (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry about your boy. Your wife and daughter, too. It just ain't fair...what happened to you.

Frank slowly nods, then backs away and reaches for the door. He glances out the window and suddenly stops--

SUE FOWLER (40) is outside, walking down the street...

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- MOMENTS LATER**

She's a vision of grace and loveliness, greeting everyone with a smile as she makes her way through town...

Sue Fowler has no idea that she's being followed.

Twenty yards back, across the street, Frank Sullivan walks -- his footsteps in line with hers -- watching her every move.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- LATER**

Sue Fowler, now dressed in a WHITE DOCTOR'S COAT, comes out of the examination room with REVEREND MORGAN FARLEY (50s)--

SUE

I wouldn't worry about it, Morgan.  
Should clear up in a week or two.

REVEREND FARLEY

Thanks, Sue. I can always count on  
you to put my mind at ease.

SUE

It's not the *flu*.

REVEREND FARLEY

God, what a relief...

They turn a corner and suddenly stop dead in their tracks;  
shocked to see Frank Sullivan standing near the door--

SUE

Frank...I didn't hear you come in.  
Have you been here long?

FRANK

Not really.  
(To Reverend Farley)  
How are you, Morgan?

REVEREND FARLEY

I'm well, Frank. And you?

Frank hesitates, then shrugs. Farley steps closer--

REVEREND FARLEY (CONT'D)

I don't believe we've seen each  
other since your wife and daughter  
passed. Frank...I am *so* sorry. If  
there's anything I can do--

FRANK

There isn't...but *thank you*.

Reverend Farley hesitates, then turns back to Sue--

REVEREND FARLEY

I'll see you on Sunday, then?

SUE

(Nods)  
Bye, Morgan.

Reverend Farley tips his hat and leaves. The door closes  
softly behind him. Frank and Sue are alone. BEAT.

SUE (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?

FRANK

I was in town. Thought I'd stop by.

SUE

(a moment, then)

It's good to see you.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- MOMENTS LATER**

Reverend Farley comes outside and walks down the street. He sees Tom Donovan up ahead and goes over to meet him--

REVEREND FARLEY

You're never gonna believe who I just saw in Sue Fowler's office.

TOM

Frank Sullivan.

(Off Farley's look)

'Saw him ride in.

REVEREND FARLEY

I can't even imagine...

(Looks up at Sue's window)

...he lost *everyone*.

Tom slowly nods, then glances down the street where a LARGE BANNER is being hung above the TOWN'S ENTRANCE...

REVEREND FARLEY (CONT'D)

How's the new job treating you?

TOM

Eh, fair enough. I just hope things stay quiet.

REVEREND FARLEY

I'm sure they will, Tom. After everything we've been through.

(Beat)

What could *possibly* happen, now?

Tom turns and gives Farley a look: *don't tempt fate*.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- EXAMINATION ROOM -- LATER**

Frank sits on a table with his shirt unbuttoned. Sue warms her STETHOSCOPE and places it over his chest...

This office, like everything else in town, reflects a world in *transition*; the old giving way to the new.

X-RAYS and MICROSCOPES, VACCINES and ASPIRIN BOTTLES...all mingle with crude instruments from an earlier time.

SUE  
 Take a deep breath...  
 (Frank inhales/exhales)  
 How have you been feeling?

FRANK  
 Fine, I guess.

SUE  
 Any symptoms I should be worried  
 about. Fever? Headaches?

Frank slowly shakes his head as Sue listens to his heartbeat,  
 their faces just inches apart. Sue suddenly pulls away--

SUE (CONT'D)  
 Roll up your sleeve, please.

Frank tugs at the arm of his shirt. Sue wraps a BLOOD  
 PRESSURE CUFF around his bicep...

FRANK  
 'Hear your nephew's coming home...

SUE  
 My sister tell you that?

FRANK  
 Yeah, just saw her.

Sue squeezes the pump, tightening around Frank's arm...

SUE  
 You know, I was pretty heartbroken  
 when George and I realized we  
 couldn't have children. But  
 watching all those mothers send  
 their boys off to war...I don't  
 know...made me feel like maybe it  
 was a *blessing* in disguise...  
 (Then, off Frank's look)  
 I'm happy for her. She could use a  
 little joy. We *all* could...

Sue checks the redial and unfastens the cuff--

SUE (CONT'D)  
 Congratulations, you're in better  
 shape than most teenagers.

FRANK  
 I bet you say that to all your  
 patients.

Sue smiles and begins to put her things away...

SUE  
Are you worried about anything in particular, Frank?

Frank shrugs, something clearly on his mind. Sue glances at the WEDDING BAND on his right ring finger--

SUE (CONT'D)  
How long has it been?

FRANK  
(a moment, then)  
Almost a year.

Sue steps forward, choosing her words carefully--

SUE  
I know it's natural to worry when people you've lived with get sick, but if you're not showing any symptoms by now, then...

FRANK  
I'm in the clear?

SUE  
In a manner of speaking.

Frank slowly nods. BEAT.

FRANK  
Have there been any recent cases?

SUE  
Not for awhile. Things are getting back to normal. Sore throats. Broken bones. That sort of thing.

FRANK  
Think you'll stay on?

SUE  
I honestly don't know. We'll see what happens when the boys come home. It's one thing for a nurse to take over when all the male doctors have been drafted. Or *killed*. But making it *permanent* is something else entirely.

Frank glances across the room, where a portrait of the town's late PHYSICIAN (60s) still hangs on the wall. BEAT.

FRANK

You should stay. People know you,  
trust you...you're good at it.

SUE

Thank you, Frank.

They sit together in silence and the tension quickly returns. Suddenly, the sound of distant *SINGING* fills the air...

Frank and Sue stand up and go to the window--

A group of CIVIL WAR VETERANS (all 70s) are standing outside, singing *WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME*;

Written by a different generation fighting a different war, the lyrics seem as timely as ever. These dying veterans -- their voices old, but resolute -- bear witness to the most universal of truths: *Dwell on the past and you'll lose an eye. Forget the past and you'll lose both.*

SUE (CONT'D)

I remember when you left with  
President Roosevelt all those years  
ago. We sang the same song, then.  
We've really been through a lot,  
haven't we? An epidemic and a war  
...all in the *same* year.

FRANK

It's the way it's always been...

Frank stares out the window and sees Eli Peterson on the street. Once again, we sense the two men have *history*...

FRANK (CONT'D)

When I was in the Philippines, we  
lost six men to measles for every  
one we lost in combat. Soldiers  
sleep in close quarters. They board  
trains. They travel all over the  
world. If you want to spread a  
*disease*...all you need is a war.

Frank notices the LARGE BANNER being hung at the edge of town. Then he shifts his glance to a familiar building--

FRANK (CONT'D)

How's Leonard doing?

SUE

He stays in his room most days. And  
that seems to suit people just  
fine. They're still pretty angry.

FRANK  
It wasn't his fault.

SUE  
I know. But it's always easier when there's someone to *blame*. I feel sorry for him...he's got *nobody*.

Frank glances at Sue, then stares back out the window. BEAT.

SUE (CONT'D)  
Is it lonesome living all by yourself? I don't mean to pry, it's just...I imagine the solitude would be pretty hard to bear.

FRANK  
It's not so bad...once you get used to the feeling.

SUE  
You don't live so far away. I could cook you a meal sometime, if you're inclined to accept an invitation...

FRANK  
George okay with that?

SUE  
(Hesitates)  
He'd love to have you.

Frank smiles, knowing that's not true. He glances out the window once more, then cautiously steps back--

FRANK  
I should go.

SUE  
It was good to see you. Don't wait so long next time.

Frank smiles, then steps forward and gives Sue a gentle hug goodbye. *She suddenly winces in pain...*

Frank hesitates, then pulls at her neckline...*revealing a mottling grey bruise just beneath her shoulder blade.*

FRANK  
Goddamnit.

SUE  
Frank, please.

FRANK  
I thought he quit that.

Sue pulls away and covers herself...

SUE  
He didn't know he was hurting me,  
alright? He started drinking again  
when his brother died.  
(then, off Frank's look)  
You're not the only one who's lost  
someone, you know...

FRANK  
Sue...

SUE  
Frank, it's none of your business.  
Just let it be...

She steps back, folds her arms...and finally looks at him.

SUE (CONT'D)  
Will there be anything else?

FRANK  
No, I guess not.

Frank slowly turns and heads for the door. Sue watches him...  
wishing he wouldn't leave like this--

SUE  
Frank?

Frank stops and looks back at her. Sue hesitates, then says--

SUE (CONT'D)  
Happy Birthday.

Frank smiles, softly. Then turns...and leaves.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank climbs back on his horse just as the LARGE BANNER is  
unfurled above the town's entrance--

*It's a triumphant declaration heralding the end of war, as  
well as the heroic return of the town's soldier sons.*

Frank stares at it for a moment. And then, suddenly, he  
realizes everyone is watching him...

Frank takes a final look at the singing veterans. Then Eli  
Peterson. And then, finally, his friend Tom Donovan.

Frank kicks his horse swiftly and gallops away, passing beneath the banner as he rides out of town...

**EXT. CEMETERY -- LATER**

Frank comes to a beautiful clearing and tethers his horse to a nearby tree. The wind blows, cold and ominous--

Frank takes a deep breath, summoning his courage. He places a handkerchief over his face...and enters the town cemetery--

And now we get a glimpse of the true horror of influenza; freshly dug GRAVES and unburied CASKETS stacked row upon row.

HEADSTONES mark the remains of young and old, rich and poor ...all dying in the dreaded plague year of 1918.

Frank makes his way through this awful place, finally stopping at the graves of his wife and daughter.

He stares at his family -- helpless and alone.

**EXT. MEADOW -- EVENING**

Dozens of MODEL-T FORDS park along the meadow's edge; their bright headlights piercing the dusty haze of twilight.

TOWNSPEOPLE welcome each other as the BAND starts to play and MUSIC fills the air. Everyone claps and cheers...

It's going to be an eventful evening.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- SAME TIME**

Frank sits in the dark shadows of his lonely house, listening to Marion Harris sing *AFTER YOU'VE GONE* on the phonograph--

*Now won't you listen honey, while I say / How could you tell me that you're going away? / Don't say that we must part / Don't break your baby's heart...*

As the song continues, Frank takes a pair of SCISSORS and clips the front page of the newspaper he bought earlier...

The flickering light of a nearby candle dances in his eyes. Frank stares at a headline that seems to taunt him--

***ARMISTICE DECLARED; PEACE AT LAST!***

Frank glances at the GOLD STAR. And the song continues--

*After you've gone...and left me crying / After you've gone, there's no denying / You'll feel blue, you'll feel sad / You'll miss the dearest pal you've ever had--*

Overwhelmed, Frank lifts the needle and the song abruptly stops. The house grows deathly quiet. But then--

A crack of THUNDER suddenly rumbles overhead. And the autumn wind carries the faint sound of distant *celebration*...

Frank Sullivan stands up and goes to the window. BEAT.

**EXT. MEADOW -- EVENING**

The party is in full swing. The band plays to the sunset as rows of dancing couples welcome the night--

Nearby, a group of men prepare some FIREWORKS, waiting for darkness so they can rocket them into the sky...

As the music pools with laughter and joy, a few TOWNSPEOPLE notice the approaching sound of GALLOPING HORSE HOOVES...

Heads turn as they draw near. Then, suddenly--

Frank Sullivan appears over the ridge, riding towards them; his reluctance visible even from a distance.

TOWNSPEOPLE gasp, a few nudge each other and point.

Frank tethers his horse to a tree at the end of a long line of MODEL-T FORDS. The animal snorts with disgust--

FRANK

Don't worry. I won't be long.

Frank turns and approaches the crowd. TOWNSPEOPLE come over to say 'hello'. Frank smiles, shaking everybody's hand...

*Sue Fowler watches from a distance--*

She's dressed for the occasion and looks even lovelier than before. A little makeup has put a spotlight on her face.

Frank Sullivan notices her right away.

Sue's breathing grows heavy as he approaches; her body language a curious mixture of excitement and fear.

She waits for him to reach her...and then finally says--

SUE

I'm glad you came.

FRANK

Yeah, well...

(Looks around)

It is my birthday, after all.

Sue smiles as the world celebrates around them. The last vestiges of twilight fade and the sky grows very dark...

But neither Sue nor Frank notice. They're lost in each other.

ACROSS THE MEADOW

Rosaleigh grabs Tom by the arm, nodding at Frank and Sue--

ROSALEIGH

Would you look at *that*...

(Tom follows her gaze)

I wonder how much shorter George's  
leash will get now that Emily  
Sullivan is dead and buried.

Tom glances at his wife with mild disapproval. And then Rosaleigh shifts her glance...and suddenly freezes--

*Leonard Duschene is walking along the meadow's edge...*

ROSALEIGH (CONT'D)

I don't see how he can even show  
his face...after all the misery he  
brought on this town. Aren't they  
supposed to hang traitors?

Tom stares at Leonard...and slowly nods.

ACROSS THE MEADOW

Frank and Sue continue to talk--

FRANK

That's quite a dress.

SUE

Oh, I've had it for years.

FRANK

Looks brand new.

SUE

I don't get to wear it that often  
...do you like it?

FRANK

(a moment, then)  
Very much.

Frank glances at the dancing couples, then looks back at Sue. We can see in his eyes what he'd like to ask her.

And we can tell by hers that she's dying to say yes.

But Frank is torn both by loyalty and concern over what people might think. He fidgets nervously with the wedding ring on his finger...and hesitates a moment too long--

GEORGE (O.S.)  
Well, look who it is...

GEORGE FOWLER (40) steps forward, holding a beer in his hand. Frank's eyes slant to stab wounds. Sue tenses, on edge.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
How are ya, Frank?

FRANK  
Fine, George. Yourself?

GEORGE  
Pretty good.

Frank clenches his fist and glances at Sue. She stares at him, begging with her eyes: Not here. Not now.

FRANK  
'Sorry about Dave.

GEORGE  
Yeah, he deserved better. Hell, I suppose we all did.  
(Glances up at the sky)  
Wonder how much longer the weather's gonna hold...

FRANK  
Hopefully they'll be able to get the fireworks off in time.

George slowly nods, then turns to Sue--

GEORGE  
C'mon...let's go over and say 'hi' to the Ludlows.  
(As they leave)  
See ya around, Frank.

Frank watches George and Sue head back into the crowd, then he slowly turns...and sees Tom Donovan standing nearby--

FRANK  
That new job of yours come with any deputies?

TOM  
Yeah, two of 'em. 'Only men left in this town under the age of forty.

FRANK

You need to take 'em out and pay  
George Fowler a visit...

(Off Tom's look)

He's drinking again.

TOM

Last I checked, that's not against  
the law. Not yet, anyway. His  
brother died. Cut him a break.

FRANK

'Problem is when George Fowler  
drinks, he gets *violent*.

(Off Tom's look)

Sue's got bruises around her  
shoulder and collar bone.

TOM

Who told you that?

FRANK

Saw it with my own eyes.

Tom glances across the meadow, letting out a deep sigh--

TOM

Shit. I was worried about that.  
There have been rumors...

FRANK

Why hasn't anything been *done*?

TOM

What am I supposed to do?

FRANK

I don't know, *Sheriff*. You tell me.

TOM

Hey, take it easy. I'll look into  
it, alright?

Frank stares at Tom as THUNDER erupts overhead...

TOM (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that. I told  
you I hate this goddamn job...

Tom suddenly turns and disappears back into the crowd. Frank  
watches him go, then heads the other way...

As he walks, Frank overhears PARENTS asking each other when  
their children are coming home from the war...

Frank looks away, saddened. He glances across the meadow... and sees Leonard Duschene standing all by himself--

The two men stare at each other for a moment...and then the sound of MICROPHONE FEEDBACK causes everyone to look up.

Tom Donovan and Reverend Farley are standing at the PODIUM--

TOM (CONT'D)

Ladies and Gentlemen...could I have everyone's attention, please?

The music and dancing stop. All eyes turn to Tom--

TOM (CONT'D)

As most of you probably know by now, I'm no good at making speeches. But I wanted to welcome you all out tonight...and just say thank you for coming.

(Applause, then)

This is a time for celebration. But we would be remiss if we did not pause to remember those we've lost this past year. So, on that note, I'd like to turn it over to Reverend Farley. *Morgan?*

Reverend Farley steps forward. The mood turns *grim*--

REVEREND FARLEY

In memory of the fallen, I ask that we observe a moment of silence...

*Suddenly, CHILDREN and TEENAGERS begin roaming through the crowd, holding trays filled with SMALL CANDLES...*

REVEREND FARLEY (CONT'D)

Members of our Sunday school will be passing by with candles. Please take one for every family member you lost this year, whether it was from sickness...or war.

TOWNSPEOPLE start taking candles as the children pass by. Every FAMILY takes at least one; some even take *two*.

A soft orange glow slowly spreads through the meadow...

Frank Sullivan looks up at a YOUNG GIRL standing before him. He takes a deep breath and picks up a candle...

Then, with his other hand, he picks up *two more*.

## IN THE CROWD

Eli Peterson watches Frank struggle to hold three candles on his own. With trembling hands, *Eli sets his candle down.*

## AT THE PODIUM

Reverend Farley lifts a single flame high above his head...

The entire town follows his lead. *Hundreds of flames rise in the darkness, whispering gently in the faint autumn air.*

*Leonard stares at all the candles, haunted and guilt-ridden.*

Everyone observes a moment of silence. And then Reverend Farley takes a deep breath...and blows out his flame.

Everyone else does likewise. The meadow suddenly goes *dark.*

A devastating stillness hangs in the air...and then the *sound of SHRIEKING ROCKETS causes everyone to look up--*

FIREWORKS explode overhead. TOWNSPEOPLE gasp and applaud, their faces fading up and down with the flickering light...

Then, softly and *suddenly--*

*Distant GUNSHOTS pop in the faraway woods...*

They reverberate for a moment and quickly die away, absorbed by the loud explosions booming overhead.

Frank is the only one who notices. He turns and looks out at the thick dark trees, wondering if he heard right...

CUT TO:

**EXT. SULLIVAN RANCH -- SAME TIME**

Frank Sullivan's ranch sits peacefully in the night...

A gust of wind shakes the trees like a torrent of darkness; followed by rumbling thunder and flashes of lightning.

The storm warnings subside and the silence returns. A calm, soothing moment hangs in the air...and then--

*A YOUNG WOMAN (20s) stumbles out of the woods; her clothes soaking wet, her body drenched in blood.*

*The sight of her should take our breath away. She appears suddenly out of nowhere, like a ghost in the darkness.*

*She limps towards Frank Sullivan's house...*

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS**

The young woman breaks a window and comes inside, leaving a thick trail of blood with every painful step.

She searches frantically for medicine and supplies, but the house is very dark. And her life is fading fast.

She collapses on the floor with a sickening *thud*; unconscious and near death, her blood pooling around her.

Outside, a violent crack of thunder promises heavy rain...

**EXT. MEADOW -- SAME TIME**

Just as the fireworks conclude, the DOWNPOUR begins...

Everybody runs to their cars, but the Model-Ts are trapped. Engines start and wheels spin. Nobody is able to get away...

...except for Frank, who walks calmly towards his horse -- kicking and snorting beneath an onslaught of rain...

Frank climbs into the saddle and gallops away, passing scores of cars as they fishtail in vain.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- LATER**

Frank comes inside and takes off his wet coat. He lights a candle and makes his way through the dark house...

Suddenly, Frank *stops*. He can hear the storm outside louder than ever. He sees the broken window first...

...and then he steps in something *wet*.

Frank kneels, holding the candle close to the floor. His eyes suddenly widen -- he's standing in a pool of *blood*.

A burst of LIGHTNING reveals the young girl on the floor...

Frank springs to action, reacting on pure instinct--

He picks the girl up and sets her down on the kitchen table, knocking everything to the ground in order to make room...

He tears off her clothes and finds three bullet wounds; two in the arm, one in the thigh. Blood pours out of her body...

Frank wraps a tourniquet above each wound, then finds the girl's pulse...so faint, it's barely even there.

Frank stares at her, overwhelmed. This is as far as his knowledge will take him. He needs help. He needs...a *doctor*.

**EXT. MEADOW -- LATER**

Frank gallops through the pouring rain, weaving between trapped cars and foggy headlight beams--

He knocks on windows and waits for them to crack. Then he peers inside, hoping to find Sue Fowler...

Finally, Frank reaches the right car. He knocks loudly and waits. The window opens...*George Fowler peers out--*

GEORGE

Frank? What the hell...?

Frank rides around to the other side of the car. He knocks on the window...it immediately rolls down--

SUE

What's wrong?

FRANK

I need your help...a woman's hurt.

SUE

What? *How?*

FRANK

Shot. Pretty bad. C'mon, I'll explain on the way...*please.*

Sue nods and opens her door, stepping out into the rain...

GEORGE

Sue! What the hell are you doing?!

Frank pulls her up onto his horse and they gallop away...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- LATER**

Frank and Sue come inside, both soaking wet.

FRANK

I don't know where she came from.  
She was here when I got home...can you help her?

Sue rushes to the girl's side and quickly goes to work--

SUE

She's lost a lot of blood...  
(then, horrified)  
God, her pulse is *racing*...it has to be in the 140s, at least. Is there any alcohol in the house?  
(MORE)

SUE (CONT'D)  
 (Off his look)  
 I need a *disinfectant*.

FRANK  
 What kind?

SUE  
 Whatever's strongest. And I need a  
 knife...like a scalpel.

Frank leaves to gather the items. Sue grabs a nearby candle and moves it closer. It lights up the girl's face...

Frank comes back just in time for her to say--

SUE (CONT'D)  
 She looks like Kathryn.

Frank hesitates, then sets two bottles of WHISKEY and a SMALL KNIFE down on the table--

FRANK  
 Anything else?

SUE  
 We need to make a splint for her  
 arm. And I need a hemostat...

FRANK  
 A *what*?

SUE  
 A pair of pliers...

Frank glances around the room -- thinking fast. He turns a TABLE on its side and breaks off one of the LEGS.

FRANK  
 Will this work?

SUE  
 (Looks up)  
 Yes, thank you.

Sue fashions a splint and wraps the girl's arm. Frank leaves the room and returns with a pair of PLIERS--

SUE (CONT'D)  
 Thank you.

Sue soaks a towel and cleans the girl's wounds...

SUE (CONT'D)  
 Do you know your blood type?

FRANK

No.

SUE

Hopefully someone in town does...

Sue picks up the pliers and douses them with whiskey--

FRANK

Is that clean enough?

SUE

It's gonna have to be.

Sue digs into the girl's thigh. Frank watches with steely resolve as the pliers go deeper...and deeper--

FRANK

(Re: Bullet)

Can you get it?

SUE

It's up against the femoral artery.  
If that gets severed, she'll bleed  
to death.

FRANK

She's doing that already.

Sue nods...and pushes the pliers in *just that much deeper*. She pulls out a thick BLACK SLUG; mangled and disgusting.

Frank grabs his rifle and stands guard near the window... after all, the killers may still be out there.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SULLIVAN RANCH -- MORNING**

The rain has stopped. The sun begins to rise, revealing a beautiful landscape and a majestic morning.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank sits in a chair, holding his rifle in his arms. He hears approaching footsteps...and slowly looks up.

Sue Fowler comes into the room, wiping her hands on a bloody towel. She stares at Frank, exhausted. Then quietly says--

SUE

She's alive.

Frank slowly nods and gets to his feet...

SUE (CONT'D)  
Her clothes are ruined, though. Do you have anything...she could use?

FRANK  
(Hesitates)  
Emily's things are still upstairs. Second bedroom closet.

SUE  
Okay. What should I take?

FRANK  
(a moment, then)  
Doesn't matter.

Sue slowly nods, then hands him a LIST--

SUE (CONT,'D)  
Think you could go into town? I need some things from my clinic.

Frank nods, pocketing the list. He holds up his rifle--

FRANK  
You know how to use this?

Sue hesitates, then nods. Frank hands her the gun--

FRANK (CONT'D)  
Safety's off. All you gotta do is aim...and pull the trigger.

SUE  
Please hurry.

Frank turns and charges out the door...

CUT TO:

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- LATER**

Frank Sullivan gallops into town, heading for Sue's clinic. TOWNSPEOPLE watch, alarmed by his urgent pace...

CUT TO:

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- BEDROOM CLOSET -- SAME TIME**

Sue Fowler stands in the quiet room, staring respectfully at clothes that once belonged to Emily Sullivan.

She goes through the dresses, one at a time...finally selecting one that seems safe and appropriate.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME**

Frank fills a BLACK MEDICAL BAG with supplies...

He hears a pair of boots come *thunking* up the stairs,  
followed by Tom Donovan's voice at the door--

TOM

Saw your horse outside. You know,  
for a guy who supposedly doesn't  
like coming into town, you sure are  
doing it a lot, lately.

Frank glances at Tom, then continues filling the bag...

TOM (CONT'D)

You aimin' to rob the place?

FRANK

Taking some things out to Sue...

TOM

Where is she?

FRANK

My ranch.

TOM

Oh, good. That oughta make for some  
nice Sunday gossip.

FRANK

There was a *shooting* last night,  
Tom...

TOM

What? *Where*?

FRANK

Not sure. A girl showed up on my  
doorstep covered in blood.

TOM

You're serious?

FRANK

You think I'd make this up?

TOM

Is she from around here?

FRANK

Don't think so.

TOM  
But she's *alive*?

FRANK  
Last I checked.  
(Then, urgently)  
I need you to come with me. *Now*.

TOM  
Alright, let me get my horse.

FRANK  
Do it quickly.

Tom nods and leaves the room. Frank grabs the last few things on Sue's list...and follows close behind.

**EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

Patrick and Nathan come outside and watch Tom climb onto his horse. He rides over to meet them--

PATRICK  
What's going on, Boss?

TOM  
I need you boys to start gathering a search party...

NATHAN  
This early? It's Saturday...

TOM  
You get twelve able-bodied men as fast as you can and head out to the Sullivan Ranch. You hear?

Nathan looks dumbfounded. Patrick slowly nods--

PATRICK  
Yes, sir.

Tom kicks his horse and meets Frank in the middle of the street. Together, they gallop out of town...

**INT. LEONARD DUSCHENE'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS**

Leonard watches Frank and Tom disappear over the ridge. His eyes narrow -- sensing trouble in the air.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- LATER**

Sue lays a BLANKET over the girl's trembling body. She suddenly hears *faint horse hooves*, approaching fast...

She grabs Frank's rifle and heads for the door...

**EXT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS**

Sue steps outside just as Frank and Tom appear over the ridge. They bring their horses to a sudden stop--

SUE

Did you get everything?

Frank hands her the medical bag. Sue opens it and checks--

FRANK

How is she?

SUE

Not good...

Sue snaps the bag shut and hurries back to the house...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Tom stares at the blood stained floor as Sue inflates a BLOOD PRESSURE CUFF around the girl's arm and checks the redial--

SUE

Jesus, she's 70 over 30.

TOM

What does that mean?

SUE

That she's hanging by a thread.  
 (Checks the girl's pulse)  
 Her heart can't keep beating like this. It's gonna give out...  
 (Then, to Tom)  
 You don't know your blood type by any chance, do you?

TOM

There are different kinds?  
 (Off her look)  
 What does it even matter?

SUE

The wrong kind will kill her.  
 That's why it matters. And since she's unconscious, we have to find someone who's O-negative...  
 (Off Tom's look)  
 They're called universal donors. They're very rare...and they can give blood to *anybody*.

TOM

I'll ask around town, but who would even *know* such a thing?

FRANK

Soldiers. Anyone who's met with a draft board knows if they're able to transfuse blood.

TOM

*Transfuse* blood? We never did anything like that in Cuba.

FRANK

We did in the Philippines.

TOM

(Grimly)  
Yeah, I bet.  
(Then, stepping *closer*)  
I can't hardly believe it...  
somebody shot her?

SUE

Twice in the arm. Once in the leg.

TOM

All on the same side, too.  
(To Frank)  
What does *that* tell you?

FRANK

She wasn't running away...

TOM

Wasn't *facing* 'em either.

Tom suddenly notices the *mangled slug* sitting on the table.

TOM (CONT'D)

(To Frank)  
That look like any bullet *you've*  
ever seen?

Frank hesitates, then slowly shakes his head. Tom turns and crosses the room, staring at the broken window--

TOM (CONT'D)

How'd she get all the way out here?

FRANK

I don't know, Tom. I didn't have a chance to ask her.

Tom peers out the window and sees Patrick and Nathan in the distance, leading a SEARCH PARTY towards Frank's property...

DUFFY  
(Dramatic Beat)  
Let's find out.

**EXT. WOODS -- LATER**

The search party charges through the woods; TWELVE MEN on HORSEBACK armed with GUNS and SCENT-SNIFFING DOGS.

Frank and Tom lead the group. The others are all MEN we might recognize -- Patrick & Nathan, the Civil War Vets, etc.

They keep pace with the dogs, hot on the girl's trail...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- BEDROOM -- SAME TIME**

Sue kneels at the girl's bedside, attending to her wounds. She suddenly hears a knock at the front door...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- FRONT DOOR -- MOMENTS LATER**

Sue opens the door and finds her *husband* standing on the porch. She recoils slightly, then manages to say--

SUE  
You're late. The others left...

GEORGE  
That's all you have to say to me?  
Do you have any idea how worried I was last night? I didn't even know what had happened until one of Tom's deputies knocked on our door organizing a search party.

SUE  
(Exhausted)  
Please. Don't start.

Sue turns and heads back upstairs. George quickly follows...

**EXT. WOODS -- SAME TIME**

Branches snap as the dogs carve through the trees. The men follow close behind, hoping for some *sign* or *clue*...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- BEDROOM -- LATER**

Sue resumes her place at the girl's bedside. George comes to the doorway and watches quietly...

GEORGE  
So this is the mystery girl, huh?  
Where'd she come from?

SUE  
We don't know.

GEORGE  
Is she going to live?

SUE  
(a moment, then)  
Probably not.

GEORGE  
Yeah, well...you should be used to  
that by now.

Sue shudders quietly, but doesn't respond. George suddenly notices an empty WHISKEY BOTTLE sitting on the table--

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Any more of *that* in the house?

SUE  
(Hesitates)  
I think we used it all...

George slowly nods, then turns and leaves the room...

**EXT. LAKE -- SAME TIME**

Frank and Tom emerge from the woods and find themselves at a MAJESTIC LAKE, stretching for miles in every direction...

Tom watches their dog sniff along the shoreline--

TOM  
Goddamnit...it's as if she just  
fell out of the sky.

Frank stares at the TALL CLIFFS towering above the lake...

TOM (CONT'D)  
C'mon, let's go...

Tom turns to leave, but Frank doesn't *budge*--

TOM (CONT'D)  
(Confused)  
Frank? She didn't walk on water...

FRANK  
Maybe she came up out of it.

Frank spurs his horse forward, charging up the STEEP INCLINE; so severe, they're nearly vertical as they ascend...

**EXT. SUMMIT -- CONTINUOUS**

Frank and his horse reach the top and level out onto flat terrain. Frank dismounts and takes in his surroundings--

He hears the sound of a HORSE struggling to climb. And then Tom appears; his face ashen from the harrowing ascent.

TOM

Let's *not* do that again.

Frank nods up ahead, where the road suddenly bends--

FRANK

If you were waiting to ambush someone, where would you be?

Tom looks around for a moment, then points--

TOM

*There.*

Frank takes position in the grass. He stares at the road and shifts his weight...*something crunches beneath his feet--*

Frank picks up a handful of empty bullet shells.

TOM (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ.

Frank walks over to the cliff's edge. He stares at the ground, looking for something...*and then he finds it--*

Faint TIRE TRACKS, like a decaying fossil; nearly washed away by the rain, *leading right over the edge of the cliff...*

Frank leans over and peers at the water below; the sun dances across the surface like a fortune of golden coins.

Beneath the water, oscillating between glimmers of sunlight, is a refracted image of a LARGE, BLACK OBJECT...

TOM (CONT'D)

That what I think it is?

Frank hesitates, then slowly nods--

FRANK

Yeah...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- LATER**

George sits at Frank's desk, opening drawers. He searches vigorously, but doesn't find what he's looking for.

Instead, he discovers a file of NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS--

The article Frank saved earlier is at the top of the pile ...along with a hand written LETTER, worn and well read--

*"Dear Mr. & Mrs. Sullivan, I deeply regret to inform you that your son, Private William Sullivan, died this afternoon..."*

George skims the letter, then flips through the articles, each one detailing the horrors of the past year...

George closes the file and puts it away. He goes to shut the drawer, but stops when he *sees something*--

An old PHOTOGRAPH buried beneath a stack of papers...

It shows TWENTY YOUNG SOLDIERS standing at the top of a DUSTY HILL with an AMERICAN FLAG billowing overhead.

A LEGENDARY FIGURE stands in the center--

His thick moustache and coke-bottle glasses identify him as clearly as a caption would: *President Theodore Roosevelt.*

And then George sees two familiar faces in the back row: FRANK SULLIVAN and TOM DONOVAN; each twenty years old...

SUE (O.S.)  
What are you doing?!

George looks up and finds his wife standing at the door--

SUE (CONT'D)  
You shouldn't be going through Frank's things.

George hands her the photograph--

GEORGE  
If you had a picture of yourself with the President, would you hide it away in a goddamn desk drawer?

Sue stares at the picture, suddenly overwhelmed.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
He left you for that war. Least he could do is put it on display.  
(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(Beat)

I wonder what else he's hiding...

George stands up and leaves the room as Sue quietly winces from the pain of old wounds...

CUT TO:

**INT. WOODS -- LATE AFTERNOON**

WORK HORSES lurch forward, pulling tightly against long CHAINS running beneath the surface of the lake...

Frank, Tom, Nathan, Patrick, and the other SEARCHERS watch as the horses move forward, one laborous step at a time...

Nathan seems excited, the others concerned. Whatever these horses are pulling, it appears to be quite heavy...

And then, suddenly--

*A bullet-ridden MODEL-T FORD breaks through the surface...*

The men slowly gather around as the car comes to shore. They peer through the shattered windows, recoiling in horror--

Two DEAD MEN are slumped in the front seat; their bodies destroyed by gunfire, their faces unrecognizable...

TOM

Nathan, hand me their wallets.

Nathan glances at Tom, the excitement gone from his face. *Do I really have to?* Tom's dark eyes give him the answer...

Nathan takes a deep breath and reaches inside the car. His hand reappears, clutching two leather WALLETS...

Tom steps forward and flips them both *open*. Each wallet carries a BADGE. The dead men were *federal agents*.

TOM (CONT'D)

Shit.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- LATER**

TOWNSPEOPLE stand outside, watching with grave concern as two PINEWOOD COFFINS get stacked outside the FUNERAL HOME...

**INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

Eli Peterson looks up as the DOORBELL chimes. Deputies Patrick & Nathan step into the office--

ELI  
Gentlemen...

PATRICK  
How are ya, Eli?

ELI  
Oh, just waiting for the telephone  
man to get here so I can retire...  
(Glances out the window)  
You've had a busy day.

Patrick nods and hands Eli a slip of paper--

PATRICK  
We need to wire this information to  
to Kansas City right away.

ELI  
What's going on? Folks are talking  
about some kind of shooting out at  
the Sullivan Ranch...

PATRICK  
We're not sure, but it needs to  
stay quiet. Let us know the *instant*  
you get a response, alright?

Eli nods and watches the two deputies leave. He looks down  
and reads the wire...his eyes suddenly go *wide*.

**EXT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

Eli steps into the street, completely dazed. He watches the  
two coffins disappear inside the funeral home...

Then he turns and sees TOWNSPEOPLE standing outside;  
whispering, pointing...the *fear* already taking hold.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- BEDROOM -- EVENING**

Sue stands by the window, staring at the photograph. Frank's  
young face is enough to knock the wind out of her...

**EXT. SULLIVAN RANCH -- SAME TIME**

Frank and Tom sit beneath a jeweled sky, their horses kicking  
and snorting in the cold evening air...

Frank stares at the wallets of the two dead men--

FRANK  
(Reading their IDs)  
Neither of 'em made it to thirty.

TOM

Too many young people dying these days. That's for sure.

Frank nods sadly and gives the wallets back to Tom. BEAT.

TOM (CONT'D)

I'll come back tomorrow and help you move the girl into town.

(Off Frank's look)

She can't stay here. This place is the perfect spot for an ambush.

Frank looks around for a moment, then slowly nods.

TOM (CONT'D)

Edward will be with me, so we can get *his* help, as well.

FRANK

Don't forget to ask about his blood type, alright?

TOM

Sure. And I'll have Farley make an announcement. Maybe someone in town knows. Worth a shot.

(Beat)

I could have my deputies stay here tonight. Incase whoever did this decides to come back.

Frank stares at the dark forest, considering the offer--

FRANK

If someone was going to show up, they would've done it by now.

TOM

Alright...

Tom sees Sue Fowler standing in Frank's window. He *nods*--

TOM (CONT'D)

You should've seen her during the crisis. It reminded me of *you*, quiet honestly. Charging with Roosevelt up San Juan Hill...

(Beat)

People were dying all around her. One after another. But she just kept going. *Fearless*.

Frank looks up at Sue. Tom stares at his friend--

TOM (CONT'D)  
 You ever regret going to the  
 Philippines...after Cuba?

FRANK  
 I did what my country asked...

TOM  
 If you had come home, she might not  
 have married George...

FRANK  
 I don't regret the years I had with  
 my wife, Tom.

TOM  
 No one's saying you do. But you  
 deserve to be happy. So does she...  
 (Glances at Sue, then)  
 Nobody'd hold it against you.  
 Nobody who *matters*, anyway.

Tom kicks his horse and gallops away. Frank watches his  
 friend disappear in the darkness...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- DOWNSTAIRS -- MOMENTS LATER**

George Fowler sits at the table, nervously rubbing his hands.  
 It's been awhile since he's had a drink...

*...and the shakes are starting to set in.*

FRANK (O.S.)  
 It's getting pretty late. You gonna  
 head home?

George looks up at Frank with eyes darker than the room--

GEORGE  
 If my wife's staying, I'm staying.

Frank stares at George. His fist clenches again...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- BEDROOM -- SAME TIME**

Sue leans against the wall, deep in thought. *The sound of  
 faint moaning causes her to suddenly turn around...*

The young girl is awake. Sue rushes to her bedside--

SUE  
 Hi...can you hear me? What's your  
 name? Can you tell me? It's alright  
 if you don't remember...

The girl's eyes flutter as she fights to stay conscious. Her heart is racing and her nerves are on fire...

SUE (CONT'D)

Here, let me give you something for the pain...

Sue fills a SYRINGE with MORPHINE--

SUE (CONT'D)

This is going to *sting* a little...

She pierces the skin. The girl suddenly screams and pulls away, causing the needle to *break* off in her arm...

SUE (CONT'D)

Shit...

(Yelling)

Frank?! George?!

(Top of her lungs)

*I NEED HELP UP HERE!*

FOOTSTEPS come flying up the stairs and race down the hall. Frank bursts into the room with George close behind...

SUE (CONT'D)

Hold her down...

Frank steps forward and restrains the girl so that Sue can dig the bloody needle out of her vein...

YOUNG GIRL

*No...shtfpfff...nasths...please...*

*no...ugh, humph...God, no...*

George stares at the girl, trying to make sense of her words--

YOUNG GIRL (CONT'D)

*No, please...somebody...help!*

(And then, screaming)

*Getaway! You fuck! Help me! Shit!*

*Motherfucker!! God...damnit!*

*The young girl suddenly grabs Frank by the hand, bracing herself against him, holding on for dear life...*

Sue pulls the needle out of the girl's arm. Blood sprays everywhere, soaking the bed sheets. The girl screams--

Sue fills another SYRINGE and sticks the exposed arm. The girl moans as narcotic burns through her veins...

She slowly lets go of Frank's hand...and falls asleep.

GEORGE

Jesus, where did she come from?  
 (a moment, then)  
 Been awhile since I heard screaming  
 like that...almost forgot what it  
 sounded like.

Frank looks down at his *empty hand* as Sue goes to the window.  
 She suddenly steps back, her face frozen in *fear*--

SUE

Frank? There's somebody outside.

**EXT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER**

A SILHOUETTED MAN stands on the front porch...

Frank comes out the side door holding a rifle in his arms. He  
 swings around, about to pull the trigger--

FRANK

Don't move!

The man freezes, then turns slightly...it's *Eli Peterson*.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Jesus, Eli...

ELI

Didn't mean to scare.

Frank catches his breath and climbs the porch steps. The look  
 on his face says it all: *What are you doing here?*

ELI (CONT'D)

Folks in town are saying this girl  
 looks like my granddaughter...

(Beat)

Can I see her?

Frank stares at Eli...and finally nods.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank stands with Eli at the girl's bedside, watching as the  
 old man stares down in quiet disbelief--

ELI

Quite something, isn't it?  
 (Off Frank's look)  
 I know you're not a religious man,  
 Frank...but it's hard not see the  
 hand of providence in this.

FRANK  
 If you say so, Eli...  
 (a moment, then)  
 What are people saying in town?

ELI  
 A lot of rumor and...speculation.  
 Folks see pinewood coffins stacked  
 outside the funeral home and...  
 (Chokes back emotion)  
 ...old *feelings* rise up.

Eli looks at Frank as the fire crackles behind them--

ELI (CONT'D)  
 I still haven't forgiven you.  
 (Off Frank's look)  
 For not letting me see my daughter  
 before you put her in the ground.

Frank glances at Sue, standing quietly near the door. BEAT.

FRANK  
 It was all pretty sudden, Eli.  
 There wasn't much time.

ELI  
 It's almost worse imagining it. You  
 hear about people's hair turning  
 white and falling out. Their lungs  
 filling with fluid, black like oil.  
*Drowning in open air...*

FRANK  
 It's better you remember them the  
 way they were. I didn't want you  
 seeing them...like *that*.

ELI  
 (a moment, then)  
 What kind of disease spares the  
 elderly and attacks the *young*?

Frank stares at his father-in-law, unable to answer. Eli  
 looks right at Frank and points to the young girl--

ELI (CONT'D)  
 Frank...save *her*.

And with that, Eli turns and leaves the room. BEAT.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- LATER**

Frank Sullivan slumps in a leather chair, fast asleep.

The house is dark and quiet, except for the soft whisper of a tiny candle flame dancing on a nearby table...

Suddenly, the candle goes out...and a thin trail of smoke floats to the ceiling as the room grows *that* much darker--

Frank Sullivan suddenly opens his eyes. He sees a STRANGE SHAPE lurking just across the room...

A YOUNG WOMAN. Standing by the window.

Frank slowly gets up and walks towards her. The girl lingers for a moment, then spins towards him...

It's his *DAUGHTER*. She looks right at him through hollow eyes, her face rotting with MAGGOTS and WORMS--

KATHRYN SULLIVAN

Father...

*Frank Sullivan suddenly bolts awake!* He gasps and falls out of his chair, struggling to catch his breath...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Sue Fowler sleeps peacefully; the fading light of a dying fire dancing softly against her eyelids.

Frank covers her with a blanket, then crosses the room and stokes the fire back to life...

He glances up at a FAMILY PORTRAIT hanging on the wall, then looks down at the young girl, fighting for her life...

This is a *line in the sand* moment for Frank Sullivan--

He was powerless to save his wife and daughter. He had no control over what happened to his son. But Frank can save *this* girl...even if it means risking his life.

He takes a deep breath as the fire roars behind him. We can almost see Eli's command taking hold in his mind: Save her.

**INT. CHURCH -- MORNING**

Reverend Farley stands behind the PULPIT, addressing his CONGREGATION. Less than half the pews are filled...

REVEREND FARLEY

Before we begin, I've been asked to make an announcement. As I'm sure many of you have heard...there's a young girl out at the Sullivan Ranch who's been badly hurt...

IN THE AUDIENCE

Tom sits beside Rosaleigh, watching as many CONGREGANTS glance at each other *suspiciously*...

REVEREND FARLEY (CONT'D)  
 She was viciously attacked Friday night...and is in desperate need of a blood transfusion. Is anyone here aware of their blood type?

People slowly shake their heads. Tom watches, disappointed.

**INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE -- SAME TIME**

Eli Peterson comes into the office and finds the telegraph eerily quiet. No messages have come through...

Eli stares at empty tray, clearly alarmed.

**EXT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- LATER**

Frank Sullivan stands outside, chopping firewood as the morning sun breaks free of the horizon...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS**

George Fowler watches Frank from the window. He nervously rubs his hands, which have started to *tremble*...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- UPSTAIRS -- MOMENTS LATER**

George walks to the girl's bedroom and peers inside. Sue is swapping out her bandages. George clears his *throat*--

GEORGE  
 'Think I'm gonna head into town...  
 You need anything?

Sue glances at his trembling hands and shakes her head. George turns and leaves without saying another word.

**EXT. CHURCH -- LATER**

Tom and Rosaleigh come outside and overhear Reverend Farley talking to a FARMER and his WIFE (Both 50s)--

REVEREND FARLEY  
 ...maybe you could ask Joey when he gets in next week?

FARMER  
 Our Joey's been through *enough*. We don't want him mixed up in this...

The farmer and his wife turn and walk away. Farley watches them go, then glances at Tom and Rosaleigh--

REVEREND FARLEY  
Seems to be the general feeling,  
I'm afraid.

TOM  
They're just scared...

REVEREND FARLEY  
Bullet-ridden cars and bloody  
corpses...not all fear is  
irrational, you know?

Rosaleigh glances at her husband. BEAT.

TOM  
Yeah. I know.

A distant TRAIN WHISTLE suddenly shrieks and Rosaleigh pulls Tom away. Farley watches them race towards the station...

**INT. LEONARD DUSCHENE'S ROOM -- THAT MOMENT**

Leonard watches Tom and Rosaleigh charge down the street as another TRAIN WHISTLE blows, already getting *closer*...

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- CONTINUOUS**

Rosaleigh glances up at Leonard's window as the train whistle fades. Her face darkens. She turns to Tom--

ROSALEIGH  
Farley has a point, you know?  
(Nods at Leonard's window)  
A lot of people would still be  
alive if we'd just shut our doors  
and kept everyone out...

Tom glances at his wife, but doesn't respond. He sees Eli Peterson up ahead, waving for them to come over...

ROSALEIGH (CONT'D)  
You better know what you're doing,  
especially if you're getting Edward  
involved. We're the only family in  
this town who hasn't *lost* anyone...

TOM  
You think I've forgotten that?

ROSALEIGH  
Just make sure you *don't*.

Tom nods "alright" as Eli steps forward to meet them--

TOM  
What is it? We get a response?

ELI  
No, that's just it. There's been  
*nothing*. No word.  
(Then, off Tom's look)  
We wired to say that we found two  
dead federal agents...don't you  
think that's the sort of thing that  
would get an answer right away?

Tom glances at Rosaleigh as another train whistle shrieks--

TOM  
I'm sure we'll hear something soon.  
Keep me posted, okay?

Eli reluctantly nods as Tom and Rosaleigh walk away...

**EXT. TRAIN YARD -- SAME TIME**

A TRAIN pulls into the station and TWO DOUGHBOYS step onto the platform. A gathering CROWD bursts into APPLAUSE--

EDWARD DONOVAN (Tom's son, 20) is one of the soldiers. He walks with a *faint limp*, searching for his parents...

TOM (O.S.)  
Edward! Edward!

Tom and Rosaleigh are standing up ahead. They throw their arms around their son and hold on for dear life.

TOM (CONT'D)  
It's so good to see you...

EDWARD  
Thank you, sir.

Tom takes a step back and stares at son, impressed by the dapper looking kid wearing a man's uniform--

TOM  
My word...welcome home.

**INT. SALOON -- SAME TIME**

PATRONS stand at the window, watching the celebration...

George Fowler suddenly bursts into the saloon. Everyone watches as the BARTENDER (50s) pours his usual drink--

GEORGE

Thanks, Sam. Leave the bottle.

Sam nods and steps aside. Charlie Foster and Ben Sanderford (the two 'regulars') stand up and approach--

CHARLIE

Heya, George. Didn't see ya come in yesterday. We were getting worried.

LAUGHTER ripples through the saloon as Charlie and Ben surround George; *two bad angels perched on his shoulder--*

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

'Been out at the Sullivan Ranch?  
What's the story?

GEORGE

It's nothing. No big deal...

BEN

No big deal? I hear you guys pulled a shot-up car out of the lake.

(Leans closer)

Who's in the *coffins*, George?

CHARLIE

To hell with the coffins, who's the girl? She *sick*?

GEORGE

No, she ain't sick. Just shot to hell. Sue's taking care of her...

George throws back his drink and pours himself another--

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You know Frank's got a picture of himself with the president?

BEN

You mean *Roosevelt*? Sure. Frank charged up San Juan Hill. He's a genuine piece of American history.

CHARLIE

That's nothing. After Cuba, most of the Rough Riders came home. But not Frank. He went to the *Philippines* and fought the insurgency there.

BEN

I guess one war against Spain wasn't enough...

CHARLIE

Can you imagine? Not even Hearst's papers could spin *that* war. I bet Frank saw one or two things over there. Yes, sir...

BEN

It all worked out though. Frank got his war. And George got Sue.

CHARLIE

Except now Emily Sullivan is dead. And Sue is back at Frank's house...

George looks up at Charlie, his eyes wounded and foggy.

BEN

Hey, George...you gonna tell us what we want to know or what?

George hesitates, then pours another drink as more footsteps approach. His eyes suddenly close...and surrender.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- DOWNSTAIRS -- MOMENTS LATER**

Sue comes downstairs and fills a PITCHER with water...

She notices the PHONOGRAPH on the counter and starts flipping through records...suddenly stopping at one in particular--

*AFTER YOU'VE GONE by Marion Harris*

The sound of an opening door causes Sue to look up. Frank comes inside, his arms filled with FIREWOOD. BEAT.

FRANK

George left?

SUE

Yeah, he had to go into town...  
(Holds up the record)  
I remember *this* one.

Frank sets down the firewood and slowly approaches--

FRANK

Me, too.

SUE

They played it the night you left.  
I don't think I've heard it since.

Frank smiles, then takes the record from her hands and places it on the wheel. He lowers the needle gently--

After a few bursts of static, the song begins to play--

Frank finally finds the courage to look at Sue. The lyrics pull them together and they slowly start to dance...

FRANK

If I tell you something, will you  
promise not to think less of me?

SUE

Okay...

FRANK

The other night...I wanted to dance  
with you.

(then, off her *silence*)

Did you hear what I said, Sue?

They spin towards CAMERA. Sue's eyes are *closed*--

SUE

(Softly)

I heard you.

The song winds down and comes to an end, replaced once again by the crisp static of the spinning wheel...

Frank and Sue slowly lean in, just about to kiss...when they're suddenly interrupted by a *knock at the door*.

Frank forces himself to turn away and leave the room.

Sue stares at the record spinning on the wheel. She slowly lifts the needle...and the house plunges to silence.

Sue takes a deep breath and goes to the window--

The Donovan family is standing outside.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- LATER**

Frank stands with Tom, Rosaleigh, Edward, and Sue; a heavy silence weighing between them...

Edward stares at PICTURES hanging on the wall, focusing on Kathryn, beautiful in black & white--

EDWARD

(To Frank)

I don't know if you were ever  
aware, but...I carried quite a  
torch for your daughter when we  
were in school.

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I used to tell William that when we got back, I was gonna call on her. He didn't like that very much.

Frank smiles, but doesn't respond. Edward turns and limps across the room. Everyone watches. Nobody says a word.

Edward reaches the counter and opens his bag--

There's newspaper lying on top of his things. Edward takes it out and sets it aside, then *reaches deeper into the bag--*

He pulls out a WATCH and a few LETTERS, then gives them to Frank as if they meant everything in the world--

EDWARD (CONT'D)

These were *his*.

Frank takes a deep breath, clutching his son's things.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

He has a beautiful grave. Just outside of Fromelles. It's about the nicest spot you could ask for.

(a moment, then)

He talked about you all the time. Bragged about how his dad got to the top of San Juan Hill before Roosevelt did.

(Beat)

All he wanted was make you proud.

FRANK

I was already proud of him. He didn't have to go to war for that.

Edward slowly nods. Sue cautiously steps forward--

SUE

Edward, you don't know your blood type, by any chance...do you?

EDWARD

Dad said you were looking for a donor...I'm AB-Positive. Sorry.

FRANK

(To Tom)

Morgan make the announcement?

TOM

Yeah, but nobody's coming forward. And the next batch of soldiers aren't due in until next week...

EDWARD

O-negative blood is pretty rare.  
There weren't many guys in my  
regiment who had it.

Sue nods, clearly disappointed. Tom checks his watch--

TOM

We should probably get going.

Frank glances at Sue, then reluctantly nods.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- BEDROOM -- LATER**

The young girl lies in bed; her breathing weak and shallow.  
Sue Fowler stands nearby, quietly packing her things...

FRANK (O.S.)

Ready?

Sue looks up and sees Frank standing at the door. She nods,  
then turns and gives the girl another shot of MORPHINE.

FRANK (CONT'D)

How's she doing?

SUE

Blood pressure's low. Pulse is  
high. All we can do is keep her  
sedated...and hope for the best.

Frank stares at Sue, reading between the lines--

FRANK

She's not going to make it, is she?

SUE

(a moment, then)

With the amount of blood she's lost  
and no donors coming forward...it's  
probably just a matter of time.

Frank stares at the girl and finally nods. BEAT.

SUE (CONT'D)

If it's any consolation, I know how  
you feel. I was looking forward to  
*saving* a patient for a change.

Frank glances at the FAMILY PORTRAIT on the wall. Suddenly,  
Sue realizes: *it's more than just some patient for him.*

CUT TO:

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- DUSK**

The sun begins to disappear behind silhouetted mountains, throwing long, dark shadows down the empty street...

**INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

Eli continues to stare at the telegraph, unnerved. The day's almost over...and it hasn't made a sound.

Suddenly, Eli hears squeaking wheels outside...

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- SAME TIME**

Frank Sullivan rides into town beside a HORSE-DRAWN WAGON--

Tom and Edward Donovan are upfront, holding the reins. Sue and Rosaleigh are in back, caring for the girl...

TOWNSPEOPLE come outside as the wagon passes by. They turn and glance at each other. Suspicious. *Afraid.*

**INT. SALOON -- SAME TIME**

Charlie and Ben walk across the room and stand over George, now passed out in a drunken stupor...

CHARLIE  
Hey, George!

Charlie kicks the chair, George suddenly wakes up--

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Your wife's outside. Incase you're interested...

George rubs his tired eyes, then leans over and grabs the bottle...and pours himself another drink.

**INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE -- SAME TIME**

Eli Peterson watches the wagon stop outside Sue's clinic. He opens the door and steps outside. The bell chimes loudly...

...but then the sound fades and Eli hears something *else*. He slowly turns and peers through the window--

*The telegraph ticker has started typing!*

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- SAME TIME**

Patrick and Nathan cross the street to help Frank, Tom, and Edward lift the girl out of the wagon.

Together, they carry her toward Sue's clinic...

TOWNSPEOPLE crowd the other side of the street, watching from a distance, refusing to come any closer...

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- LATER**

Frank, Tom, Edward, Rosaleigh, Sue, Patrick, and Nathan carry the girl into the clinic and set her down by the window...

Sue checks the girl's pulse and gives her a shot of MORPHINE. Frank and the others stand nearby, quietly watching...

They suddenly hear FOOTSTEPS coming down the hall. The door slowly opens...and Eli enters the room.

He looks at everyone, then hands Tom a slip of paper--

ELI  
From Kansas City...

Tom grabs the wire and starts to read...

FRANK  
(To Eli)  
What's with everyone outside? Town seems panicked...

ELI  
You can thank George Fowler for that. He's been spouting off at the saloon to anyone who'll listen.

Frank's eyes pulse with anger. Sue looks up, *concerned*--

SUE  
How long as he been there?

ELI  
(Hesitates)  
Awhile.

Tom finishes reading and holds up the wire--

TOM  
'Feds are sending some agents out on the morning train.

FRANK  
What took so long?

TOM  
You can ask 'em when they get here. I'm sure everyone's got questions.  
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

(To Sue)

Gonna have Patrick and Nathan stay here tonight. Just to be safe.

Sue nods as the deputies take position at the window...

TOM (CONT'D)

If you need anything else...I'll be in my office.

SUE

Which one?

TOM

The one with *guns* in it.

Tom tips his hat and leaves with his family. Frank waits for the door to shut, then goes to the window--

He watches the Donovan family climb back into their wagon. *Tom and Rosaleigh both have their arms around Edward...*

Frank takes a deep breath, then looks down at the young girl. Her eyes remain closed. She doesn't even know he's here.

PATRICK

You should go home, Mr. Sullivan.  
*We'll take it from here...*

Frank looks up at Patrick and Nathan, resolved to their duty. Then he glances at Sue...and heads for the door.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- MOMENTS LATER**

The Donovan family rides out of town. Edward glances over his shoulder and sees Frank come outside...*alone.*

EDWARD

I feel bad for him.

Tom glances back and slowly nods--

TOM

We all do.

AT SUE'S CLINIC

Frank stares at the saloon as he un-tethers his horse. He slowly turns...and sees Eli Peterson standing nearby.

FRANK

George still over there?

Eli hesitates, then nods. Frank charges across the street--

**INT. SALOON -- MOMENTS LATER**

Everyone looks up as Frank enters the saloon--

BARTENDER  
Hey, Frank...what'll it be?

FRANK  
Whiskey.

Frank looks around the room as the bartender pours. He sees George passed out near the back...*clutching an empty bottle.*

CHARLIE  
Hey, Frank...what's going on?  
Who's this girl?

Frank keeps staring at George. Finally, he answers--

FRANK  
Just someone who needs a little  
help. That's all.

CHARLIE  
I hope there isn't going to be any  
trouble. Cemetery's crowded enough  
as it is, wouldn't you say?

Frank takes a deep breath as George continues to slump in his chair; unconscious, pathetic...not worth the effort.

FRANK  
I think this whole town's a  
cemetery, Charlie. Excuse me.

Frank turns and walks out the door.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank climbs back on his horse and trots out into the street. The light from Sue's clinic burns like an oven...

Frank stares at her window for a moment, then tugs on his reins in the moonlight...and gallops out of town.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME**

Sue listens to Frank's fading horse hooves as she checks the girl's vitals. Suddenly, there's a knock at the door...

Sue crosses the room and answers...surprised to see her sister, Kay, standing in the hallway--

KAY  
Where is she?

Kay charges past Sue and goes to the girl's bedside--

KAY (CONT'D)  
Dear God. Just as our boys are  
starting to come home...as if this  
town hasn't been through enough?

SUE  
There's no cause for alarm...

KAY  
That's not what your husband says.

Sue looks up at at her sister as *another KNOCK raps on the door*. Sue hesitates, then turns and crosses the room...

She discovers three BOYS (ages 12-14) standing in the hallway, armed with their fathers' RIFLES...

ELDEST BOY  
Mrs. Fowler...we were wondering if,  
you could use any help tonight?  
(Off Sue's confused look)  
We could stand guard--

KAY  
Oh, no you could *not*!

Kay charges forward to confront the startled children--

KAY (CONT'D)  
Jimmy Rogers, Russell Thompson, and  
Mitchell Stevens. What kind of  
foolishness is this?! You all think  
because you missed out on one war,  
you need to rush out for a second?!  
Do your fathers even know their  
rifles have gone missing?

The boys look down at their shuffling feet...guilty. Kay takes the youngest by the hand and turns to face Sue--

KAY (CONT'D)  
I hope you and Frank know what  
you're doing. I really do.  
(To the young boys)  
C'mon, you three...you can explain  
this to your parents.

Sue watches her sister leave...then quietly shuts the door.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS**

Kay guides the children down the hall. Suddenly, they stop. A DARK FIGURE slips quietly past them--

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

Sue hears yet *another knock* and reluctantly crosses the room. She opens the door and suddenly freezes...

Leonard Duschene is standing before her.

SUE

Leonard...what are you doing here?

Patrick and Nathan both step forward, alarmed. Leonard hesitates...and finally finds his voice--

LEONARD

Does she need blood?

Sue stares at him, hoping she heard right--

SUE

You're O-negative?

Leonard nods. Sue grabs him by the arm--

SUE (CONT'D)

Come inside right now.

She pulls him into the room and slams the door shut.

PATRICK

Are you sure about this, Dr. Fowler?

SUE

Get him a chair.

Patrick hesitates, then nods to Nathan...who grabs a chair and carries it over to the girl's bedside.

Leonard stares at the young girl as he rolls up his sleeve...

Sue wraps a RUBBER BAND around his arm, then pierces his skin with an 18-gauge needle. Leonard flinches, but stays quiet.

BLOOD starts to flow, turning the clear tubing red as it falls into a COLLECTING BOTTLE resting on the floor...

SUE (CONT'D)

Tell me if you get dizzy.

LEONARD

I'm fine.

His blood continues to fill the bottle, mixing with COAGULANT, rising every second-- 100cc...200cc...300cc...

SUE

You okay?

Leonard slowly nods -- pushing himself to the max...

400cc...500cc...700cc...the glass is almost full. Sue siphons off the tubing and removes the needle from Leonard's arm...

Leonard slumps in the chair, about to faint. Patrick and Nathan step forward and *catch* him--

Sue then inserts a NEEDLE into the young girl's arm and raises the container. Blood flows into the girl's body.

Patrick, Nathan, and Leonard watch, silently captivated...

The bottle finally empties. Sue removes the needle from the girl's arm as carefully as if she were defusing a bomb.

PATRICK

Did it work?

SUE

We'll know in the morning.

The deputies both nod, then look back out the window--

Outside, the town sits beneath a blanket of indifferent stars ...completely unaware of the wicked doom heading their way.

FADE TO BLACK:

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- MORNING**

Frank Sullivan wakes up and slowly climbs out of bed. He looks around, sadly. His house is empty, again...

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank stops outside his daughter's bedroom and looks at the empty bed. Then the floor. Then the fireplace.

And then, finally, at the PICTURES hanging on the wall.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME**

Sunlight pours in through the open window, causing Sue Fowler to suddenly wake. She gets up and checks on the girl...

NATHAN  
Something wrong?

SUE  
(Smiles)  
She's warm.

A TRAIN WHISTLE suddenly shrieks far in the distance...

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME**

Tom smiles at Rosaleigh as she heads to school. Then he slowly turns and stares out at the horizon--

Tiny puffs of smoke suddenly appear, signaling the imminent arrival of FEDERAL AGENTS from Kansas City...

CUT TO:

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- SAME TIME**

Frank is scrubbing the table where Sue operated on the girl, desperately trying to get the blood off the wood...

Edward's newspaper is still lying on the counter. Frank wipes his hands and picks it up-- ***THE KANSAS CITY GAZETTE***

The top fold displays bold HEADLINES announcing the end of war. Frank turns the newspaper over--

His eyes suddenly narrow. Buried in the bottom right hand corner, a small HEADLINE ominously reads--

***"MOBSTER TRIAL CONTINUES; WITNESS MISSING, FEARED MURDERED."***

Frank sets the newspaper down...and quickly leaves the room.

**EXT. TRAIN STATION -- SAME TIME**

Tom steps onto the platform as a TRAIN pulls into the station, releasing a thick cloud of piping hot steam...

Two FEDERAL AGENTS (Both 30s), dressed in dark suits, step off the train and take in their surroundings...

TOM  
You boys from Kansas City?

The two agents nod and quickly approach--

AGENT #1  
That's right. I'm Agent Reynolds.  
This is Agent Parker. You the one  
who sent the wire?

TOM

Sure am. Tom Donovan. I'm uh...  
*sheriff* of this town.

REYNOLDS

Well, *Sheriff*, there really isn't a  
moment to lose...where's the girl?

Tom hesitates, then nods: *This way*. The two agents glance at each other, then follow him down the platform...

**INT. SUNDRY STORE -- SAME TIME**

Kay Anderson, busy stocking shelves, glances out the window and sees Tom approaching with the two agents...

She looks at her husband's crepe, trembling. Afraid.

**INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM -- SAME TIME**

Rosaleigh peers out the window, clearly concerned...

STUDENT

Mrs. Donovan...? Are we gonna grade  
our homework now?

Rosaleigh doesn't answer. She doesn't even seem to *hear*.

**EXT. CHURCH -- SAME TIME**

Reverend Farley watches quietly as Tom leads the two agents down the street...and into Sue's clinic--

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MAIN FLOOR -- SAME TIME**

Tom and the agents climb the stairs, in mid-conversation...

TOM

...a local rancher found her. We  
couldn't figure out where she came  
from...maybe you boys could shed  
some light on that?

The agents glance at each other as Tom reaches for the door.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

Sue, Nathan, and Patrick look up as Tom enters with Reynolds and Parker. Everyone stands quietly for a moment, then--

TOM

Sue, these men are from Kansas  
City. They're here for the girl...

Sue hesitates, then stands aside. The two agents walk across the room and stare down at the young girl--

REYNOLDS  
That's her, alright.  
(Looks around, confused)  
Where's the doctor?

TOM  
Standing right next to you.

Reynolds hesitates, then turns to face Sue--

REYNOLDS  
So, what's her condition? She obviously hasn't *died*, yet...

SUE  
No, she's actually *improving*.

PARKER  
Improving? Your wire said she was shot three times and wouldn't survive the week...you're saying she could *live*?

SUE  
Yes, she very well could.

The two agents glance at each other. BEAT.

REYNOLDS  
I can't tell you how relieved we are to hear that...

TOM  
Gentlemen, do you mind telling us what's going on?

REYNOLDS  
Sheriff, I'm afraid the less you know, the better. For your own safety. As well as *hers*.  
(Then, to Sue)  
Is it safe for her to travel? Could she board a train?

SUE  
I don't think that's a good idea. Not for awhile, at least.

REYNOLDS  
Why not? I thought you said her condition was *improving*...

PARKER

You moved her *here*, didn't you?

SUE

That was a few short miles at a snail's pace. And, even then, she had muscle spasms the whole way...

Reynolds and Parker stare at Sue with guarded eyes...

SUE (CONT'D)

She's dehydrated. Her wounds are still open. The slightest exposure could cause infection to set in... that could *kill* her.

Reynolds checks his watch--

REYNOLDS

The next train's at noon...and *she* needs to be on it.

SUE

Sir, please...

REYNOLDS

Listen, I understand your concern, but it's a risk we have to take. This girl has enemies. You've seen what they can do. As long as she's here, this town isn't safe.

(To Tom)

Where's the telegraph, Sheriff?

TOM

Down the street...I could take you over there, if you like?

REYNOLDS

I'd appreciate that.

(To Sue, an order)

Have her ready when we get back.

Sue hesitates, then finally nods. The two agents charge out the door. Tom follows close behind...

**INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Eli Peterson looks up as the doorbell chimes. Tom enters with Reynolds and Parker--

TOM

Eli, these men need to send a wire to Kansas City.

Eli slowly nods...and slides a FORM across the desk.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME**

Sue peers out the window as she packs for the girl's trip. Tom and the two agents are walking down the street...

Sue watches them approach. Suddenly, she hears something far in the distance-- *GALLOPING HORSE HOOVES...approaching fast!*

CUT TO:

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- SAME TIME**

Frank Sullivan comes riding into town. Tom and the two agents stagger back as he dismounts and approaches--

TOM

Gentlemen, this is Frank Sullivan, the rancher I was telling ya about.

(Beat)

Frank, these men are from Kansas City. They're here for the girl...

FRANK

Is that so?

REYNOLDS

Yes, sir. And we owe you a real debt of gratitude. Because of your bravery, that girl is still alive.

FRANK

Where ya taking her?

REYNOLDS

(a moment, then)

Back where she belongs.

Frank slowly nods, then looks past Reynolds and Parker. He sees TOWNSPEOPLE peering out of every window...

FRANK

I read an article about a missing witness in Kansas City...that's her, isn't it?

REYNOLDS

Like we told your sheriff here... it's really best for everyone if you know as little as possible.

FRANK

I bet.

A distant TRAIN WHISTLE suddenly shrieks--

REYNOLDS  
We should probably be going...

Reynolds and Parker tip their hats and turn to leave...

FRANK  
Will you be taking the remains of  
your dead colleagues, as well?

The agents suddenly stop and turn around. BEAT.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
They're down at the funeral home.  
I'm sorry pinewood coffins were the  
best we could do. We had a tough  
year...as I'm sure you both know.

REYNOLDS  
That's alright, Mr. Sullivan. Their  
families will understand...

FRANK  
What were their names?

REYNOLDS  
I'm sorry?

Frank steps forward and repeats himself *firmly*--

FRANK  
Their names. What were they?

REYNOLDS  
David York and Mikey Smith. Good  
agents. And dear friends.

Frank glances at Tom. He knows they're lying.

Another train whistle suddenly *shrieks*--

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)  
We really do need to get going...

Reynolds and Parker turn once again and head for the stairs.

Frank suddenly steps forward, blocking their path--

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)  
What's the idea?

FRANK  
I'd like to see your credentials.

REYNOLDS

Our *what?*

FRANK

ID, gentlemen.

Tom takes a step back, suddenly nervous--

REYNOLDS

In case you haven't noticed, we're in a bit of a hurry here...

FRANK

'Better make it quick, then.

Reynolds scowls at Frank, suddenly *aggressive*--

REYNOLDS

Suppose I told you the answer is *yes*. We *do* mind?

FRANK

You'd be breaking the law. But that won't matter much...

REYNOLDS

And why's that?

FRANK

You'll both be dead.

Tom stares at Frank in total disbelief. BEAT.

REYNOLDS

Is that a fact?

FRANK

Not yet.

Reynolds glances at Parker, then turns back to Frank--

REYNOLDS

Alright. ID. Here you go...

Reynolds and Parker reach inside their jackets...*and draw their guns!* But Frank is ready. And he's lightning fast--

He puts a bullet in Parker's head and fires two rounds into Reynold's chest. Their bodies snap backwards and hit the ground, flooding the street with thick arterial spray.

Frank glances back at Tom, standing in a prison of shock and fear; *his gun still resting firmly in its holster*--

TOM

My God. What have you done?

Frank stares at his friend as TOWNSPEOPLE come outside, staring at the carnage in the middle of their street--

Then he glances at the school, where Rosaleigh Donovan is struggling to keep her students away from the window...

*A slight tremor of movement suddenly catches Frank's eye--*

"Agent Reynolds" is still alive. He slithers along the ground and reaches for his gun...

But Frank's boot comes down hard, snapping his wrist--

Reynolds screams in agonizing pain. Frank kicks the gun away and pulls the dying man up by his collar...

FRANK

Their names were William Arthurton  
and Robert Church...

(Beat)

And they were no friends of *yours*.

REYNOLDS

You got me...

Reynolds suddenly smiles, dark and evil.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

You people have no *fucking* idea  
what's coming your way...

Blood pours out of Reynold's mouth as the life fades from his eyes. His head rolls back and his body grows still...

Frank stares at the corpse for a moment, then lets it fall back into the sticky redness covering the earth.

CUT TO:

**INT. SALOON -- LATER**

George Fowler opens his eyes and slowly gets up. He glances around the saloon, shocked to find it completely *empty*...

Confused, George goes to the window...and peers outside--

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- THAT MOMENT**

The town's entire POPULATION is standing in the street, watching as two additional COFFINS get carted away...

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Frank and Tom stare out the window. Tom suddenly pulls down the blinds. The room goes *dark...*

TOM

Alright, you tell me...what now?

Before Frank can respond, there's a knock at the door--

TOWNSPERSON #1 (O.S.)

Tom, I need a word with you!

TOM

Earl, I'm a little busy at the moment! I'll be out in a minute!

Tom takes a deep breath and looks back at Frank--

TOM (CONT'D)

We're in a lot of trouble.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME**

Patrick and Nathan stare at the madness in the street--

NATHAN

Should we go down there?

Patrick hesitates, then slowly shakes his head--

PATRICK

Our orders are to protect Dr. Fowler and the girl. We stay here unless told different.

Nathan glances at Sue, then reluctantly nods. BEAT.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank and Tom come outside and walk quickly down the street. Everyone watches them, some even shout--

TOWNSPERSON #1

What's happening, Tom! What are we supposed to do?!

TOWNSPERSON #2

You didn't have to kill 'em, Frank!

**INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

Eli looks up as Tom enters with Frank--

TOM  
Eli, you got the wire those men  
sent out? I'd like to see it...

ELI  
'Figured you might.

Eli holds up a slip of paper. Tom takes it and reads. His eyes suddenly darken. He hands the message to Frank...

TOM  
(To Eli)  
We need to wire all nearby towns  
and ask for help. You ready?

ELI  
Just tell me what to type.

Eli leads Tom across the room as Frank stares at the message in his hands. The wire is two simple words-- "*SHE'S ALIVE.*"

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER**

The door bursts open and six TOWNSPEOPLE storm into the room--

TOWNSPERSON #1  
Where is she? Is *this* her?

Sue and Leonard block their path...

TOWNSPERSON #2  
Sue, get out of the way. We have a  
right to *know*, goddamnit! What have  
you and Frank gotten us into?!

Sue glances back at Patrick and Nathan. They step forward and usher the TOWNSPEOPLE towards the door...

TOWNSPERSON #3  
This isn't right, Sue! You know it!  
Why are you *protecting* her?!

Sue turns the lock as the door slams shut.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- TELEGRAPH OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER**

The doorbell chimes as Tom steps outside. Through the window, we can see Eli furiously sending out wires...

Tom glances down the street and sees Rosaleigh standing with Kay. She gives him a look: *What are you going to do?*

Tom hesitates, then shrugs: *I don't know.*

Eli suddenly taps on the glass. Tom glances back, the urgency in Eli's eyes draws him to the window--

ELI  
Message just came through.

TOM  
From which town? Dawson? Sparks?

ELI  
No...*Kansas City*.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- LATER**

The DOOR HANDLE suddenly jiggles against the LOCK--

SUE  
Who is it?

FRANK (O.S.)  
Frank...

Sue opens the door just wide enough for him to slip through.

SUE  
This is madness...

Frank slowly nods, then notices Leonard Duschene standing across the room. Sue follows his gaze--

SUE (CONT'D)  
The good news is she's improving...  
a donor came forward last night and  
offered quite a bit of blood.  
(Nods, softly)  
Looks healthier, doesn't she?

Frank turns and looks down at the girl. *She looks just like his daughter...*and she could wake up any moment now.

FRANK  
*She's beautiful.*

Sue stares at Frank as a peaceful moment hangs in the air, punctured suddenly a loud knock at the door--

SUE  
Who is it?

TOM (O.S.)  
Tom Donovan, open up.

Sue opens the door. Tom bursts into the room--

TOM (CONT'D)  
 'Got another wire from Kansas City.

Tom hands the message to Frank, who reads it out loud--

FRANK  
*Where are you?*

TOM  
 Didn't take 'em long to figure out something was wrong.

SUE  
 Didn't take *who* long?

Sue's question goes unanswered...until Frank takes the newspaper out of his jacket, handing it to Tom--

FRANK  
 Edward left this at the house yesterday. 'Must've gotten it before boarding...  
 (Off Tom's look)  
 Bottom right corner.

Tom takes the newspaper and slowly *reads*--

TOM  
 Jesus Christ...

Tom lets the paper fall to the floor. He goes to the window as Patrick and Nathan rush forward to pick it up--

PATRICK  
*This* is who we're up against? No wonder it took so long to respond.

NATHAN  
 I don't understand. We wired the federal authorities...

TOM  
 Just because we *sent* a wire doesn't mean they *got* it...  
 (Nodding at the newspaper)  
 People *this* powerful have informants everywhere. Someone got our message and tipped 'em off...  
 (Then, realizing)  
 ...the feds don't know what's happening here.

Patrick looks down, Nathan's eyes flood with panic.

FRANK  
Any word from the other towns?

TOM  
Nothing yet...

PATRICK  
We could wire back, pretending to  
be those men. Say it was all a  
mistake. 'Got the wrong girl.  
(Beat)  
They might believe it.

TOM  
Would *you*?

Patrick hesitates, then shakes his head. BEAT.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Those men were just the beginning.  
They know she's here. They know  
we're protecting her. Right now,  
they're summoning every resource at  
their disposal...and heading  
straight for us.

FRANK  
I think it's time to start sending  
out more wires...

TOM  
(Dramatic Beat)  
'Goddamn right.

**INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank and Tom come inside and find Eli standing over the  
telegraph. His face appears ashen. *Something is very wrong--*

ELI  
Tom, signal just went dead.

TOM  
What? *How*?

ELI  
'Dunno. The equipment's working.  
It's not a problem on our end.  
(Glances out the window)  
The line's been *cut* somewhere...

FRANK  
Could just be a coincidence...

TOM  
Or maybe they're taking the  
necessary *precautions*...

Tom opens the door and disappears outside. Frank goes to the window and stands beside Eli...

They stare out at the surrounding forest, wondering if villains are lurking just beyond their view.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- SAME TIME**

Tom charges down the street, stopping beneath Sue's window--

TOM  
(Calling)  
Patrick!

Patrick pokes his head outside--

PATRICK  
Yeah, Boss?

TOM  
Get your horse saddled and meet me  
outside. You're riding oughta town.

PATRICK  
Where to?

TOM  
Kansas City. As fast as you can.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

Patrick steps away from the window and glances at Nathan, who has a pale white look of envy spread across his face--

NATHAN  
Maybe I should go, instead. My  
horse is younger, faster.

PATRICK  
Kansas City is more than a hundred  
miles away. You ever ridden that  
far through the night?  
(Beat)  
You wanted an adventure? Looks like  
you're going to get one...

Patrick turns and walks out the door, leaving Nathan to glance down at the TIN STAR pinned sharply to his vest.

CUT TO:

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- MOMENTS LATER**

Patrick kicks his HORSE and gallops out of town. Everyone watches him disappear over the ridge...

*...and then they hear a distant TRAIN WHISTLE.*

Frank and Tom walk towards the station, passing scores of TOWNSPEOPLE frozen where they stand...

**INT. TRAIN STATION -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank and Tom step onto the platform as a distant TRAIN chugs towards them through blue-grey twilight...

Tom slowly exhales. His hands are trembling...

FRANK

Cold?

Tom slowly shakes his head, then quietly says--

TOM

It isn't fair...

(Off Frank's look)

I've done everything I was supposed to do. I didn't ask to be sheriff and I never went looking for trouble. When you stepped forward and volunteered for the Philippines, I *stood aside*. My hands are clean...

Frank hesitates, then steps closer--

FRANK

Tom...nobody from Kansas City is going to be on this train.

TOM

How do you know that?

FRANK

(a moment, then)

They'll wait for it to get *dark*.

Tom takes *another* deep breath, steadying his nerves--

TOM

Let's just hope the conductor's willing to help us...

The train's whistle shrieks as it nears the station. Frank and Tom step forward. But then something terrible happens...

The train doesn't stop. It soars past them with devastating speed, each car a bullet in the air...

Frank and Tom watch the train grow small in the distance... this is worse than they could've possibly imagined.

**INT. CHURCH -- LATER**

The TOWN has gathered for a meeting. People scream and shout, fighting for seats. Before long, it's standing room only--

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME**

Sue, Leonard, and Nathan stare out the window -- watching as the entire town shuffles into the church...

Sue sees her sister in the crowd, then Rosaleigh and Edward Donovan. And, finally, Eli Peterson, not far behind...

And then Sue's eyes suddenly narrow--

George is stumbling down the street. He glances up at Sue briefly, then disappears inside the church...

NATHAN

I wonder if my wife's over there.  
We have a little girl. Just turned  
six months old...

SUE

You can leave if you want. Nobody's  
forcing you to stay.

NATHAN

(Hesitates)  
No, it's my duty to protect you...  
and that's what I'm going to do.

The door suddenly opens and Frank enters with Tom; their shoulders sagging under a heavy burden--

SUE

No good?

Frank shakes his head as Tom goes to the window--

TOM

What's going on at the church?

SUE

They called a town meeting...

TOM

My family over there?

SUE  
Just saw 'em go in...

Tom turns and quickly leaves. Frank glances at the girl--

FRANK  
How's she doing?

SUE  
Fine, assuming she doesn't get  
handed over to a lynch mob.

Frank looks up at Sue and she begs him with her eyes to go over and face his critics. He turns and leaves the room.

**INT. CHURCH -- SAME TIME**

The meeting is underway. A RANCHER (30s) has the floor--

RANCHER  
Could more of 'em be coming?

RANCHER #2  
Oh, they're coming, alright. Just as sure as God's vengeance. Frank Sullivan killed *two* of their men. That's not the sort of thing you get to just walk away from...

Ben Sanderford comes down the aisle, distributing BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS to different people--

BEN  
Went over to the Hall of Records and got these pictures. *This* is what we're up against...

TOWNSPEOPLE gasp as they look at the pictures; each one a grisly crime scene with blood-soaked corpses--

BEN (CONT'D)  
They have guns that fire thirty rounds a *second*. And they're capable of *this*...

Ben holds up a particularly gruesome photograph. Many TOWNSPEOPLE turn away, unable to stomach the macabre...

BEN (CONT'D)  
Now we don't know *who* this girl is or what she's done. But one thing is certain...she has a past. It's dark and it's ugly. And it wants her *dead*.

The photographs get passed up to Reverend Farley. He looks at them quietly as Charlie Foster stands up to speak--

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I don't like this, folks. Not one bit. Girl was supposed to testify at some trial? Okay. She got scared? Fine. I can understand that. Hell, we all can. But then she runs away and makes her problems our own. And that's *not* okay. I don't like people who run away from responsibility. It never ends good. Look at Leonard Duschene. *He* deserted the army and who paid the price? *We did*. Victims of the plague he was carrying in his veins. Innocent people *always* pay the price when cowards abandon their duty. It's happened before. And it's happening *now*...

(Beat)

Earlier today, I watched two men die less than a hundred yards from where my children go to school. It isn't *right*. It isn't *fair*. It's not our responsibility!

TOWNSPEOPLE voice their agreement as Charlie sits down...

IN A NEARBY PEW

George Fowler stares at one of the grisly photographs; a terrible rage building inside of him...

BACK OF THE ROOM

The door softly opens and Tom Donovan comes inside. He sits down by his family as a WOMAN (40s) stands up to speak--

WOMAN

I don't want my husband risking his life for some stranger. For all we know, this girl might even *deserve* what's coming to her. We've already lost so many people. How much can one town be expected to endure? Our soldiers have already been through so much terror overseas. The last thing I want is for them to come home orphans.

The woman sits down as soft murmurs begin to ripple through the church. Reverend Farley suddenly looks up...

*Frank Sullivan is standing at the door.*

The room grows deathly quiet.

Frank looks around, about to speak when--

George Fowler suddenly stands up, drunk and loud. He stares at Frank; his eyes flickering with the promise of violence.

Everyone waits anxiously for something to happen. And then-- George Fowler turns and storms out of the church...

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- CONTINUOUS**

George charges across the street, each footstep angrier than the last; his hatred gathering momentum...

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Sue, Leonard, and Nathan look up as the door bursts open. George Fowler comes inside, his eyes dark and angry...

GEORGE

I'd like to speak to my wife.

Nathan and Leonard look at Sue. She nods, *it's okay*. George waits for them to leave, then charges towards her...

GEORGE (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

SUE

What do you mean?

GEORGE

Don't play dumb with me. You know *exactly* what I mean.

SUE

I'm a doctor. This is my *job*.

GEORGE

Your job?! *She* is not your patient. The folks out there *are*. And you're about to get them all killed!

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MAIN FLOOR -- THAT MOMENT**

Leonard and Nathan stand in the lobby, listening to the muted sounds of George and Sue arguing upstairs...

NATHAN

Should we go up?

Leonard hesitates, unsure. The fighting grows *louder*...

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

George leans closer, getting right in Sue's face--

GEORGE

Why are you doing this? Tell me!

SUE

Stay away from me...

George grabs her by the arm and pulls her close...

GEORGE

Tell me why! Why are you putting  
this town at risk? For *him*?

SUE

God, you're drunk...

George slaps her face, hard. Sue *screams*--

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MAIN FLOOR -- THAT MOMENT**

Leonard hears Sue's cry and sprints up the stairs...

Nathan remains frozen where he stands; his face torn apart by  
anguish and shame. He suddenly looks down...

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

George hits Sue again, this time with a closed fist--

GEORGE

You want to help Frank save this  
whore so that you can be *his*!?  
That's it, isn't it? It's been your  
reason all along...

George throws her to the ground, about to stomp her...

*Leonard bursts into the room and grabs George from behind...*

George stumbles back, then drives an elbow into Leonard's  
solar plexus and hurls him across the room...

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MAIN FLOOR -- THAT MOMENT**

Nathan hears a LOUD CRASH upstairs and suddenly looks away...

There's no such thing as bravery. Only varying degrees of  
fear. And Deputy Nathan is crumbling...

He slowly unfastens his TIN STAR and sets it down. Then he goes to the door...and disappears into the night.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

George tears through the room, knocking *everything* to the ground. Sue gets to her feet and charges towards him--

SUE

Get out of here!

George grabs her throat and slams her down on the desk--

GEORGE

Did you *let* his family die? So you and he could be together just like you *wanted*? To hell with this *town*! To hell with these *people*! Just as long Sue gets what she *wanted*!

He hits her again and again...each punch a sickening thud against her skull; brutal and awful--

His knuckles split and start to bleed. George grimaces as he steps away, letting his wife's limp body fall to the floor.

He shakes his hand for a moment and catches his breath. Then he steps forward...and approaches the young girl--

She continues to sleep, calm and peaceful; completely unaware of the battle raging around her.

*George stares at her with murder in his eyes...*

And then, as if suddenly realizing the barbarity of what he's done, George Fowler backs away. And quietly leaves the room.

**INT. CHURCH -- SAME TIME**

Frank Sullivan stands in a sea of hostility, listening to various TOWNSPEOPLE express their grievances--

MAN

I remember when our boys were getting drafted, you said the war was wrong, that it wasn't our fight. But now you're asking us to risk *our* lives? For someone we don't even know? Have you lost your mind?! She may *look* like your daughter, but that doesn't mean she's worth saving...

(Beat)

(MORE)

MAN (CONT'D)

You owe us an explanation. You've  
wagered all our lives on this.

Everyone shouts in agreement as the man sits back down. Frank  
takes a deep breath, gathering his thoughts--

FRANK

I'm not sure what to say, except...  
this is our *home*, not some battle-  
field halfway across the world.

MAN

It's a fight we didn't ask for!

FRANK

Maybe not...but it's coming just  
the same.

MAN

(Emotional)

First, it was the sickness. Then  
the war. Now *this*. It's too much, I  
tell you...too much.

Frank stares at the man, not sure what to say. *And then he  
sees Kay Anderson standing across the room--*

KAY

My husband died eight months ago  
when the flu spread through town.  
Two days later, I watched my only  
son march off to war...

(Gathering herself)

And every night since then, I've  
prayed for just one thing. That my  
boy would come back to me...*alive*.

(Beat)

He's due in next Thursday.

Kay stares at Frank for moment, then--

KAY (CONT'D)

You and my sister did right in  
trying to help this girl. Nobody  
faults you for that. It was  
Christian charity, fine and decent.

(Beat)

But when you killed those men  
today, you invited the devil *back*  
into our town. It's *your* mistake,  
not *ours*. And we shouldn't have to  
pay for it. I'm begging you...

(Beat)

Let this cup pass from us.

Kay slowly sits down. Frank turns to face everyone--

FRANK

What would you have me do? Wheel her out into the street so we can all close our windows and pretend we don't hear the gunfire?

(Looks up at Farley)

Should we put the girl in God's hands and call it a day?

REVEREND FARLEY

There are worse hands to be in, Frank. Much worse.

FRANK

That may be. But it wasn't so long ago that you wouldn't even set foot in our cemetery to conduct a funeral. You remember? Because *I* do. Sometimes God's hands are no match against *fear*...

REVEREND FARLEY

You think I'm a coward, Frank? Is that it? You think we're all cowards? Well, maybe we are...

(Beat)

But I will tell you this: our community has been through the darkest of nights. Look around you. Maybe you'll be struck, as I am, by all the people who *aren't* here.

(Points to various people)

Ella-May lost her husband of fifty-three years. Mary Richardson lost her new baby boy. The Fuller's son died at Verdun; the Cooper's boy at Belleau Wood. The Stevenson's graciously adopted the three Randall children after *both* their parents were killed.

(Beat)

There isn't a single family here who hasn't been touched by the tragedy of the past year. And now, just when the sun is finally starting to rise...

(Holds up one of the gruesome photographs)

You want us to head back into the shadows and face something we don't understand. It's asking a *lot*.

FRANK

I know, but I'm not the one asking.

(Turns to face everyone)

I didn't ask for any of this. Not for my wife to perish or my children to die. Not for sickness. Not for war. And *certainly* not for this girl...

(Beat)

But I can't just sit back and let harm come to her. I'm surprised anyone here *can*...considering everything we've been through.

(Beat)

Don't you understand? If we turn away from this now...we'll never survive it.

Frank stares at a sea of blank faces...

FRANK (CONT'D)

Isn't there someone here who wants to stand up and say *no more*? When did we become the sort of people who peer out of windows and hide behind locked doors? That's not us. That's not who we are.

(Beat)

Who will stand up with me?

Frank glances around the room...and starts to call names--

FRANK (CONT'D)

Bob?...Thomas?...Ralph?...Earl?

Each man reluctantly shakes his head...

FRANK (CONT'D)

Charlie?...Ben?

Both men shake their heads. Frank turns to his father-in-law--

FRANK (CONT'D)

Eli?

Eli Peterson stares at Frank with blank eyes...

FRANK (CONT'D)

We're *family*.

ELI

We *were*.

Frank takes a deep breath, turning to one last person--

FRANK

Tom?

Tom glances at his wife and son, then looks down...*ashamed*.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What if it was *your* daughter?

Tom slowly shakes his head with tears in his eyes--

TOM

It's *not*.

Edward stares at his father. Rosaleigh trembles in her seat.

FRANK

What's wrong with you? *All of you?!*  
This is basic right and wrong...

Rosaleigh can't take it anymore. She suddenly *erupts*--

ROSALEIGH

Damnit, Frank, it's easy for you to  
say...we have something to *live*  
for. You don't!

The room plunges to silence. It's an awful thing say...but  
Rosaleigh can't take it back--

FRANK

Is that what you think?  
(Then, to everyone)  
Is that what *all of you* think?

Nobody responds or even looks Frank in the eye. They just  
stare at their hands...as if idly passing the time.

Frank slowly puts on his hat...and walks out of the church.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- LATER**

Frank comes outside and stares at the empty street; imagining  
what will be like to face gunmen all by himself...

A cold wind suddenly blows, dark and ominous; rattling the  
window panes like a harbinger of doom.

Frank walks towards Sue's clinic...

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MAIN FLOOR -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank comes inside and heads for the stairs. He sees Nathan's  
TIN STAR on the counter...and reluctantly picks it up. BEAT.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- LATER**

Sue and Leonard move quietly through the dark room, picking up the pieces after George's terrible rampage...

The door softly opens and Frank Sullivan comes inside. SHATTERED GLASS crunches beneath his feet...

Frank turns on the light--

The room is torn asunder; books and equipment scattered on the floor, two wounded people standing in the shadows...

Frank crosses the room and grabs Sue gently by the arm. She resists for a moment, then finally turns around--

Her face is bruised and bloody. Swollen eyes, split lip. Frank has to bite his hand just to keep from screaming--

SUE  
Frank, please...

FRANK  
*Where is he?*

SUE  
I don't know. It doesn't matter.  
It's over, he's gone...

Frank glances at the girl, expecting the worst--

SUE (CONT'D)  
She's fine. He didn't hurt her.  
Frank, please...*don't*.

Sue collapses into his arms and starts to cry. Frank hesitates, then gently strokes her hair--

FRANK  
Alright...alright.

Leonard turns and quietly leaves the room. Frank waits for the door to shut, then guides Sue over to the couch...

FRANK (CONT'D)  
Here, sit down.

**INT. CHURCH -- SAME TIME**

TOWNSPEOPLE sit in stunned silence, glancing at each other as the weight of what happened starts to take hold--

A few people begin to stand up...and head for the door.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank soaks a COTTON SWAB with ALCOHOL and begins to clean Sue's wounds. She winces in pain--

FRANK

Sorry...

SUE

It's okay. Just stings a little.

Frank slowly nods...and continues with care.

**EXT. CHURCH -- THAT MOMENT**

TOWNSPEOPLE come outside into the cold, grim night. Some linger for a moment, others start to head home...

CHARLIE

I don't know about everyone else,  
but I could sure use a drink...

A few TOWNSPEOPLE follow Charlie towards the saloon...

Tom, Rosaleigh, and Edward stand nearby. Edward watches the departing citizens, torn by everything he's just seen...

TOM

We should probably stay in the  
office tonight...  
(Off their looks)  
The walls are reinforced by *steel*.

Rosaleigh stares at her husband, then nods...*terrified*.

**INT. SALOON -- MOMENTS LATER**

The bartender turns on the lights and discovers George Fowler sitting at the counter, nervously rubbing his hands...

The bartender hesitates, then sets down a bottle of WHISKEY. George pulls the cork and pours himself a drink...

BARTENDER

George? Your hands are *bleeding*...

George looks up as the door opens behind him. Charlie Foster and some other TOWNSPEOPLE begin to trickle inside...

George grabs the bottle and flees into the back room...

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME**

Sue stares at Frank as he quietly treats her wounds...

SUE  
He wasn't always like this. Incase  
you were wondering...

FRANK  
Wondering *what*?

SUE  
(a moment, then)  
Why I married him.

A TRAIN WHISTLE suddenly shrieks far in the distance; so faint that Frank and Sue barely seem to notice...

SUE (CONT'D)  
You and Emily ever fight?

FRANK  
On occasion.

SUE  
Did it ever get...*bad*?

Frank looks at her...and suddenly grasps her meaning--

FRANK  
No. *Never*.  
(Beat)  
It was always over little things.  
Should we get indoor plumbing? Buy  
a car? Was Kathryn old enough to  
date? We argued about the *future*...  
(Then, softly)  
Guess it was pretty silly,  
considering we didn't *have* one.

Frank tapes a BANDAGE to Sue's cheek. They stare at each other for a moment, their faces just inches apart...

SUE  
Why did you leave me?

Frank's eyes flicker, wounded and filled with regret--

FRANK  
I don't know how to answer that,  
Sue. I really don't.

Sue takes out the *Rough Rider photograph*, which she's kept all this time. She slowly hands it to Frank--

SUE  
Was it everything they said it was  
going to be?  
(MORE)

SUE (CONT'D)  
*Roosevelt and his legendary Rough  
 Riders...the adventure of a  
 lifetime?*

Frank stares at the photograph, *ashamed*.

SUE (CONT'D)  
 I read stories about massacres...  
 one newspaper called it genocide.

FRANK  
 That's one way of putting it...

Frank stares at his past self, thinking of his son--

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 All men fight in wars for the same  
 reason, Sue. It's a matter of luck  
 whether you get to be on the right  
 side of history or not.

Sue points to the young man in the photograph--

SUE  
 You know...every now and then, I  
 think about the boy who left all  
 those years ago...and what life  
 would've been like had he *stayed*.  
 (Beat)  
 I imagine he would've been *kind*.

The train whistle suddenly shrieks again; close enough now  
 that Frank and Sue can hear its engine chugging forward...

SUE (CONT'D)  
 Is there going to be more  
 bloodshed?

Frank's dark eyes give her the answer--

SUE (CONT'D)  
 You're certain?

FRANK  
 As much as I am that the earth  
 turns.

SUE  
 Is Tom going to help you?

Frank hesitates, then slowly shakes his head...

SUE (CONT'D)  
 What about the others?

Frank holds up the TIN STAR Nathan abandoned--

FRANK  
I'm all alone on this.

Frank sets the badge down and stares at it for a moment.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
I never wondered *why* you married  
him. I always knew. The only thing  
I never understood was...why you  
didn't wait.

SUE  
Frank, when you left...I was angry.  
I'm *sorry*...

Frank reaches out and touches her bruised face. Sue leans  
into his hand as tears trickle down her cheek...

Then, in the depths of silence, Frank *hears something*--

FRANK  
Listen...

SUE  
What? There's nothing.

FRANK  
(Dramatic Beat)  
I know...the train *stopped*.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- THAT MOMENT**

TOWNSPEOPLE stare at the distant station, where thick tufts  
of smoke float into the dark evening sky--

**EXT. TRAIN STATION -- THAT MOMENT**

A LONG TRAIN sits on the tracks, lurking ominously in the  
night like a dark trojan horse. Then, suddenly--

A CAR DOOR *bursts open*...

A MAN (40) steps onto the platform. All alone. Dressed in a  
beautiful suit, wearing confidence like a bullet proof vest.

He looks around the empty station, smiling at the shadows.  
Then he slowly turns...and walks straight into town--

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- CONTINUOUS**

The man strolls down the street, whistling a familiar tune...  
(*"Do Not Forsake Me, Oh My Darling"*)

The melody floats through the air; cheerful and creepy.  
TOWNSPEOPLE flee into buildings as the stranger approaches...

**INT. SALOON -- THAT MOMENT**

PATRONS take cover...

**INT. SUNDRY STORE -- THAT MOMENT**

Kay ducks out of view...

**INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Eli Peterson sits at his desk, quietly listening...

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Tom, Rosaleigh, and Edward exchange nervous glances...

**INT. CHURCH -- THAT MOMENT**

Farley watches a DARK FIGURE float past his window...

**INT. LEONARD DUSCHENE'S ROOM -- THAT MOMENT**

Leonard slowly turns and opens his bedroom closet. He stares at his WWI UNIFORM...*and then pulls out his RIFLE.*

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

The young girl squirms in fear as the whistling comes closer. Sue checks her pulse. Frank goes to the window...

**EXT. SALOON -- THAT MOMENT**

The stranger looks up at the WWI BANNER and suddenly stops whistling. Then he smiles...and enters the saloon.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Frank steps away from the window and heads for the door. Sue watches him leave, then glances back at the young girl...

**INT. SALOON -- THAT MOMENT**

The stranger smiles as PATRONS stand up from behind their tables...and reluctantly sit back down--

STRANGER

You folks expecting a tornado or something?

Charlie glances at Ben from the corner of his eye. Everyone else looks away, too frightened to answer...

BARTENDER  
What'll it be, Mister?

STRANGER  
Shot of rye, if ya got it.

The bartender nods and starts to pour. The stranger glances over his shoulder, drawing strength from everyone's *fear*--

STRANGER (CONT'D)  
Nice town ya got here.

BARTENDER  
Passing through?

STRANGER  
Something like that.

The stranger picks up his drink and gulps it down--

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- THAT MOMENT**

Frank Sullivan steps out into the empty street, making his way towards the saloon...

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Tom stares quietly out the window, watching his friend charge through the night towards the unknown...

EDWARD  
You going to go over there?

Tom glances at his son, unsure. BEAT.

**INT. SALOON -- SAME TIME**

The stranger sets down his empty glass...

BARTENDER  
Another?

The stranger nods, *why not?* The bartender pours...

STRANGER  
Got a doctor around these parts?

PATRONS glance nervously at each other...

STRANGER (CONT'D)  
Say you get *shot*, for example...  
where would you go?

BARTENDER

I really don't know. I'm the not  
the person to talk to about that  
sort of thing.

The stranger stares at the bartender and *smiles*--

STRANGER

What do I owe for the rye?

BARTENDER

Thirty cents...

STRANGER

Tell you what...

The stranger throws a wad of MONEY on the counter--

STRANGER (CONT'D)

I'll make it a *hundred dollars*...if  
you tell me who *is* the person to  
talk to about that sort of thing.

BARTENDER

I don't understand...

STRANGER

Oh, I think you *do*.

The bartender shakes his head as the stranger leans forward,  
focused, unrelenting...refusing to take no for an answer...

*And then, suddenly, they hear a door open--*

Frank Sullivan comes into the bar. He stares at the stranger  
for a moment, then sits down at a nearby table.

The stranger glances at the bartender, "*Him?*"

The bartender nods...and pockets the hundred dollars.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Frank listens to the stranger's approaching footsteps and  
then looks up as a dark shadow falls across his face--

STRANGER (CONT'D)

I'm wondering if you could help me?

FRANK

You don't look like the sort of man  
who needs much help.

The stranger smiles and sits down--

STRANGER

We all need a little help,  
especially in a strange town...

(Beat)

I'm looking for a *girl*. Medium  
build. Five and a half feet tall.  
Fair complexion. Very beautiful.

(Beat)

Sound like anybody you know?

Frank shakes his head as the door opens *again*. Tom Donovan quietly enters, followed by Reverend Farley...

STRANGER (CONT'D)

I work for some people who are very  
concerned about her. We have reason  
to believe she was in the area.  
Sent a couple men out looking for  
her, but...they seem to have  
disappeared.

FRANK

Maybe they ran off together. Maybe  
they don't want to be found...

STRANGER

Well, if that's the case, it's even  
*more* important that we find them.  
The girl, at least.

FRANK

(Confused)

What about the *men*?

STRANGER

As long as we find the *girl*, we'd  
be willing to forget about them.  
Call it an even exchange.

(Dramatic Beat)

Our men...for *your* deputy.

The stranger sets a BLOOD-STAINED BADGE down on the table--

STRANGER (CONT'D)

You'll be happy to know he was very  
brave. Didn't even scream. Said to  
tell his kids he loved 'em.

Frank glances at Tom, frozen across the room.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Is it a matter of money? If not,  
then what is it? I saw that  
cemetery when I came in.

(MORE)

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Pretty crowded. How many able-bodied men could this town possibly have left?

Frank slowly looks up, calm and *defiant*--

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Do you have any idea who you're dealing with? Look what we did in a few short hours. You wired for the feds. *Our* men showed up, instead. Your telegraph is cut. Your train station is off the map. Don't you realize how *alone* you are?

Frank stares at the stranger...but doesn't respond. BEAT.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

You know...I remember when the flu spread last year, the government sent a dispatch to towns like this. You probably got it...

(Quoting)

*... "Round up your woodworkers and set them to making coffins. Then round up your street laborers...and set them to digging graves."*

(Beat)

That was all the help you got *then*. And it's all you're getting *now*.

The stranger suddenly reaches into his coat. Everyone tenses, fearing he's about to draw a gun...

...but the stranger takes out a collection of PAPERS, instead. He looks up at Frank, smiling like the devil...

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Do you know how easy it is to intercept a telegraph? A few snips and a little cut...and the signal gets re-routed.

(Holds up first page)

From the town of Sparks...

Everyone leans forward as the stranger reads--

STRANGER (CONT'D)

*...Dear Sheriff, stop. We regret we have no men to send at this time, stop. Very sorry, stop.*

(Turns the page)

*From Dawson...Sheriff Donovan, stop. Unable to provide help, stop.*

(MORE)

STRANGER (CONT'D)

*Please keep us abreast as the situation unfolds, stop.*

(Turns the page)

From Ridgeview...

TOWNSPEOPLE start to look away, sensing the pattern...

STRANGER (CONT'D)

*Have neither resources nor men to spare, stop. Deeply regret, stop.*

(Looks up at Frank)

*...Good luck, stop.*

The stranger throws the papers down on the table--

STRANGER (CONT'D)

You can read the rest for yourself.

They all say the same thing.

Nobody's coming. Why would they?

Frank shuffles through the messages one at a time. The stranger watches, genuinely puzzled--

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Why are you doing this? What's in it for you? Do you even know *who* you're risking your life for?

Frank's eyes flicker faintly with *doubt*--

STRANGER (CONT'D)

You think she's worth saving? A damsel in distress in need of a white knight? You think by defending her, you'll redeem this town? Maybe even yourself? That you've finally got a cause worth fighting for? Boy...have I got a few surprises for you.

(Raising his voice)

She's a *hooker*. Sorry to disappoint you, but...that's what she is. A two-bit whore. Pay her enough, she'll do anything you want. Fucked the wrong guy, heard the wrong things. And now she's a *nothing* witness in a *nothing* case...

(Beat)

You're telling me you're gonna risk your life and lives of all these people to save someone like *her*? Have you thought this through? Trains and telegraphs are the *least* we can do.

(MORE)

STRANGER (CONT'D)

We'll wipe this town off the face of the earth. You'll see. We're just getting warmed up.

The stranger looks around the room as his words take hold--

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Now why don't you do the sensible thing and mind your own business? This girl has no friends. No family. When she's gone, there will be no newspaper headlines mourning her death. She won't have a funeral or even an obituary. Because no one will remember her long enough to forget her. It'll be as though she never existed. All you have to do is order another drink and try not to worry about things that are beyond your control. Alright?

Frank hesitates -- deep in thought. And then--

George Fowler comes out of the back room and takes a seat at the bar, totally oblivious to what's going on...

FRANK

Excuse me...

Frank stands up and charges across the room. The stranger watches, confused by his sudden departure...

AT THE COUNTER

Frank grabs Charlie's empty BEER GLASS and hurls it right into George's face. He looks up, stunned--

Frank knocks two of his teeth out with the first blow. The second bruises a kidney and the third cracks a rib...

TOWNSPEOPLE flee from the eye of the storm...

ACROSS THE ROOM

The stranger watches the attack with a faint smile; as if suddenly recognizing a worthy opponent...

NEAR THE DOOR

Tom steps forward, trying to restore order--

TOM

Frank! Frank! That's enough! You're *killing* him!

Frank slams George's face into the counter, shards of glass splinter his skin. George drops to the ground--

Frank bends over, about to lift him to his feet...

...when he suddenly hears the *click of a gun*--

TOM (CONT'D)  
Goddamnit, Frank, I said enough!

Frank looks up and sees Tom pointing a SHOTGUN at him from across the room. His eyes fill with betrayal...and rage.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Back away. Now.

Frank slowly approaches his friend--

FRANK  
You're gonna shoot me, Tom? Or just arrest me?

Tom peers over the shotgun as Frank takes a step *closer*; both barrels now just inches from his chest. And then--

Frank snatches the gun out of Tom's hands. Everyone *gasps* as he opens the boxlock, letting the shells fall to the floor...

FRANK (CONT'D)  
You're not doing either today...  
(Quoting Tom from earlier)  
Now, why don't you do what you're good at, Sheriff...and stand aside.

Frank throws the gun down and charges back across the room...

FRANK (CONT'D)  
Sam, whiskey.

The bartender sets a BOTTLE down. Frank picks it up...

AT THE END OF THE BAR

George pulls himself to his feet. Blood pours down his face, blinding his vision. He slowly turns around...

...Frank smashes his face with the whiskey bottle!

Glass shatters, the alcohol stinging like acid. George screams...and goes down for the count.

But Frank is on top of him, punching and wailing, kicking and stomping, *beating this man within an inch of his life*.

ACROSS THE ROOM

The stranger glances around the saloon, assessing different people's reactions. Some seem horrified. Others, *inspired*.

AT THE BAR

Finally, Frank stops. Just short of murder. He grabs George by the collar and gets right in his face...

FRANK (CONT'D)

Look at me...this is what happens  
when you hurt women.

Frank throws George back to the ground, then slowly turns around to face the lingering stranger--

FRANK (CONT'D)

You were saying?

The stranger smiles. And picks up right where he left off--

STRANGER

There's no need for you to go and  
get the good people of this town  
hurt. All we want is *the girl*.

Frank wipes the blood off his face, then--

FRANK

You can't have her.

The stranger stares at Frank with a faint smile. *There it is*. The dye is cast. Frank Sullivan has crossed the Rubicon.

The stranger glances at George writhing on the ground, then walks across the room...and disappears out the door.

**EXT. SALOON -- CONTINUOUS**

The stranger looks up once more at the WWI banner. Then he turns and walks down the street...*whistling* the entire way.

**INT. SALOON -- SAME TIME**

Everyone stares at at Frank Sullivan--

He doesn't ask for any help or offer any explanations. He just puts one foot in front of the other...

...and charges right out the front door. BEAT.

Tom watches the door shut, then walks across the room and picks up his deputy's TIN STAR. He wipes it with his thumb...

*...the blood smears across the metal, leaving Tom Donovan to stare at his own reflection in the brass-colored tin.*

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER**

Sue looks up as Frank comes into the room. She sees the blood on his shirt. Her eyes suddenly go wide--

SUE  
What did you do?

FRANK  
You have to leave now...

SUE  
Why? Are they coming?

FRANK  
No...they're already here.

Frank grabs Sue by the arm and pulls her to the door...

SUE  
Frank, wait a minute. Frank...  
(Then, *screaming*)  
...take your hands off me!

Frank suddenly lets go. Sue looks at him, softly--

SUE (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

Frank nods quietly, then glances at the girl; still asleep, completely unaware of what this man is about to do for her.

SUE (CONT'D)  
Are you sure about this?

Frank hesitates, then slowly shakes his head--

SUE (CONT'D)  
Then don't. Please, just...don't.

FRANK  
It's too late. I'm sorry...

Frank turns and heads for the door. Sue follows him, realizing she may never see him again--

SUE  
I don't understand...why is this  
your responsibility? Frank, stop!

She grabs his arm, desperate to make him stay--

SUE (CONT'D)

Tell me why! Why do you have to go  
out there and face this *alone*?

Frank suddenly erupts, frustrated and out of time--

FRANK

Goddamnit, because I don't have a  
choice. Because there's a chance I  
might be able to help someone  
tonight. And I have to go. Do you  
understand? I have to go.

Sue slowly lets go of his arm. Frank stares at her for a  
moment, then nods at the young girl--

FRANK (CONT'D)

Push her away from the window  
before the fighting starts...

And then he turns and walks down the hall...

SUE

Frank?  
(He stops, turns around)  
When it's all over, I'll be *here*...  
(Softly)  
*...waiting.*

Frank slowly nods, then disappears down the stairs.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- MOMENTS LATER**

Frank comes outside into the cold night air, crunching gravel  
beneath his boots as he walks down the empty street...

He takes position behind a building and waits; his rifle  
trembling in his hands; his breathing deep and heavy...

Frank Sullivan is afraid -- we can see it in his eyes.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Sue pushes the girl's bed away from the window, then closes  
the shutters and leans against the wall.

Her eyes close with dread. She slides down to the floor...

**INT. CHURCH -- SAME TIME**

Reverend Farley kneels in the third row of his empty church;  
hands clasped together tightly in prayer...

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- SAME TIME**

Tom comes inside, shaken and undone. He stares at his wife for a moment, then hears a soft *clicking sound*...

Edward is standing across the room, loading a RIFLE--

TOM

What are you doing?

EDWARD

Were you and Mom going to ask about the limp in my step?

TOM

(Hesitates)

I hadn't noticed...

EDWARD

Sure you did. You *both* did. You just pretended not to.

Tom steps forward, scared to know the answer--

TOM

Edward, I asked you a question... why are you loading that rifle?

Edward slides a final round into the chamber and slams it home. He turns to face his father--

EDWARD

It was just outside *Neuve Chapelle*. I took a bullet in the thigh...

TOM

You never mentioned it in your letters.

EDWARD

There were a lot of things I didn't mention in my letters...

(Beat)

There was a french family who gave me shelter. If the Germans had found me, that family would've been executed. I was a *stranger* to them just like this girl is a *stranger* to you ...and yet they risked their lives in order to save mine.

Edward turns to leave, having made his point...

TOM  
Where are you going?

EDWARD  
To do what I can...

Tom pulls Edward back from the door--

TOM  
No, damnit, you're staying here!  
Your mother and I didn't wait  
through that blasted war just to  
lose you in some street brawl!

EDWARD  
Let go of me, I'm not a child--!

TOM  
You're *my* child!

Edward looks at his father, suddenly calm--

EDWARD  
I know you're afraid...  
(Beat)  
But I'm only alive because of  
people like Frank Sullivan.

Tom's grip weakens and Edward pulls way. He glances at his mother one last time, then opens the door...and leaves.

Rosaleigh turns to Tom, frantic and undone--

ROSALEIGH  
Tom? *Do* something!

Tom goes to the window and watches his son walk away. Then he takes out his deputy's tin star...and stares at it once more.

**INT. SALOON -- SAME TIME**

Charlie Foster and Ben Sanderford hover around George Fowler; crunching glass beneath their cautious footsteps...

CHARLIE  
Jesus Christ. That was the finest  
beating I ever saw.

BEN  
Frank went too far. George didn't  
deserve *that*...

Eli Peterson suddenly steps forward--

ELI

No, he deserved worse. And sooner.  
Any man lays a hand on his wife has  
it comin'. Call me old fashioned.

TOWNSPEOPLE glance at each other quietly as Eli stares at the  
blood-soaked man squirming on the floor--

ELI (CONT'D)

My son-in-law is about to die alone  
in the street...  
(Then, softly)  
What have we become?

**EXT. TRAIN STATION -- SAME TIME**

The stranger's footsteps echo as he walks quietly along the  
train. He stops at the engine and slowly turns around...

Then, suddenly--

*The stranger stops whistling.*

On that signal, every single car door suddenly opens...

FIFTY GANGSTERS step out into the night, dressed in BLACK  
COATS, dangling TOMMY GUNS like samurai swords...

CUT TO:

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- SAME TIME**

Frank grips his gun tightly as he waits in the darkness. He  
hears a faint *rustling*...and glances across the street--

Leonard Duschene is crouched in an alley, holding his rifle.  
Frank nods quietly. Leonard nods back. And then--

*Movement from above suddenly catches Frank's eye...*

TOWNSPEOPLE are taking position to help in the fight--

...Charlie Foster throws a rifle up to Ben Sanderson, then  
climbs a fire escape to the top of the saloon...

...BAR PATRONS take cover in the alleys...

...Eli Peterson and the Civil War vets crouch along the  
rooftops, drawing their service revolvers one at a time...

...Tom and Edward Donovan stand side by side, each pointing a  
rifle towards the darkness up ahead...

CUT TO:

**EXT. TOWN -- MOMENTS LATER**

The town sits quietly beneath a brilliant FULL MOON, enjoying its last few moments of peace and tranquility...

Suddenly, the barrel of a TOMMY GUN dips into FRAME, followed by BLACK BOOTS and an army of dark TRENCH COATS...

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- CONTINUOUS**

Frank Sullivan sees the approaching shadows. He glances at the other TOWNSPEOPLE. They all take cover...

The gangsters pass beneath the WWI BANNER, glancing up at the quiet rooftops as they make their way into town...

TOWNSPEOPLE grip their weapons, waiting for Frank's move...

Frank takes a deep breath as the shadows pass by. Finally, he steps into full view, takes aim...and pulls the trigger. *BAM!*

*A GANGSTER'S head explodes in a bright puff of red...*

CUT TO:

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Sue looks up at the crack of Frank's rifle. Outside, GUNFIRE erupts. The terrifying rapid fire of TOMMY GUNS--

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- THAT MOMENT**

The WWI BANNER falls to the ground as MACHINE GUNS explode...

Frank and the TOWNSPEOPLE dive for cover as bullets slam into buildings, splintering wood and shattering windows...

The guns expel thousands of rounds, each with the power to cut a man's body apart. But then the magazines empty...

*And the townspeople seize their moment--*

They step out of hiding as the gangsters reload. Frank fires again, followed by Leonard, Tom, Eli, Charlie, and Ben--

Five gangsters fall as the rest dive for cover. They reload their TOMMY GUNS...and the bombardment continues--

CUT TO:

QUICK INTERIOR SHOTS -- Sue, Rosaleigh, and Kay all dive for cover as BULLETS hit their buildings...

CUT TO:

SUPER WIDE SHOT -- PEOPLE who fled the town earlier stand far in the distance, watching GUNFIRE light up their homes...

CUT TO:

An aging CIVIL WAR VET is the first townspeople to die. He takes three shots in the torso and slumps over the roof...

CUT TO:

A BAR PATRON takes a shot in the head...

CUT TO:

Charlie and Ben stand up to shoot...

CUT TO:

Tom and Edward takes turns covering and firing...

CUT TO:

Leonard Duschene kills two gangsters from the alley, then gets driven back by a barrage of gunfire...

CUT TO:

Frank dives behind a Model-T. Gunshots shatter the windows...

Frank leans forward and fires beneath the engine. A GANGSTER'S shin explodes and he falls to the ground.

Frank finishes him off with a shot to the head.

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Sue crawls along the floor and peers out the window. Outside, bodies fill the street as TOWNSPEOPLE take cover...

Sue glances at the young girl, clearly conflicted. Outside, another TOWNSPERSON falls, wounded...

Sue fills a BLACK MEDICAL BAG...and dashes out the door.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- THAT MOMENT**

The stranger blasts away with his tommy gun as he walks down the street. Calm. Unafraid. Shielded by shadows.

He shoots a CIVIL WAR VET. Then a BAR PATRON. Then a RANCHER on a ROOF. The stranger watches his body slump forward, falling four stories to the ground.

CUT TO:

Sue comes outside and races down the alley. She kneels beside the rancher as gunfire ricochets around them...

CUT TO:

GANGSTERS step out into the street, clearly gaining ground. TOWNSPEOPLE fall back, retreating for cover...

CUT TO:

Sue dodges bullets as she darts between patients; doing whatever she can as the madness rages around her...

CUT TO:

The stranger empties his gun and then signals for a cease fire. An eerie silence falls on the town...

*...except for faint cries of men in their death throes--*

STRANGER

(Shouting)

You hear that?! Nobody wants this!  
Just give us the girl!! There's a  
thousand dollars for any man who  
tells us where she is!

BAM! A GANGSTER takes a bullet in the head and falls to the ground. The stranger ducks as his men resume firing--

TOWNSPERSON #1 (O.S.)

(Shouting)

Keep your money!

The stranger's face hardens. He shouts to someone nearby--

STRANGER

Who's got the grenades?

QUICK SHOT -- Edward Donovan's eyes go wide...

GANGSTER #1

I do!

STRANGER

Use 'em!

GANGSTER #1 pulls the pin on a GRENADE and tosses it onto the roof where Charlie and Ben are positioned!

QUICK SHOT -- Edward screams, too late--

EDWARD

Get out of there!

*BOOM!!!* A giant EXPLOSION sends the two regulars to their maker. TOWNSPEOPLE lurch back, horrified--

CUT TO:

The stranger smiles, then nods for his men to continue. They fire into buildings, shattering windows...

Then they toss in grenades-- *BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!*

The explosions rock the town; one of the buildings collapses in flames. The TOMMY GUNS resume firing...

CUT TO:

Tom screams to Edward as everyone dives for cover--

TOM

'The hell are those things?!

EDWARD

Shoot 'em as they throw!

TOM

What?!

EDWARD

Cover me!

Edward stands to fire. Tom lays down some cover...

CUT TO:

Gangster #1 pulls the pin of a GRENADE...

CUT TO:

Edward watches the gangster lean back to throw...and then suddenly pulls the trigger--

CUT TO:

Gangster #1 lurches forward as a bullet tears through his chest. The grenade lands on the ground, rolling...

It stops by a large group of GANGSTERS and.....*BOOOOOM!!!*

CUT TO:

Edward gets hit by SHRAPNEL as Tom pulls him away...

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Christ, I don't believe it...!

TOM  
Are you hurt? Where are you hit?!

EDWARD  
The same goddamn leg!

CUT TO:

Frank peers around the corner of an alley. He sees the BAG OF GRENADES lying beside Gangster #1's body...

Frank raises his rifle...and fires! BOOM!!! The bag explodes, sending five more gangsters straight to hell...

CUT TO:

SUPER WIDE SHOT -- Those who fled watch in horror. Half their town is on fire. *And the TOMMY GUNS have started again...*

CUT TO:

The remaining gangsters unload everything they have; ready to slaughter every last man, woman, and child...

CUT TO:

Tom leans Edward against a wall as gunfire thunders around them. Sue suddenly appears, kneeling beside them--

TOM  
It's his leg...

Sue gives Edward a shot of MORPHINE and shoves a piece of wood between his teeth...

SUE  
Here, bite down on this...

Edward bites down. Sue grabs a pair of pliers...

SUE (CONT'D)  
This is going to hurt...

Edward slowly nods, bracing for the worst.

Sue digs into his wounded thigh, pulling out a thick piece of blood-soaked SHRAPNEL. Edward screams...

And then GUNFIRE erupts all around them!

DOWN THE ALLEY

A GANGSTER approaches, about to kill both Donovans and Sue Fowler. Suddenly, a GUNSHOT rips his head apart...

Tom, Edward, and Sue slowly look up...and see Reverend Farley on the roof of his church, holding a smoking rifle.

CUT TO:

Eli picks up a TOMMY GUN, trying to figure out how it works. *Suddenly, three bullets slam into his chest!*

Eli falls to the ground and stares at his blood-soaked torso. Three DARK SHADOWS step forward and surround him--

GANGSTER #2  
Where is she?

Eli looks up defiantly, refusing to answer. Gangster #2 lifts his boot and pushes down on the wounds--

GANGSTER #2 (CONT'D)  
*Where. Is. She.*

Eli closes his eyes in pain we can only imagine.

Then, suddenly-- GUNSHOTS tear the gangsters apart...

...and Frank Sullivan steps out of the shadows.

**EXT. / INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Rosaleigh screams as GUNFIRE hits the steel door--

GANGSTER #3 (O.S.)  
Hey, you hear that? There's a woman  
in there! *It's her!*

Rosaleigh steps back, horrified. The shooting continues... and then the gangsters begin to *break down the door!*

**INT. SUNDRY STORE -- CONTINUOUS**

Kay hides behind the register as three GANGSTERS come inside. Their footsteps come closer...and closer...

Kay trembles, afraid to die.

Suddenly, GUNFIRE erupts and two bodies hit the ground. Kay hears the sound of hand-to-hand fighting...

Someone *screams*...and a BODY hits the floor.

Kay hears labored breathing. She peers around the corner...

Three GANGSTERS lie dead in pools of blood; two from gunshot wounds, the other from a knife sticking out of his back...

And then Kay sees someone *else*-- Leonard Duschene, slumped against the door, clutching his wounded torso...

Kay grabs her husband's crepe and rushes to Leonard's side. She puts pressure on the wound...

But Leonard stops her, shaking his head. Kay hesitates, then wraps her arms him, gently cradling the dying man.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- THAT MOMENT**

Sue dodges GUNFIRE as she charges across the street and races down an alley. Finally, she reaches Frank and Eli...

Frank looks up at her, desperate. *Please, do something.*

Sue opens her bag and starts to treat Eli's wounds. But the blood on the ground tells her it's not looking good...

**EXT. / INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

The door hinges start to give way as GANGSTERS break down the door. One of them fires through the cracks!

Rosaleigh dives for the cover as gunshots rip through the office. GUNPOWDER gets ignited...*and fire begins to spread!*

The gangsters continue to bash down the door. The crack gets wider...and wider. *They're almost inside...*

But, then, suddenly--

GUNSHOTS come from behind, killing three of the gangsters instantly. The others dive for cover and return fire...

CUT TO:

Tom and Edward are across the street, shooting. Tom looks up and suddenly realizes the office is on fire--

TOM

God, no...

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- ALLEY -- THAT MOMENT**

Sue works furiously to stop Eli's bleeding. Suddenly, he grabs her arm and gently pushes it away--

ELI

It's okay...I'm thinking...of my little girls.

Eli's head slowly rolls back. He dies in Sue's arms.

Frank stares at his father-in-law, overwhelmed. He hears distant gunfire...and sees Tom and Edward pinned down.

SUE  
Frank, wait!

Frank picks up the TOMMY GUN and charges down the street...

Sue watches him go, then shifts her glance. Her eyes suddenly narrow. *She's staring at the saloon.*

**EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Tom takes a bullet in the arm and falls to the ground. Edward tries to help, but GUNFIRE drives him away...

TOM  
Stay back! Stay back!

GANGSTERS cross the street, about to finish them off...

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Rosaleigh crawls along the floor, overwhelmed by smoke and fire. She climbs the staircase, heading for the roof...

**EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Tom and Edward both hear a hollow *click* as their guns run out of bullets. GANGSTERS surround them...

ON THE ROOF

Rosaleigh comes outside and sees her two men surrounded; helpless, exposed, about to die...

ROSALEIGH  
No!!!

The GANGSTERS look up at Rosaleigh's scream. And then--

Frank suddenly appears, wielding a TOMMY GUN with focus and rage. He fires at head level, cutting the gangsters down!

Their bodies land beside Edward and Tom. Both Donovans look at Frank...but they don't have time to say thank you--

*Because FLAMES suddenly burst through the roof!*

FRANK  
Rosaleigh, jump!

Rosaleigh looks down and shakes her head. A fall from this height will surely break her legs...

FRANK (CONT'D)  
You have to jump. *Now!*

Rosaleigh trembles as flames explode through the windows...

**INT. SALOON -- THAT MOMENT**

Sue walks around the bar and sees her husband lying in a pool of dried blood and shattered glass...

GEORGE  
*Who's there...?*

Sue takes a deep breath and kneels beside him--

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
You come to finish me off?

Sue stares at George for a long, terrible moment. And then she opens her bag...and begins to treat his wounds.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- THAT MOMENT**

The stranger stands in the shadows, watching from a distance as Frank urges Rosaleigh to jump off the roof...

AT THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Tom and Edward struggle to get to their feet. They shout encouragement as Frank steps closer--

FRANK  
Rosaleigh, jump! *Now!*

ROSALEIGH  
I can't!

FRANK  
You can! I'll catch you!

BOOM!!! Another explosion nearly consumes her.

Rosaleigh takes a deep breath...and steps off the ledge!

Tom watches his wife fall gracefully for two stories and land in Frank's arms. They collapse...wounded, but *alive*.

**INT. SALOON -- THAT MOMENT**

George stares at Sue as she bandages his arm--

GEORGE  
Can't you just give me something  
for the pain?

Sue hesitates, then sticks him with a shot morphine. George closes his eyes with relief...

Sue slips off her wedding ring and sets it beside him.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
(Confused)  
What's *that* for?

SUE  
(a moment, then)  
*My pain.*

Sue shuts her bag and disappears out the back door.

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- THAT MOMENT**

The stranger raises his gun, about to pull the trigger. But then he glances at the *saloon*...and suddenly gets an idea.

**EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- THAT MOMENT**

Sue comes over and kneels beside the Donovans...

Frank crouches nearby, loading a RIFLE and two REVOLVERS. He gives the handguns to Edward and Tom, then stands to leave--

TOM  
Where you going?

Frank nods at Sue's distant *clinic*--

FRANK  
(Re: Girl)  
'Make sure she's okay...

Tom nods as Frank takes off down the street...

**INT. SALOON -- THAT MOMENT**

The stranger steps through the shadows and kneels beside George Fowler. The wounded man looks up--

STRANGER  
*Where is she?*

George takes a deep breath, then slowly raises his bloody arm and points out the window...*right at Sue's clinic.*

The stranger nods, then shoots George Fowler in the head--

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- THAT MOMENT**

Sue looks up at the crack of a GUNSHOT...

The stranger emerges from the saloon. He signals to his *five* remaining men, pointing towards Sue's clinic--

SUE

*Jesus, no...*

Tom and Edward both look up, horrified--

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MAIN FLOOR -- THAT MOMENT**

Frank enters through the back door and heads for the stairs--

GANGSTER (O.S.)

Hold it right there!

Frank stops and slowly turns around. A GANGSTER stands near the door, pointing a TOMMY GUN right at him...

GANGSTER (CONT'D)

In here, boys!

The other four GANGSTERS come in and slowly surround Frank...

GANGSTER (CONT'D)

(To Frank)

Hands in the air...

Frank glances up at the ceiling, taking notice of the hanging CHANDELIER -- *the room's only light source.*

Frank raises his arms...*but doesn't drop his rifle.*

GANGSTER (CONT'D)

Hey, Bright Boy...I meant drop the gun, first!

Frank suddenly pulls the trigger and the chandelier explodes.

The room plunges to darkness as *TOMMY GUNS erupt--*

The brutal gunshots light up the room with ear-splitting violence. Anguished screams of dying men quickly follow--

Anything that moves gets shot at. Bodies dance at the bullets, torn apart in the deadly crossfire...

And then the guns fall with their owners, hitting the blood-soaked ground as powdered smoke fills the room.

The stillness lingers for a moment...and then, suddenly, there's movement. A body shifting on the floor--

It's Frank, still alive. Last man standing. But he's wounded...bad enough that he's unable to get back on his feet.

So he crawls, through fallen bodies and pools of blood. Hand over hand, foot over foot; reaching for the stairs...

**EXT. MAIN STREET -- THAT MOMENT**

The stranger stares at Sue's clinic, now quiet in the absence of gunfire. He walks across the street...

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- UPSTAIRS -- THAT MOMENT**

Frank coughs blood as he crawls to Sue's office. He hears the door open downstairs. *The stranger is inside the building...*

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MAIN FLOOR -- THAT MOMENT**

The stranger lights a KEROSENE LAMP and stares at the bodies on the floor. He sees a blood trail leading up the stairs...

And then the stranger hears Frank *crawling...*

**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS**

Frank pushes the door open and crawls into the room as the stranger's footsteps start to *thunk* up the stairs...

Frank looks around, desperate to find something he can use to block the door. But there's nothing. He's stuck...

Frank turns and crawls over to the girl's bedside...

He reaches up with his good arm and pulls her down to the floor. Her limp body lands softly beside him...

Frank leans her against the bed as the stranger's footsteps reach the top of the stairs and come down the hall...

*Thunk...thunk...thunk...*

Frank takes out his revolver and opens the cylinder. He slides the last few rounds into the chamber...

Then, suddenly--

Frank feels a tremor of movement beside him.

He slowly turns...and sees--

The young girl is awake, staring right at him.

The life in Frank's eyes is fading fast. And the stranger's boots have *stopped* just outside the door.

With his last ounce of strength, Frank puts the loaded gun into the girl's hands...and *pulls back the hammer.*

Frank stares at the girl for a dramatic moment, then falls into her lap as the door softly opens...

The girl slowly looks up, horrified--

The stranger enters the room, each footstep slow and ominous. He holds up his lantern and looks right at her...

The girl's breathing quickens. She clearly recognizes him...

The stranger smiles and takes another step forward. *And then he shifts his glance to Frank Sullivan lying on the floor...*

The girl's eyes narrow with steely resolve. No longer afraid. Sensing an opportunity. She raises Frank's revolver...

...and pulls the trigger.

The lantern shatters as the bullet explodes the stranger's skull. A mesh of brains, blood, and teeth splatter the wall--

The stranger drops to his knees...

And then his body falls forward like a giant tree, hitting the wooden floor with a dull, sickening *thud*.

The girl's breathing grows calm. She slowly lowers the smoking gun...and looks down at Frank Sullivan--

His eyes appear vacant and his chest rises and falls with the shallowest of breaths. *We are watching him die...*

...but then the young girl's hand dips into frame, caressing his neck. She leans down and wraps her arms around him...

And Frank seems to draw strength from her embrace...

More HANDS suddenly appear. The surviving TOWNSPEOPLE hoist Frank into the air and carry him over to the table...

Sue Fowler immediately goes to work...

Tom and Edward help the girl walk across the room and sit down in a chair. She turns and looks out the window--

*Bodies litter the street. The girl's eyes go wide...*

She glances back at Frank Sullivan, lying on the table, surrounded by friends fighting to save his life.

Frank Sullivan, a man she's never met, but who risked everything to save her. For reasons she may never know.

FADE TO BLACK:

**EXT. SULLIVAN RANCH -- MORNING**

Snowflakes fall from the sky and blanket the ground with a soft layer of white as far as the eye can see...

**INT. SULLIVAN RANCH -- BEDROOM -- SAME TIME**

Frank Sullivan lies in bed, his body tattooed with bruises and lacerations. Suddenly, he opens his eyes...

...and sees someone across the room--

Sue Fowler gets out of her chair and slowly approaches. She kneels at his bedside, smiling gently--

SUE

How are you feeling?

Frank glances at his body, then nods. *Not bad...considering.*

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE -- DOWNSTAIRS -- LATER**

Frank and Sue come out into the hallway and limp towards the stairs. They start to tackle them one a time...

Halfway down, Frank Sullivan suddenly stops...

His house is filled with PEOPLE-- The Donovans. Kay Anderson. A few familiar faces from the saloon...

Frank and Sue reach the main floor and everyone surrounds them. Frank smiles as he receives pats on the back...

And then he senses another presence in the room--

The young girl.

She's standing near the window, wearing a brand new dress, looking vibrant, beautiful...and full of life.

Frank's breathing quickens as she stands before him, looking deep into the eyes of the man who saved her life...

As tears begin to fall down her cheeks, the girl throws her arms around Frank and holds on for dear life...

Everyone watches this tender scene unfold, touched by Frank's journey. Satisfied by his reward.

Frank Sullivan was dealt the greatest of tragedies. But in this moment...he has an awful lot to live for.

THE END