

DANGEROUS DECISIONS

Family Friendly
Western

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iNT. bLANK SCREEN

Montage of everything in super speed rewind.

TITLE CARD: DEADLY DECISIONS

cut to

1 Ext. western countryside - Dawn 1

A nice stagecoach crosses the Texas countryside. It enters the frame from right to left. It is being pulled by a team of horses driven by rugged but fancy looking driver.

cut to

2 Ext. western town - Dawn 2

The stagecoach approaches a lively western town and passes through the main gate leading into the town. The gate is centered in the frame. There is a sign that says "Welcome to Pine Moore." The stagecoach passes the bank, the barber shop, the RANGER's office, the mercantile store and the undertaker's spot.

cut to

3 ext. Saloon - Dawn 3

The stagecoach stops out front of the saloon. THE INVESTIGATOR gets out. NATHAN CROSS, A well-dressed northeastern cowboy in his distinguished years, holding a briefcase. As he approaches, he steps in horse poop. He wipes off his shoe on the shoe scraper and then enters the saloon.

cut to

4 int. Saloon - Day 4

The LAWYER, THOMAS WINTERS, a mousy looking middle-aged man with glasses, is waiting inside at the bar. It is lightly filled with local folk. The dead bartender's ASSISTANT, MILTON ODDITY, an odd-looking young man, is behind the bar. When the Nathan, NATHAN CROSS, comes close the LAWYER sniffs the air and checks his shoes for dog shit.

MILTON

What can I get you?

NATHAN

Got any scotch?

MILTON

Nope.

MILTON rubs a mug with a rag, waiting.

NATHAN

Whiskey?

MILTON nods.

NATHAN

Neat.

MILTON pours the drink and slides it to him. He pays for the drink with a coin.

MILTON

So, what brings you to Pine Moore?
Business or pleasure? This here fine
saloon or our local Madam MEI LAN can
provide you with many of the finest
libations Texas can offer.

NATHAN

Unfortunately, chap, I'm here on
business. First and foremost, I'm
looking for a lawyer named THOMAS
WINTERS.

MILTON

Well, you've found him.
(he nods toward THOMAS)

The LAWYER chokes on his drink sitting next to him at the bar.

Thomas

What can I help you with, Mr....?

NATHAN turns to THOMAS at the bar.

NATHAN

My name is Nathan Cross. I was hired
by the late owner of this fine
establishment, a JASPER SANDERS, to
investigate if he were ever to die
under mysterious circumstances. I
received explicit instructions on what
to do. This letter here can show you
the date of employment and his

signature.

NATHAN pulls a letter out from his coat pocket and hands it to THOMAS who looks it over and hands it back.

thomas

Well, it does appear what you say is true. So you say you were hired by JASPER SANDERS? (beat) Well... we are having a reading of the will in the back once all parties arrive.

NATHAN

When do you expect everyone to arrive?

THOMAS

Today By High Noon.

THOMAS checks his pocket watch it's still early.

NATHAN

Well you won't mind if I sit in for the reading will you?

THOMAS

No. It will be fine. I can explain to anyone that might object.

NATHAN

Great. So who do you think killed JASPER SANDERS?

THOMAS

What? Killed? Ohh heaven's no, he killed himself. With a pewter rope in his own study. Such a shame.

NATHAN

And you believe that?

THOMAS

Why wouldn't I?

NATHAN

It seems like there are several parties interested in this reading. Too many for my thinking no foul play was involved and not by what JASPER wrote in his letters too.

THOMAS
Well, I think that's absurd.

NATHAN
Just doing my job.

fade out

5 Ext. western town - Day 5

The SOLDIER arrives in town. His name is Lieutenant HARLAN SANDERS, the brother of the dead saloon owner, Jasper Sanders. He's wearing his uniform and riding a horse. He enters through the town gates passing the Bank.

cut to

6 ext. Saloon - Day 6

HARLAN dismounts his horse, ties it up, and enters the saloon.

cut to

7 int. Saloon - Day 7

The LAWYER, THOMAS WINTERS recognizes HARLAN as he enters and greets him. THOMAS waves him over.

HARLAN
I always said someone would have to die for me to want to grace your presence, you slimy, no good...

THOMAS cuts him off

THOMAS
Lt. Sanders, please let me introduce you to NATHAN CROSS

HARLAN
Ohh yes, Please call me Harlan.

They shake hands

HARLAN
Not the NATHAN CROSS? The famous investigator. Solved the case of the Chupacabra of Nacogdoches?

NATHAN

Well, I guess my reputation does proceed me.

The HARLAN sniffs the air and checks his shoes for horse poop.

HARLAN

And what brings you here?

NATHAN

Same as you. I'm here for the reading of the will. I was hired by your brother, JASPER, in case he ever had an accidental death.

The soldier looks Nathan up and down suspiciously; but suddenly realizes Nathan is here to investigate his brother's death.

HARLAN

Accidental? I heard he hung himself.

NATHAN

Well, yes that's what they have been saying around here but I'm going to do my own investigation and uncover any foul play, if there was any.

Nathan looks around the room at all the parties present.

HARLAN

Well that'd good someone has Jasper's best interests at heart. Maybe you'll get to the bottom of this tragedy.

NATHAN

I always do.

(pause)

In due time.

Harlan slaps Thomas on the back, causing him to choke and spit out his drink again.

HARLAN

I knew he didn't hang himself! It just ain't like him.

Thomas wipes his mouth and pats his forehead.

NATHAN

You see why I have my suspicions.

(pause)

And I see you serve the Army?

HARLAN

Yes, I've been serving in the Cavalry,
but I look forward to one day
returning back to Kentucky and
starting me a family.

nathan

What's next for you?

HARLAN

Well, I'll return to my post and
finish out my service.

NATHAN

And after that?

HARLAN

I've dreamed of returning to my family
chicken farm in Kentucky. My brother
has been holding on to something I
think will really make all the
difference.

NATHAN

And what's that?

HARLAN

Our secret family recipe for the
world's greatest fried chicken.

NATHAN

Sounds mouth-watering.

harlan

I'll tell ya ... It's finger-lickin'
good.

THOMAS checks his pocket watch again.

THOMAS

MILTON, is the ballroom set up?

MILTON

Yes, the girls are practicing but I'll
get rid of them. Someone needs to
watch the bar while the reading of the

will is happening.

The LAWYER leads the two through a door to the grand ballroom with the mainstage.

cut to

8 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

8

The TWIN SALOON GIRLS, HARMONY and MELODY are leading the practice on the mainstage with their menagerie of saloon girls. There's an screen, a piano and a large original motion picture projector. The LAWYER, THOMAS WINTERS, NATHAN CROSS and LT. HARLAN SANDERS enter the ballroom. The LAWYER leads them to a large table with a large briefcase. 5 seats on one side and 3 seats on the other.

THOMAS

Gentlemen, if you would please take a seat. Family on this side.

THOMAS points at the side of the table for family and HARLAN takes a seat. NATHAN and THOMAS take their place opposite of them.

MILTON interrupts the girls practicing and shoos them off the stage.

MILTON

HARMONY and MELODY. I need you up front running things, while we have this meeting.

melody

Sure thing suga.

Harmony

Whatever you say boss.

HARLAN has noticed the two beautiful girls. One of them winks at him while the other blows him a kiss. They giggle and run off stage together ushering the group of saloon girls out first.

HARLAN

I'm really starting to see what my brother saw in this place.

fade out

9 Ext. western countryside - Day

9

The BOUNTY HUNTER, a rough and tough but beautiful woman, the ex-wife of the dead BARTENDER, known simply as RAVEN, rides into town on her horse with something the size of a head in a burlap sack bag hanging behind her. She enters the town gates.

cut to

10 Ext. western town - DaY

10

RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER rides through town. The townspeople notice as she pasts them. They whisper and point. A group of children notice, the young child runs up to her.

Child 1

Are you RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER?

RAVEN winks as she holds up one finger to her lips, shhsing the CHILD. RAVEN pulls out a gold coin and throws it to the kid. The SCHOOL MOM sees what's happening and is not happy.

school Mom

Betsy you get back over here right now!

The other children gather around BETSY - Child 1, admiring the coin she was just thrown.

Child 2

That's so cool...

child 3

That's more than my brother saved all summer working on the ranch...

Betsy bites the gold coin. The school mom, stares daggers at Raven as she rides toward the ranger station.

cut to

11 EXT. RANGER's office - day

11

RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER ties up her horse outside the RANGER's office. She removes the mysterious sack from the back of the horse and enters the RANGER's office.

cut to

12 int. RANGER office - day 12

The RANGER, GARNETT BLACKWOOD, is sitting with his feet on his desk reading a newspaper, not noticing as RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER enters the office. She kicks his feet off the desk and drops the mysterious sack on the desk. He goes from in shock, to crushing on her, to confusion.

RANGER Blackwood
What's this?

The RANGER begins to open the sack. He sees there is a head in the sack and recoils back.

cut to

13 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT 13

RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER is chasing her bounty. They are on horse back. cutting back and forth between the two. She tries to shoot at him from a distance on the horse back but misses. He comes to a dead end at a fence outside a farmhouse and he has to dismount. He ties the rope to the fence and runs towards the farm house. RAVEN rides up after, see's his horse tied up and she dismounts and ties up her horse. She see's him running towards the farm with a barn. she chases after him.

cut to

14 Ext. BARN - NIGHT 14

THE BOUNTY runs into a barn to hide.

cut to

15 int. BARN - NIGHT 15

The BOUNTY peeks out between cracks hiding in the barn. He can see RAVEN approaching. She yells out when she gets close.

RAVEN
I know you're in there,
(pause)
don't make me come in there.
(pause)
Your time of reckoning has come. are
you ready to face it like a man?
(pause)
You're gonna pay for what you did to
my son.

THE BOUNTY recoils from peeking through the cracks of the wall. He starts to get nervous and starts backing away from the wall, but he accidentally trips over a rake on the ground and falls onto a giant logging saw.

camera pov of bounty falling into the saw

This makes a large noise and RAVEN comes rushing in guns drawn ready for a fight. Only to see the decapitated head and body of the BOUNTY. She put's her pistols back in her holsters.

RAVEN

Well, I'll be damned. If only they had all been this easy.

cut to

16 Ext. FARMHOUSE - Day

16

RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER ties a bag with the severed head to her horse. She mounts the horse and rides off to collect her bounty.

fade out

17 int. RANGER office - day - CONT

17

RANGER Blackwood

I guess I should have asked who is this?

RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER slams a wanted poster on the desk next. It says DEAD or ALIVE \$25 reward.

RAVEN

I want my \$25 reward.

RANGER BLACKWOOD picks up the poster and looks it over. He puts its down and looks at her thoughtfully.

RANGER Blackwood

Look, I know these guys are ultimately responsible for the death of your son. But when will this bloodbath end?

RAVEN

You know damn well there's only one person left after this. Now give me my damn money.

RANGER BLACKWOOD pulls out a checkbook from his desk and writes her a check for her reward. Tares it out and hands it to her. She turns to walk away but he calls out to her.

RANGER Blackwood
Look, RAVEN, there's something else
you need to know.

RAVEN stops and looks back.

RAVEN
What's that? You're in love with me
and you would do anything for me and
blah blah blah...

RANGER BLACKWOOD takes a deep breath as he prepares to tell her some bad news.

RANGER Blackwood
I don't know how else to say it. And I
hate to be the one to have to tell
you. But here goes, your ex-husband
JASPER was found dead. Apparently, he
killed himself. In his study with a
rope.

RAVEN
Are you messing with me?

RANGER Blackwood
I wish I was.

RANGER BLACKWOOD lets this news sink in as she processes the information, he just told her. She's in shock but for a hard person.

RAVEN
I'm in shock. I can't believe it.

RANGER Blackwood
Well, you came just in time. I've sent
messages out trying to let you know.
The reading of the will is today. Over
at the SALOON. I was about to head
over. You want to come?

RAVEN nods yes. RANGER BLACKWOOD puts the head away in a large drawer in the desk and closes it. He then puts away the checkbook in the desk drawer and pulls down the wanted poster for the head that now lies in his desk. He gets up and adjusts his shirt to prepare to leave.

RANGER Blackwood
 Now that your ex is dead, do you think
 you're ready to give me a shot?

RAVEN
 Not likely.
 (pause)
 Ever.

RAVEN walks out of the RANGER's office. RANGER BLACKWOOD
 chases after her. He reaches back inside and grabs his hat
 off the hat stand just inside the door.

fade out

18 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

18

The ASSISTANT Milton, joins the LAWYER THOMAS, the
 INVESTIGATOR NATHAN and the SOLDIER HARLAN at the table. Four
 seats are still empty. MILTON smells something bad in the air
 and checks his shoes as he sits down.

THOMAS
 Thank you for joining us, MILTON, I
 know that JASPER was like a father to
 you. Raising you since you were a
 preteen orphan.

MILTON
 Yes, I'm still in shock that he's
 gone...
 (pause)
 I still can't believe he killed
 himself...

Milton seems genuinely sad that his step father is gone.

THOMAS
 Yes, such a tragedy, this suicide.
 There are so many here that really
 cared for JASPER SANDERS.

NATHAN
 We are still are not sure that we can
 rule out there was no foul play
 involved....

Thomas shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

Thomas
 Yes, of course, now that you're here

the famous investigator, NATHAN CROSS.

MILTON is concerned.

fade out

19 ext. Saloon - Day

19

RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER and RANGER BLACKWOOD walk across the town and stop right outside of the Saloon. The townspeople point and notice RAVEN. Some whisper and giggle, some with jealousy in their eyes.

RAVEN

JASPER never would have committed suicide.

RANGER Blackwood

So what are you saying? What? That he was murdered? You do realize I was the one to declare it a suicide, since I was called in after they found the body.

RAVEN

Whatever, you're an idiot. It has to have been some kind of foul play. Everyone in this town wants this bar. Especially that good for nothing Dad of yours, the Mayor.

RAVEN enters the saloon. RANGER Blackwood looks concerned and enters also. She did just insult his father. It's obvious he's attracted to her and she wants nothing to do with him.

cut to

20 int. Saloon - Day

20

RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER and RANGER BLACKWOOD enter. The SINGING SALOON GIRLS are behind the bar. The RANGER approaches the bar.

RANGER Blackwood

Give me a beer, and...

He turns to RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER.

RAVEN

Tequila. Straight up.

The SINGING SALOON GIRLS pass off their drinks as the MADAME, MEI LAN intercepts them.

MEI LAN

Well, if it isn't JASPERS's ex-wife turned bounty hunter, RAVEN.

(pause)

Still failing at bringing justice to your dead son?

RAVEN

Only one left. Too bad it's not you...

RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER taunts grabbing her pistol and taps on the hilt of the gun.

MEI LAN

Two can play that game.

The MADAME nods to the MELODY and HARMONY the SINGING SALOON GIRLS and they both pull out excessively large guns and point them at RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER from behind the bar.

Everyone and everything in the bar stops. As the showdown is about to begin.....

RANGER Blackwood

Ohh please enough with the pissing contest.

The RANGER waves them off and everyone lowers their weapons. The MADAME still stands strong with a smirk.

RANGER Blackwood

Mei.

MEI LAN

Garret.

MEI LAN

Let's get this over with. If you would both, please follow me. The reading of the will is in the back.

They each leave a coin and grab their drinks. The MADAME leads the RANGER and the BOUNTY HUNTER to the ballroom. Melody and Harmony return to entertaining the guests at the bar. And the rest of the bar continues.

cut to

21 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

21

MEI LAN, RANGER BLACKWOOD and RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER join the table in the ballroom with the NATHAN CROSS, MILTON, THOMAS, and HARLAN.

THOMAS

Thank you all for coming. Family on that side of the table.

THOMAS points at the side of the table. They each sniff the air and check their shoes as they sit down. One seat remains empty.

THOMAS

Only waiting for one more?

HARLAN

Isn't this all of the family?

thomas

I promised MAYOR BLACKWOOD that he could be present at the reading.

THE RANGER chokes on his drink at the mention of his father. The LAWYER checks his pocket watch. Raven looks around the room at everyone. Nathan is writing in a small book as if he's not paying attention to anyone.

fade out

22 Ext. western town - DaY

22

The BIG BAD, the mayor of the town, HARRISION BLACKWOOD, walks through town. The townspeople scatter and scurry away as he crosses their path. He blazes through town arrogantly. A sheepish townsman approaches the mayor with his hat in his hands.

townsperson

Mayor Blackwood, sir. I don't think I can come up with all the tax money, this season.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Well, then i'll just have to take another percent of your crop.

townsperson

But Mr. Blackwood sir. I'm down to my last shares. You already took all the

rest.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

The dusty main street bustles with activity under the scorching sun. The townsfolk go about their business as the MAYOR, a stern and imposing figure, strolls purposefully towards the SALOON at the end of the street. His presence sends a wave of unease through the crowd, and people quickly scatter.

TOWNSPERSON 1

(nervously)

Mayor's comin'. Scatter!

As the townsfolk disperse, a SHEEPISH GUY, JOHN, a thin and downtrodden man with a worried expression, approaches the MAYOR with his hat in his hands.

JOHN:

(stuttering)

Mayor... I, uh, I been meanin' to talk to ya 'bout somethin'.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

(steely gaze)

John, you best make it quick. I ain't got time for idle chatter.

John glances around nervously, his hat trembling in his hands.

JOHN

(hesitant)

Well, sir, it's 'bout them taxes. I been strugglin', ya see, and I can't rightly pay 'em all this month.

The MAYOR's expression darkens, and he leans in closer, his voice low and menacing.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

(whispering)

John, you know the rules in this town. Taxes are due when they're due, no exceptions. I've been more than patient with folks like you.

John swallows hard, beads of sweat forming on his forehead.

JOHN

(nervous)

I know, Mayor, I do. It's just times have been tough, crops ain't been good, and my family-

MAYOR

(interrupting, stern)

Your family's troubles ain't my concern. What's owed to me is my concern. You got two choices, John. You pay up by the end of the week, in full, or you find yourself and your family out of this town.

John's eyes widen, and he nods quickly.

JOHN

(panicked)

Yes, Mayor, I'll find a way. I promise.

The MAYOR gives John a final hard stare before continuing his march toward the SALOON, leaving John trembling in his wake.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

(authoritative)

See that you do, John. I'll be watchin'.

John watches the MAYOR's retreating figure, fear etched on his face, knowing he has a daunting task ahead of him to meet the MAYOR's demands.

cut to

23 ext. Saloon - Day

23

BIG BAD, MAYOR BLACKWOOD walks up the steps. The saloon girls wave and open the door for him as he enters. They relax after he's gone.

cut to

24 int. Saloon - Day

24

MAYOR BLACKWOOD walks into the saloon and stops just inside the swinging doors. Everyone in the saloon stops and looks over, the music stops. He looks everybody over.

Mayor BLACKWOOD
Melody give me the usual

The music restarts and they all resume what they were doing.
She slides him his drink across the bar.

Harmony
They're all waiting for you in the
back in the Ballroom.

He drinks his whole drink in one chug and slams it on the
counter. Melody is ready with his second one as Harmony
removes the empty glass. He smiles picks it up and heads to
the back room. People scurry out of his way as he walks
through to the ballroom.

cut to

25 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

25

MAYOR BLACKWOOD joins the table. He sits in the last empty
seat.

Mayor BLACKWOOD
Hello, GARETT. Ladies and Gentlemen.

RANGER Blackwood
Father.

MAYOR BLACKWOOD looks around the room and realizes he doesn't
recognize NATHAN CROSS.

Mayor BLACKWOOD
Now who may I ask that you are?

NATHAN
My apologies, MAYOR BLACKWOOD, my name
is NATHAN CROSS. I'm a private Nathan.

Mayor BLACKWOOD
Not the NATHAN CROSS?

NATHAN
Unfortunately I do have a reputation
for my past dealings.

Mayor BLACKWOOD
And who hired you today to
investigate?

NATHAN

I was hired a few months ago by JASPER SANDERS to look after his affairs in case anything was to ever happen to him,

(pause)

unexpectedly.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Sounds like the man was paranoid.

NATHAN

Well look where we are now. was he really?

(pause)

Truly he hired me for her.

(Pointing at raven)

raven

Me?

NATHAN

He wanted to make sure your best interests were taken care of.

raven

Mine?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Fascinating.

Now a full table, everyone one sits across from the LAWYER, Nathan and the RANGER.

THOMAS

Mayor thank you for joining. Now that we are all here, I can begin with the reading of the will.

THOMAS opens his briefcase and pulls out a sealed envelope. He uses a letter opener to open it and then reads it out loud.

THOMAS

"I the JASPER SANDERS being in sound body and mind do hereby direct that My Brother Harlan will get the family recipe, and the rest of my assets both liquid and otherwise I leave in their entirety to my adopted son, MILTON. He should maintain my partnerships with GARRETT BLACKWOOD and MEI LAN. Signed

and notarized JASPER SANDERS. March
12, 1902."

A wave of relief washes over MILTON. The rest of the group begin to protest and argue. NATHAN CROSS raises his hand to silence the crowd.

NATHAN

Now that is out of the way. Let me begin. Ladies and gentlemen, like I've said before my name is NATHAN CROSS, I am a private Investigator and like some of you just heard, I was hired by JASPER SANDERS a few months ago.

NATHAN pauses and lets this information sink in.

NATHAN

Some of you have already mentioned you've heard of my exploits. Like the Chupacabra of Nacogdoches.

MILTON

The kidnapped child of the Mexican general.

NATHAN

Yes.

raven

The poisoning of the well in Toledo.

naTHAN

Yes. The point is, JASPER was worried that someone was going to try and kill him. So he sent me a docier on everyone he thought had a motive.

The Nathan puts the briefcase on the table. He opens it and pulls out several brown envelopes with each person's name on it. He lays out one that says MEI LAN, RANGER BLACKWOOD, MAYOR BLACKWOOD, MILTON, and one more without a name. He then pulls out the letter from the Bartender and reads it.

NATHAN

"Dear Mr. Cross, I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Jasper Sanders and I work as a bartender at the saloon in town of Pine Moore, Texas. I have reason to believe someone is trying to kill me. There

have been some strange incidents, and I don't feel safe. I would like to hire you to investigate if something were to happen to me unexpectedly and furthermore, to please make sure my ex-wife RAVEN is taken care of. Best Regards, Jasper Sanders. Jan 11, 1903.

NATHAN

To me, this letter, doesn't sound like someone that was suicidal.

(pause)

So, all of you wouldn't mind staying in town while I investigate JASPER's sudden death. Will you..!

Thomas

But the will just stated Milton would get everything...

NATHAN

But what you didn't notice was that my letter was signed and dated Jan. 11, 1903 while your letter was signed and dated March 12, 1902.

This information has caused the lawyer to be at a loss for words and he slumps back in his chair.

(NATHAN looks around the room)

So, let's go ahead and get things started.

CUT TO

26 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

26

MILTON sits alone under a spotlight on the stage. Separated from the group at the table across the room. NATHAN sits across from him interrogating him.

NATHAN

Let's start at the beginning. How did you become an orphan?

MILTON

My parents died of yellow fever when I was 12. I had to fend for myself. I was stealing scraps at night while everyone was asleep and sleeping in the stables during the day.

NATHAN

Go On.

Milton

This was how JASPER found me one day. I hadn't hidden myself enough that day. He had already grown suspicious of me, noticing things missing.

NATHAN

Ok.

Milton

I didn't know about his dead son. Not until years later...

(pause)

But when he found me, I was for sure thinking I was going to get a licking, but instead, what'd he do? He welcomed me into his home. Raised me like one of his own.

NATHAN

And how long ago was that?

MILTON

10 years.

NATHAN

So that makes you 22 years old?

MILTON

Yes.

NATHAN

Did you expect JASPER to leave you the bar?

Milton looks around sadly and thoughtfully

cut to

27 FLASHBACK - INT. STUDY. - NIGHT

27

JASPER is sitting down behind his desk when there's a knock at the door. The desk is messy and cluttered but somehow organized in JASPER's head.

jasper

Come in.

MILTON enters the room.

MILTON
I got your note.

Milton holds up the note and the note say's "I'm Sorry"

jasper
Milton, my boy, please come sit down
and talk with me.

MILTON sits down across the desk from him. He's going to give him some hard advice. JASPER giving him a heart to heart.

jasper
I know you're not my true kin. But
I've always raised you like you were
one of my own.

MILTON
Yes.

jasper
And I was never too hard on you. Never
beat you.

MILTON
Yes, sir.

jasper
Ever since before the Railroad decided
to make Pine Moore its own stop, and
the mayor has been buying up all the
property in town. Everyone has been
selling out and moving west but I've
held on to my piece, this bar.

MILTON
Yes, sir.

jasper
I built this bar from the ground up.
You need to go out there and find your
own thing, your own destiny. Create
something of yourself, follow your
dreams. If my dead son, JJ was alive
today. I would tell him the same
thing.

MILTON
What?

jasper

Normally I wouldn't give the bar to anyone. It's my life's work. I know I've always said you would get the bar after I died, but I decided if I were to give the bar to someone, I would want to give it to the person who needs it the most, and expected it the least. But don't worry I'll give you two months pay, in severance, when the time comes. It'll be up to you to convince them to let you stay on and keep running the place.

milton

Why would you leave the bar to someone else and not me?

jasper

I have my reasons.

cut BACK to

28 int. Saloon ballroom - Day - cont -33

28

MILTON

I was always told that JASPER would one day leave me the bar. HE and MEI LAN had always planned to get a farm and settle down away from the bar and the night life.

NATHAN

A farm you say.

NATHAN takes a note.

NATHAN

Did JASPER seem suicidal to you?

MILTON

Well, he's been really stressed out and had been acting strange.

NATHAN

Strange? How So?

MILTON

He's been manic and delusional. Always daydreaming. I think those moving pictures had rotten his brain. He was

never the same once the first one came to town. The man played it for him in the ballroom and I thought his head was going to explode.

NATHAN

Anything else you can think of?

Milton

It caused him and MEI LAN to grow distant. Maybe he was depressed about that?

NATHAN

Distant? How so?

milton

Everything here was no longer interesting to him.

NATHAN

How so?

MILTON

The only thing he cared about were those stupid moving pictures.

NATHAN

So you think this was an unhealthy obsession he was having with these motion pictures?

milton

Absolutely, he watched on so many times over and over again it caught on fire and almost burned down the whole saloon.

NATHAN

Interesting...

(pause)

Well is there anything else you think I should know?

milton

Not that I can think of.

NATHAN

Ok. I see. Well, thank you for talking to me.

CUT TO

29 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

29

MEI LAN now sits in the interrogation chair with NATHAN across from her.

NATHAN

How long have you worked here?

MEI LAN

15 years.

NATHAN

How long has your arrangement with JASPER been, more than, well, strictly business.

MEI LAN

15 years.

NATHAN

How did it begin?

MEI LAN

I stepped in the saloon with my guardian at the time. JASPER noticed me right away. I think I was the first person like me he had ever seen. He was easily mesmerized by my charm and geisha training.

NATHAN

A gaurdian?

MEI LAN

Yes, I had been sold to a wealthy american railroad planner. He brought me here on his scout of the city.

NATHAN

Go on.

MEI LAN

My guardian drank too much, boasted too much, and by the end of it all, lost me in a game of chance to JASPER.

NATHAN

What luck.

MEI LAN

JASPER freed me but suddenly needed to find something for me to do. I told him about my geisha training and that's when we decided to open the Hotel upstairs. JASPER expanded with my help. That's why I deserved something. This has been truly unfair.

NATHAN

Why is it unfair?

MEI LAN

JASPER always promised me that he and I would leave this place and settle down on our very own farm.

NATHAN

You, on a farm?

MEI LAN

This girl has always dreamed of some alone time.

NATHAN

Would you say you and JASPER had become distant?

MEI LAN

Definately not, he and I were as close as ever.

NATHAN

Do you think he had been acting strangley? Anything unusual?

MEI LAN

Nothing I can think of.

NATHAN

What do you think about the moving pictures?

MEI LAN

They bring paying customers in.

NATHAN

Well, MEI LAN thank you for your time.

CUT TO

30 int. Saloon ballroom - Day 30

RANGER BLACKWOOD sits in the interrogation seat with NATHAN CROSS across from him.

NATHAN

What can you tell me about the crime scene?

cut to

31 int. bARTENDER's study - morning 31

RANGER BLACKWOOD stands in the study looking for clues. A body is covered with a white sheet. A rope hangs from the ceiling. A candlestick without a candle sits on the desk. A half a piece of paper with a note that only says "I'm sorry." sits on the desk. Everything is pretty clean and in order.

RANGER Blackwood

Well, I guess it look's like a suicide to me?

deputy

Yes sir. Nothing to point otherwise?

RANGER Blackwood

Except anyone who knew the man would have never thought he was suicidal.

deputy

Is there anything else boss?

RANGER BLACKWOOD looks around the place one last time hoping to find some kind of clue but he get's doesn't try to hard and shrugs its off.

RANGER Blackwood

No, just get the undertaker in here so he can take care of this body.

fade out

32 int. Saloon ballroom - Day - CONT 32

RANGER Blackwood

Crime scene you mean suicide?

NATHAN

Ok, what can you tell me about where the incident took place? Where the

body of JASPER SANDERS was found?

RANGER Blackwood
Well he was hanging from a rope in his study. And there was a note on is desk.

NATHAN
What did the note say?

RANGER Blackwood
It simply read, "I'm sorry?"

NATHAN
And where is this note?

RANGER Blackwood
Its back at the station. You can come by and take a gander whenever you want.

NATHAN
Was there anything out of the ordinary? Spilled drinks, scattered papers, anything you can recall?

RANGER Blackwood
No, everything was extremely neat and in order.

NATHAN takes a note.

NATHAN
How long have you been a RANGER of this town?

RANGER Blackwood
Well I started as a deputy and worked my up. But I joined the station about 15 years ago.

NATHAN
And how long have you known JASPER SANDERS?

RANGER Blackwood
Well, let's say about 12 years. It was after his son died and he sold his farm. He started this saloon when it was only a closet with a bar.

RANGER Blackwood
As he grew, his troubles grew and
thats when we can up with our
arrangement.

NATHAN
What sort of arrangement?

RANGER Blackwood
Well, after the second time, the local
horse gang robbed him. He asked me to
help protect him so something like
this couldn't ever happen again.

NATHAN
And what did you get for these
protective services?

RANGER Blackwood
Well, a 5% share in the bar.

NATHAN
I see. And this was an amicable
relationship? Not extortion?

RANGER Blackwood
Absolutely ambilocal.

NATHAN
Thank you RANGER, for answering my
questions, as soon as I can I'll come
by and check out that note you found.

RANGER Blackwood
Great. Can't wait.

Ranger Blackwood gets up from his seat.

CUT TO

33 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

33

HARLAN SANDARS is sitting in the interrogation chair across
from NATHAN CROSS.

NATHAN
What's your name and relation to the
deceased?

HARLAN
My Name is Lieutenant HARLAN SANDERS.

(pause)
JASPER was my younger brother.

NATHAN
When was the last time you saw JASPER?

Harlan leans back in his chair to think

HARLAN
It's been almost 10 years.
(pause)
It was a few years after his son past
away and few years after he had opened
the bar. After that I went off and
joined the Calvary.

NATHAN
So you haven't seen him since?

HARLAN
No, but we've been corresponding
through letters and telegrams ever
since. He been saying in his letters
that he was doing well.

NATHAN
Are you still active in the army?

HARLAN
Yes. I've put in 19 years. I only have
1 more year to finish out my service
before I can retire and return home to
Kentucky.

NATHAN
What were you hoping to gain by coming
here today?

HARLAN
Well, you see my brother has a copy of
our family recipe and I need it for
when I retire and go home to the
family chicken farm in Kentucky.

Nathan cocks his head in thought.

NATHAN
So. you hope to get the family recipe?

HARLAN
Yes, HARLAN always knew about my plan.

He was keeping it safe for me while I was away on duty.

NATHAN

Do you think your brother was suicidal?

HARLAN

No. He was so excited about moving pictures. It's all he wrote about in his latest letters.

NATHAN

Moving pictures you say...

HARLAN

It was his new obsession.

NATHAN

Really.

HARLAN

I think he wanted to learn how to make his own.

NATHAN

Anything else out of the ordinary?

HARLAN

There's nothing else I can think of. But I sure do hope you get to the bottom of this.

(whispers)

Because like you I think it was one of them.

Harlan points at the table across the room.

NATHAN

Thank you for your time, Lieutenant SANDERS.

They stand and shake hands.

CUT TO

34 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

34

RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER now sits in the interrogation chair across from NATHAN CROSS.

NATHAN

Can you tell me about your relationship with JASPER?

RAVEN

We meet in a small Kentucky town growing up.

(pause)

He was the son of a well to do chicken farmer.

(pause)

We immediately fell in love with each other and a year later we were married. JASPER dreamed of having his own farm and that's how we ended up in TEXAS. Everything was almost perfect.

(pause)

But our son was diagnosed with polio. Life became a struggle. Little JJ needed his special medicine and when the local Cowboys robbed the train carrying the medical supplies, we didn't get the medicine in time and we lost little JJ.

RAVEN stares off into the distance as her eyes swell and she holds back a tear.

Raven

Ever since then I've been on a quest for vengeance. Hunting down every Cowboy responsible.

NATHAN

Did you catch them all?

RAVEN

All of them except the informant that is ultimately responsible.

NATHAN

And what will you do once you've gotten them all?

RAVEN

I really hadn't thought about it much. I wasn't sure I'd be able to even do it.

NATHAN

When was the last time you saw JASPER?

RAVEN

It was right before the date of the letter you just read. I stopped in right after the new year. I had passed thru town collecting the bounty for THE BOUNTY and wanted him to know how close I was to finally bringing justice to my little JJ.

NATHAN

Do you think JASPER was depressed or suicidal?

RAVEN

For years he was a shell of a man. After JJ died, I left on my quest so, he was broken. He sold the farm, bought this bar, and I think maybe his original idea was he could drown his sorrows. That's why I'd check in on him from time to time. He had adopted MILTON and had his saloon girls. It was quite the dysfunctional family. But they seemed happy for a time.

(pause)

It will have been 15 years since JJ died this spring. JASPER and I have both lived another life each since them.

(pause)

But ever since JASPER saw his first moving picture a new spark of life was now glimmering in his eye. He was mesmerized. I honestly don't think he would have killed himself. Not now, not after everything he's endured.

NATHAN

Interesting, these motion pictures keep coming up.

NATHAN takes a note.

NATHAN

RAVEN I appreciate your time and wish you well on your hunt.

raven

I think we're just about there.

CUT TO

35 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

35

MAYOR BLACKWOOD now sits in the interrogation chair across from the Nathan NATHAN CROSS.

NATHAN

How long have you been the mayor of Pine Moore?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

This is my 5th term, going on 17 years now. Pretty much since she was founded by us original settlers.

nathan

How long have you known JASPER SANDERS?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Oh gosh, I'd say over 12 years now. I was here when he first came and purchased the saloon.

nathan

I heard you had a lot to do with the new railroad stop. is that true?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Yes, I've been petitioning the governor for over 15 years trying to put this town on the map.

NATHAN

That's a lot of dedication.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

They finally listened.

NATHAN

And how much property do you now own?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

The whole downtown strip.
(pause)
Except for the saloon.

NATHAN

So is that why you're here?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Yes, I was hoping I could make the new

owner an offer they couldn't refuse.

NATHAN

Because JASPER would never sell you the bar?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Well, I definitely tried.

NATHAN

What's your plan if you do buy the saloon?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

I want to tear it down and rebuild a casino.

NATHAN

Really, that would be quite a lot of work.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Well, I've always believed in this town and I'm willing to put in that work.

NATHAN

When was the last time you saw JASPER?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

The night before he was found dead. I think everyone in town saw JASPER that night. It was quite the party.

NATHAN

Do you think he was suicidal?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

He seemed perfectly fine to me. Stubborn as always.

NATHAN

Why do you think he wouldn't sell his property to you?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

I think it was his pride, since he put so much time into building this up. It wouldn't let him see the future that was coming whether he liked it or not.

NATHAN

Would you say you and JASEPR were not friendly and actually despised each other?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

We were not friends. But we were not enemies.

NATHAN

You don't think it's suspicious that you're here to try buy the bar now that he's dead?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Are you saying you think I killed JASPER sanders?

(pause)

That's absurd.

NATHAN

What's absurd, is your lack of empathy. Thank you, MAYOR BLACKWOOD for your time.

CUT TO

36 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

36

Everyone is sitting around like at the reading of the will.

NATHAN

Ok. Everyone, please do not leave town. This is still an open investigation. Isn't that right RANGER?

RANGER Blackwood

(Looks around.)

Umm...Yes, that's right.

(more confidently)

Until we get to the bottom of this everyone needs to stay put.

NATHAN leans over to the LAWYER.

NATHAN

I'm going to need to gather some more information.

RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER stands up and shoots the LAWYER dead

to the surprise of everyone.

cut to

37 ext. campsite - FLASHBACK

37

RAVEN the BOUNTY HUNTER sits at a campfire with a cowboy that doesn't realize he is her bounty. They are sharing a meal together. Both hold bowls and spoons. BOUNTY has been boasting about how they robbed a train. RAVEN sits listening intently like a love-struck teenager.

BOUNTY

... So we left everyone else tied up and took off with the loot. It was a pretty good score. Well, I mean the medicine was hard to sell, and I think a lot spoiled before we could ever sell it all. But in the end, we came out great.

raven

Wow, I really can't believe I'm sitting here with one of the actual robbers of the Javalina Run Train Robbery. I have so many questions like... Where did you get your tip from? What's it like to rob a train?

Acting like a total fan girl.

BOUNTY

We get tips from all kinds of places. You always got to be on the lookout for a good tip.

Talking like he's talking to a rookie recruit that he supports.

BOUNTY

But this particular time we had an inside scoop. This lawyer named THOMAS WINTERS gave us everything. Times, maps, itineraries, even a copy of the manifest. We knew what we wanted and that's what we got.

He leans in like he's winning this girl over and he's going to make his move. Right before he fully goes for it a pistol appears between them, RAVEN holding it. Her flirty girl attitude disappears, and the rugged bounty hunter emerges.

RAVEN

And you're sure he was a LAWYER, and his name was THOMAS WINTERS?

BOUNTY is in shock but realizes quickly that he's got a gun in his face.

BOUNTY

Yes, like I said THOMAS WINTERS... why do you care so much?

RAVEN

You know that medicine you casually mentioned... Yeah my son needed that medicine and he died because you assholes robbed that train.

BOUNTY realizes who she is now.

BOUNTY

Wait a second, you're not RAVEN SANDERS are you?

RAVEN

It's . Just . RAVEN .

BOUNTY

Yeah I've heard of you. Hunting down all the members of my old gang...

He looks down at his bowl defeated. RAVEN smiles. She knows she has him dead to rights. Suddenly he throws it at her face, knocking the gun out of her hand. He runs and gets on his horse and rides off. RAVEN scrambles to grab the gun and rides after him.

cut to

38 int. Saloon ballroom - Day - CONT

38

The LAWYER falls out of his chair dead. Everyone in the room reacts to the sudden execution.

RANGER Blackwood

What the hell are you doing?

RAVEN slaps down another wanted poster. With a question mark for a face.

RAVEN

The last member of the gang told me

the name of their informant. And guess who it was, none other than our very own lawyer, THOMAS WINTERS.

RAVEN spits on the dead body of the LAWYER

RAVEN
Now I'm finally free...

RANGER Blackwood
Well, I'll be damned...

NATHAN
Like I said. No one leave town.
Dismissed.

milton
Let me get the girls to clean this up.

fade out

TITLE CARD: PART TWO

fade out

39 int. study - day

39

NATHAN CROSS stands in the STUDY with MILTON. Everything is the same since the body was cleared. NATHAN starts to look around.

MILTON
I've haven't been able to come in here since.

NATHAN picks up the candlestick and takes a close look at it. MILTON flinches. NATHAN puts the candlestick back and keeps looking. MILTON relaxes slightly.

milton
I can't be here anymore I'm sorry.
Look around as long as you need to.

MILTON leaves NATHAN alone in the STUDY. Now that he is gone, NATHAN goes to books on the wall. He starts looking for one specific book. His finger stops on the spine of "Meditations" by Marcus Aurelius.

NATHAN
The note said to look inside this book.

(pause)
 He wrote, "The Obstacle is the Way."
 (pause)
 Such a stoic.

He pulls the book out. Opens it to reveal its hollowed out and a sealed document is inside with a note on top.

NATHAN
 Found you.

NATHAN puts the envelope in his pocket and reads the note.

fade out

40 Ext. Church - DAY 40

The wooden doors of the quaint Western church swing open, and NATHAN CROSS, a seasoned INVESTIGATOR with a determined demeanor, steps inside. The sun filters through the stained-glass windows, casting colorful patterns on the dusty wooden floor.

41 int. Church - Day 41

Inside, a small group of CHILDREN, led by the SCHOOL MOM, sits attentively in the front pews, absorbed in their lesson. The SCHOOL MOM is a kind-hearted, middle-aged woman with a nurturing presence.

SCHOOL MOM
 (smiling warmly)
 Alright, children, that's all for today. Don't forget your homework on multiplication tables.

The children start gathering their books and belongings, chattering with excitement as the lesson concludes. Nathan approaches the SCHOOL MOM, tipping his hat.

NATHAN CROSS
 Ma'am, I hope I ain't disturbin' the youngins' education.

SCHOOL MOM
 (kindly)
 Not at all, mister. How can I help you today?

Nathan's eyes scan the room, lingering on the young faces.

NATHAN CROSS

I'm lookin' for information about a man named Jasper Sanders. Owned the saloon in town.

SCHOOL MOM

(thoughtful)

Jasper Sanders, you say? Well, I don't frequent the saloon much, you see. I try to keep the children away from such places.

Nathan nods, respecting her values.

NATHAN CROSS

I understand, ma'am. But anythin' you might've heard or know about him could be of help.

The SCHOOL MOM considers for a moment, her expression kind but unsure.

SCHOOL MOM

I can't rightly say I knew much about him. Jasper kept to his own, and I to mine. Besides, my focus has always been these little ones.

NATHAN CROSS

(appreciative)

That's commendable, ma'am. But you see, Jasper's passed on under mysterious circumstances. It's important to gather as much as I can about him.

The SCHOOL MOM's expression softens with sympathy.

SCHOOL MOM

I wish I could be of more help, but I just don't know much about his affairs.

SCHOOL MOM begins to gather her belongings.

SCHOOL MOM

If you'll excuse me, I need to get these children back home.

Nathan tips his hat once more as the SCHOOL MOM leaves the church ushering the children out ahead of her. As the doors

swing closed behind her, the REVEREND, a wise and African American figure, enters.

REVEREND

(gentle)

Good day, Mr. Cross. How can I assist you?

Nathan and the REVEREND move to sit down in the pews, the afternoon light bathing the church in a warm glow.

42 int. Church - Day - Cont'd

42

NATHAN CROSS sits in the pews of the church with the PREACHER.

NATHAN

Thank you for speaking with me, preacher.

PREACHER

No problem my child.

NATHAN

I was hoping you could tell me about JASPER SANDERS. It's always been know that PREACHERS know everything that goes on in a town.

PREACHER

He was a simple man. He wasn't one to come to the church much. Not since his son died. He kind of lost faith. Well, at least for awhile.

NATHAN

You don't say? What do you think caused this change?

PREACHER

JASPER came by just last week for confession.

NATHAN

Can you tell me what he confessed?

PREACHER

Oh no, only he and God will ever know what was said.

NATHAN

But would you have suspected he was suicidal? Was he crying out for help?

PREACHER

Not at all. It seemed he was invigorated with life. Sounded like he was making big changes.

NATHAN

Anything else you can tell me?

PREACHER

He had a fresh shave that day. Maybe the barber will be able to help you more. You know lots of people get chatty with the barber.

NATHAN

Thank you, PREACHER, that sounds like an excellent idea.

preacher

Go with God.

NATHAN gets up and exits the church.

fade out

43 int. barber shop - day

43

The interior of the small, dimly lit WESTERN BARBER SHOP is adorned with faded photographs and shelves lined with various tonics and razors. A lone BARBER, skilled but rough around the edges, is at work. He's also the town's DENTIST, as suggested by the dental chair in the corner.

NATHAN CROSS, the INVESTIGATOR, steps inside, a determined expression on his face. The sound of clippers and the lingering scent of shaving soap fill the air.

NATHAN CROSS

(politely)

Good day, sir.

The BARBER glances up from his work, revealing a tooth extraction in progress. A CUSTOMER winces as the BARBER deftly removes a GOLD BACK TOOTH.

BARBER

Be with ya in just a minute.

The Barber holds the tooth up to the light.

The CUSTOMER stands from the chair with a pained expression on his face, and his hand to his jaw.

customer
(mumbles through the pain)
Thank you.

The Barber pockets the tooth in his vest as the customer leaves the shop.

BARBER
(gruffly)
Howdy. Take a seat.

Nathan settles into the well-worn barber's chair, the leather creaking beneath him. The BARBER grabs a hot towel and begins preparing for a shave.

BARBER
(curious)
What brings you here, stranger?

NATHAN CROSS
(leaning back)
I've been askin' 'round town about a man named Jasper Sanders. Ran the saloon.

The BARBER, focused on his work, continues to prepare the shave.

BARBER
Jasper, huh? What's it to ya?

Nathan watches as the BARBER deftly heats the shaving cream and begins applying it to his face.

NATHAN CROSS
(casual)
Just tryin' to piece some things together. Heard he might've had some troubles lately.

The BARBER, his razor poised in mid-air, as he regards Nathan suspiciously.

BARBER
Town's got no shortage of gossip.
What's in it for me if I help you?

NATHAN CROSS

(smiling)

Well, I reckon you just got yourself a fine piece of gold a minute ago. How 'bout we consider this a fair trade?

The BARBER grumbles but starts to shave Nathan's beard with a practiced hand.

BARBER

Ain't much to say, really. Jasper kept to himself mostly.

nathan

So, the PRECHER told me JASPER SANDERS had a clean shave last week.

BARBER

Oh, yes. JASPER was always a regular. He's been here longer than I have been in this town. It's a damn shame what happened. Kinda hard to believe.

NATHAN

Did he say anything to you that would make you think he was suicidal?

BARBER

Not at all. All he ever talked about was these new motion pictures. Ever since the first one played; he was mesmerized.

NATHAN

Really?

BARBER

Oh yeah. He even joked about how he was going to leave it all behind and move to California to become an actor slash director. Whatever that means.

Nathan listens attentively as the sharp blade glides across his face.

NATHAN

An actor/director? You don't say?

BARBER

Yeah, it was nice to see him alive again.

NATHAN

What do you mean?

BARBER

Well, he was always just a shell of a man after his son died. He was just kind of coasting by for years. But once he saw those moving pictures. It was like he lit up inside again.

The BARBER leans in closer to Nathan, their eyes meeting in the mirror.

BARBER

But I'd be careful pokin' around that hornet's nest, Mr. Cross. Some folks in this town don't take kindly to questions.

With that, the BARBER finishes the shave, and Nathan, now clean-shaven, sits up, pondering the information.

NATHAN CROSS

(thoughtful)

I appreciate your words of caution. Now, you got any idea where I might find these "unsavory types" that don't like questions?

The BARBER hesitates for a moment

BARBER

low voice

Might wanna start with that lawyer fella, Thomas Winters. Rumor has it he's into all the dark dealings in this town.

Nathan nods in acknowledgment, already knowing Thomas Winters was just shot dead earlier that day.

NATHAN

I guess news doesn't travel that fast in this town.

BARBER

What?

NATHAN

You don't say.

NATHAN

Well thank you for your time and insight.

Nathan drops a few coins on the counter, and exits the barber shop, leaving the BARBER/DENTIST to his dual trade.

cut to

44 ext. barbershop - day

44

Nathan Cross steps out into the bustling street, his mind filled with new leads as he moves forward with his investigation.

fade out

45 Ext. western town - DaY

45

MEI LAN is standing on the porch next to the stairs that lead up to the Hotel above the saloon. A group of saloon girls stand at the stairs trying to entice gentlemen walking by. As RANGER BLACKWOOD approaches MEI LAN steps away so they can't be overheard.

MEI LAN

Keep working girls.

RANGER Blackwood

Howdy Madame.

MEI LAN

Don't Madame me Garrett. What are we gonna do now? There's no way Milton is going to give me what I deserve.

RANGER Blackwood

I don't know yet MEI, but I swear to you we'll get out of this town. get our own little farm. Just like you've always wanted.

MEI LAN

How are we gonna do that? You're father the mayor is never going to let you leave his side. You know the only way was to sell him the bar. I was still working JASPER to leave me everything. UGhh.

RANGER Blackwood
 Don't worry MEI, I'll figure
 everything out. It's going to be right
 as rain.

MEI LAN
 Ohh Garrett. My plans were so close. I
 was waiting for just the right moment.

RANGER Blackwood
 Don't worry darling. Garrett will fix
 everything.

MEI LAN
 Ever since JASPER fell in love with
 motion pictures and out of love with
 the idea of settling down I've done
 everything I can try and change his
 mind.

RANGER Blackwood
 I just don't understand why someone
 would want to move to California to
 make moving pictures. How is that a
 job?

MEI LAN
 It's all that damn RAVEN's fault. Her
 coming close to finishing her revenge.
 Making JASPER feel guilty and wanting
 to find something new to do with his
 life.

RANGER Blackwood
 Ahh, RAVEN, yes...

RANGER BLACKWOOD strokes his chin thoughtfully.

MEI LAN
 JASPER raised MILTON like he was his
 own son. And by doing this I think he
 satisfied that need to go settle down.
 Drowning all my hopes and dreams with
 it. Finally being able to escape this
 god forsaken town.

Ranger Blackwood
 And my overbearing father.

MEI LAN
 Yes that too. He can have this town.

RANGER Blackwood
So what do we do about MILTON?

MEI LAN
Don't worry MELODY and HARMONY will
take care of that. Trust me.

RANGER Blackwood
Ok fine. But this NATHAN CROSS guy
poking around really unnerves me. I
dont want him digging to deep.

MEI LAN
He'll be gone soon enough. And little
does he know.

RANGER Blackwood
Yes. And let's keep it that way. Well
I have to help prepare for tonight at
my dad's for dinner. We should be
having some special guests. I'll let
you know what happens.

fade out

46 int. mercantile shop - day

46

NATHAN CROSS enters the Mercantile Shop and approaches the
counter. A country lady is purchasing some bread and other
groceries. She's digging through her purse searching for more
money.

Lady
I know I have another quarter here
somewhere.

clerk
No worries my lady, just bring me back
some of that cake you bake.

The clerk slides the change off the counter into his hand and
winks at the lady. She giggles. He makes a note in his ledger
about the purchase.

lady
Absolutely honey.

The lady smiles and gathers her things to leave. Nathan
approaches the clerk.

NATHAN

Anything you recommend?

CLERK

We just got some Virginia tobacco

NATHAN

Ohh, I don't smoke...

Clerk

Some Georgia peaches?

NATHAN

Yes perfect. I'd love one.

Nathan slides him a small coin for the peach.

Clerk

Need anything else?

NATHAN

Well, my name is NATHAN CROSS, I'm a private investigator.

CLERK

I've heard of you. Didn't you solve the case of the exploding outhouses?

NATHAN

Well I guess my reputation gets around. I was hired by Jasper Sanders to investigate his death, if he were to die unexpectedly.

clerk

Yes it really is quite shocking what happened.

NATHAN

So, you knew JASPER?

CLERK

Absolutely. I know everyone in this town. I'm kind of the only store in a 50 mile radius.

NATHAN

How long have you been working here?

CLERK

I came about a year after the town was

founded in '82 so about 20 years.

NATHAN

Did you know JASPER well?

CLERK

I'd like to think we were close.

(pause)

There have been too many occasions
where I drank away my sorrows and
sought solace in my local bartender

(pause)

Ya know for a ear to listen and maybe
get some hard but much needed advice.

NATHAN

Do you think JASPER was suicidal?

CLERK

Not at all. He was stocking up in
supplies. He was talking about going
out west to California.

nathan

Do you have a record of what he last
bought?

CLERK

Of course. Here's my ledger.

The clerk spins around and pushes forward the ledger

NATHAN

And when was his last purchase?

The clerk spins it back around and flips through it until he
finds the info he was looking for.

CLERK

The day before he died.

NATHAN

Well, that doesn't sound like
something a suicidal person would do.
Buy a bunch of supplies for a journey
west.

CLERK

No, it does not.

Nathan
Well thank you for your time.

Clerk
No problem. Good luck but be careful.
Lots of hoodlums in these parts.

NATHAN tips his hat to the clerk and leaves the Mercantile Shop.

fade out

47 EXT. HOTEL STAIRS - Day

47

NATHAN CROSS approaches the singing saloon girls as they stand on the stairs that lead up to the Hotel Rooms. Melody and Harmony lead the gaggle of girls.

NATHAN
Hello ladies.

melody
Hey there Handsome, I really do love
your accent.

Harmony
Were you looking for a good time?

NATHAN
How kind of you to say.
(To MELODY)
I'm afraid not today my dear.
(To HARMONY)

Nathan
I was hoping I could ask you ladies
some questions about the night JASPER
died?

MELODY
That's really what you're going to ask
me?

Harmony
Sure thing Mr. CROSS, what was it you
were wanting to know?

NATHAN
How long have you been working here?

Harmony
Oh my, who can remember that?

melody
5 years.

NATHAN
How was it working for JASPER here at
the saloon?

melody
Truly we work for MEI LAN, but we help
out around when needed. They always
tip us out nicely.

Harmony
Technically we used to wait tables.

nathan
What about MEI LAN, how's it working
for her?

Harmony
She's always taken care of us. We
probably couldn't survive without her.
We were runaways you see, promised to
marry twin brothers from the neighbor
clan. They were both dumb as a
doornail and there was no way MELODY,
and I were going to make that our
lives. So, we ran away together. MEI
LAN let us wait tables and work our
way up. She didn't realize we could
sing and dance for quite a while.

NATHAN
Runaways you say.

He takes a note.

NATHAN
what about you MELODY what how do you
think it is working for MEI LAN.

melody
She runs a tight ship.

Thats all she says, and he takes another note.

NATHAN
What about JASPER and MEI LAN? What
was their relationship like?

melody
They've been running this place
together for years.

Harmony
If Milton was like a son, we would be
like the daughters of this misfit
family.

melody
A hyper dysfunctional family.

NATHAN
Interesting. And where were you the
night JASPER died?

CUT TO

48 int. Saloon - Night 48

HARMONY the Saloon girl and MEI LAN the MADAME, carry out a
drunken RANGER BLACKWOOD. JASPER closes the door behind them
and shuts down the bar.

fade out

49 EXT. HOTEL STAIRS - Day - cont 44 49

Harmony
I was helping MEI LAN get RANGER
BLACKWOOD TO BED. He had drunk a
little too much that night.

NATHAN
Does that happen a lot?

Harmony
Carrying Garrett home? No, he was
celebrating, MEI LAN was helping him.

NATHAN
Celebrating?

harmony
Yeah, something about how he just
bought a ranch to settle down on.

NATHAN takes a note

NATHAN
And after you got him to his bed?

melody
Well I left MEI LAN there and headed
back to my quarters at the hotel.

NATHAN
You left MEI LAN there with the
RANGER?

melody
Oh yes, we're a very close town.
(she winks at him suggestively.)

NATHAN takes a note that MEI LAN and RANGER are having an
affair.

Nathan
That's all?

Melody
Well I bumped into HARMONY in the
hallway on my way to my room but after
that I went straight to bed and was
out cold.

Nathah
She said she ran into you in the
hallway, HARMONY, where were you
coming from?

50 INT. BallRoom - NIGHT

50

MELODY, one of the singing saloon girl sisters, has forgotten
her boa and has come back into an empty ballroom to retrieve
it. It's hanging on the microphone on the stage. She see's it
across the room and walks over, then takes it off. She
pretends the room is full of people

melody
I appreciate you all for coming.
You've been a wonderful audience.

MELODY starts to take a bow and when she leans over, she
hears two men arguing as if it's a sound coming from her
invisible crowd. She grabs the boa and runs off the stage.

cut BACK to

51 EXT. HOTEL STAIRS - Day - cont 46

51

Harmony
I had left my boa back on the stage
and had gone back to get it.

nathan
And you didn't see anyone else?

harmony
I didn't see anyone else. But I did
hear two men arguing.

Nathah
Can you say where it was coming from?

Harmony
I'm not really sure.

Nathah
Do you think it was from JASPER's
study?

Harmony
I mean I guess it could have been, but
it could have been two drunk cowboys
outside suga.

Nathan
Well ladies I appreciate your time.
This was truly enlighteneing.

He leaves them to get back to work.

fade out

52 EXT. UNDERTAKER - DAY

52

Nathan approaches the UNDERTAKER. He is trying to move his
coffins around for his display. He notices Nathan and turns
into sales pitch mode.

UNDERTAKER
Hello there my fine gentleman, are you
in the market for some slightly used
coffins?
(pause)
Do you need a bin for your next of
kin?
(pause)
Please call me Stan.

The undertaker reaches out and shakes his hand.

NATHAN
What? Slightly used?

UNDERTAKER

Most of my stock had only been used for a few hours, and had not been touched by a living soul.

NATHAN

I think I'm going to pass on the coffins but I was curious if you could tell me about Jasper Sanders?

UNDERTAKER

Why are you so interested?

NATHAN

Jasper hired me incase he were to die, well, unexpectedly.

UNDERTAKER

Well sir, it's kind of hard to remember. There have been a lot of bodies coming through. We just got Mr. Winters our local lawyer.

Nathan

I need to know everything you can tell me about the body.

Nathan understands a salesman and hands him two gold coins. This is exactly what Stan needed to change his tone and spill his guts.

UNDERTAKER

Certainly, sir. What would you like to know?

Nathan

Well, it was made to look like he hung himself, but I have my doubts. What do you think?

UNDERTAKER

Well, I can tell you that there was a bruise and a cut on the back of his head. That could have been from a blow of some kind.

Nathan

And what about any signs of struggle?

UNDERTAKER

I couldn't find any evidence of a

struggle or fight. There was nothing under his fingernails, on his knuckles or on his wrists to suggest that.

Nathan
That's odd. And what about the smell?

UNDERTAKER
Well, he smelled too nice, like someone washed the blood out of his hair. That's not something you typically see in a hanging.

Nathan
(nodding)
I have a feeling there's more to this than meets the eye.

UNDERTAKER
Are you sure you don't want a coffin?

FADE OUT

53 EXT. BANK - DAY

53

The Bounty Hunter climbs the steps to the entrance of the bank. Just as she reaches the top step, she is intercepted by a well-dressed man. It is MAYOR BLACKWOOD, one of the town's most powerful figures.

Mayor BLACKWOOD
Bounty Hunter, I've been looking for you. I have a proposition for you.

raven
What kind of proposition?

Mayor BLACKWOOD
I understand you've been quite successful in your line of work.
(pause)
I could use someone with your skills.
(pause)
I'm expanding my operations and I think you'd make a great addition to my team.

raven
Thanks, but I prefer to work solo.

RAVEN starts to walk away but the Mayor cuts her off.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

I understand that, but you should also understand the importance of having friends in high places. If you don't take me up on my offer, things could get difficult for your friend, Milton. He's just inherited the bar, and I have reason to believe he may not be interested in selling it. That could cause problems for everyone involved.

raven

What kind of problems?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Let's just say, I don't think it would be in anyone's best interest to find out. I'm having dinner at my house tonight. I'd like to continue this conversation over a good meal. What do you say, will you join me?

raven

I'm not interested in dining with you.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

I understand. But consider this an invitation, not a request. I'll expect you tonight. I'll send my carriage.

MAYOR BLACKWOOD tips his hat and walks away, leaving RAVEN with a sense of unease. She heads into the bank, determined to collect her rewards and get out of town as soon as possible.

FADE OUT

54 EXT. BANK - DAY

54

Raven is pocketing her money as she is leaving the bank. She walks over to the ranger station to collect her horse and leave town. Nathan Cross approaches as she's mounting the horse.

NATHAN

You wouldn't be leaving so soon would you?

RAVEN

I don't want anything to do with this town. I'm finally free.

NATHAN

What if I were to tell you it was in
your better interest to stay?

(pause)

I still have unfinished instructions
from Jasper regarding you.

Nathan sees the effect of Jasper's name on her face. He tries
to let this info sink in.

raven

What should I do for now?

NATHAN

What did the mayor say?

RAVEN

He demanded I come to dinner and work
for him.

NATHAN

Well I'd say do that. It can only help
with my investigation. All the info I
gathered is starting to come together
but I'm still missing some key pieces.

Raven

I'm only doing this for Jasper.

fade out

55 INT. Dining Room - Night

55

RAVEN walks into the dining room, where MAYOR BLACKWOOD and
his son, RANGER BLACKWOOD, are already seated. The room is
lit by candlelight, and a spread of fine cuisine is laid out
before them.

RAVEN

(Taking her seat)

Thank you for the invitation,
gentlemen.

MAYOR BLACKWOOD

(Smiling)

Of course, Raven. We're always happy
to have a guest at our table.

RANGER Blackwood

(Adding)

Especially one as beautiful as

yourself.

Raven smiles politely but is clearly not interested in the flattery.

RAVEN

(Getting to the point)

So, what is it that you wanted to discuss with me this evening?

MAYOR BLACKWOOD

(Leaning forward)

I wanted to tell you about our town's history and the exciting future we have in store. We've made a deal with the train company that's going to change everything for us.

RAVEN

(Intrigued)

Really? Do tell.

MAYOR BLACKWOOD

(Proudly)

Well, we've convinced the train company to divert their main route through our town. It'll bring in a lot of business and opportunities for our residents. And at the same time profitable for my team of cowboys and outlaws, like yourself, that pay their tributes.

(pause)

And its run that way since I help found this town over 20 years ago.

RANGER Blackwood

(Chiming in)

And my father has kindly offered you a job to help us ensure the success of this venture.

Raven's expression hardens as she realizes the truth behind the Mayor's words.

RAVEN

(Stiffly)

I see. And is this the same cowboys that resulted in the death of my son? The train robbery that you and your cowboy gang were responsible for?

MAYOR BLACKWOOD

(Surprised)

Ah, I see my reputation precedes me.

RAVEN

(Angrily)

You bet it does. I'll be leaving now.

Raven rises from the table, holding in her anger.

RAVEN

(Quietly)

But rest assured, I'll be watching
you.

With that, Raven leaves the dining room, her thoughts focused on her plan for revenge.

Fade out.

56 Ext. Saloon - Night 56

Establishing shot of the Saloon. It's going off.

57 int. Saloon into ballroom - Night 57

Full montage of the saloon. The place is jumping. Saloon is in full swing. Poker is being played. People are drinking at the bar. Someone comes up and orders a drink. A continuous shot of the entire saloon that transitions into the ballroom. People sit at tables. the shot ends with The SINGING SALOON girls performing on stage.

fade to black

58 int. Saloon ballroom - NIGHT 58

The TWIN SALOON GIRLS perform a duet on stage to a full crowd.

fade out

TITLE CARD: PART THREE

59 int. Saloon - Dawn 59

RANGER BLACKWOOD enters the bar, followed by MEI LAN, to find the crime scene. MILTON is dead what appears to be from poison. He is hunched over with his face down on the bar. head to one side. foam at the mouth. glass in one hand. bottle on the bar next to him.

RANGER BLACKWOOD
When did you find him?

MEI LAN
When I got up this morning. About a
half hour ago.

RANGER BLACKWOOD walks over and inspects the bottle. It's the
private reserve from a shelf that says DO NOT TOUCH.

RANGER BLACKWOOD
Oh no, this is JASPER's private
reserve.

MEI LAN
Yeah so...

RANGER BLACKWOOD
Well, I gave him this bottle as a
present when he went into business
together.

MEI LAN
You mean extorting him for protection.

RANGER BLACKWOOD
Potatoe, po-tat-toe.

MEI LAN shrugs it off annoyed.

MEI LAN
Who is going to care about that?

MEI LAN playing dumb.

RANGER BLACKWOOD
People will think I poisoned him.

mei lan
No one is going to think that.

She smirks when he's not looking because she knows they will.

RANGER BLACKWOOD
Since JASPER died and he inherited the
bar I guess he finally was able to try
it, since JASPER wouldn't let anyone
have any, and he only drank it on the
most special occasions. And never let
anyone have any.

MEI LAN
I've had it.

The RANGER looks at her side eyed like he doesnt believe her.

RANGER BLACKWOOD
Really? When?

MEI LAN
It was our 5th anniversary.

RANGER BLACKWOOD
Well, I better go tell the undertaker.
Can you deal with NATHAN CROSS. He's
been nothing but trouble since he got
here.

MEI LAN
It's already happening.

RANGER BLACKWOOD
Should have known.

fade out

60 EXT. CAMPFIRE Kitchen - DAY

60

COOKIE stands there with a roast on a spit this time. He's
glazing the dead animal. NATHAN cross approaches.

NATHAN
Hello, there, chef.

COOKIE
Everyone calls me Cookie.

Nathan
Okay Cookie. My name is Nathan Cross,
and I was going around town about the
night JASPER SANDERS died. Any chance
you heard or saw anything unusual that
night.

Cookie
It was a pretty standard night for
nights around these parts.

61 EXT. CAMPFIRE Kitchen

61

COOKIE the chef is standing over a large pot on a fire. As he
stirs the pot he hears two men yelling.

cookie
 What in thearnation...?

He shrugs it off and continues to stir his pot.

fade to black

62 EXT. CAMPFIRE Kitchen - DAY - CONT

62

(grabs chin to think)
 I was making my family gumbo recipe
 that night. And nothing out of the
 ordinary, no shootings or killings or
 big winnings. Just a lot of
 celebrating.

NATHAN
 Go on.

cookie
 So, as I went to check on it, I heard
 two men arguing. Didn't think much of
 it. Men in this town argue all the
 time.

NATHAN
 How long have you been cooking for the
 Bar and Hotel?

cookie
 Oh about 8 years now. I was pushing
 cattle across the country and broke my
 leg. I ended up here cooking until I
 had healed and recovered. However, I
 realized I enjoyed cooking more than
 cattle driving.

NATHAN
 Can you tell me anything about JASPER
 SANDERS?

cookie
 He was a fine man. Raising that
 orphan. But also a fun guy. He's place
 has been heard of all the way in New
 Orleans.

NATHAN
 Really?

cookie
 He's had all kinds of entertainment here in the Ballroom. Theater actors, traveling bands, some strange dancing on toes, he even had some singer that just kept screaming in what they said was Italian. And even those moving pictures. People can't seem to ever get enough entertainment out here.

NATHAN
 Do you think JASPER was suicidal?

COOKIE
 No, not really. He didn't talk to me much about his personal life.

NATHAN
 Anything else you can think of?

Cookie
 No sir . I'm sorry I'm not much help.

NATHAN
 Aww no you've been wonderful, thank you for your time. This smells delicious.

fade out

63 int. billard room - day

63

NATHAN CROSS stands in the billiards rooms questioning the two locals playing.

LOCAL 1
 Its a shame JASPER killed himself.

Local 2
 Never seemed the type.

LOCAL 1
 Not after living with having a dead son for all these years.

Local 2
 Agreed.

NATHAN
 How long you guys been coming here?

LOCAL 1

I've been here about 4 years.

Local 2

A little more than 3 for me.

NATHAN

Did you see or hear anything unusual the night JASPER allegedly killed himself?

LOCAL 2

Allegedly?

LOCAL 1

You don't think he killed himself?

Nathan

I'm not ready to rule out there was no foul play.

Local 1

That was a wild night at the saloon.

local 2

Almost the entire town was there.

LOCAL 1

I passed out right there in the corner. Woke up to the Johnson's dog licking my face.

Points to an area on the ground in the corner that night.

Nathan

What about you sir?

Local 2

I rented a room at the Hotel that night...

(he winks)

LOCAL 1

You dog!

nathan

All right gents I won't take up any more of your time.

NATHAN tips his brim and leaves the two locals.

fade out

64 INT. Library - DAY

64

NATHAN CROSS, a seasoned Nathan, is browsing through the shelves in search of a book. The librarian approaches him.

Librarian

Can I help you find anything, sir?

NATHAN CROSS

Yes, actually. I'm looking for a book about poisons.

Librarian

Ah, we have several books on that subject. May I ask what it's for?

NATHAN CROSS

(evasively)

Just a personal interest.

Librarian

(suspiciously)

If you don't mind me asking, sir, is this related to the recent murder in town?

NATHAN CROSS

(taken aback)

As a matter of fact, it is. I'm investigating the case. Do you know much about the suspects?

Librarian

I'll do my best, Mr. Cross. What would you like to know?

NATHAN CROSS

I'm curious about Mei Lan, the beautiful singer at the saloon. What do you know about her?

Librarian

Mei Lan is a regular here. She often comes to the library to read about music and practice her singing. She's very talented, but she keeps to herself and doesn't say much.

NATHAN

What about Milton, the bartender's adopted son and assistant?

Librarian

Milton is a hard worker, but he's always been jealous of his father's success. He wanted to inherit the bar, but he was never going to be able to do it on his own.

NATHAN CROSS

And what about Raven, the former wife of the bartender and a bounty hunter?

Librarian

Raven is a determined woman. She's been hunting down bandits for years, and she's relentless in her pursuit of justice. She's still grieving the loss of her son to polio and the medicine that never made it to him.

NATHAN

What can you tell me about the mayor, a man with a lot of power and influence?

Librarian

The mayor is a businessman, but he's also a bit of a shady character. He's been buying up all the land in Pine Moore, and there's talk that he wants to turn it into a casino once the railroad comes through.

NATHAN

And what about Ranger Blackwood, the local RANGER?

Librarian

Ranger Blackwood is a good man. He's always been fair and just, but he's also a bit of a ladies' man. He's been courting Mei Lan for some time now, but she doesn't seem interested.

NATHAN

And finally, the singing saloon girls. What do you know about them?

Librarian

The singing saloon girls are a bit of a wild bunch. They're always up for a good time and they love to sing and

dance. They're also known to be a bit flirtatious and to have their way with the men in town.

She reaches over to the bookshelf and removes a book on poisonous plants. She hands it to Nathan.

Librarian

I think this is what you're looking for. Poisonous Botany.

NATHAN

Wow. Thank you for your time, ma'am. You've been most helpful and some full of knowledge.

Librarian

Of course, Mr. Cross. Let me know if there's anything else I can do for you.

NATHAN nods and dives into the book. Looking for his next clue.

FADE OUT.

65 INT. CONSERVATORY - DAY

65

NATHAN CROSS enters the conservatory and approaches a plant specialist.

NATHAN CROSS

Good morning, I was hoping you could answer a few questions for me. I'm particularly interested in flowers that are poisonous.

PLANT SPECIALIST

Of course, I would be happy to help. What would you like to know?

NATHAN CROSS

I've been reading that some flowers contain dangerous toxins. Can you tell me more about that?

PLANT SPECIALIST

Yes, it's true. Some flowers contain potent toxins that can be harmful or even fatal if ingested. For example, the castor oil plant contains ricin, a

highly toxic substance.

NATHAN CROSS

I see. And what about Mei Lan? I've heard she comes to the conservatory quite often. Does she have any interest in these types of plants?

PLANT SPECIALIST

Mei Lan is one of our regulars, yes. She is very interested in horticulture and is especially drawn to exotic and rare species of plants. I'm not sure if she has any specific interest in toxic plants, but I wouldn't be surprised if she does. She is quite knowledgeable about all sorts of flora.

NATHAN CROSS

Thank you for your help. I appreciate your time.

PLANT SPECIALIST

You're welcome. If there's anything else I can assist you with, just let me know.

FADE OUT.

66 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

66

NATHAN CROSS sits at a dining table with the MAYOR and RANGER BLACKWOOD. They are drinking and chatting, with a hint of tension in the air.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

So, Mr. Cross, I've heard that you're looking into the death of the bartender.

NATHAN CROSS

Yes, that's correct.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Well, I hope you understand the sensitivity of the situation. A lot of people in town rely on the saloon for their livelihood. We don't want any more trouble or negative attention.

NATHAN CROSS

I understand your concerns, Mayor. But I was hired to get to the bottom of this, and I intend to do just that.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

I see.

(pauses)

Well, perhaps we can come to some sort of agreement. A little extra incentive for you to wrap things up quickly and keep things quiet.

NATHAN raises an eyebrow, intrigued.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Nathan, let me be frank. This investigation of yours is causing quite a stir in our little town. People are getting nervous and it's not good for business. I'm willing to make it worth your while if you just drop it and leave Pine Moore.

NATHAN CROSS

And what sort of incentive are you offering, Mayor?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Let's just say that you'll be well taken care of if you choose to close this case and move on.

RANGER BLACKWOOD watches the exchange, his expression unreadable.

NATHAN CROSS

I'm afraid I can't accept your offer, Mayor. My job is to uncover the truth, not to sweep things under the rug. I was hired by JASPER SANDERS and I intend to see this through to the end.

RANGER BLACKWOOD

My father is being generous, Cross. You don't want to make enemies here. You're not from around these parts and you don't understand how things work.

NATHAN CROSS

Enemies can be useful in uncovering

the truth. I've learned a lot from people who didn't want to talk. Tell me, what do you know about the deceased's ex-wife, the bounty hunter?

RANGER BLACKWOOD

I know she's been hunting down bandits for years, but what does that have to do with anything?

NATHAN CROSS

It could be a motive for murder. She's the kind of person who wouldn't hesitate to get her hands dirty for the sake of justice.

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Now hold on a minute, Nathan. We don't want to jump to any conclusions. There are plenty of other suspects in this case.

NATHAN CROSS

That's true, but I have to start somewhere. Thank you for the drink, gentlemen. I think I've finished my investigation and I'm gonna need everyone to come back to the saloon.

NATHAN CROSS finishes his drink and gets up from the table, leaving the MAYOR and RANGER BLACKWOOD behind.

FADE OUT

67 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

67

All parties are back at the table where the will was read. HARLAN, RAVEN, MEI LAN, and RANGER BLACKWOOD sit on one side and THE Nathan NATHAN CROSS sits on the other side.

NATHAN

I appreciate you all for coming back. I wanted you all to know that I have completed my investigations behind this bazar string of murders. Yes murders. Whether accidental, or on purpose, people did die.

RANGER BLACKWOOD

Really, MR CROSS. This should be interesting.

NATHAN

Well to begin RANGER BLACKWOOD this tragedy is not that simple. I need to start from the begging and explain the series of events that led up to these unfortunate losses of life.

NATHAN

JASPER sanders a successful barkeep and saloon owner has become infatuated with moving pictures.

(pause)

I'm not sure why and I don't think they will be more than a fad.

68 int. ballroom - night - flashback 68

JASPER SANDERS is seeing a film being projected for his first time.

69 int. Saloon ballroom - Day- cont 69

NATHAN

This new love has driven him to rethink life. Around the same time the railroad has decided to make this town one of its next stops. JASPER starts getting offers and he gets this wild idea that he could maybe do something else with his life. not just settle down and become another farmer. all over again. and he knows it's rough out there raising a family and there's no way he can guarantee their safety, like he learned so hard before.

70 int. study - day 70

MAYOR BLACKWOOD and ANOTHER ARISTOCRAT are making JASPER SANDERS an offer of a bag of cash and he sits behind his desk shaking his head no.

71 int. Saloon ballroom - Day - CONT 71

NATHAN

But this is what MEI LAN has always wanted and dreamed of. She realized their dreams were no longer lining up. This is when MEI LAN started seeing

RANGER BLACKWOOD in secret.

72 int. study - day - flashback 72

MEI LAN stands in the doorway watching jasper turn down the offers and is getting upset.

73 int. Saloon ballroom - Day - CONT 73

MEI LAN

What do you mean? I was a loyal girlfriend and companion.

RANGER Blackwood

There's no reason trying to hide it anymore. He's dead. Who cares. He never knew.

NATHAN

Oh on the contrary, that's where you're wrong. JASPER had caught on to your infidelities long ago. Both were noted in your folders he sent me. Like I said JASPER was always the smartest man in this town. But he trusted the wrong people.

RANGER Blackwood

Just because we were having an affair doesn't mean we killed JASPER... right?

NATHAN

Please, let me go on.

Nathan

Let's skip over JASPER and talk about the poisoned bottle. It sounds like JASPER had not drank any of it since last New Years. So sometime between New Years and yesterday the bottle had to have been poisoned. Since the only people that truly have access to it would be MILTON and the SINGING SALOON sisters. And we All know MILTON didn't poison himself after inheriting the bar. MEI LAN knew RANGER BLACKWOOD gave JASPER this bottle and people would suspect him. And who does all of MEI LAN's bidding? Melody and Harmony.

74 int. Saloon - Night - flashback 74

MELODY keeps a look out as HARMONY poisons the bottle of special reserve whisky that has a big sign "DO NOT TOUCH"

75 int. Saloon ballroom - Day - CONT 75

melody

MEI LAN said nobody would ever know it was us.

Harmony

She said she was going to make our lives a living hell if we didn't do it.

NATHAN

So, there you have that mystery explained. The SISTERS were forced into spiking the bottle.

NATHAN

MEI LAN has wanted nothing more than to escape this town for a long time. The bar would have been hers until JASPER adopted MILTON. MILTON was JASPER's focus after his son died. He treated MILTON like the son he never got to have. She knew people would suspect RANGER BLACKWOOD and help free her from having to be with him.

RANGER Blackwood

You no good for nothing...

RANGER BLACKWOOD gets up but the other men step into restrain him. RAVEN gives him a look that puts him in his place. He sits back down

NATHAN

So...

cut to

76 int. Saloon ballroom - Day 76

NATHAN

So that brings us back to the scene of the crime. The MURDER of JASPER SANDERS.

NATHAN

When investigating the crime scene. I noticed everything was too clean. Too orderly. Not something a man about to take his own life would surely do.

77 int. study - day - flashback

77

NATHAN CROSS is investigating the crime scene. He notices a spot of blood on the candlestick. He touches the ash tray and notices the ash isn't from smoking but from paper.

NATHAN

After speaking with the UNDERTAKER I learned JASPER had a large bump with a cut on the back of his head. And his hair smelled extremely clean. Like he had just washed it.

NATHAN

THE SINGING SALOON GIRLS heard JASPER and MILTON get into an argument. This argument was no other than JASPER telling MILTON that he wasn't going to get the bar and that he was giving it to his ex-wife RAVEN. MILTON had gone to confront JASPER about it after getting an apology note that said I'm Sorry.

78 int. study - day - flashback

78

MILTON is holding the note in his hand waving his arms arguing with JASPER.

79 int. Saloon ballroom - Day - CONT

79

NATHAN

When MILTON couldnt convince JASPER to change his mind and JASPER turned his back.

80 int. study - day - flashback

80

JASPER turns his back and rubs his temples shaking his head.

Milton looks at the candle stick

Milton's hand reaches over and grabs it.

Milton's hand goes back with the candlestick and he swings it

through the air.

81 int. Saloon ballroom - Day - CONT

81

NATHAN

MILTON grabbed the candle stick and hit JASPER over the head. Not intending to kill him, however, JASPER stumbled backwards and fell, neck landing on his chair, breaking it, killing him instantly.

82 int. study - day - flashback

82

JASPER is holding his head. He stumbles back trips falls and breaks his neck on the chair. MILTON stands there dumbfounded with the candlestick in his hand.

nATHAN (V.o.)

MILTON now realizing JASPER was dead went to make sure that it looked like a suicide. MILTON cleaned the site.

MONTAGE of MILTON cleaning up the crime scene. washes the blood out the hair, hangs the rope, moves the chair.

Washed out the blood from his hair. He hung a rope, moved the chair, and made the broken neck appear to have happened from a hanging. He snuck out the back and secured an alibi. But not before burning the most current will and leaving the 'I'm sorry" note behind.

MILTON burns the copy of the will and puts it in the ash tray. He tears the rest of the note off and leaves the only part that simply reads "I'm Sorry" on the desk to look like a suicide note. He burns the rest.

cut to

83 int. Saloon ballroom - Day - CONT

83

NATHAN

So, in my original note from JASPER, he told me where I could find the latest copy of his will, if he was killed unexpectedly. Thats where I found this Note and this sealed will hidden in his study in a false book.

NATHAN

He wrote, 'I have called all of you here because I have something important to share with you. I have been keeping a close eye on each and every one of you, and I know your deepest secrets and darkest desires. Everyone talks to the bartender. But, before I reveal my will, I want to make sure that you understand the weight of your actions and the consequences that came with them.'

NATHAN

"The reason for this decision is that RAVEN has almost hunted down all those responsible for the death of our son, and now she will no longer have a purpose. I want her to have something to keep her busy and fulfilled, and the saloon will be a perfect fit for that. I want her to know how much I care for her and her future.

NATHAN

"I the BARTENDER being in sound body and mind do hereby direct that my brother HARLAN can have the family recipe. All my other assets both liquid and otherwise, I leave in their entirety to my ex-wife, RAVEN. Signed and notarized JASPER SANDERS. January 11, 1903."

NATHAN

This will is dated later than the will that left everything to MILTON, and the will has the same date my letter was posted.

(pause)

It appears that someone or some people didn't want this will to see the light of day. Specifically... Milton.

cut to

84 int. Saloon ballroom - Day

84

NATHAN

So, I waited until now to show you all the most current will. Signed and

notarized a few months ago. Leaving everything, besides the family recipe, to his ex-wife RAVEN, for her dedication to bringing justice to their son and his memory.

Raven

I think this town is already giving me a new sense of purpose.

Raven

It wasn't until the other night when you had me over for dinner that you let slip that you had been supporting the cowboys all along and the LAWYER was your man during the time of my son's death. You made me think I'd gotten revenge with everyone, when there was always one more out there pulling all the strings in the shadows. Well Mayor? What do you say?

Mayor BLACKWOOD

Well darling, I used to think you were as dumb as can be, but it looks like you've finally figured me out.

RAVEN goes to grab her gun and end his life, but she stops.

RAVEN

I think it's time we take this outside. I think we have a score to settle.

MAYOR BLACKWOOD and RAVEN go outside for a showdown.

cut to

85 ext. Saloon - Dusk

85

MAYOR BLACKWOOD and RAVEN are standing 20 paces apart. Staring each other down. MAYOR BLACKWOOD starts doing all kinds of gun tricks and puts the gun back in his holster. They stare each other down. They are about to draw their guns when a stagecoach comes out of nowhere and runs over killing the MAYOR.

RAVEN

Well, that was unexpected.

The town rejoices. Everyone looks over at the stagecoach to

reveal a kid was driving.

KID

It was an accident I swear.

The townspeople laugh. They run over and rub the kid on the head.

RAVEN

First thing to do is appoint a new RANGER.

All the town looks over at RANGER BLACKWOOD.

RAVEN

You've got two choices here. Leave town and everything here to the people. Or stay here, forever, in the ground over there. Next to where we'll put your dad.

RANGER Blackwood

But I'm the law around these parts.

RAVEN rips off his RANGER badge.

RAVEN

Not anymore. So, what's it gonna be?

RANGER BLACKWOOD relents and runs off.

raven

If anyone see's your face around here again. You're gonna wind up six feet under.

RAVEN

MEI LAN. You're fired. Take your tone-deaf twins with you.

RAVEN

HARLAN, you want this? You've always been a man of honor.

She offer's HARLAN the RANGER badge.

HARLAN

That's mighty generous of you ma'am but I have my own destiny to follow. Kentucky is my home.

HARLAN shakes RAVEN's hand, holds up the family recipe,
kisses it, puts it away safely with extreme care.

harlan
I need to report back to my post.
Y'all stay safe now you hear.

HARLAN mounts his horse and rides out of town.

raven
Everyone inside, drinks are on me!

townspeople
YAY!

Everybody heads into the saloon to celebrate.

fade out

86 int. Saloon - Day 86

The whole town celebrates with RAVEN behind the bar serving
drinks. She's found her new life. She hangs up her guns.

87 ext. Saloon - Dusk 87

The Nathan exits the bar and mounts his horse.

cut to

88 Ext. western countryside - Dusk 88

The Nathan rides off into the sunset.

fade out

TITLE CARD: THE END

fade out

CREDITS