

EDEN RIDGE

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ABSTRACT:

In 1876, Charlene "Charlie" Willows commits a crime that forces her to flee for her life. She disguises herself as a man and rides for the sanctuary of Canada. Before she can cross the border, she stumbles upon the scene of a serial killer - before he has left. She narrowly escapes with her life, merely knocked unconscious. Waking, Charlie finds herself in the custody of the men who hunt this killer, a doctor in the Canadian Northwest Mountain Police, a French scout, and two U.S. Marshals, who enlist her help to track down the murderer. But can she stop a killer while keeping her own crimes from coming to light?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Screenplay: <i>Eden Ridge</i>	1
Contextualizing Document.....	116
Bibliography.....	154

Eden Ridge

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CYPRESS HILLS (CANADA) - DAY

Thick grey FLAKES fall, like snow, swirling and billowing in a lazy, peaceful dance. But it's not snow...

It's ash. From the BURNING remains of a log FORT. The sooty flakes settle on the grass. On the shrubs.

On the BODIES.

At least TWENTY dead. Men. Women. Children.

An ASSINIBOINE ELDER, staggers to his feet. Left arm useless. Dazed, he walks silently from one fallen body to another.

He squats next to a YOUNG WOMAN. She clutches a TARTAN blanket under one, twisted arm. The Elder takes the blanket. Strokes the back of the Young Woman's head.

A GROAN alerts him. A few paces away, a MAN lying on his belly, stirs. Grasping at nothing.

The Elder examines Man's back. Sickened.

ELDER
(in Nakota)
Lie still.

MAN
(in Nakota)
Who did this?

ELDER
(in Nakota)
It would be better that you let
yourself go into the earth.

The Man pushes himself up onto his hands and knees, his fingers digging into the earth. And now his injuries can be seen. His back decorated by four, bloody bullet holes.

MAN
(in perfect English)
Who did this?

He collapses again. The Elder begins to SING.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER IN/OUT: 1876...THREE YEARS LATER

EXT. PRAIRIE (CANADA) - NIGHT

Four MEN on horseback halt. They're grim, tired. Faced with the tiny LANGFORD HOMESTEAD squatting on shapeless prairie.

A WAGON catches up to them, but no one moves.

INT. LANGFORD HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is extravagant somehow, with its two rooms separated by a bookshelf. Clean. Orderly.

ETHAN LANGFORD (34) sits, legs outstretched, on the floor. One dog props up his arm. Another has its head on his knees. Ethan reads. Like he's seeing a new world in the pages. There's something priest-like about him.

The dogs raise their heads. Growl. Ethan eyes the door.

EXT. LANGFORD HOUSE - NIGHT

Both dogs flank Ethan at the door, hackles up. They watch a silhouette of a MAN dismounting from a horse.

ETHAN

Sorry. I'm afraid I don't see patients after sundown. Unless there's great cause for it.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

There is.

CAPTAIN JAMES MACDONALD (37) steps within the glow of the house lamps. Ethan stares at him. Takes in the SCARLET COAT and strained, haunted face.

ETHAN

Are you injured?

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

You're Inspector Ethan Langford?

Suddenly, Ethan sees the OTHER MEN approaching.

ETHAN

I go by Doctor Langford now.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

Inspector James MacDonald. There's something we need you to see.

4 EXT. LANGFORD HOUSE - NIGHT

4

The MEN linger outside Ethan's barn. They've thrown the doors open and pulled the wagon inside.

A lantern casts an orange haze over bales of hay and tack. A Cart Horse stretches its head over the stall door toward the wagon. Toward the pine box peeking beneath a hide tarp.

Ethan stops when he sees the rectangular box. A COFFIN.

ETHAN

I came here to get away from those.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

You'll have to go further, I'm afraid.

At the Inspector's nod, two men lift the lid from the box.

Ethan has prepared himself, drawn on the clinical gaze of a man detached. He assesses the box's contents while the men around him recoil. He's reading again. Reading flesh.

ETHAN

How many others?

5 EXT. DAKOTA TERRITORY (USA) - MEADOWLAND - DAY

5

Shrubs and a few stunted poplars break the monotony of dead grass. Sandpipers chatter to one another.

Two DEER graze, taking turns to scan the surroundings.

CRACK! A gunshot fires and spits back half a dozen echoes.

The lucky Deer bolts. The other tries to follow, but its hind legs don't work. All the pipers have gone quiet.

ON A HILLSIDE

Fifty yards away from the struggling deer, a RIDER lowers their rifle, revealing the fierce, wind-flushed face of a slim, plain young woman, CHARLENE "CHARLIE" WILLOWS (20). Her white blonde hair is loose on her shoulders and she wears clothes that have seen too many seasons.

She grimaces at the missed shot. Urges on her bay mare, FLASH.

BY THE FALLEN DEER

Charlie halts. Shoots the deer again.

She dismounts and kneels by her kill.

CHARLIE

I am sorry for that.

Then she freezes, seeing something. Next to the deer's head is a massive PAW PRINT.

She's on her feet. Goes for her gun and scans her surroundings. Empty.

BY THE STAND OF POPLARS - MOMENTS LATER

Flash waits patiently while Charlie throws a rope over a thick branch and wraps it once around the saddle horn.

At just a touch of Charlie's fingers, Flash backs up. She tightens the slack in the rope, lifting the deer upward.

HILLSIDE - LATER

She's downwind. Charlie dismounts to crawl up the crest of the hill. Not too far away, the deer hangs, a pool of crimson beneath it. Charlie readies her rifle. Waits.

HILLSIDE - LATER

Still alert, Charlie rubs her thumb in circles against the trigger guard. Flash senses the predator before Charlie, alerting her by shifting restlessly.

Down below them, a WOLF lopez across the plain. Skittish, it circles the tree and the deer. Charlie takes aim...

CRACK!

The shot doesn't come from Charlie's rifle. It comes from over to her right. From the rifle of another RIDER.

The Rider starts making his way down the slope.

Charlie watches, waits for the stranger to reach the kill before getting to her feet and whistling for Flash.

The Rider halts, startled by the young woman who seems to have sprung up from the earth.

BY THE STAND OF POPLARS

The Rider is AMOS PRATT (39), clean shaven and weathered in even his voice. He takes in the deer carcass and the wolf lying ten yards away.

PRATT

Miss Willows. You wait long for that one?

CHARLIE

Not long.

Charlie leads Flash beneath the deer, cuts it loose.

PRATT

Would've let you have the shot if I'd seen you.

CHARLIE

I have what I need.

PRATT

Brought the herd in last week. Lost about a dozen this time.

He waits for some sort of reaction. Charlie's busy securing the deer, hardly seems to have heard.

PRATT

Tracked them as far as the Bones, then they up an vanished. To my eyes anyway. You think your mama could spare you a day?

He holds out a leather coin pouch. She takes it.

PRATT

Throw in the pelt too. Then he's come back to you, in all fairness.

CHARLIE

Don't need the pelt Mr. Pratt. I'll have em back to you by tomorrow night.

13

EXT. FARMLAND - DAY

13

You can see the barn from a distance. No trees to shelter it. The roof sags after the weight of heavy snows. The fences all lean, posts and rails warped.

Charlie pauses near a fallen section. She jams a heavy plank back into place. A sharp splinter cuts her. She sucks the wound.

14 EXT. WILLOW'S FARM - DAY 14

Closer now, the barn's even more rundown. Charlie whistles, sharp and long. No response at first. She peers out at the open ground, the barn and the tiny house peeking from behind.

Then from a low valley, a BLACK COLT makes his appearance. This is SYRUS. He's not a cow pony, he's got thoroughbred blood and you can see it.

He's moving fast. Easy. He whips along the fence line, not slowing to a lope until he's next to Charlie and Flash. The horses match strides.

Charlie leans across the fence, balancing with her leg hooked over the horn of the saddle so she can tease the colt by tugging at his mane and ears. Smiling.

Now we see her.

15 INT. BARN - DAY - LATER 15

Outside, in the paddock, the horses both eat hay contentedly.

Charlie stands on one of the stall partitions, shimmies up so that she straddles a roof beam. She has the leather pouch from Amos in her teeth, and stuffs it into a larger satchel that's tied to the beam's cross-section.

16 INT. WILLOW HOUSE - DAY 16

NELLE WILLOWS (44), peels vegetables as worn as she is.

The door to the house opens. Charlie's feet make no sound. She watches her mother, unnoticed.

Notes the table. Four places, with bowls, plates and mugs.

Charlie shuts the door so Nelle knows she's here.

NELLE

Men'll be back this evening. You wash your hair, put that dress on that Digs likes.

CHARLIE

Don't have a dress anymore, mama.

NELLE

They'll be back this evening.

Charlie picks up one of the bowls on the table. The inside is covered in a layer of dust and soot from the fireplace. Using her sleeve, she wipes it out, puts it back.

She goes over to the basin and takes a sharp knife from the block next to it. Nelle doesn't stop her work.

17 EXT. WILLOW HOUSE - DAY 17

Charlie walks to the shed near the barn. Pulls out the knife and approaches the deer carcass.

18 INT. WILLOW HOUSE - NIGHT 18

Nelle sleeps in a chair at the table.

Charlie wakes her, gently guides her to the bed. Tucks her in. Nelle won't let go of her hand.

Charlie kicks off her boots. She pulls a rawhide NECKLACE over her head. Fixed to it are three WOLF CLAWS. She drops it on the chair next to the bed and lies next to her mother.

Nelle runs her hands over Charlie's fingers, one by one,

NELLE

Used to do this when you were just
little. Remember? One, two, three
pretty as pretty be...

Nelle's hand relaxes. She sleeps.

CHARLIE

(whispering)

Four, five, six, seven, good girls
fly swift to heaven...

19 INT. WILLOW HOUSE - DAY 19

Charlie wakes to the sound of scraping and banging.

Nelle washes a basin, scrubbing it hard.

Charlie changes from her under garments to her work clothes. Brushes out her long blonde hair carefully and thoroughly. Enjoys the silkiness.

CHARLIE

Have to fetch some strays for Mr.
Pratt today.

NELLE

Your step father and the boys,
they'll be back this evening.

CHARLIE

He's paying me, mama.

NELLE

I can't do everything in this house
by myself. You're to wear your
dress. Digs likes that dress.

So quick it might not have happened, Charlie kisses Nelle's cheek, slips out the door. Nelle doesn't stop her work. Just keeps scrubbing the same spot over and over.

20 EXT. THE BONES - DAY 20

The valley of long dead birch trees look like bones, straight and bleached white, jutting up straight into the sky. The ground here is hard. Charlie dismounts from Flash, examines the earth.

21 EXT. GRASSLAND - DAY 21

Flash carries Charlie along at a lope, up a hill. Across a river. Finally, they break the cover of trees and there, grazing happily, are the twelve head of missing CATTLE.

Charlie shakes out a whip, circles round the herd and gets them moving back in the right direction. A daring YEARLING makes a break for it and immediately Flash darts after, without Charlie really even moving.

The whip cracks. The yearling turns on its haunches and dashes back into the herd.

22 EXT. PRATT FARM - DAY 22

This is what a farm should look like. Fences and corrals and two barns, one newly raised, the pine boards still fresh. And a big farm house. Rain begins as Charlie drives the little herd into a corral.

23 EXT. WILLOW'S FARM - NIGHT 23

Rain falls heavily by the time Charlie lopes toward the farm. Syrus waits by the barn.

Three other COW PONIES are with him. Charlie halts, shocked at the new additions. She looks to the house.

A MAN, just barely visible through the rain, leans on the porch rail, smoking. He wears a tan, SHEEP SKIN COAT with white wool around the collar.

Charlie ducks into the barn quickly.

24 INT. BARN - NIGHT 24

Just inside the door, Charlie pauses. Three saddles perch on sawhorses. One has metal FOX TRAPS and CHAIN SNARES hanging from it. Charlie leads Flash past them quickly.

25 INT. BARN - LATER 25

Flash has been unsaddled. Charlie lets her out into the corral and goes immediately to a ladder, leading up into the hay loft. She climbs up.

IN THE LOFT there's a neatly folded blanket and rolled up mattress. She unrolls it. Smooths it out. The horses start to bang on the barn doors. Hungry.

26 EXT. CORRAL - SHELTER - NIGHT 26

Charlie uses a HAY HOOK to pull hay down into the corral from a little wagon. As he comes to eat, Charlie notices Syrus has a fresh cut on his leg.

27 INT. BARN - NIGHT 27

The rain clatters on the roof as Charlie settles Syrus. She lights a lantern. Her fingers gently test the tissue around the wound.

She goes to a wooden CHEST, rummaging through a collection of pouches and jars. None are what she wants.

CHARLIE

Goddamn...

She sits back on her heels. Looks through the barn door, toward the house.

28 INT. WILLOW HOUSE - NIGHT 28

SAUL (56) and his two sons DIGS (26) and CRAIG (31) are in the midst of a raucous discussion.

It's Craig who wears the sheep skin coat.

They slop food and beer into their mouths between bouts of laughter. They're already drunk - probably arrived with empty flasks.

SAUL

Hey, what did I say about these cups?

Nelle quickly offers him a refill. He grabs her around the waist, pulls her into his lap just as...

Charlie steps inside. Immediately, a DOG leaps up from under the table, barking wildly and snarling. Craig has a tight hold on the animal's rope, but lets it get within a hand's breadth of Charlie's legs.

She presses herself to the door, terrified.

SAUL

Craig, get that dog out of here!

Laughing, Craig staggers out, hauling the animal with him.

SAUL

Still scared, Wisp? Thought you'd grow outta that. Let me look.

DIGS

Christ, she got thinner.

SAUL

Where you been? Working hard for Pratt again?

Craig laughs and kicks the door shut behind him.

SAUL

What's he paid you? Let's see.

His palm opens, waiting. She gives up the five dollars.

SAUL

This all?

CHARLIE

Yes, sir.

Saul seems satisfied and Charlie starts to move toward the shelves near where Nelle scrubs the pots.

Digs grabs her arm. Grip tight. She doesn't flinch.

DIGS

She's lying. She's keeping some back.

Saul chews slowly.

SAUL

You gone hungry? You out in the rain?

CHARLIE

No.

SAUL
You dressed in rags?

CRAIG
Might as well be.

SAUL
(to Craig)
Shut it.
(back to Charlie)
Now I look after you, don't I? I
look after your mother. All the
money that is earned gets put into
my hands, and I decide where it's
best laid out, so I can continue to
look after all of us. Just fair.
How it's supposed to be. So, I'll
ask you just one more time...this
all he paid you?

Charlie nods.

Digs shoves his hands in her pockets forcefully. Enjoying his
groping. But they're empty.

CHARLIE
If I could get more, I would. Maybe
you could speak to him. Make him
see what's fair.

SAUL
Be wasted breath. Pratt's a tight
fister.

DIGS
Bastard's got more than he
deserves.

They start eating again. Charlie goes to the shelves. She
picks up three jars of different herbs.

Nelle spills some of the beer as she pours it and earns a
snarl from Saul. He grabs her shaking arm. Makes her yelp.

For a blistering second, Charlie's close to intervening.

But Saul lets go.

Charlie lies awake in the hay loft. She's pulled the ladder
up. From her make-shift bed she can see Syrus sleeping.

Faint laughter, and barking can be heard over the rain.
 Charlie puts her arm over her ears, squeezes her eyes shut.
 And then YELLING. A SCREAM. A woman's scream.

30 INT. WILLOW HOUSE - NIGHT 30

Flying through the door, Charlie sees her mother on the ground, face averted. BLOOD forms a pool beneath her chin.

Charlie rushes to her. Tries to help. Saul yanks Charlie back, hauls her to her feet.

Charlie PUNCHES his arm, breaks his grip.

He HITS her hard, she falls backwards. Digs starts laughing, so drunk he nearly topples off his chair. Craig has already passed out.

On her back, Charlie's disoriented. Bleeding from her lip. Drunk and stupid, Saul stoops over her and his hands, groping for a way to pick her up, pull at her loose collared shirt, starting to expose her upper chest.

The feel of it makes Charlie focus. Her hand closes over a shattered beer mug. Grabs it. Drives it with great force against Saul's head. Neither can believe what she's done.

31 EXT. WILLOW HOUSE - NIGHT 31

The door CRASHES open. Charlie sprints hard, fleeing through the rain, the mud, past the barking dog.

32 INT. BARN - NIGHT 32

Sensing danger, Syrus circles his stall. Charlie scrambles up into the hay loft. Raises the ladder as Saul charges in.

He tries climbing up a wall. Sober, he could do it maybe. Drunk, not a chance.

He falls. BELLOWS in frustration. And sees...Syrus. He looks around him, searching...

...until he sees a hard piece of rope. He begins to tie it in a knot. Charlie realizes what's coming.

CHARLIE
 Don't you touch him!

He ignores her, pulling hard on either end of the newly made whip. Grinning, he goes toward the stall. He opens the door, COOING softly, the rope hidden behind his back.

Syrus steps toward him and SMACK the knot comes down hard between the colt's ears. Charlie screams. The colt presses himself as far from Saul as possible.

Saul twirls the rope, teasing him, feinting, enjoying himself. He brings the rope down again and again.

The colt lunges at Saul, who slams the door - just in time.

Charlie launches herself toward the ladder then balks.

Digs staggers in. He looks up at Charlie and straightens.

DIGS
(slurring)
Come on down here, Charlene.

Digs leans heavily on the wall, giggling. Charlie can't move.

Saul teases. All she can do is mouth the word PLEASE. He shakes his head. Opens the stall door.

Syrus backs away from him. The heavy knot rises. Falls. Syrus SCREAMS. There's nothing like this sound. It's pain, and terror, and confusion. Charlie's own cry echoes it.

Saul strikes the colt again. Syrus lashes out, trying to defend himself, but Saul's making a game of it. He uses the door as a shield, then darts in. WHAM!

Syrus tries to break down the stall wall and escape, but he can't. The whole barn reverberates with the sound of his hooves scraping and pounding, and Saul laughing.

Digs staggers, his own laughter making him wobble, then slumps down against the wall.

Finally, Saul sees the HAY HOOK. It's iron. Probably five pounds, with a handle attached to a thick hook. Useful once. Now gruesome. He yanks it from the hay bale.

Standing by the ladder watching this, Charlie's fear melts away into something else. Fierce rage. She grabs the ladder. Syrus backs into the corner. Ears flat. Nostrils flared. Saul grins. Opens the stall.

CRACK!

Saul's expression goes slack. His body teeters. Falls.

Behind him, Charlie doesn't lower the rifle. There's no fear on her face. Just pure, simple, rage.

DIGS (O.S.)

Jesus.

She turns toward the voice. Digs has his feet under him.

DIGS

You're dead. Fucking dead.

He fumbles at his belt for his pistol. Charlie aims. Fires. A sick THUD sounds as Dig's body hits the ground.

Glaring at the lifeless body, Charlie doesn't move. Hating him still. Then in a breath the rage seems to disappear.

And she looks down in shock, at the rifle in her hands.

34 INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

34

Nelle walks in, tentative. Sees Digs first. Then her husband. Nelle SHRIEKS and throws herself on the body, sobbing. She looks up at Charlie, who soothes Syrus.

Charlie calls Flash. The mare trots in, obedient. Charlie grabs her saddle.

Nelle presses her palms to her eyes, shaking her head madly.

NELLE

No. No, no, no.

CHARLIE

We're leaving, Mama. Before Craig's head clears.

NELLE

I'm not leavin.

CHARLIE

I have money. You go get your things. Just what you can carry in your hands.

Nelle stays bent over Saul's body, rocking back and forth.

CHARLIE

Mama, I have to go, with or without you. You understand? Be killed if I stay.

NELLE

It's what should come to you.

Charlie takes this in. Really feels it.

Then she leaps up onto the stall partition, leans across the beam and grabs the pouch of money.

35 EXT. BARN - NIGHT 35

On Flash, Charlie leads Syrus out the gate. The rain has stopped and she pauses once to look back at her Mother. Nelle does not raise her hand.

36 EXT. GRASSLAND - NIGHT 36

Flash and Syrus gallop along at a fast clip. Charlie's eyes are tearing. From the wind, or something else.

She pulls up suddenly, chest heaving, clutching the saddle. She yanks off her gloves, stares at her hands. They're completely steady. The only parts of her that aren't shaking.

37 EXT. WILLOW HOUSE - DAY 37

Craig staggers out of the house...

38 INT. BARN - DAY 38

He pushes open the barn door. Sees the dead. Sees Nelle. His anger drives out the last of the drink.

39 EXT. ROAD - DAY 39

Charlie walks Flash and Syrus now, cresting a hill. She spots a group of MEN trying to fix a WAGON that's laid up in the mud. She gives them a wide berth.

One man, SHIRTLESS, continues watching her until she's gone.

40 EXT. BROOK - DAY 40

A moment of peace. Charlie waters the horses. She takes her beautiful hair in her hands and tucks it under her hat. Her fingers find her shirt collar. One of the buttons has popped off. She takes her kerchief and wraps it around her neck to secure the collar - to hide every inch of skin.

41 EXT. TOWN OF KETTLEBRICK - DAY 41

The WAGON, driven by Shirtless, rolls up. He hands the lines over to his PARTNER and leaps down.

PARTNER

Where you going?

SHIRTLESS

Damn fool question.

Partner spits, annoyed, snaps the lines and drives off.

42 INT. KETTLEBRICK SALOON - DAY 42

A HAND slams down onto the bar. Loud. Demanding attention.

Groups of DRINKERS, CATTLEMEN and OLD TIMERS pause, look up. Shirtless has just walked through the doors.

The hand belongs to Craig.

CRAIG

Most you men know me. Knew my pa.
My brother. Yesterday, they was
gunned down in their own barn. By
her.

He holds up a fairly decent SKETCH of Charlie, her face blank, long hair on her shoulders.

CRAIG

Girl was fed, clothed and sheltered
by us for six years, and she repays
the kindness with murder. I'm
offering a hundred dollars to the
man who brings her back to me,
alive. So that I can hang her from
the neck until dead. And I will pay
fifty dollars, to three men who
ride with me right now to find her
trail. You'll get another fifty
when she's caught.

SHIRTLESS

I don't have time to chase no mad
woman around.

Shirtless lights up a cigarette.

SHIRTLESS

But I just might know which way she
was headed. How much is that worth?

43 EXT. KETTLEBRICK SALOON - DAY 43

Shirtless flies through the swinging doors. Lands hard on the dirt, face bloody. Coughing, fighting for breath.

Craig's right after him. His booted foot strikes the other man's ribs so hard it lifts him off the ground.

He brings his boot down on Shirtless's throat, choking him.

SHIRTLESS

North. She was headed north. Road
to Fort Benton.

44 EXT. FIELDS NEAR SOLITARY HOMESTEAD - DAY 44

Squatted in the dirt, a FARMBOY (10) plays with a homemade
slingshot. A shadow falls across him. He SPINS fast.

Charlie's only few steps away. No horses.

FARMBOY

You part Indian, mister?

She's surprised. The boy thinks she's a man.

45 EXT. SMALL TOWN - GENERAL STORE - DAY 45

The Farmboy, barefooted and dusty, walks quietly and quickly
along the street toward the store. The MANAGER sits outside
on the porch, a PIPE in his teeth.

The Farmboy reaches him. For a moment they just look at one
another. The Manager sets his pipe down.

46 INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY 46

The Manager watches the Farmboy eye a row full of licorice
and penny candy. The child runs his finger over the glass
jar. But he moves on. Stops at some MAPS.

FARMBOY

You got one that shows Canada?

47 EXT. FIELDS NEAR SOLITARY HOMESTEAD - DAY 47

Charlie meets the Farmboy in the field. He's clearly curious,
looking toward the woods where she came from.

Until Charlie removes a pretty, silver-handled knife from her
pocket. The blade glints, small but deadly. She flips it in
her hand and holds it out.

He holds out the bag.

They make the exchange. Like grown ups. But his admiration as
he examines the silver blade is all childish glee.

CHARLIE

Don't you run round with that
unless it's in a covering. Ask your
ma for the strip ends of some hide,
you can make yourself one.

Charlie takes a quick peek in the bag. She pulls out the ammunition and a pair of men's PANTS.

FARMBOY

My brother won't even notice what I taken. He outgrew them and hardly ever changes his clothes anyway.

Farmboy tucks the knife in his belt. Tough.

CHARLIE

What was left over?

FARMBOY

Just a dollar.

He wavers under Charlie's sharp look.

Farmboy pulls out three dollar bills. Grins, sheepish. Despite herself, Charlie fights her own smile. She takes two bills, then cuffs the boy lightly on the back of the head.

CHARLIE

Either be a good liar, or tell the truth.

48 EXT. CHARLIE'S CAMP - NIGHT 48

No fire. No tent. The horses stand close together, very near where Charlie sits wrapped in her blanket. She stares at the pants, and shirt laid out in front of her.

Then, slowly, she peels off her shirt. Her upper body stays hidden as she cuts the shirt carefully so that it becomes a long, wide strip of material.

Only when she begins to wrap the strip around her breasts, do the SCARS become visible. Eight parallel lines from just below her shoulder, down between her breasts and concealed by the binding.

49 EXT. CREEK - DAY 49

Long locks of white blonde hair lay suspended on the water, carried by the current.

The potato sack, weighted with stones, plunges to the bottom.

Charlie wipes her hands, watching the hair float away, the sack sink to the bottom. Her hair is cut very short now, but she hides it quickly with her hat. She wears the pants and chaps and a baggy shirt.

The young woman is gone, a young man in her place.

50 EXT. GRASSLAND - DAY 50

Flash and Syrus gallop north.

51 EXT. BARNBOARD HOUSE - DAY 51

Charlie and the horses crest a hill and come upon a tiny house. Nestled right against a stand of trees, it's barely more than a shack.

Two shaggy mules careen around the corral, trembling and pressing against the rails.

Syrus and Flash shift uneasily, picking up the fear.

Charlie rides toward the house slowly, removing her rifle from its holster behind her thigh.

CHARLIE

Anybody in?

(beat)

I'm armed, but I don't want trouble. Just looking to buy some grain.

Silence.

She dismounts. Notes the wheelbarrow next to the corral. Full of hay. Pitchfork still buried in it.

Rifle ready, she walks to the house. The door sits open a crack. She pushes it with her boot and in the same movement raises her gun. The door MOANS as it opens. She steps into...

52 INT. BARNBOARD HOUSE - DAY 52

It's just one room, all in chaos. Table turned over, chair on the ground across the room, cans and pots strewn across the dirt floor.

Lying across the bed is a MAN. Facedown. Limbs awkwardly splayed. Charlie knows death when she sees it. Backs away.

Outside, Flash lets out a NEIGH and startled hooves begin a drumbeat. Charlie doesn't move.

Because it's not the only sound.

A soft, whispering GROWL comes from behind her. Her fingers tighten on her rifle and then -

She spins! Drops to one knee.

Too late - SOMETHING is on her. Slams into her, sending her backwards. Her head CRACKS on the edge of the bed.

Her vision blurs. She brings her hands up to protect herself as a dark shape blots out the light. HANDS seize her shirt.

Everything goes BLACK.

53 EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF SMALL TOWN (USA) - DAY 53

A TIN CAN perched on a rock, wobbles in the wind.

Sixty yards away, Ethan Langford squints into the sight of his rifle. He ignores the hair swept into one eye. Ignores the wind. Ignores the scream of crows.

He stops breathing altogether. Exhales slowly, finger tightening on the trigger and

HENRI (O.S.)
Rusty, Langford?

A sudden gust of wind knocks the can over from the rock. Ethan lowers his rifle, looks back at HENRI GAUTIER (47) riding up to him.

Henri is handsome, with black hair, his skin lighter than Ethan's, his eyes bright blue, his movements almost feline.

ETHAN
Tell me you have a reason for
spoiling my shot.

HENRI
(in French)
What happens when the can is
moving?

Ethan shakes his head, doesn't understand.

HENRI
Word of another. Fifty miles from
here. Wounds like the others.

The air seems to wheeze out of Ethan. He props his rifle on his shoulder and starts toward his horse.

HENRI
The fellow that found him, found
someone else there
too...unconscious.

ETHAN
Not...not him?

HENRI

Perhaps his victim fought back a little harder this time. The Marshals are already on their way. They would not wait for us.

Ethan holsters his rifle, retrieves a SCARLET COAT from where it has been hanging on the saddle horn.

ETHAN

It can't be him.

HENRI

You say this because you don't want to be disappointed, or because you really hope it isn't?

In response, Ethan mounts up, urges his horse into a gallop.

54 INT. JAIL - CELL - DAY 54

The cell is old and dusty, the "bars" made of wood. Charlie stands on a stool, looking out the window on the other side of the room. She can just see the corral, Syrus and Flash. She lets out a whistle, and both horses raise their heads.

Then she looks to the ROAD. Her body tenses and she leans forward, straining to see. FOUR MEN have ridden into view.

Each face is studied quickly. She relaxes. Doesn't recognize them. They stop their horses at the SALOON across the street.

MEN'S VOICES sound from the other room. She checks her collar, her hair and hat. Pulls on the new identity.

The door opens. Two men enter with the GUARD.

PORTER SIMS (36) has red-tinged blonde hair and a beard, and his shoulders hardly seem to fit through the door. His brother OWEN SIMS (21) is taller, but lean, with a mop of hair down to his chin.

GUARD

U.S. Marshals come to speak to you.
(to Owen and Porter)
He ain't said more than five words, except to ask after his horses.

PORTER

That so.

OWEN

What's your name?

PORTER

Word is you won't justify yourself.
You want to tell us why you killed
Mister...?

OWEN

Egli. John Egli.

Charlie just returns to looking out the window.

PORTER

Nothing? No reason? What about the
other two, boy?

She glances at him, startled, then fixes on something
unnoticed behind him.

Ethan, dressed in his scarlet coat and adjusting his tight
collar, leans on the door frame. He studies Charlie
carefully. She returns the once over, then ignores her
audience again.

OWEN

He seems awful small, Porter.
Hardly old enough to grow a beard.

PORTER

Don't need to be big if you know
how to use a knife right, do you
boy? You realize murder is a
hangin' offense?

This has no effect. Ethan stands on his tip toes, sees out
the window. Sees Flash and Syrus.

ETHAN

So's stealing horses.

CHARLIE

I didn't steal them, they're mine.

Startled, Porter whips round to see Ethan.

PORTER

Langford, if you aren't like a
goddamn burr.

ETHAN

Nice to see you again too, Porter.
Owen.

Owen touches his hat, hiding a smile.

CHARLIE

How many Marshal's it take to hang someone?

PORTER

He's no marshal.

CHARLIE

What are you?

ETHAN

A forensic doctor. With the Canadian Northwest Mounted Police.

PORTER

He don't even know what that is, or who they are. And I couldn't tell him!

CHARLIE

You're from Canada?

ETHAN

That's right. Someone's been killing people in the North, and the South. Five people, actually. Three American, two Canadian, starting with a man in Ottawa. We've been trailing him; now these two think the game's up.

CHARLIE

Do I fit the tracks he left behind?

PORTER

He don't leave tracks.

OWEN

Just bodies.

CHARLIE

Poor hunter says that. Never true.

(beat)

Didn't kill Mister Egli. I was riding by the house, I saw the mules were all lathered, and I figured something was wrong. Stepped inside, and had enough time to see a body before-

ETHAN

Egli was dead already?

CHARLIE

Not long, but he was dead.

A stillness grabs Ethan. He's holding his breath again.

CHARLIE

I saw the body, then I was attacked from behind. I couldn't get a shot off; he must have knocked me out. I woke to some bastard throwing me across his pack horse.

ETHAN

Did you see the attacker? Could you give a description?

Charlie falls silent. Touches her collar nervously.

CHARLIE

No.

ETHAN

No you didn't see him, or no you can't describe him?

No response.

Porter takes a threatening step forward but Ethan stops him with a ferocity that wasn't there before.

ETHAN

What's your name?

OWEN

He won't tell us.

CHARLIE

(quietly)

Charles Wilson. Charlie.

ETHAN

Well, Charles Wilson, you're in quite a strange situation. As far as we know, the only people who have seen this fellow kill, are the ones who have their throats ripped out. Not you though. You he simply knocks unconscious. Now some would say, that means you're lying, and you're connected to the murders...or our man just made his first serious error.

Charlie considers and is suddenly plunged into a

FLASHBACK

SNARLS, HANDS grasping at her. That hulking black SHAPE. The shape becomes the snarling face of a BLACK WOLF.

RETURN TO SCENE

CHARLIE

Wasn't much of a mistake. I don't remember anything. I'm sorry I can't help you.

Frustrated, Porter exits, Owen trailing behind him. Ethan continues to observe Charlie.

55 EXT. JAIL - DAY

55

The Guard marches Charlie outside. Ethan and Porter are talking near their horses, Porter clearly irritated. Seeing Charlie, he breaks off, gets on his horse and rides toward Owen, who's saddling Flash.

CHARLIE

I had nothing to do with murdering that man!

ETHAN

You do now. We're going to see if we can jog your memory.

Owen brings Flash over.

56 EXT. BARNBOARD HOUSE - DAY

56

The Barnboard house comes into view. Outside it, waits with the BURLY SHERIFF and Henri.

The group halts.

ETHAN

Henri, this is Charles Wilson.
Charlie, this is my scout, Henri Gautier.

HENRI

Charles.

Henri offers his hand. Catches her by surprise but she shakes it gently. Dismounts from Flash.

There's the door, closed tight now. Charlie glances over at the small, dilapidated pen where the mules were. All is deserted now.

ETHAN

Take your time, try to absorb everything. Recreate what happened, in your mind.

CHARLIE

Everything's different.

ETHAN

Be more precise. What, exactly, is different?

Charlie ignores him, annoyed, and walks to the door. Pushes it open with a brazen carelessness. She's shocked.

CHARLIE

Everything.

Inside, everything is neat and tidy. Simple and arranged. The only sign of violence is the blood on the bedding.

57 INT. BARNBOARD HOUSE - DAY 57

Charlie enters the dimness. Henri and Ethan stay by the door.

CHARLIE

Who's been here? When I came in, it was all torn to pieces. The chair was over there. Cans on the floor. And the blanket is upside down - he was lying with his head and chest on the end there, his knees on the ground.

ETHAN

We didn't touch anything. No one did.

CHARLIE

What about the man that found me?

HENRI

He swears he picked you up and brought you back here, that's all. Didn't move anything but you.

Charlie takes things in. She sees:

SCRATCHES on the windowsill.

CANS, neatly lined up in the cupboard.

THE BOLT on the inside of the door, shiny and silver.

The TRACE OF BLOOD on the side of the bed. She touches the back of her head, WINCES.

The door MOANS in the wind and a floorboard CREAKS under Ethan's weight. Charlie freezes, in nearly the same spot as when she was attacked. And she remembers...

CHARLIE

He growled.

ETHAN

Beg your pardon?

CHARLIE

He growled. Before he attacked me. Snarled, like a dog or a wolf.

ETHAN

That's good. Very good.

CHARLIE

I don't remember anything else.

Charlie spins fast on her heel, pushes by Ethan, past Henri.

58 EXT. BARNBOARD HOUSE - DAY 58

Charlie dashes away from the house, Ethan tries to follow quick but Henri grabs him. Shakes his head, no. Henri goes after Charlie himself.

Porter goes for his rifle, but Ethan waves him down.

ETHAN

Henri can handle him. Show me the body.

59 EXT. FIELD, FRONT OF BARNBOARD HOUSE - DAY 59

Charlie gazes out at the wilderness, lost in thought. She's taken off her gloves, clasping and unclasping her hands. Behind her, Henri approaches, leading his horse and Flash.

He holds out the reins. Charlie takes them. Rubs the leather in her fingers. Henri looks closely at her hands before she puts the gloves back on.

CHARLIE

Wasn't a mistake. He had enough time to put that house in order...he had enough time to kill me.

HENRI
Yet here you are.

60 INT. JAILHOUSE - DAY

60

Quiet. Just the Guard at his desk, Henri and Charlie, who keeps her head down. Avoiding the man's sharp eyes.

GUARD
How long he take to look at a corpse?

HENRI
It is different with each one.

GUARD
Pity the dead can't talk.

HENRI
They can. To him.

Ethan walks in with Porter and the Burly Sheriff. Through the open door, Charlie sees Owen getting ready outside.

PORTER
Alright kid, you'll be gracing the Sheriff's company for a time.

CHARLIE
No.

BURLY SHERIFF
That weren't a question, son.

CHARLIE
You got no reason to hold me!

ETHAN
Charlie, sometimes after a blow to the head, it takes time for a person to remember things.

CHARLIE
I've been laid up here two days already, I'm not staying any longer.

Charlie stands. Ready to walk out. The Sheriff and Guard take hold of her arm and when she struggles, simply lift her back into the cell.

She kicks the stool hard, sends it flying so it catches the Guard in the knee as he exits. He yelps.

Henri watches, quietly disapproving.

ETHAN

Mind giving us a moment, gentleman?

The three leave.

Inside the wooden cell, Charlie burns with rage.

ETHAN

He made a mistake. What if he comes back to correct it?

CHARLIE

You're trying to frighten me - you'll have to try harder.

ETHAN

It's the Marshal's decision. His jurisdiction. They want you held for a time, just to be certain you've been honest about your role. Two weeks. The Sheriff will look after you and your horses and, if you remember something, he can get word to me. You'll be safe.

CHARLIE

Putting me in a cage doesn't make me safe, makes me easy to find.

ETHAN

He wanted to, he'd find you anywhere I think. Here you've something between you.

CHARLIE

What if I went with you?

ETHAN

I think not.

CHARLIE

You say you want me to remember, want me safe, then I might as well be moving and helping at the same time.

Ethan puts on his hat, reaches for the door.

Charlie digs her fingers into the wooden bars and blinks at the sight of blood beneath one nail.

CHARLIE

You see the tips of Egli's fingers
were bloody?

This stops Ethan. He turns.

ETHAN

You remember that?

Charlie shakes her head. No.

CHARLIE

Blood and scratches on the
windowsill. Shiny new bolt on the
inside of an old door.

ETHAN

Facts are useless unless you can
see the whole of the image they
create. Can you see?

CHARLIE

He trapped him in there, so he
could take his time, enjoy it. Egli
couldn't get out of his own goddamn
house.

Ethan looks down at his muddy boots, thinking hard.

61 INT. JAILHOUSE - DAY

61

From her perch on the stool, Charlie watches Ethan and Porter
discuss outside. Porter gestures angrily while Ethan stands
quiet. Immovable.

Owen listens in, already in his saddle. He glances over, sees
Charlie watching and grins, genuinely amused.

Finally, Porter throws his hands up and goes to his horse.

62 EXT. TRAIL - DAY

62

The four men and Charlie ride single file. Ethan rides ahead
of Charlie, Porter behind. Henri and Owen are at the front.
Henri hangs low off his saddle, studying the ground.

HENRI

Very few travelers.

PORTER

Only ones with no sense.

They reach a steep hill going downwards. Owen's horse halts,
fights Owen, shaking its head.

Owen puts his heels to the animal, hauls hard on the reins.

Porter steers around his brother and joins Henri at the bottom. They look up.

OWEN
Damn animal...

He finally uses the end of his reins to smack the horse's haunches. The horse plows down the hill at a gallop, nearly unseating Owen. Porter rides up beside him and grabs the horse's bridle.

Charlie offers to let Ethan go first but he shakes his head. Smiles. Like he's not letting her out of his sight.

63 EXT. TRAIL CAMP - DAY 63

Ethan and Porter look over a map together. Porter has a tin can heating over a pathetic looking candle.

Henri sits next to a hide lean-to. He pulls a small jar from a satchel, as if it's made from gold rather than glass. Charlie watches while she rubs down Syrus. She's curious.

OWEN (O.S.)
We don't build fires.

Charlie flinches at Owen's sudden approach.

OWEN
On the flats, makes you easy to spot. You had a woman yet?

CHARLIE
What's Henri eating?

OWEN
Honey. Loves it. He prays too, before every meal. Kisses his cross, to ward off evil or illness or some such.

Henri spoons some of the pale gold goo from the jar. A silver cross hangs on a chain around his neck.

OWEN
You even shave yet?

Saying nothing, Charlie turns away from him. Owen goes over to his horse and stares it down like it's something he's never seen before.

OWEN

I need to sell this damn fool first
chance I get.

Charlie walks over. She runs her hands along the horse's
neck, up to his ears, down his face and to his muzzle.

Her fingers probe gently and the horse JERKS his head back in
response. She coos to it softly, soothes it.

CHARLIE

He has an abscess.

OWEN

A what?

CHARLIE

Toothache. Bit probably bangs it
when you ride.

PORTER

Bull shit.

Porter swaggers over smacks the animal's rump.

PORTER

Owen just don't know how to break
his bad habits. He needs a harder
hand, man up a bit that's all.

Without a word, Charlie unties the horse from the line where
they're all tethered. She ties the loose end of the rope to
the bottom of the rope halter, and throws it over the horse's
head so she has a make-shift set of reins.

As he begins to trot forward, she leaps onto his bare back.

The horse immediately starts fighting for his head, taking
off at a lope. Charlie sticks to him. Circles him around the
camp; Ethan and Henri watch now too.

The horse stops fighting gradually, then stops when Charlie
pulls on the rope gently. Turns. Springs to a lope at the
touch of her heels. Halts so fast his hocks nearly touch
earth. Backs up.

OWEN

Well...Shit.

A beaming Owen steers his horse around the lean to and the
fire pit, nearly knocking Porter over.

PORTER

Would you quit? Horse is gonna die
of exhaustion.

Brushing Syrus, Charlie hides a little smile. Ethan sees.

ETHAN

Where'd you learn to read horses
like that?

CHARLIE

Don't recall learning. Just doing.

ETHAN

It's a gift.

He puts a hand on Charlie's shoulder. Instantly, she drops
it, shrugging away from him.

65 EXT. TRAIL CAMP - NIGHT

65

They sleep under open tents, wrapped in wool blankets, heads
on their saddle pads.

Charlie lies between Porter and Henri. Both are asleep.

Around them, the wind plays with the trees. Changing the
shape of the shadows, making the branches whisper,
moan...GROWL

Charlie sits up, stricken momentarily.

The fire burns low still, and she looks around frantic,
searches the darkness. She looks around for her gun, sees
Ethan sitting, almost invisible, against a nearby tree, rifle
across his knees. He smiles at her, motions for her to lie
back down. She does so. Closes her eyes.

66 EXT. TRAIL - DAY

66

Charlie rides beside Ethan, the other three men are in front.

ETHAN

We've been chasing him for two
months now, and we still know very
little about our Wolf.

CHARLIE

Wolf...

ETHAN

Marshal Owen's name for him, due to
his methods of attack.

As far as we can tell, he picks his victims, stalks them for a short amount of time, prepares, strikes. And thanks to you we now know he alters the scene before he's departed.

CHARLIE

And no one else has ever seen or heard him?

ETHAN

All the victims lived alone - though the first was in Ottawa, in a rented room. Neighbours heard nothing. Not a single sound. Landlord found him after a pool of blood leaked through the floorboards.

HENRI

And the fool, he called the paper before he called the police.

PORTER

This isn't information he needs.

ETHAN

Why withhold it?

PORTER

Ain't such a far stretch to think there might be a connection between him and our man.

OWEN

Well then Langford's not telling him anything he doesn't know already!

Porter curls his upper lip, like the truth tastes bad. He heels his horse into a lope, rides ahead.

CHARLIE

Can you tell why he kills them?

ETHAN

No motive, that we've found. Sometimes there isn't with these. It's something else. It's for pleasure. They enjoy killing, it fulfills a sort of, physical need, like sleeping with a woman.

CHARLIE

Can't say that makes sense.

ETHAN

Murder shouldn't make sense.

Charlie shifts in the saddle, tries to hide how these words settle on her shoulders.

OWEN

Feels a lot like he's the one that knows what's what. We go along, waiting for a kill instead of being able to stop it.

CHARLIE

But you've hunted men like him before?

ETHAN

I thought I had. But he doesn't make mistakes. There's plenty for me to read, he's happy to tell me who he is now - but who he was, and where he's going...

A town sits on the horizon ahead. Charlie takes in the view, just noticing the landscape.

HENRI

See where the ground starts to rise?

Charlie nods.

HENRI

Canada.

Henri gives her a long, searching look. She's quiet for a long moment, and he's about to see if she heard when -

CHARLIE

There anything absolutely the same, about all the victims?

ETHAN

No. Well...they're all men. But that isn't much help to us, I'm afraid.

CHARLIE

No. Wouldn't be.

67 EXT. BORDERTOWN (CANADA) - LIVERY BARN - DAY 67

The town is small and quiet. The barn isn't built for more than ten animals and the corral is small and muddy. The group of five men and six horses draw a few long looks from PASSERSBY.

The LIVERY OWNER welcomes them with little friendliness.

68 INT. LIVERY BARN - DAY 68

Charlie brushes Flash. Checks her hooves. While she's bent over, a low, appreciative WHISTLE sounds and she stiffens. Straightens up with cheeks burning.

A REDHEAD man has sidled up. He's admiring Syrus though, not her. He runs his hands over the colt's back.

REDHEAD

Where'd you buy this animal?

CHARLIE

Didn't. Raised him.

REDHEAD

This too much horse for a boy. I'll give you fifty dollars for him.

Across the aisle, Ethan keeps a watchful eye as he unsaddles his own horse. Owen makes stolen glances, also watchful.

REDHEAD

That's a good price. But you probably got a sentimental attachment. Sixty dollars's more than fair.

CHARLIE

(sharply)

Mister, you could offer me a thousand, my answer would be the same.

Redhead takes in Ethan and Owen. His smile is stretched too tight. His hands linger on Syrus's rope.

REDHEAD

Well. Fine. Fine. But don't think I'll be offering again.

69 EXT. LIVERY BARN - DAY 69

Charlie emerges, carrying her saddlebags toward the HOTEL.

Ethan speaks with Henri, patting his friend on the shoulder before walking toward Charlie.

Looking behind Ethan, toward the main road, Charlie sees a man in a coat like Craig's - tan, with wool collar. She freezes, terrified until The STRANGER turns, showing a very old face and grey beard. Charlie relaxes.

70 INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY 70

Ethan opens the door and walks into a tiny room barely large enough to hold the two narrow beds.

Ethan plunks down on one. Begins taking off his boots. Charlie presses her palms to her thighs. Ethan begins taking off his shirt. He folds the garment meticulously, sets it on the chair at the end of the bed. He's just in an undershirt now.

Charlie eyes the window; it looks onto the roof of the porch.

ETHAN

Hungry?

CHARLIE

I've got enough in my packs.

ETHAN

The opportunity for a hot meal
isn't one you pass up.

CHARLIE

Don't have the money for it.

Surprised, Ethan chuckles and slips out without another word.

Charlie shuts the door softly behind him. Locks it. She goes to the window. It's sticky when she tries to open it at first. Then groans upward. She moves it up and down a few times. It stops groaning.

71 INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT 71

When he returns, Ethan has two bowls of thick beef stew. He sets one on the chair next to Charlie. She stares at it. Reaches for her saddlebag, for a money purse.

ETHAN

Please, leave that. This is what we
do.

CHARLIE

The police?

ETHAN
 (laughs)
 People.
 (beat)
 Share the load.

Charlie sinks back on the bed. Outside, it begins to rain.

72 EXT. TOWN (USA) - NIGHT 72

The rain pours here too, as DEPUTY SAMUELS nails up "WANTED" posters to the side of an old building. Half a dozen others are faded, ripped or unreadable.

This is a sleepy town, no one pays attention to him.

A COMMOTION rises from far down the street. The wind carries the WAILS of a CHILD. Deputy Samuels pauses. Drops his hammer. He RUNS.

One of the new posters flutters in the wind. Someone else approaches. Gentle FINGERS smooth back the poster of CHARLENE WILLOWS. Tear the poster free. Roll it up. Tuck it in a deer-skin, BEADED SADDLEBAG.

73 INT. HOTEL ROOM (CANADA) - LATER 73

Ethan sits on the edge of his bed. Charlie's still under the covers. She sweeps a piece of bread into the bowl.

ETHAN
 Where were you headed?

CHARLIE
 No place in particular.

ETHAN
 You don't have family?

CHARLIE
 No. None to speak of.

ETHAN
 That's tough. I am the same. Here.
 My few kin are in Ireland.

CHARLIE
 Why leave?

ETHAN
 Too many ghosts. I needed a fresh
 start, and that's what this place
 is. That's what you want, isn't it?

Charlie sets the bowl down. Realizes Ethan's only halfway through his. He smiles, understanding.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

She sets the bowl down and turns down the kerosene lamp next to the bed. Ethan wants to say something else, but doesn't. He goes and locks the door.

He settles in his bed, turns up the kerosene lamp. Charlie sneaks a glance at him. He's reading.

74 INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING 74

Ethan sleeps soundly. Shirtless and wearing long-johns. Charlie's bed is empty. She crouches by Ethan's saddle bag and quietly tucks several DOLLAR BILLS inside.

Then she goes to the window.

75 EXT. HOTEL ROOF - MORNING 75

The sky grays at the edge but it's practically still night. Charlie slides partially off the roof, dangles, then drops to the railing.

76 EXT. LIVERY BARN - MORNING 76

Charlie slips under the fence surrounding the livery. She's surprised to find the barn door open already.

77 INT. LIVERY BARN - MORNING 77

For a breath, Charlie doesn't register what's happening. Syrus stands outside his stall with a bridle on.

Next to him, Redhead tightens his horse's girth. Syrus's reins are tethered to Redhead's saddle horn. That fierce rage reappears.

Charlie drops her saddlebags, yanks her rifle free. The sound alerts Redhead. He turns.

Her rifle is ready. He raises his hands.

A CLICK. This one comes from a pistol. The one pointed at Charlie's head. A GIANT of a man holds it. He's at twenty paces though, easily. He might miss.

Redhead makes his stretched smile and drops his hands.

REDHEAD

No need for this to get nasty. You drop the gun, take a walk back out the door, we'll be on our way.

Charlie cocks her rifle. No hesitation.

Redhead starts to realize what he's dealing with. He raises his hands, very slowly, again.

REDHEAD

Hey now. Don't you go do something stupid. Kill me, sure, but you'll be killing yourself too.

Charlie closes one eye, preparing...

Giant takes a step forward and

ETHAN (O.S.)

I suggest you lose that.

In the doorway, Ethan has his rifle aimed casually at Giant. Too much for the big man. He takes his finger off the trigger and lets the gun dangle from his hands before dropping it.

ETHAN

Off you go.

Giant backs out the door, then jogs away.

Redhead shifts on his feet. Itching to go after his partner.

But Charlie hasn't moved, she's still focused, vibrating with anger. Redhead can see it. So can Ethan. Ethan lowers his gun but doesn't approach Charlie.

REDHEAD

This is all just a misunderstanding.

ETHAN

Alright now, Ace. He's not going anywhere.

REDHEAD

It's not what it looks like, I just wanted to see how he went...

Wrong thing to say. Her finger caresses the trigger.

REDHEAD

I'm sorry, kid, swear to the almighty...

She presses the gun against her shoulder more, adjusts her stance, holds her breath -

CRACK!

Both horses shy sideways.

A bullet rips into Redhead's THIGH and he drops to the ground HOWLING.

Charlie yanks her gun away from her shoulder. The bullet didn't come from her. It came from PORTER'S pistol. Baffled, she stares at the Marshal standing in the doorway.

Ethan hurries to Redhead and presses his palm to the wound. Redhead just keeps screaming.

ETHAN
Christ, Porter!

PORTER
Figured he'd rather take one in the leg than in the head.

Henri comes running in, the Livery Owner on his heels.

ETHAN
Charlie wasn't going to shoot him.

PORTER
You sure?

ETHAN
Henri, Porter, help me.
(to Charlie)
You. Not one move.

Henri helps Ethan lift Redhead up and they take him out of the barn. Porter takes a long pull from his cigarette, peering at Charlie. Then follows the others.

78 EXT. LIVERY BARN - DAY 78

Charlie leans up against the wall. Owen's nearby, smoking.

OWEN
You cause trouble, or does it just find you, you think?
(no answer)
Why were you in the barn so early, anyway?

Ethan walks up, Porter and Henri with him.

PORTER

I'd like to know the answer to that
as well.

ETHAN

I sent him to get the horses ready.

PORTER

That so?

ETHAN

I had intended to make an early
start of it, fool that I am.

Ethan brushes past Charlie. Inside, he saddles his horse.

Porter snatches the cigarette from Owen, inhales deeply.

OWEN

Help yourself. What's got you both
so sore?

PORTER

A post rider came while Langford
was patching up old Red.

Owen gets it immediately.

OWEN

Shit. That's the shortest amount of
time between them.

Confused, Charlie looks to Henri.

HENRI

Another victim, South of the
border. A school teacher. A woman.

The men begin to move, get ready, but for several breaths,
Charlie can only stare at the rifle in its saddle holster.

Across Flash's back, she locks eyes with Ethan. He waits.
Expecting her to make her decision. She grabs her saddle.

79

EXT. STREAM (USA) - DAY

79

The posse halts at a stream to water the horses. As Charlie
dismounts, Henri watches her, sees her grimace.

PORTER

Bit stiff are you, kid?

CHARLIE

Not all made out of rawhide between
the legs.

Owen stifles a hoot at the cheek and the way it catches
Porter off guard. Even Ethan grins.

AWAY FROM THE OTHERS Charlie looks downwards, slides her hand
down between her thighs and fights panic.

With as much subtly as she can, Charlie returns to Flash,
removes her saddlebag.

PORTER

Don't go far, take a piss and let's
move on.

Charlie ignores him, slips into the woods.

80

EXT. STREAM - DAY

80

Charlie has changed her pants. She plunges the ones coloured
by blotches of blood into the river, scrubbing hard.

She sees Henri approaching downstream, walking toward her.
She wrings out the pants, tries to hide the fear.

Henri squats down beside her.

CHARLIE

Must have cut my leg.

HENRI

This cut, it appears every month?

She stops folding the wet pants. Her secret is his. He offers
her a pouch.

HENRI

Black snakeroot. It will lessen the
pains.

CHARLIE

How did you...?

HENRI

Your hands. You hide them well,
yes, but not always.

(beat)

Is this who you are, Miss Wilson?

He sweeps his hand up and down from her head, hair cropped
short, to the buttoned man's shirt and ill fitting boots.

CHARLIE

Some of it.

HENRI

Don't wait too long to shed what
isn't yours. You may forget which
is which.

She looks at the gloves, too big for her hands.

CHARLIE

He know too?

Looking up, Charlie sees that Henri has risen already and
weaves his way lightly, back through the brush.

81 EXT. TOWN (USA) - DAY 81

Another quiet, tiny town, out of place in the wilderness.

82 INT. BOARDING HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - DAY 82

Two MEN and a WOMAN sit quietly. The men play cards,
LYDIA(58) cleans a silver platter.

Her husband, SHERIFF LUCAS (60) world weary and graying,
smokes a pipe, studies his cards. The same Deputy Samuels who
nailed up the posters, lays a card down with shaky fingers.
He twists round suddenly, toward the window.

HOOFBEATS.

83 EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - PORCH - DAY 83

It's a dismal, grey day. Samuels lingers near the door.
Sheriff Lucas leans on the porch rail as Ethan, the Sims
brothers, Henri and Charlie all dismount from their horses.
They're soaked and cold.

Samuels steps forward to peer closer at Henri and Charlie
next to him. Sees something amiss. He grabs Sheriff Lucas's
arm and whispers in his ear, angry and urgent.

Lucas pulls away. Whatever it is, he doesn't care.

84 EXT. ROAD TO SCHOOL HOUSE - DAY 84

It has started to rain again. Sheriff Lucas rides in front
with Porter and Ethan, the others follow.

SHERIFF LUCAS

Her name was Ingrid Crouse. Husband
died a month or so back.

She wasn't real friendly with anyone, except maybe one or two of her students. Was one of them that found her, in the evening. Noticed she was missing from Church.

ETHAN

Were you able to track him at all?

SHERIFF LUCAS

The rain started before we even found the body. Samuels here, tracked him into the creek.

PORTER

But you couldn't find where he lit out again?

Samuels is watching Henri. He opens his mouth to answer but

SHERIFF LUCAS

Nope.

OWEN

Yeah. He does that. Leaves us a trail, clear as day up to a point then poof, up and gone. Just to let us know he can.

85 EXT. SCHOOL HOUSE - DAY

85

They ride up the hill toward the school. Ethan turns in his saddle, makes a wordless request, and Henri peels off from the group. Charlie starts to follow him.

ETHAN

You stay with me, Ace. Owen, would you be so good as to --

OWEN

Sure, boss.

Owen reins his horse off and goes after Henri at a gallop. Porter glares at Ethan but keeps his mouth shut.

Sheriff Lucas looks between Ethan and Porter, cynical.

SAMUELS

Fools errand, Doctor. Even your mutt won't find no signs now.

Affronted, Ethan turns to Samuels. The Deputy glares at Henri's shrinking figure with disgust. Before Ethan can say anything, Samuels rides away.

86 INT. SCHOOL HOUSE - DAY 86

It is dim and suffocating inside. Ethan stops Charlie immediately when she steps inside. Points to the mud brought in by their boots.

ETHAN

Take them off.

They all walk around in stocking feet. The school is one room, full of chairs and tiny desks in rows. Chairs and desks on either side of a single aisle, are turned over.

CHARLIE

Why was she here on a Sunday?

SHERIFF LUCAS

Came here to prepare her lessons,
maybe? She lives just there.

He indicates through a single window. A tiny house sits between the school and the town.

At the front of the room sits a LARGE DESK. Pencils and bits of chalk litter the floor around it. A pool of blood marks the space between desk and front wall. There's red spattered on the wall. A HAND PRINT on the desk.

ETHAN

He didn't bother to clean up this
time.

SHERIFF LUCAS

What do you mean, clean up?

ETHAN

All the other scenes where the
killings took place, they were
rearranged, repaired, before he
left.

PORTER

We know because Charlie here just
so happened to stumble onto one
before he took off.

SHERIFF LUCAS

You saw the sonvabitch? And he
didn't kill you?

Samuels goes to the CABINET at the back. Tries to open it but it's locked.

Ethan bends close, examining the HAND PRINT. Charlie watches, curious, Porter too.

ETHAN

There's a theory, one I happen to agree with, that all human's have unique, one of a kind patterns on their finger tips and palms. We'll be able to identify someone, based entirely on impressions of their finger tips.

PORTER

That's great, Langford but we still have to catch him first. And I don't think we'll need a hand-print to know it's him.

Charlie opens the door to look outside. Sunlight hits the inside door handle. She gently pinches a tuft of what looks like wiry hair between thumb and forefinger.

CHARLIE

He tied the door shut.

SAMUELS

Why? Why'd he tie it shut?

CHARLIE

So he could take his time.

87 EXT. SCHOOL HOUSE - DAY

87

Samuels bursts out of the door, yanking off his hat. He heads for the house at the bottom of the hill. Stops, puts his hands on his knees. From the door, Charlie watches.

88 EXT. PATH TO INGRID'S HOUSE - DAY

88

Ethan walks with Sheriff Lucas half way down the hill. Charlie goes more slowly, eyes on the ground, and Porter keeps close to her.

Something stops Charlie. She steps off the path, two strides, drops to one knee. She examines the grass. Rust red spatters the green. Porter's shadow falls across her.

PORTER

What you looking at?

She walks a bit further, searching...finds it. A place where the grass is crumpled haphazardly, there are gouges in the dirt. More blood.

FLASHBACK

Charlie falls onto her back, on the floor of the Barnboard house. HE is on top of her. A snarling dark shape.

And then it's not in the house, it's on the hill. It's in the grass, with the School above, house below. And his hands are TEARING, CLAWING at her shirt.

89 RETURN TO SCENE 89

Charlie's closed eyes open to find Porter peering at her.

90 INT. INGRID'S HOUSE - DAY 90

The place looks normal. No sign of violence. Except one table chair on its back.

Two places have been set at the table. Ethan lifts the lid from the fine china teapot and finds black water. The tea cups empty. Dry, and clean.

ETHAN

Tea set for two, but never poured.

Distracted, Charlie pads softly to the bedroom door.

Samuels is in the bedroom. He rifles through drawers. Lifts up the straw mattress of the bed. Finally, he notices Charlie. Stops his search.

CHARLIE

Find anything?

SAMUELS

Don't really know what I'm looking for.

He brushes past her.

Ethan has seated himself at a small, latch top desk. He holds a small bundle of letters, wrapped in frayed ribbon.

Seeing him, Samuels halts, goes rigid.

SAMUELS

What are those?

ETHAN

Seems to be simple correspondence.

Ethan flips to the final page of a letter.

ETHAN
 Sheriff, remind me, what the
 victim's Christian name was?

SHERIFF LUCAS
 Ingrid. Ingrid Crouse.

91 INT. BOARDING HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

91

The back door leads to the kitchen, and the posse files in,
 dripping wet and awkward.

Samuels bumps past Henri roughly, knocks him into the wall.

LYDIA (O.S.)
 John Samuels, you take off that hat
 if you're dining in this house.

Lydia Lucas has her arms crossed. Formidable. Sheriff Lucas
 obeys the command too, and Lydia ushers Henri in first.

Then she gets her first look at Charlie. Stares hard.

LYDIA
 And you are?

CHARLIE
 Charlie Wilson, ma'am.

Grabs hold of Charlie's arm, pulls it away from her body to
 get a good view. She's peering closely. Too closely. Charlie
 can't move. Or breathe.

LYDIA
 Lord Almighty, Mr. Wilson, has no
 one fed you?

CHARLIE
 The way I was made...ma'am.

LYDIA
 Is it really? Well son, feeding you
 something extra can't hurt.

The woman's fingers relax. She smiles.

92 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

92

Charlie looks around, a little in awe. The house is quite
 fine, if simple. Cushioned chairs, papered walls, bright red
 rugs.

A table has been set. The men start to find places around it.

Charlie is at a loss. Awkward. Ethan's hands find her elbows, gently shift her toward a chair. He sits beside her.

Samuels seats himself directly across from Henri.

93 INT. DINING ROOM - LATER 93

Plates are empty, and Sheriff Lucas lights up his pipe. Charlie listens in on the conversation between Lydia and Ethan.

ETHAN

It's a fairly new idea, that even small fragments, traces left on a body, or the manner in which a person is killed, can tell us something about who killed them.

SAMUELS

How many bodies you looked at so far?

ETHAN

Five.

SAMUELS

Five. And she's still dead, isn't she?

LYDIA

Alright now, that's fine Johnny. Doctor Langford, you come with me. Seems we finished the pleasantries.

Henri rises to go with Ethan but

Samuels stands up so fast his chair SLAMS onto its back. His hand's on his hip, fingers to holster. The entire posse REACTS, hands reaching for guns. Only Charlie keeps absolutely still.

SAMUELS

No way that Indian touches her!

Porter, Owen and Charlie all look absolutely stunned.

OWEN

Indian? He ain't --

Porter silences his brother with a look.

ETHAN

I need assistance in this, Deputy.

SAMUELS
Not from him.

HENRI
(very quietly)
You're mistaken, friend.

SAMUELS
I'm not. I knows a red-Indian when
I see one, even if he's dressed up
fancy and blue eyed.

Henri gets to his feet.

LYDIA
John, don't you even think of
pulling a gun.

CHARLIE
I'll do it. I'll help.

All the men look at Charlie, the only one still sitting. She
locks eyes with Samuels, gets up slowly, hand outstretched to
calm him. Samuels takes his hand from the holster. Henri
exits the house.

94 INT. BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT 94

Lydia leads them down the hall to a door. She unlocks it. The
mask is on Charlie's face. All emotion forced away.

95 INT. LITTLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS 95

The body lies on the bed, covered in a white sheet. Ethan and
Charlie stand next to it. Lydia by the door.

LYDIA
We don't have an undertaker. Bodies
come here before the funeral, and I
see they look respectable. But this
was different.

Ethan opens his doctor's. He rolls up his sleeves.

Charlie stares at the sheet. At the body's head, where the
face will be. She's curious, not moved.

ETHAN
Charlie...Charlie...

He touches her arm to draw her attention back.

ETHAN

Take out my notebook. There'll be a pencil in there too. Write what I say, and hand me the tools as I need them.

CHARLIE

I can't.

ETHAN

Yes you can. Try to take your mind somewhere else, focus on the words.

Lydia sees the awkward, almost helpless way Charlie holds the pencil and takes both it and the notebook from her.

LYDIA

Mr. Wilson doesn't know how to write, Doctor Langford.

ETHAN

Sorry. See to the tools then.

Ethan pulls the sheet down to reveal just the head and the very edge of her shoulders. It's startling.

But soon, Ethan is simply reading again. This is not a person. This is text. A letter, written to him.

ETHAN

Throat and neck torn in three places. From the width and shape of the wounds, I would guess a relatively blunt blade was used...as with the other victims.

Lydia writes quickly.

Without fear, Charlie lifts a lock of Ingrid's gold hair aside. The skin has a greenish tinge in one spot at the hairline. Blue black in the center.

Ethan moves down, removes her arm from under the sheet. There are bruises on her upper arm and wrist.

ETHAN

Bruises, partially healed, on forehead, upper arm, forearm and wrist.

(he thinks a moment)

Mrs. Lucas, I'm afraid I need more light. Perhaps another lamp, two if you have them to spare?

Lydia nods, darts out quickly. Immediately, Ethan retrieves the notebook, scribbles details down.

ETHAN

Something strange - she was beaten.
Not by her husband, and not by our
killer.

CHARLIE

(bitterly)

Not strange. Happens all the time.

ETHAN

I'd still like to know the
circumstances.

CHARLIE

Samuels is the best bet. They were
more friendly than he lets on.

ETHAN

What makes you suspect that?

Lydia returns before Charlie can answer. Ethan flips to a fresh page, hands the notebook back. They position two new lamps nearer the body. Ethan prepares to resume but

CHARLIE

What was her husband like?

The question stalls Lydia's pencil, makes her go stiff.

LYDIA

Well, I'm not one to speak ill of
the dead but... truth is, he was
nasty, degenerate sort of man. The
kind you avoid, if you can.

96

INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

96

Sheriff Lucas and Samuels continue playing cards. Owen and Porter share a look of concern at the silence. Henri's focus stays on the hall.

Porter gets up. Gestures to a box of matches. At the Sheriff's nod, Porter lights up.

PORTER

How'd, uh, Mr. Crouse die?

SHERIFF LUCAS

He went quick. Of natural causes.
Think his breath just gave out, so
to speak.

97 INT. BOARDING HOUSE - ROOM - NIGHT 97

Ethan bends close to Ingrid, hands gentle, turning her head.
Lydia waits to write.

LYDIA
Drank himself to death I would say,
nearly two months ago.

98 INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 98

The scene continues, posse at the table, men playing cards.

SHERIFF LUCAS
He didn't raise trouble in town.

99 INT. LITTLE ROOM - NIGHT 99

The two are focused on Lydia now.

LYDIA
I don't think he lifted a finger to
keep them. She was what held them
on their feet.

100 INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 100

Sheriff shuffles his cards.

SHERIFF LUCAS
Nothing special about either of em.

101 INT. LITTLE ROOM - NIGHT 101

Ethan plays with sheet in his hand, not realizing what he's
doing. Neither of the women notice.

LYDIA
They were strange folks, everybody
could tell. Secretive. Just
appeared one day and bought that
property on the outside of town. We
needed a new school mistress so
seemed like an answer to prayer.

CHARLIE
Where did they come from?

102 INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 102

The same.

PORTER
They from around this country?

103 INT. LITTLE ROOM - NIGHT 103

Lydia shakes her head, no.

LYDIA

She never did say where they set
down originally. That's what I mean
about them being secretive.

104 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT 104

Samuels lights his cigarette too.

SAMUELS

They came up from Missouri.

SHERIFF LUCAS

He ran cattle and boarded up where
he could, until he met the Mrs.
Then I guess they came up, looking
for...opportunity.

105 INT. LITTLE ROOM - SAME 105

Lydia sits down, Charlie and Ethan keep still.

LYDIA

I heard someone ask her once, and
he Mr. Crouse - came right along
and interrupted. Took her away.
Doesn't surprise me that he beat
her.

ETHAN

Mrs. Lucas, these bruises weren't
made during the attack. They're
also too fresh to have been the
work of her husband.

Silence. Lydia keeps her eyes on Ingrid.

106 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT 106

Samuel presses his cards down on his thigh. Sheriff Lucas can
see what's coming.

SAMUELS

What's all this gonna help, anyway?
She was a ordinary woman, didn't
deserve dying like that.

PORTER

I agree with you, hundred percent.

SAMUELS

Doesn't deserve to be kept from
resting in peace either. How much
time does the redcoat need?

Samuels gets up, starts toward the door.

107 INT. LITTLE ROOM - NIGHT

107

Lydia finally looks at each of them, first Ethan, then
Charlie.

LYDIA

John...Deputy Samuels...took up
with her. He has a temper, but he
is a good, God fearing man.

ETHAN

No one is suggesting otherwise. But
he's concealed the relationship,
and I have to assume he may know
more than he'd have us believe.
Perhaps, he saw her before she was
killed, had tea with her, made her
upset...

LYDIA

No, no he was with us before, and
during Church. But why would you
think that he saw her?

CHARLIE

She set the table. She poured two
cups of tea.

ETHAN

Either she had a visitor
beforehand, or...she knew him. The
killer. At the very least, had
reason to trust him.

They hear footsteps outside the door and all pause.

108 INT. OUTSIDE LITTLE ROOM - NIGHT

108

Samuels grabs the doorknob but doesn't turn it. Listens.

109 INT. LITTLE ROOM - NIGHT

109

Sensing the urgency now, Ethan picks up the edge of the sheet
again.

ETHAN

I think the other questions must wait.

Charlie and Lydia nod in agreement. Ethan pulls back the sheet. Shock. Revulsion. Fear. They hit Charlie in a wave.

ETHAN

Dear Jesus.

Ingrid's dress is torn, ripped down the middle of her chest. Down to her belly. The skin below her collar bone, across her breasts, has been lined with deep, straight cuts. Many are parallel - like scratches. Ragged. Red.

ETHAN

This is...Christ..he's never done this before. I've never seen anything like this.

Charlie has. She spins, dashes out the door - knocking Samuels out of the way.

110 INT. BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 110

Charlie runs down the hall and into

111 INT. SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 111

The men all look up as she dashes past, out the front door.

112 EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - PORCH - CONTINUOUS 112

She makes it down to the last step and VOMITS. She tugs at her collar, unbuttoning it, trying to breathe. Then she keeps running, out into the rain.

113 INT. LUCAS BARN - NIGHT 113

Charlie sits in the back of Syrus's stall. He stands over her, quiet.

Charlie has her hand pressed to her chest. Her breathing is still ragged and her eyes are squeezed shut, as if trying to shut out all light.

FLASHBACK

A snowy landscape. Plumes of hot breath. Wide, terrified blue eyes looking at A BLACK WOLF, its lips folded back in a menacing snarl.

114 RETURN TO SCENE 114

Charlie looks down at her chest, removes her hand. Peeking from under the cloth, are those lines of raised pale flesh. Parallel lines. Like scratches. Jagged. White.

115 INT. LUCAS BARN - LATER 115

FOOTSTEPS sound. Charlie buttons up her shirt.

ETHAN (O.S.)
(from outside)
Charlie?

116 INT. LUCAS BARN - MOMENTS LATER 116

Ethan reaches Syrus's stall. Charlie has pulled herself together. She grooms Syrus. Ethan watches the stroke, stroke, stroke of the brush.

ETHAN
You've nothing to be ashamed of.
Those kind of wounds, that kind of
violence, turn anyone's stomach.

Charlie lets out a strange, sharp laugh.

CHARLIE
Not ashamed.

She stops brushing Syrus, stares down at the brush in her gloved hand.

CHARLIE

Why did you lie for me this morning, when Owen asked about me being in the barn so early?

ETHAN

For the same reason that most people tell those small lies. It was more convenient. You're valuable to me, Charlie, you've a keen eye. You not only see things, you put them in their proper place, interpret them.

CHARLIE
Maybe. But that doesn't mean I'm
like you. What he did to Ingrid was
personal. It wasn't for him, or for
her...

ETHAN

The Wolf's not sending us a message, Charlie. What you're seeing is an indication that he's losing control of that part of himself. He's an animal, when he kills. That's how you have to think of him. He becomes someone - something - else. Likely, so he can distance himself from what he's done.

(beat)

You disagree with me.

CHARLIE

You say murder shouldn't make sense, but to him - to me - it does. What don't, is the idea that he kills with no reason. The stalking, the trapping, the torture, he does it with purpose.

ETHAN

It's natural to be afraid -

CHARLIE

I'm not afraid of him, Langford. I'm afraid because after two months you still have no idea who he is.

She yanks off her gloves, as if they strangle her hands. Walks around Syrus so she is nearly toe to toe with Ethan.

CHARLIE

He knows what he's doing, every second. And every decision he's made, he would make it again. What he did to Ingrid, is not a sign that he's losing control. It's a sign that he has it.

She resumes brushing Syrus, still without her gloves on.

ETHAN

You're right. It was wrong of us to bring you into this further. God knows I tried to get away from it myself. You're free to go. You should go.

He reaches out, squeezes her shoulder. She lets him. Ethan walks out the barn door, leaving Charlie. The moment he's gone, she's out of the stall.

Goes to Flash. Unties her. Starts putting on the saddle.

A strap slips from her fingers. She grabs it, but the same thing happens. She can't hold it. She looks at her hand. It's trembling. She tries to stop it, closes it in a fist. Presses it to her thigh. Nothing. It just keeps shaking.

She leans her head against the horse.

117 INT. LUCAS BARN - LATER 117

Charlie tethers Flash in her stall again. At the door, she pauses. Sees movement in the rain. SOMEONE darts from around the house, keeping low, moving fast.

118 EXT. SCHOOL HOUSE - NIGHT 118

The rain falls in thick, blinding sheets. Charlie can just make out a shape entering the school house. She reaches the wall, and creeps along to the window.

As she does, the rain plays tricks. It Forms outlines in the blackness. The outline of someone else CROUCHED at the corner of the house. Plumes of hot breath melt in the air.

She dashes water from her eyes. The shape is gone. She reaches the spot, the corner. There are deep impressions in the mud. Treadless shoes.

Again she feels it. The hair rising on the back of her neck. Someone behind her, getting close She's learned. She spins, fast this time and There's no one there. The rain falls on nothing but mud.

119 INT. SCHOOL HOUSE - NIGHT 119

Samuels stands by the cabinet. He attempts to pry it open. With a sharp CRUNCH the wood gives way and he flings the doors aside, immediately rummaging through the contents.

It's fairly empty. Some books, more tin cans of pencils, twine, sheets of paper. He has all of it on the floor in moments.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Try on top.

She scares him enough that he pulls his gun.

SAMUELS

What the hell do you want?

CHARLIE
Same thing you do. To find what
Ingrid was hiding.

He lowers the gun, hesitant, and drags a chair over. On top of the cabinet, far back near the wall, is a box.

By the desk, he opens the box and pulls out a wad of bills.

SAMUELS
How'd you know?

CHARLIE
Marks between the desk and cabinet.
She dragged that chair, same as
you, and she did it often.

SAMUELS
It's mine, anyway.

CHARLIE
That why you beat her? She stole
it?

The gun rises again, pointed at her angrily.

SAMUELS
What you sayin, I beat her? You
don't know that!

CHARLIE
She says you did.

He starts. Opens his mouth to stammer but -

CHARLIE
Her body says it. Bruises too fresh
to be from her husband, too old to
be when she was killed.

SAMUELS
I gave her the money, to help her
through. I figured she was mine she
didn't make me think differently.
She certainly wasn't his no more.

CHARLIE
Seems she didn't need it. She kept
it.

SAMUELS

Oh she needed it. When he dropped dead, I thought we could make things proper...then she tells me she's up and leaving and using my goddamn money to do it! Wouldn't even tell me why! Said I was just like her husband if I thought she was hiding out here any more.

CHARLIE

You know where she was going?

SAMUELS

Yeah. Sure. Also know her real name wasn't Ingrid, and it wasn't Crouse.

120 EXT. POSSE'S CAMP NEAR SCHOOLHOUSE - NIGHT 120

The rain has stopped. Charlie walks into the camp as the men set up tents.

CHARLIE

Where's Langford?

121 INT. ETHAN'S TENT - NIGHT 121

Ethan reads the letters, quickly. Holding them close to a lamp. He jots something down as Charlie throws the flap open and steps inside.

He's surprised and happy to see her. Can't quite tell her.

CHARLIE

She lied about her name.

ETHAN

Yes.

CHARLIE

You figured already?

ETHAN

From the letters. They're addressed dear Isabelle and signed with the name Liza.

CHARLIE

And you got that from that?

ETHAN

Simplest explanation is usually the right one.

Isabelle and Ingrid are the same person. Question is why did she feel the need to change her name?

CHARLIE

There's someone who might be able to answer that. Deputy Samuels says she was planning to leave for Fort Benton to visit Crouse's partner. Figures he owed them money and she was fixing to get it from him before going back north. She wrote him a letter, had Samuels post it - before he knew what she planned.

ETHAN

North?

CHARLIE

Yeah. Ingrid - Isabelle - was originally from a place called Winnipeg.

ETHAN

The partner have a name?

CHARLIE

Samuels doesn't remember it. Said he was more focused on what the letter said, not who it was from. But he saw him once. He thinks.

ETHAN

He thinks...

CHARLIE

If they were running from something...or someone...the others might've been too.

Ethan taps his pencil on his notebook, deciding.

122

INT. ETHAN'S TENT - NIGHT

122

The lamp is almost out of oil. Ethan sits hunched with the pages tilted toward the weak light. He sips from a tin cup. Flips a page. Reads. And stops halfway down the page.

He picks up the previous page again, reading the bottom lines, the rereads the one in his hand, growing more excited.

123 EXT. POSSE'S CAMP NEAR SCHOOLHOUSE - MORNING

123

The men and Charlie prepare the horses. Porter confronts Ethan. Not happy.

PORTER

What does the woman's goddamn name have to do with anything? So she changed it, so what?

ETHAN

People who change their names, generally do so because they're hiding something. Or they're trying to leave something behind. In the letters, Ingrid's sister urges her to forgive herself of whatever 'great sin' she committed. Tries to get her to come home.

PORTER

We're not trying to discover her 'great sin', we're trying to catch the animal who slaughtered her.

ETHAN

What if there's a connection?

PORTER

Connection? Connection to what? Christ, Langford, you been telling me he kills for sport. We already know there ain't no connection. Ingrid Crouse was like every other of those poor devils. In the wrong place at the wrong time.

CHARLIE

I was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Porter blinks, surprised by Charlie's sudden entry into the conversation.

CHARLIE

And he left me alive.

PORTER

Maybe he just has taste, Mr. Wilson and you weren't to his liking!

ETHAN

We made a mistake - I made a mistake.

There is a similarity between all the victims. They were all new to their communities. None of them had family, none of them had friends who'd known them for more than two, three years. Crouse's partner is the first. Now I'm not saying for certain that it's of any significance. But we have nothing else to follow, and I don't know about you but I'm getting bloody tired of just waiting for another person to die.

Porter takes off his hat, thinking.

PORTER
 Goddamn it.
 (beat)
 I hate Fort Benton.

124 EXT. TRAIL TO FORT BENTON - DAY 124

Henri rides ahead of the posse, scanning the terrain. He spies MOVEMENT to his left, starts a bit, but does not halt.

Far behind him, the others notice nothing. He searches again, sees a RIDER briefly silhouetted. Riding parallel to them.

125 EXT. TRAIL TO FORT BENTON - DAY 125

Porter and Ethan ride side by side. Ethan watches Henri, who is far ahead.

Owen rides beside Charlie, on the other side of Syrus. They're moving at a trot. He notices Charlie rest the hand gripping Syrus's lead against her stomach.

Owen extends his hand toward Charlie, palm upwards.

OWEN
 You want me to pony awhile?

CHARLIE
 No.

OWEN
 I won't run off with him.

CHARLIE
 Not afraid of that.

OWEN

Sure you are. And that's okay, I take no offense.

(beat)

He ought to be broke by now, don't you think?

CHARLIE

Give a horse enough teaching from the ground, and they won't need breaking.

OWEN

Big talk, but we'll see when you tighten a girth round his belly.

Charlie smiles. She reaches down, slips the rope halter off Syrus's head. The colt dashes off at a gallop.

Ahead of them, Porter and Ethan turn in their saddles.

ETHAN

He get loose?

OWEN

Naw, Charlie's just proving a point, I expect.

Syrus covers the slopes of the grasslands easily. The men ride abreast now, all eyes on the black colt.

ETHAN

He's liable to cross the border a day before we do.

PORTER

He'll slow up to ordinary with a rider on him.

OWEN

Like hell he will. He won't even notice. Especially Charlie - no more than a cotton wisp.

Charlie snaps to attention at this, staring at Owen. His teasing grin wobbles as he sees the expression, but she hides it quickly, turns back to the colt.

And that's when they see, behind Syrus, a group of ten INDIAN RIDERS thunder toward them.

Instantly, Porter and Owen draw their guns.

Henri gallops up.

Charlie lets out a high whistle and the colt sprints back to her. A few of the Indians break off, as if to chase him.

Charlie starts to urge Flash forward but -

HENRI

Stay as you are. He's well ahead.

OWEN

Jesus...

ETHAN

Henri?

HENRI

They're Sioux. Or Lakota.

ETHAN

Could we be in their territory?

HENRI

I suggest you put your weapons away. No good now.

Henri nudges his horse out in front and raises his hand in a welcoming hail. The Marshals do as he says, reluctantly.

Syrus reaches Charlie and she quickly halts him.

The two Lakota rein up. They let out loud CRIES. Intimidating. Two others join them and surround Henri.

PORTER

He know what he's doin'?

ETHAN

We'll see.

Charlie notices one particular SIOUX MAN in the midst of the riders. They lock eyes. She nods, respectfully.

The Lakota keep looking over at the posse. Suspicious.

PORTER

(to Owen)

They turn on us, you don't be a slinger, you turn tail. Not a fair fight at this range.

ETHAN

Let's not talk like that gentlemen.

But he looks at Charlie, expression saying the same thing.

Finally, Henri rides back. His expression is grim. And shocked. The Indian men remain where they are.

HENRI

They're hunters. They ride from the hills of the Little Big Horn.

PORTER

That right? Army's there. Trying to bring some unruly tribes to heel.

HENRI

They failed. General named Custer and all of his men were brought down three days ago.

PORTER

All of em?

HENRI

They underestimated the number, underestimated the plans of the chiefs Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull.

PORTER

Jesus we should be bringing in all those bastards

HENRI

These men are Lakota, from Canadian soil. They were not part of the fighting.

PORTER

We supposed to just swallow that?

HENRI

If you want to question their honesty, be my guest.

It seems Porter might be stupid enough to do this. Then he looks at his brother. Shakes his head.

Henri offers a gesture of goodbye, and rides on. The others follow.

126 EXT. TRAIL TO FORT BENTON - DAY

126

Riding between Porter and Charlie, Owen can't look up from the ground.

OWEN

Baxter was riding with a troop was camped out just south of Big Horn. Boss Harding too.

PORTER

Probably they weren't called up. Sounds like that was part of the trouble, not enough men. They'll be waiting for you at end of season, same as every year, with big stories to tell.

It's a rare moment of softness. Porter reaches over squeezes his younger brother's shoulder. Charlie looks away, at the shrinking dust cloud left by the Lakota band.

127 EXT. FORT BENTON (USA) - DAY 127

A small, typical fort town, dusty, dirty and tired.

128 INT. FORT BENTON - POSTAL OFFICE/GENERAL STORE - DAY 128

A dozy POSTMASTER (65) shakes himself awake at the sound of a BELL tinkling on the door. He eyes whoever has just walked in. Suspicious.

POSTMASTER

Help you?

Inspector MacDonald smiles warmly at the Postmaster.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

I hope so. I'm here on a matter of some urgency. I need to find Damien Hollands. He used to live over at the boarding house, but --

POSTMASTER

No, he ain't there no more.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

So I've learned. The clerk couldn't tell me where he moved to.

POSTMASTER

Why you looking for him?

MacDonald considers how much to reveal. He removes something slung over his shoulder. A familiar, BEADED SADDLEBAG.

He removes a letter, all smiles. Showing bright teeth. A feminine scrawl has written Holland's name on envelope.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

A mutual friend asked me to deliver this to him. He's likely received correspondence from her before. A Mrs. Ingrid Crouse, perhaps you remember?

The Postmaster relaxes.

POSTMASTER

Yeah yeah. She's written a few times. Damien'll be ridin in for a drink when sun goes down, you don't mind waiting.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

Ah, well I do mind, actually.

MacDonald's free hand slips toward his hip, slowly. Stealthily.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

I need to be on my way as soon as possible. And this is a matter of some urgency, I think he'd appreciate the letter being delivered in a timely manner. Don't you?

The Postmaster thinks hard, disconcerted by MacDonald.

POSTMASTER

He's at the Stockyards, just outside town. If you ride straight through, you can't miss it.

MacDonald's hand reappears, empty. He puts the letter back, the Saddlebag back over his shoulder.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

Thank you ever so much.

He begins to walk away, then pauses. And for a brief moment a shadow passes across his features, we see his other face. Vicious and full of hate.

When he turns back, he is the Inspector again. Smiling.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

Actually, there is one other thing I might trouble you about...

129 EXT. FORT BENTON - DAY 129

As they ride through the town, the posse receives curious and suspicious looks from RESIDENTS. A SIOUX WOMAN and CHILD sit on the side of the road, selling coyote pelts.

130 EXT. FORT BENTON - NEAR BARRACKS - DAY 130

They halt before the army buildings.

PORTER

We don't even have a name,
Langford?

ETHAN

Deputy Samuels remembers him having
scar on the right side of his face.

PORTER

We all got scars! Half this town'll
fit that description.

He throws his hand out toward the street. Dozens of MEN HORSE TRADERS and TRAPPERS, FARMERS, and SOLDIERS in blue uniforms - make their way through the street.

Henri leans over and speaks to Ethan, exact words lost. Ethan shakes his head, firm, but Henri grows more fervent. Ethan says nothing.

ETHAN

Owen, how would you feel about
accompanying Henri while he speaks
with some of the Sioux? Alright
with you, Marshal?

Porter shrugs.

PORTER

Fine with me, what's fine with
Owen.

131 EXT. OFFICE OF THE COLONEL - NIGHT 131

Through the window, Porter and Charlie catch glimpses of Ethan, asking his questions. Inside, the COLONEL shakes his head. Another SOLDIER steps forward, listening.

CHARLIE

Why aren't you in there with him?

PORTER

Sometimes two ain't better than one
with military men.

They feel surrounded, gets their
hackles up.

(beat)

That and this particular military
man - Colonel Simons - don't like
me much.

CHARLIE

Sleep with his wife?

She smiles when Porter's irritated glare descends. It catches
him off guard. He realizes she's joking.

PORTER

Worse. Caught the man he was
tracking. We was trussing him up
across my pack mule when the
Colonel and his men rode in. I had
the proper paperwork.

CHARLIE

You catch many outlaws and such,
you and Owen?

PORTER

More than most. Less than some.
Been doing it since Owen was
younger than you. Think he's spent
more time in the saddle than on two
legs. This one we're chasing
though, never looked for one like
him...I'm about ready to pack it
in. Bounty or no.

CHARLIE

I can't believe that.

Charlie looks down the road, to where a sign advertises the
GENERAL GOODS AND POSTAL OFFICE. She gets an idea, starts
walking.

PORTER

Where you figure you're going?

CHARLIE

How does a postal office work?

PORTER

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

Deputy Samuels said she had him
post a letter to Crouse's partner.

PORTER

So?

CHARLIE

So could they tell us who mailed a letter to Ingrid Crouse in the last fortnight?

PORTER

Well...shit. Postmaster won't give out information though. It's U.S. Government Policy that there can be no -

CHARLIE

Not everyone sticks to policy, Marshal. Besides, U.S. Marshal outrank a U.S. Postmaster?

PORTER

Depends.

CHARLIE

On what?

PORTER

If the U.S. Postmaster is armed.

Charlie grins. So does Porter.

132 INT. FORT BENTON - POSTAL OFFICE - DAY

132

The first thing Charlie sees when entering the small office, is a row of six or seven posters with SKETCHES of people's faces. Wanted ads.

HER FACE is the third one from the top.

Her stride catches as she sees it. She forces herself not to look at it. Eyes forward. Porter notices nothing amiss.

She approaches the front counter where the POSTMASTER works quietly, sorting envelopes. Porter lets her keep the lead. Intimidating from a distance.

POSTMASTER

Name?

CHARLIE

Not here to pick up anything for myself. I need to locate someone.

POSTMASTER

Name?

CHARLIE

Don't know the name, I just know
they recently received a letter
from a woman, name of Ingrid
Crouse.

Startled, the Postmaster adjusts his seat on the stool,
clearly confused.

CHARLIE

Something wrong?

POSTMASTER

No, can't say for certain there is.
'Cept that you're the second man in
here asking after Damien - that's
the fella you're looking for.

Porter covers the distance to the counter in two giant
strides.

CHARLIE

Say again?

POSTMASTER

Another gentleman came in here this
morning. He wanted to know where
Damien had moved on to since he
quit living in the boarding house
down the street there. Said he was
aiming to deliver this letter. I
told him Damien's still in town,
just moved house to the stockyards.

PORTER

This man an Indian?

POSTMASTER

No, sir. He was a Scotsman, I
think, or an Irishman, I can never
tell the difference.

CHARLIE

And he was in here this morning?

The Postmaster glances at the clock on the wall.

POSTMASTER

Not more than two hours ago. Funny
thing though, he said someone might
come in after him. Said, if they
did, could I give them a package.
But...you're not what I was
expecting.

CHARLIE
Why's that?

POSTMASTER
Name on the package. CHARLENE
WILLOWS.

And the earth might as well have swallowed her up.

CHARLIE
Let me see it.

POSTMASTER
Well, I really don't think

The Postmaster looks to Porter, who pulls out his badge.

PORTER
Mr. Wilson has the authority of the
U.S. Marshals. Let him see it.

The Postmaster hands Charlie the package. Charlie doesn't open it. Can't open it.

The door to the postal office swings open, Ethan on the other side, with Henri.

ETHAN
If you two are finished, Henri and
Owen found our man. Damien
Hollands. Lives out by the
stockyards.

PORTER
Where's Owen?

HENRI
We were halfway there already. He
rode on ahead.

Porter lurches toward the door, terrified and determined. He pushes past a shocked Ethan. Charlie still can't move.

Charlie opens the envelope. Inside, is the muddy WANTED POSTER. And her necklace. The claws coated in DRIED BLOOD.

ETHAN
What is it?

CHARLIE
He's here.

133 EXT. FORT BENTON STREET - DAY 133

Charlie, Henri and Ethan charge down the road at a flat out gallop. Porter is visible just ahead, lashing his horse with his reins, ruthless with his heels.

Charlie flattens herself against Flash's neck and the mare pulls away from Henri and Ethan.

134 INT. STOCKYARD - DAY 134

His horse has not stopped before Porter leaps from the saddle. He disappears into the low slung building. The other three riders careen to a halt.

ETHAN

Porter!

Charlie's the first in after the Marshal. She grips her rifle tight.

135 INT. FORGE - DAY 135

The building houses a blacksmith's forge, the coals still smoldering. Iron pitch forks, scythes, and plow blades make for eerie outlines in the dim light.

Moving around the forge, Charlie looks to the ground. To the grooves and scuffs in the packed dirt floor.

She exhales, spooks at the rattle of metal on metal, keeps her finger on the trigger. Ethan slinks low behind her.

CHARLIE

(glancing at Ethan)

Henri?

ETHAN

Around the side.

Both of them hear an agonized yell. Caution forgotten, they sprint for the door.

136 EXT. FORGE - DAY 136

Porter has found Owen. He lies between the Forge and a maze of plank stock corrals and chutes. Porter crouches by him.

The scene is hopeless. Owen's throat has been slashed. Blood flows from a bullet hole in his thigh. Porter has his hands over his brother's throat.

Owen reaches out to Charlie, palm upwards. She can't react. Then tentatively, she takes his bloody hand. He sweeps a gaze over her that is unmistakably tender. As if...

Owen coughs. Blood leaks from the corner of his mouth. Charlie looks to Ethan.

Ethan takes his hat off, shakes his head. No point. Owen tries to speak. Looks at Porter. Frantic.

PORTER

He said they went in there. Into the yards. The Wolf, and Hollands.

Henri moves over to the perimeter fence of the stockyard chutes. He gives a determined nod. Motions that he'll go one way, someone else should go another.

ETHAN

Marshal, I'm going to need you now. Charlie will stay with Owen.

CHARLIE

He's in no way to go in there.

Ethan grips Porter's shoulder. Owen starts to tremble and immediately Porter shrugs off Ethan's hand. He's not moving.

Seeing this, Charlie gets up and darts toward the stock chutes.

ETHAN

Charlie!

She ignores him.

137 EXT. STOCKYARD CHUTES - DAY

137

The chutes are a network of narrow fenced in avenues between dozens of small corrals. Their sides are made of thick planks, seven feet high but warped in places. There are only the smallest of slits between planks.

VERTICAL TRAP DOORS - solid squares of wood - hang poised to fall like guillotines, creating enclosures and blockades.

Charlie and Ethan follow one chute, following tracks in thick mud. Their guns are ready. Feet quiet. Breathing measured. A blood trail appears on a plank. A finger swipe of red.

Charlie moves past Ethan. She passes beneath a TRAP DOOR, pausing beneath it to examine two sets of footprints.

CHARLIE

Hollands was alive. Walking on his own, with the Wolf beside.

SNAP. SNAP. Charlie looks up. Ethan is two paces from her, but on the other side of the trap door. SNAP.

They lock eyes and register the sound The rope holding the trap door WHOOSHES through its pulleys. Charlie throws herself out of the way The trap door CRASHES down.

A high wall now separates Charlie from Ethan. She can't see him, and scrambles to pick herself up. Her weapon is gone.

She presses herself to the far side of the chute, waiting for the attack to come.

ON THE OTHER SIDE Ethan leaps up, gun drawn. He carefully tries to see through the planks. Nothing...nothing...then he starts abruptly as SOMEONE, a black shape, dashes by and disappears around the curve in the neighboring chute. He tries to see, to take aim, but it's too late.

ETHAN

You alright, Ace?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

I don't have my gun.

He turns his attention to the door. He digs his fingers underneath the door. Tries to get a grip. Can't. Can't lift it or gain purchase.

ETHAN

Try to help me lift this thing.

ON THE OTHER SIDE Charlie moves to the door and attempts to pry it upwards with Ethan. No luck.

ETHAN (O.S.)

Shit.

She has only two ways she can go: continue on...or climb over. She starts to put her foot on one of the boards, but a sound makes her look down the chute. Twenty paces from her, the chute turns. She can't see around the corner.

CHARLIE

(quietly)

I need my gun, Ethan.

ETHAN (O.S.)

I'm going to climb over.

Another sound. A THUMP. Definitely from around the corner. She presses her palms against the wood.

CHARLIE

My gun, Ethan. Throw it to me. Now.

Quickly, Ethan retrieves her rifle.

ETHAN

Stand back.

He throws the rifle like a javelin and -

BANG! A bullet nicks the rifle, changing it's trajectory slightly. Ethan drops down to one knee.

ETHAN

Jesus.

Charlie picks up the rifle. The corner of it's wooden butt has been blown off. Still, she holds it tight, calming.

ETHAN (O.S.)

Alright, Ace?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

ETHAN (O.S.)

Well, we now know something new about our monster.

CHARLIE

He can shoot.

ETHAN

He can shoot. I'm going back to find something to pry this door, stay quiet, stay put.

Charlie gets on her feet. Moves toward the corner, gun raised. Determined.

ETHAN

Charlie?

(no answer)

Christ almighty... He too gets up, starts backwards.

138

EXT. STOCKYARD CHUTES (WITH CHARLIE) - MOMENTS LATER

138

Charlie's footsteps make no sound as she follows flecks of blood. She reaches another TRAP DOOR and hesitates.

The same soft THUMP attracts her from up ahead. She steps through the door. It stays up.

Carefully, slowly, rifle cocked and at her eye, she approaches the corner and darts around it, ready to shoot. A GREY CAT peers up at her from where it eats, a dead CROW at its paws.

The cat hisses, picks up the crow and LEAPS onto the wooden partition, dragging its kill. The crow's wing bangs against the wood, and when the cat jumps off the other side of the partition, it makes a THUMP when it lands.

Charlie lets out a shaky breath, wipes sweat from her nose.

From two feet to her right comes a soft, rumbling growl. A human growl. She doesn't even hesitate. She just shoots.

139

EXT. STOCKYARD CHUTES (WITH ETHAN) - DAY

139

In his own part of the maze, Ethan freezes at the sound of the SHOT. He doesn't know what to do. He can't see. Is trying to be silent. A second shot follows.

ETHAN
(yelling)
Charlie!

HENRI (O.S.)
Ethan!

Ethan spins, but Henri is on the other side of the plank partition.

ETHAN
Charlie!
(beat)
He's not with me, Henri, we got separated! The bastard separated us!

140

EXT. STOCKYARD CHUTES (WITH CHARLIE) - DAY

140

Charlie moves sideways, gun aimed. She sees a flash of movement through the slats, but doesn't fire this time.

ETHAN (O.S.)
(distant)
Charlie!

She reaches a GATE and pushes it open quickly. A few steps forward, across a small CORRAL and she's at the opening of the next chute. Its gate swings, as if just opened, but the long stretch of space is unoccupied.

Quickly, Charlie checks her flank, her rear. She's alone.

She picks up the blood trail again. It leads into the new chute, but Charlie doesn't go in. She debates.

Without warning, the door falls, and once more Charlie leaps back, gun up. The CRASH echoes.

141 EXT. STOCKYARD CHUTES (WITH ETHAN) - DAY 141

Together now, Ethan and Henri dash toward the sound of the CRASH. Abruptly, Henri grabs Ethan, stops him. A VOICE echoes ahead of them.

THE WOLF (O.S.)
Charlene. It's a nice name.
Unusual. Pity that you have to hide
it behind a common one.

Struggling to understand, Ethan looks at Henri.

142 EXT. STOCKYARD CHUTES (WITH CHARLIE) - DAY 142

Charlie can't quite believe she's hearing this voice. She aims toward the sound. Doesn't fire.

The voice comes from further to her left. Further from the gate where she entered.

THE WOLF (O.S.)
(further away now)
Why don't you tell them? You're not
the only fraud among them, anyway.

There's a harsh SCRAPING from the other side of the wood wall. Like a sharp stone being dragged across the planks as the Wolf walks.

THE WOLF
Is it because you think they'll
kill you, like they want to kill
me?
(beat)
Silence silence. You're still
talking to me though, even if you
wish you weren't. You want to kill
me, right now. But you only know
what they know. Nothing at all.

His footsteps and the scraping stop. Charlie stops. Peers at the fence. Waits. She can't see much through the slits in the boards but she tries and -

A WOLF'S gaping, fanged mouth appears, followed by a yellow eye. Charlie shoots. The bullet wedges fast in the wood.

A growling laugh answers the attack.

THE WOLF

Quite a feeling, isn't it? Fear, I mean. It tells us we want to live. Up to a point. Then, eventually, it makes us desire the opposite.

CHARLIE

Why didn't you kill me?

THE WOLF

Did you want to die?

Taken off guard, Charlie considers this.

CHARLIE

No.

THE WOLF

Then I'll wait until you do.

Charlie's directly across from the gate where she entered. Another door in front of her. This one shut. But it begins to open. Creaking upwards. The rope pulled by HIM.

Instantly, the muzzle of a large DOG thrusts through the opening under the door. It snarls, sensing Charlie. Then seeing her as the opening allows for his head.

She's paralyzed. Staring at the snapping jaws and paws clawing at the dirt, tearing small canyons in the mud. Charlie yanks her gun up. Aims. Fires and CLUNK. It jams. The dog squirms through.

Charlie bolts. She won't reach the gate in time. Instead, she launches herself at the wall. Grabs the top plank with just the tips of her fingers. Manages to pull herself up.

She's still within reach of the dog as it closes in. She kicks off the wood. The dog's jaws close on her boot, but she yanks free. Her momentum carries her over the partition.

She FALLS. Hard. Lands with all her weight on her right arm. She screams, her eyes slammed shut with pain. When she opens them, she screams again.

Behind her, the dog is snarling and digging, trying to get at her still. In front of her, the dead DAMIEN HOLLANDS stares at her.

His neck is twisted. His face entirely masked in blood. The SNARLS overwhelm her as she squeezes her eyes shut.

143 EXT. DAKOTA TERRITORY - MEADOWLAND - DAY (FLASHBACK) 143

LITTLE CHARLIE (7) trudges through deep snow, holding a walking stick. She is bundled in wool and fur. Only her eyes visible, lashes frosted. Little Charlie is focused upon a stand of trees ahead.

Then comes a GROWL.

She freezes. Slowly, very slowly, she turns. Her eyes go wide with fear.

A massive BLACK WOLF stalks toward her. Its hackles go up.

Its ears flatten and its lips curl back, flashing fangs. The attack comes. He slams into Charlie, knocking her to the ground. She kicks and screams and pummels him.

His front paws tear at her clothes, seeking a grip as he shakes his head savagely, her arm locked in his jaws. The claws of his feet find flesh and tear it. She screams. And something changes.

She starts to claw the animal's eyes with her fingers. She brings her knee up into its belly. It lets go. Dashes out of reach, still snarling.

The white snow is splashed with blood. Charlie rolls to her knees. The skin on her chest, below her throat, is exposed. Shredded. She stares at the wolf. Full of hatred. Both of them tense, and suddenly it seems as if she will be the one to spring forward snarling. Then

CRACK! A shot! The wolf jerks sideways and falls dead.

At the treeline, a MAN lowers his gun.

He scoops Charlie up into his arms. She looks up at him, dazed, and he pulls the scarf away from his nose and mouth.

It's SAUL. Younger. Cleaner.

SAUL

Where do you live, girl?

144 EXT. STOCKYARD CHUTES (WITH ETHAN) - DAY 144

Running hard, Henri and Ethan round the corner and see Charlie. She's sitting up. Ethan runs to her, Henri covering them both, searching for the Wolf.

Ethan touches Charlie's cheek. She doesn't respond. Just keeps focused on the CLAW NECKLACE that has landed just out of reach. Gently, Ethan grabs it, puts it in her hand.

145 INT. FORT BENTON BARRACKS - SICK ROOM - DAY 145

The claw necklace lays on a table. Sitting in bed, Charlie still studies it from afar. Her arm's in a sling.

She parts her shirt, looking down at a bandage wrapped around her shoulder, across her collar bone. The shirt isn't hers.

She gets out of bed.

146 INT. FORT BENTON BARRACKS - SICK ROOM - LATER 146

Dressed now, Charlie opens the door.

Porter sits outside. Chin on chest. A man utterly undone. It takes a moment for him to look up.

PORTER

You're supposed to stay in bed.
Doctor's instructions.

CHARLIE

My arm's fine.

PORTER

Yeah, looks that way, but you have
your orders.

Charlie falls silent. He rises, as if to herd her inside.

She steps back. They both see the pile of clothes with the blood stained gloves at the same time.

CHARLIE

Marshal...

PORTER

Nobody's fault, nobody to blame,
except the man who ambushed him.
Owen wasn't a fool, he made a call
and it went wrong, but he wouldn't
want our pity.

CHARLIE

We're gonna get him.

PORTER

No we, anymore, kid. I just wanted
to make sure damn doctor had fixed
you up right. Looks like he did.

Porter puts on his hat. Slowly, extends his hand to shake.

PORTER

Owen liked you, from the start. His
eyes always were better than mine.

Her hand is in his for a long moment, then he leaves. She can hear his boots, the CLINK of spurs, until he's outside.

147 EXT. BARRACKS, NEAR ARMORY - DAY 147

Henri carries a bucket of steaming water and a sponge. Several SOLDIERS steer clear of him. He pauses though, to watch Porter mount up and secure Owen's horse to his saddle.

The unmistakable shape of a BODY, wrapped in cloth, lies across the second horse's saddle.

Porter sees Henri. They lock eyes. And Porter gives the smallest of nods. Then he rides away.

148 INT. FORT BENTON BARRACKS - SICK ROOM - DAY 148

Charlie sits on the edge of the bed, just staring at the necklace. A KNOCK.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

Ethan walks inside, shuts the door behind him. Immediately, he removes his hat.

149 INT. BARRACKS - VACANT ROOM - DAY 149

Damien Hollands lies on a table. Henri closes the door behind him, and pulls the blinds open wide to let light in. He kisses the cross around his neck, and crosses Damien.

HENRI

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall
not be in want. He maketh me to lie
down in green pastures."

Gently, he sponges away the blood on Damien's face.

HENRI

"He leadeth me beside still
waters."

The blood washes away to unmask most of Damien's features.

Henri stops singing, abruptly. He sponges away more blood, quickly, less gently. Stares at the dead man's face. Recognition. Disbelief.

150 INT. FORT BENTON BARRACKS - SICK ROOM - DAY

150

The disguise seems to have melted away. Charlie sits cross-legged. Beneath her shirt, no bindings hide her chest, her short white blonde hair sticks up in tufts.

Ethan rubs his collar, absently.

ETHAN

Henri tells me he never asked why
you did it? I have to.

CHARLIE

This an official questioning?

ETHAN

Takes an awful lot of trouble for a
young woman to disguise herself as
a man...she must have a reason.

CHARLIE

Because my step-father isn't
looking for a runaway step son.

ETHAN

I thought perhaps it was a husband.
(beat)
And he - your step father - gave
you those scars, I suppose.

Charlie reacts by placing her hand over her chest, angry.

ETHAN

Henri couldn't hide everything.

Her relaxed pose changes, her eyes go to the window as they
so often did in the jail cell.

ETHAN

The horses --

CHARLIE

Are mine. Like I said. I expect
he'd argue that I belong to him. If
you agree then yes, I am a thief as
well as a liar.

ETHAN

I had to ask, Miss Wilson.

CHARLIE

It's Charlie. Still.

He's rebuked. He starts for the door. Then pauses, clearly troubled by something.

ETHAN

How did he know your name?

Charlie's confused.

ETHAN

The Wolf. He called you "Charlene".
I can understand how he realized
your true sex, but how did he know
your true name?

She keeps calm. Notes the necklace.

CHARLIE

My necklace. Had a piece of wood
with it carved on one side.

Ethan picks up the necklace.

CHARLIE

He must have taken it off me. I
thought I'd just lost it.

ETHAN

If I check my measurements of
Ingrid Crouse's chest wounds

CHARLIE

I say they'll match, yeah.

Shaking his head, he puts the necklace down.

CHARLIE

What if the answer had been yes?
What if I had stolen something?
What if I had three hundred dollars
in my pocket that wasn't mine? I
took it because I thought the
beatings and the whippings and all
the times I spent pinned on my back
earned me the right to a few dollar
bills. What if that were the truth,
what would you do with me?

The space between them simmers with her anger, and he takes a
step forward, as if to reach out, calm her but --

The door bursts open. Henri enters, hands still bloody.
Dripping pink water.

HENRI

His name isn't Damien Hollands, his
name is Thomas Pitt.

151 EXT. CYPRESS HILLS (CANADA) - DAY

151

The horses grow skittish. As if they can still smell death.
Henri leads Ethan and Charlie, up a hill.

The plain lays in full view below. Heaps of charred wood form
outlines of what were once buildings. The grass grows thicker
than the surrounding hills. Henri dismounts. He goes to cross
himself. Then makes a second sign.

152 EXT. CYPRESS HILLS

152

On foot, leading the horses, they wind across the valley
floor. Charlie spots a pale branch protruding from a clump of
grass. But it's not a branch.

Ethan dismounts, examines it.

It's bone. Human. A femur.

There are others, scattered all across the valley. The place
is a graveyard.

CHARLIE

What happened here?

Ethan's chin falls against his chest as he realizes...

ETHAN

The massacre.

HENRI

Three years ago, a group of Montana
wolfers lost half a dozen ponies to
Cree raiders. They tracked them to
a trading post on the banks of
Battle Creek. But then the trail
vanished. Two lodges of Assiniboine
were also camped on the plains by
the creek. The wolfers thought the
tribe must have known something of
their missing horses, but they were
offered no help, so they stayed to
drink with the other trappers and
traders. Then, another horse went
missing, this one belonging to a
trapper.

The story goes that he went to the leader of the wolfers and asked him, and his group, to enter the Assiniboine camp and...procure some of the tribe's ponies, until they gave up the stolen one. Every single one of them had been at the whisky. They were angry about their own animals, they were angry that the Assiniboine were allowed to live so close to white men's trading posts. The translator who often accompanied men into the Assiniboine camp was not there - he had gone north would not return until sun up. The men crossed the creek, began to remove the horses from the Assiniboine's herds. The Assiniboine could not understand what the men were doing...one of them must have intervened. A wolfer took his attempt to stop them as an act of aggression. And he shot him. After that, it was like the breaking of a dam. The Assiniboine retaliated with arrows and muskets. They were cut down by Henrys and Winchesters. Women and children dropped with bullets in their backs as they attempted to run. It was over in less time than it takes to cross this field.

CHARLIE

Nobody buried them.

HENRI

No. No Assiniboine returned here, and the wolfers fled south before the sun could light their work.

Charlie dismounts, leaves her horses and walks to another cluster of newer, darker earth.

ETHAN

How did you know Thomas Pitt was one of them?

HENRI

I was there, when he was brought to trial in Winnipeg. Just a few months back.

He was released when there was no one to testify against him. They were all released, the few who were caught.

CHARLIE

Winnipeg. Ingrid Crouse was from Winnipeg.

HENRI

Yeah. She and her husband must have been staying at Solomen's. And maybe she didn't hold a rifle, but you can bet her husband did. Like the others, they fled, changed their names...

CHARLIE

But if there was no threat of them being caught

ETHAN

There was a threat. But it remained nothing more than that.

HENRI

For many months, the new, red coated mounted police went deep into Wyoming and Montana looking for the men who did it. There were promises of retribution from both governments, and the knowledge that if just one tongue could be bought...but none could be. That is why the bones were left here, because until there is justice there can be no rest, no sweet sleep. But then, no one remembers it anymore.

CHARLIE

He remembers. The Wolf remembers.

HENRI

Oui. It would seem so.

Charlie looks around, half expecting the Wolf to be standing next to the white bones.

CHARLIE

But the Postmaster said he wasn't Indian.

HENRI

Only a white man would feel the need to dress his justice in a mask.

ETHAN

It's vengeance, not justice. And a mask won't save him.

CHARLIE

It already has. He's nearly done all he wanted - what the law couldn't do. They must be nearly all dead.

HENRI

At least one more lives, brought to Winnipeg with Thomas Pitt. He wasn't among the dead so far.

ETHAN

We can't be sure. There could be other victims we never found.

HENRI

Perhaps. I doubt it though. He used to live less than a mile from here. My guess is he still does.

CHARLIE

Unless the Wolf has already reached him.

153 INT. CABIN - DAY

153

Weak, dusty beams of light illuminate a worn board floor. A straw bed. Cupboards. A rocking chair and table.

The door opens with a CREAK, Henri on the threshold. Charlie and Ethan follow behind him as he walks inside. Looks around. Only Henri hasn't bothered to have his gun ready.

But the place is untouched. The weapons are lowered.

ETHAN

If he's dead, he wasn't killed here.

Above the mantle of the fireplace is a beautiful SATCHEL made of deer hide, a bright BEADED FLOWER stitched on the side. Charlie looks at it closely, curious.

HENRI
 He was Metis. A halfblood
 (beat)
 ...a mutt.

Henri dusts off a lamp with his shirtsleeve. Ethan brushes a fingertip over the table.

ETHAN
 There's recent stock in the
 cupboards, but he hasn't been here
 in a couple months.
 (a long exhale)
 Damn. Damn, damn, damn.

CHARLIE
 (unaffected)
 Might want to save your
 disappointment a breath or too.

154 EXT. CABIN - DAY

154

A SECOND CABIN, smaller, sits thirty yards from the first.

Between the two, Charlie stalks over the ground carefully, palm hovering over the grass, sometimes her fingertips graze the blades. Ethan watches from the front porch.

Finally, Charlie rises from her crouch.

CHARLIE
 We're the first to ride up in a
 week or more. And nothing's been
 touched inside. How could he know
 Henri would recognize Pitt, or know
 about this place? He wouldn't.

Ethan blinks, understanding slowly.

ETHAN
 We're ahead of him.

Charlie nods.

155 EXT. CABINS - LATER

155

The sun is dropping steadily.

Ethan settles Henri's horse in the corral, while Charlie attempts to obscure the hoof prints of the others with her scuffing feet.

HENRI

We want the horses hidden, they'll have to be out at that bluff, or behind the house.

ETHAN

No, if he approaches from the west he'll see them.

Charlie eyes the second cabin. Opens the door, examining it. Then she whistles.

Syrus pulls away from Henri, who lets him go. At the Cabin door, Charlie steps aside, herds Syrus across the threshold.

156 INT. SMALL CABIN - DAY

156

The horses have been tied in line at the back of the room. Henri and Ethan check their rifles. Charlie adjusts a horse's halter.

HENRI

I will keep watch to the west, from here.

Charlie ducks under the rope. She doesn't like this idea.

ETHAN

It could very well be he won't be trying to hide, might ride up as he did with Ingrid.

CHARLIE

He might do anything. All we know for sure, he's good at what he does, and what he does is take people when they're alone.

Torn between the two suggestions, Ethan eyes both his partners.

ETHAN

He won't be alone. We'll be right here. I leave it to you, Henri.

157 INT. CABIN - NIGHT

157

The room is all but pitch black, lit by a single candle on the table, and the embers of a fire.

Ethan once again sits on the floor, legs outstretched. He has a clear view of the door and single window. Charlie leans against the table leg, also on the floor. She shifts uneasily. Fidgets with her rifle. Can't sit quiet.

ETHAN

Be still. Your precious colt will be fine. Wolf will come to the light, to the smoke.

CHARLIE

If he wants to keep watch to the west, he should be on the roof.

ETHAN

You know, this could very well be the most concern I've seen you show for anything, besides that animal.

He regrets the words immediately.

She offers no retort. Only a fierce, hurt glare and adjusts her position so she doesn't have to look at him.

The light from the candle dances over the shelves above the small cook stove. Over cans and GLASS JARS. Three glass jars.

158 HONEY JARS.

158

CHARLIE

Ethan...how did Henri get to be your guide?

ETHAN

He was asked. As I was.

CHARLIE

By who exactly? I mean, who chose him?

ETHAN

I can't say as I know the answer to that...he was chosen because he knows the land from Ottawa to Fort Walsh.

CHARLIE

I don't think that was the only reason. It's his. This is his house.

Without a sound, Charlie darts away from her hiding place, straight for the door.

159 EXT. CYPRESS HILLS - NIGHT

159

Charlie runs to the other house, staying low.

160 INT. SECOND CABIN - NIGHT 160

The horses shift and greet Charlie with nickers when she steps inside. They are alone.

Henri is gone.

161 EXT. CYPRESS HILLS - NIGHT 161

Standing a few strides from the porch, Charlie looks like she could be swallowed up in this vast, dark landscape. She's no more than a shadow. A wisp. She scans the hills.

ETHAN (O.S.)
(whispering)
Charlie! What the hell

CHARLIE
It's Henri's house, Ethan! He's
coming for Henri!

There. She sees a silhouette. Walking away to the west. She sprints for it.

As Charlie runs, she readies her rifle. Her breath is the loudest sound, hissing in and out of clenched teeth.

The silhouette vanishes beneath the hilltop ahead of her.

162 EXT. CYPRESS HILLS - MOMENTS LATER 162

ON THE HILLTOP Charlie pauses, trying to see. Finds the shadow moving, farther away than expected. To her right.

She adjusts her course and starts down toward it but HALTS abruptly. Startled because A SECOND shadow separates from the darkness straight ahead.

The two shapes move TOWARD one another!

Hoofbeats precede Ethan, riding Flash. He halts beside Charlie, as she raises her rifle. Can't tell who is who.

The two shadows are closer now, on a collision course.

She cannot decide. Her finger brushes the trigger.

CHARLIE
(yelling)
Henri!

One shadow halts - responding to his name. The other increases speed as Charlie snaps her gun up and FIRES but misses.

Too late now. The two silhouettes blur together as they collide and a SCREAM explodes out of the silence! Full of pain and fear. It is Henri's.

Ethan spurs Flash forward, leaving Charlie behind.

163

EXT. CYPRESS HILLS - NIGHT

163

Henri has fallen by a CREEK. Ethan already stoops over his friend as Charlie covers the last distance.

The Wolf is gone.

Alive still, Henri murmurs through bloody lips. His throat and chest are torn, his shirt is soaked with blood.

He reaches for Charlie's hand and she takes it. Grips hard. Then abruptly Henri's eyes go wide, terrified and he opens his mouth to scream, GURGLING desperately.

In his eye-line, far away, a FIGURE stands silhouetted. Taunting. Something snaps in Ethan. He runs to Flash.

CHARLIE

Ethan, no! Don't!

But he thunders off in pursuit.

HENRI

Bless me, father. Forgive me, for I have sinned.

CHARLIE

It's me, Henri. Charlie. You didn't do anything wrong.

HENRI

I damned...gave them up.

CHARLIE

Who, Henri?

From far away a single SHOT rings out and Charlie jerks toward the sound, waiting for more. For anything else. Entwined in her fingers, Henri's hand goes limp. She doesn't know what to do now. Except let go of his hand.

164

EXT. CYPRESS HILLS - NIGHT

164

Picking her way through the darkness, Charlie pauses often

to listen. Nothing. Silence.

CHARLIE
(yelling)
Ethan!

She waits. Straining for a sound. Then puts her fingers in her mouth and lets out a piercing WHISTLE. From somewhere ahead, she hears a GROAN.

165 EXT. CYPRESS HILLS - NIGHT 165

Ethan lies on his back. He lets out a rough cough, and GROANS. Charlie reaches him, but halts abruptly.

A few paces away, Flash has crumpled. Charlie kneels beside her. Blood still trickles from the bullet wound between the horse's ears. Charlie smooths the horse's mane, her fingers trembling.

166 EXT. FORT WALSH (CANADA) - CORRAL - DAY 166

Perched on the corral fence, Charlie watches Syrus and Henri's gelding roll in the sand. She smiles as the gelding comes to her. Offers him a handful of grain. Then the sadness strikes her.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD (O.S.)
Miss Willows?

The voice startles Charlie and her sudden turn to face it, startles the gelding. He shies.

Inspector MacDonald offers an apologetic hand. He's dressed in scarlet, helmet under one arm.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD
I didn't mean to startle you, Miss Willows, forgive me. Could I have a word?

CHARLIE
Why?

INSPECTOR MACDONALD
My name's Inspector James MacDonald. I knew Henri Gautier. My condolences.
(beat)
I understand you have become a valuable asset to our investigation. If we could employ women I would certainly be honored to keep you under my command.

CHARLIE

I'm not under anyone's command.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

No of course not. What will you do,
now the chase is to be called off?

The news forces Charlie to look away, to grip the railing tighter. The horses stay at the far side of the pen.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

Ah. You had yet to hear, I'm sorry.
That's the second apology I've owed
you in as many minutes, I am quite
out of practice.

CHARLIE

Who hired Henri?

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

Henri was a volunteer Scout. But I
was under the impression that
Doctor Langford got him involved.

CHARLIE

No, other way round.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

May I ask why it matters?

CHARLIE

The Wolf thought Henri was there,
at the massacre in the Cypress
Hills. Involved some how. He killed
him for it, same as all the others.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

Henri was made a part of the
company intentionally, you think?
Because he was always an intended
victim.

Charlie nods while MacDonald thinks this over.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

If I'm not mistaken, the cabins you
visited were very near a place
called, in English, Eden Ridge. I
imagine you could almost see the
tall pine from the cabin window -
the place where two of the
Assiniboine women threw themselves
from a precipice, rather than fall
to the men who pursued them.

That's a part of the story often left untold, even when it is remembered.

CHARLIE

What does it matter if he lived so close?

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

Henri could well have been in the center of the massacre, Charlie. At the very least, he was on its outskirts.

CHARLIE

Were you involved?

(at his startled look)

Henri said the police tried to find the men who did it.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

No. Do you know, it took two months for news of the atrocity to reach the ears of Ottawa? Twenty three innocent Assiniboine slain. Yet the death of one white man was splashed across the front page within a day of his being killed, and the following week a small posse searches for his murderer. A second man dies across the border, and the mighty U.S. Marshals immediately join the fray, but they lifted not a finger to extradite those responsible for the massacre.

CHARLIE

There wasn't enough proof to do anything. No one would speak out against them.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD

There were. They were ignored because they had names like Running Fox and Little Soldier. Because the blood of the Indian pollutes the heart of halfbreeds and makes them to be liars by nature. It was a tragedy, Miss Willows, a true tragedy. But...there are men like Doctor Langford. Unswerving and upright. And you. You would not allow murderers to flee from justice?

Inspector MacDonald nods to a young man, CADET LEWIS (17) approaching at a run.

INSPECTOR MACDONALD
He's looking for you, I expect.
Give my regards to Langford. We
will speak again soon. I'll take
you to the ridge. Its significance
would not be lost on you, of all
people.

He gives a salute. Walks off at a leisurely pace as the Cadet reaches Charlie.

167 EXT. FORT WALSH - BARRACKS - DAY

167

Cadet Lewis leads Charlie, and as she rounds the corner of the Barracks she sees: PORTER'S HORSE tied to the post.

CHARLIE
(whispering)
Porter...

She increases speed but Cadet Lewis grabs her arm, sharply enough to make her almost snarl in anger.

CADET LEWIS
Doctor Langford wants you to meet
him around back. He was very clear.

168 INT. BARRACKS - VACANT ROOM - DAY

168

When she enters, Ethan sits at a table, his hands resting on a piece of paper, head bowed low.

CHARLIE
Have you seen Porter? His horse is
outside.

ETHAN
Yes.

Charlie realizes something's wrong.

CHARLIE
What's happened?

Straightening, Ethan turns the piece of paper and pushes it toward her. It's Charlie's WANTED POSTER.

ETHAN
He ran into a small posse on his
way south. Brought back this. Tell
me it's a mistake.

(after her silence)
You killed those two men? Your fath-

CHARLIE
The man who took up with my mother,
and his son.

ETHAN
Was it an accident?

CHARLIE
No.

ETHAN
Was it self defense, then?

CHARLIE
Doesn't matter.

ETHAN
On the contrary, it matters a great
deal.

CHARLIE
If Porter came to arrest me he
should be here.

ETHAN
We're out of his jurisdiction. I
have the authority to hand you over
to him, and the moral obligation.
Unless I am convinced it was self
defense.

CHARLIE
It wasn't.

ETHAN
Perhaps you felt you had no choice,
it was your life or theirs --

CHARLIE
No, Ethan. I shot them, the father
first, in the head, son in the
heart. He died too slowly so I shot
him a second time through the
skull. What you wanted to hear?

Ethan leans his head in his hands.

CHARLIE
What about the Wolf?

ETHAN
What about him?

CHARLIE
He needs to be stopped.

ETHAN
That's why you stayed. You think
you can atone for the murders by
catching a killer.

CHARLIE
I stayed because you asked me to,
and I was in your debt. And I
stayed because mercy is as baffling
to me, as murder is to you. He
didn't kill me, he could have, he
didn't. But he killed Ingrid
Crouse. Killed her, and put my
marks on her!

ETHAN
Perhaps he doesn't kill his own
kind.

CHARLIE
You make things too simple,
Langford.

He thinks a long moment.

ETHAN
I'm sorry.
(calling out)
Officer!

No one responds to the call.

ETHAN
Stay as you are.

Ethan steps out into -

169 INT. BARRACKS HALL - DAY

169

Cadet Lewis sits with another YOUNG LIEUTENANT, playing cards
on a small table at the end of the hall. Both leap up when
they see Ethan taking a few strides toward them.

ETHAN
Get Marshal Porter.

The two young men salute and hurry off. Ethan takes a moment, leans on the wall outside the door to where Charlie waits. His fingers collapse into a tight, angry fist.

Then he pushes the door open.

The room is empty.

170 EXT. FORT WALSH BARN - DAY

170

Henri's horse stands absolutely still while Charlie throws the saddle on and cinches it tight. Her other hand clasps the horse's breastplate in place. She's a frenzy of swift, sure movement.

She has the bridle buckled as the horse accepts the bit.

She throws her rope around Syrus's neck. For the first time, the colt puts up a mild fight.

Not enough to slow her though. She mounts up and charges out of the pen.

171 EXT. SASKATCHEWAN PRAIRIE - DAY

171

The two horses gallop over flat plains of gold scrubgrass and shrubs. Henri's gelding is slow, tired. Syrus fights to move ahead of him, tugging on Charlie. She pulls back.

Syrus jerks sideways and charges forward. Charlie nearly falls. She throws herself backwards, stops the gelding and hauls on the rope. She leaps off the gelding.

CHARLIE

Whoa! ENOUGH!

Something snaps in her. The anger and frustration suddenly visible again, and Syrus sees it. He reacts as he did with Saul, with MacDonald. His ears go back and he attempts to flee. As if from a predator.

Charlie sees the fear.

She lets go of the rope. Syrus sprints away from her.

Rage gives way to grief, and her whole body shakes with sobs.

Syrus slowly makes his way back toward her, dragging the rope. He stands beside her quietly.

172 EXT. SASKATCHEWAN PRAIRIE - NIGHT

172

Thick, black smoke rises from Charlie's large camp fire. She unsaddles Henri's horse.

CHARLIE
Go on, old man.

The gelding ambles away slowly, then rolls. Charlie adds green leaved branches to the fire, creating more smoke. She lays out her bed roll, sleeps with Syrus standing over her.

173 EXT. SASKATCHEWAN PRAIRIE - MORNING 173

It's not quite light out. The fire smolders.

Suddenly, Syrus lets out a WHINNY. From far away, another horse ANSWERS.

Charlie notes where her rifle is, but makes no move.

Soon, TWO MEN on horseback approach cautiously.

It's Porter and Cadet Lewis.

Seeing Charlie, Porter's reaction is unexpected. RELIEF.

PORTER
Charlie! Langford's gone, dragged
away during the night.

Charlie hears the words, but they hardly make sense. Then she sees Cadet Lewis's face. He's terrified.

174 EXT. SASKATCHEWAN PRAIRIE - FIRE PIT - DAY 174

Seated on rocks, Porter and Cadet Lewis rest while Charlie paces like a caged animal.

CHARLIE
No sign around the fort?

PORTER
If...if it's done, then it happened
far off, and that's what makes me
think he ain't dead. All the other
bodies was found near enough.

CHARLIE
The Doctor just disappeared out of
his room? Isn't there one of you
always looking out?

CADET LEWIS
No, Miss Wilson. None of --

PORTER
It's Willows, son.

Cadet Lewis looks at him, confused.

PORTER
Her real name's Willows.

CADET LEWIS
Begging your pardon, I thought --

CHARLIE
Alright. You couldn't have known.

Charlie stops dead. The world goes quiet, save for the rumble, the GROWL rising up from somewhere in her head.

CHARLIE
Bastard. He knew my name.

175 EXT. SASKATCHEWAN PRAIRIE - DAY

175

Porter walks beside Charlie, Cadet Lewis struggling to keep up. Charlie carries her saddle in one hand, her bridle in the other, saddle blanket over her shoulder.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
How do you catch a wolf, Marshal?

Charlie drops the saddle and blanket on the ground, hooks the bridle on her shoulder. Syrus trots toward her.

Porter grabs Cadet Lewis's arm, pulls him away.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
You use his instincts against him.

Her hands are soft, gentle but confident. She slips the bridle's headstall over Syrus's ears, slips her thumb into the corner of his mouth so that he opens it just enough for the bit to slide between his teeth.

Tense, Porter watches, can't take his eyes off her.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
Offer him an easy kill, be more patient than his hunger.

Now Charlie slides her palms over Syrus's back, down his shoulder and under his belly, caressing.

PORTER (V.O.)
You think we'll catch him the same way?

She drops the reins, goes to the saddle blanket. Syrus follows her.

She lets him sniff the blanket, lays it on his back. Then the saddle. The cinch brushes against his belly making Syrus step sideways. She halts him. Grabs the cinch and tightens it slowly. More. More.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Yes. And it's how he thinks he'll catch me.

The reins are in her left hand. Her foot in the stirrup...

176 EXT. CYPRESS HILLS - DAY

176

Syrus's black legs flash in a blur, his hooves seem to barely touch the ground. It's true, he hardly seems to notice the young woman on his back, her hands buried in his mane.

Charlie and the black colt are a quarter mile ahead of Porter and Cadet Lewis. Despite herself, Charlie smiles.

177 EXT. CYPRESS HILLS - NEAR HENRI'S CABIN - DAY

177

Charlie waits for Porter and Cadet Lewis to catch up.

Porter reins up beside Charlie. Looks around. Henri's cabins are still out of sight. The landscape is quiet. Peaceful.

CHARLIE

(pointing)

Just up to the east there, ground's high and covered, straight line of sight to the cabins. Stay in the valleys, he won't see you.

PORTER

Can't say I like this set up.

CHARLIE

I can't shoot, Marshal. Not at that range.

(softening)

And he's used to people fool enough to be alone. I'm just another fool.

Charlie offers her hand, of her own accord. Porter shakes it, squeezes it tight.

Charlie urges Syrus into an easy lope, in the direction of the place where Henri died. Toward the cabins. Toward Ethan.

178 EXT. CYPRESS HILLS - HENRI'S CABINS - DAY

178

The two cabins sit ominous and decrepit, black patches against the golden and emerald hills.

Charlie approaches without slowing. Without fear. Only when she's in the very yard, does she pull Syrus up.

The doors to both cabins remain shut. There is no movement, no sound from inside. And Charlie doesn't even see them. Her eyes are looking outward, away, to the West -

To the jagged spine of rock hills and pine forest half a mile away. One listing JACKPINE juts above the others.

179 EXT. CYPRESS HILLS - PLATEAU - DAY 179

Porter and Cadet Lewis take position.

CADET LEWIS

Sir, we're too far away from the cabins.

Porter raises a SPYGLASS to his eye, grits his teeth in frustration. They watch as Charlie suddenly gallops away from them. Away from the cabins.

CADET LEWIS

Sir...what's she doing?

PORTER

He ain't there.

Frantic, Porter leaps up, they both sprint for their horses.

180 EXT. EDEN RIDGE - BASE TRAIL - DAY 180

Syrus carries Charlie up the steep rock trail, picking his way carefully. Already, Charlie has her rifle drawn.

Looking down at the rocky ground she sees dried blood.

FURTHER UP it's now very steep, but Syrus carries her upward steadily, she clings to him, desperate not to fall.

181 EXT. EDEN RIDGE - SUMMIT TRAIL - DAY 181

The trail is shaded by clusters of pine and spruce, and covered in patches of moss and brambles.

Charlie dismounts to examine the ground. Walks on, then crouches after only a few strides. More blood. Syrus senses the tension. Trying to back away, he pulls hard on the reins.

182 EXT. EDEN RIDGE - NEAR THE GREAT PINE - DAY 182

Charlie leads Syrus into sight of the JACKPINE. A groaning CREAK makes her look up.

What she sees, cuts to the bone: A scarlet coat, black boots swinging limp, high above the ground, and that terrible sound of taut rope on wood.

CHARLIE

Ethan!

She dashes along the path through a tangle of brush but - SNAP! A metal-toothed FOX TRAP bites into her right foot!

Charlie's SCREAM echoes for miles. Syrus shies, pulls backwards. With this and the pain, Charlie drops her rifle.

Almost the instant her gun bounces on the rock, Charlie lunges after it, falling to her left knee and hand, but too late.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Leave it!

Slowly, Charlie looks up. Stunned. Craig, rifle raised, grins at her. He approaches, kicks her rifle off the side of the ridge. Metal and wood break.

CRAIG

You really are a dumb bitch. Turns my stomach, thinking on how you ended my pa and brother so easy.

Rage seizes her and when Charlie looks up at Craig, she has the same feral look as that night in the barn.

CHARLIE

Yeah, it was pretty easy.

For that, he shoots her.

The bullet passes through her right thigh, and she crumples, twisting so the fox trap tears and grinds. Behind her, Syrus bolts a few strides, halts and comes back. At war with his instincts. Craig pays no attention to him.

CRAIG

Yeah. But I'm here now. Just waited for you, and you came like a good little girl.

She struggles to her feet, pulls her shirt aside to see the hole, and smiles back at him.

CHARLIE

He told you.

CRAIG

What's that?

CHARLIE

He told you where I'd be.
Otherwise, you'd still have your
head up your ass back at Fort
Walsh.

CRAIG

I'd have found you, one way or
another!

CHARLIE

And when you did, I'd have put a
bullet through your brain too.

Craig drives the butt of his gun into the bridge of her nose.
She crumples.

CRAIG

That right? Let me ask you, why you
care about him so much? I know you
ain't sweet on him. Or are you?
Goddamn. Well then I saved you some
trouble. Likes of you don't belong
with him.

Grinning, Craig removes a KNIFE.

CRAIG

I didn't have anything against him,
it was a part of the, uh, bargain.
I hang him, so I can kill you.
Haven't struck a better deal in all
my life.

Charlie looks like she might be sick. She presses her palm to
the blood flow.

Craig walks over, slowly, grabs a handful of her white blonde
hair and yanks her head back, exposing her throat.

CRAIG

You bleed worse than your ma. But
you know, even with her face caved
in, she still looked a finer woman
than you.

Craig adjusts his grip on the handle, smiles and is just
pressing the knife tip to the skin when

Craig looks up. Confused, angry.

CRAIG

What is it? You said I could do it
any way I wanted.

THE WOLF (O.S.)

Do you want to die, Charlene?

Charlie, smeared with blood and dirt and tears, rips Craig apart with her eyes but keeps her mouth clamped shut.

Craig takes her silence as answer enough and moves to finish what he started. A BULLET strikes his shoulder and knocks him staggering backward. The knife drops.

Charlie clutches her throat with one hand, falls to the ground on the other.

Craig observes his shoulder with total, agonized disbelief.

From out of the shadows, steps THE WOLF...Inspector MacDonald. He wears all black - no scarlet coat in sight.

CRAIG

Jesus Christ! You shot me, you
crazy bastard!

THE WOLF

(to Charlie)

I see why you removed yourself from
this creature.

The Wolf looks to Craig, raises the pistol toward him again.

THE WOLF

I'm sorry, Charlene. Hold very
still and let's get that
abomination off you.

Again, a surprise. Charlie can't hide the confusion.

CRAIG

Wait! You said if I killed him, I
could kill her!

THE WOLF

I lied.

The Wolf kneels very slowly. He presses the release latch with his boot and wrenches the jaws apart.

CHARLIE

I don't understand...

It takes everything in Charlie to pull her foot out. The Wolf, helps her stand.

Craig makes a dash for his rifle. With one arm holding Charlie steady, the Wolf shoots Craig in the thigh. He SCREAMS.

THE WOLF

I needed to be sure of what he was,
so I told him he could have your
life if he was willing to take
Doctor Langford's. He did so
without a second thought. Now,
there is one bullet left in this
gun.

The Wolf wraps Charlie's trembling fingers around the gun. Steps away from her. Fear leaves her. She is all rage.

The weight of it hits Craig. So does the terror.

CRAIG

Charlene, no. Goddamn it, he's the
killer, he's the one you should
shoot!

THE WOLF

True, I am a killer, but we are
different, Craig. She knows. You've
sensed it the whole time, Charlene.
I've taken the lives of others who
are like him. Who slaughtered on a
whim, cut the men down while they
fled, drove the women off these
very rocks. He is them.

Charlie raises the rifle. God she wants to kill him.

CRAIG

I didn't know! I'm so sorry, God,
Charlene, please forgive me,
please. He'll turn on you too, you
use that bullet, you pull that
trigger and --

THE WOLF

I've had many opportunities to kill
Charlene. I hold too much respect
for her. We have both survived a
meeting with death; we still bear
the scars. Reminders of what was
taken from us. How much has he
stolen from you, think of it? Does
he not deserve to die?

The rope creaks against the tree branch, and Charlie can't help look at what hangs from it.

CHARLIE

Yes.

Her finger presses the trigger, a slow, gentle squeeze.

From behind Charlie, comes a soft, gentle nicker. Unnoticed, Syrus has come to within three feet of her. He stretches out neck so his muzzle brushes her shoulder.

Rage turns to grief. She closes her eyes.

CHARLIE

Thank you.

Charlie lowers the gun slowly, looks at The Wolf. Craig doesn't know what's going on, and stays silent.

CHARLIE

You're right. He has stolen so much from me. But this isn't about what was taken, it's about what can be taken back.

Syrus steps next to her, and she leans on him.

The Wolf moves away, just slightly, as if to see her better.

FROM THE TRAIL BELOW comes the sound of YELLING and a NEIGH which Syrus immediately answers. Charlie takes a split second to look toward the sound.

When she looks back, the Wolf is at the edge of the ridge.

THE WOLF

I can't be stopped now, you see. I have nothing but this.

CHARLIE

Don't...

In one fluid move, The Wolf draws a pistol. Aims at Charlie.

THE WOLF

Kill him. For them. For yourself.

Not taking her eyes off the Wolf, Charlie pulls the trigger, shoots into the trees. The Wolf can't quite believe it.

THE WOLF

He'll not let you go, even now.
They can't help themselves, they
will always hunt you.

CHARLIE

Can't hunt what doesn't run.

With this, The Wolf understands. He pulls the hammer back.

The Wolf smiles, suddenly swings the pistol toward Craig,
shoots him between the eyes...

...and simply FALLS backwards OFF the edge of the ridge.
Charlie rushes forward, crawling on her hands and knees as
close to the edge as she can.

Far below, The Wolf's body lies twisted between rock fangs.
To her right, Craig has a ragged hole in his forehead. She
gets to her feet, perilously close to the edge. She drops
Syrus's reins. And closes her eyes...ready to fall.

PORTER (O.S.)

Not your time, kid.

Over her shoulder, she sees Porter waiting beside Syrus.

PORTER

Not here. Not today.

183

EXT. EDEN RIDGE - NEAR THE HANGMAN'S PINE - DAY

183

Charlie stands on Syrus's back to cut the rope, Porter
waiting to ease Ethan's body gently down to the ground.

Kneeling over at his head, Charlie can't quite bear to touch
his limp hand. She dashes away tears.

CHARLIE

Ethan...

Porter pulls away Ethan's collar.

PORTER

Lord Almighty...he didn't drop him.
Fool put the noose over his collar.

CHARLIE

What's that mean?

PORTER

Means his neck didn't break, and
the rope couldn't cut off his wind
entirely.

Porter leans in, his ear over Ethan's mouth. And then Charlie sees the small rise of Ethan's chest, shallow, but steady.

184 EXT. FORT WALSH - BARRACKS - DAY 184

Two OFFICERS take over from Charlie, removing Ethan from his horse. He remains unconscious.

As she attempts to dismount and follow the men, Charlie's leg gives out. Porter catches her. She tries to keep going, but his strong arms keep her back. She gives in. Watches as the men carry Ethan through the door, met by the COMPANY SURGEON.

185 INT. BARRACKS - ROOM - DAY 185

Charlie dresses herself slowly, sliding pants over her bandaged leg. A KNOCK.

Porter enters with a second man in the scarlet coat. This is COLONEL JAMES WALSH. He smiles at Charlie. Holds out a hand when she tries to stand in respect.

WALSH

Please, stay as you are.

CHARLIE

Will Langford...

WALSH

Difficult to say, yet. His grip on life is ferocious, though.

CHARLIE

I won't put up any fight if we have to ride out now, Marshal.

PORTER

You mean take you back?

CHARLIE

I killed those men...

WALSH

You must be mistaken, Miss Wilson. I believe one Charlene Willows killed Saul and Digs Farris.

PORTER

And I saw Charlene shot dead and fall from Jackpine ridge yesterday, along with the killer James MacDonald.

CHARLIE
That right?

PORTER
I have the proper paperwork.

WALSH
Welcome to Canada, Miss Wilson. He
holds out his hand. She shakes it.

186 EXT. FORT WALSH CORRALS - DAY 186

It's early morning, misty and quiet. Charlie adjusts Cadet Lewis's foot in his stirrup.

She watches him trot his horse in tight circles. Nods. Smiles encouragement as he transitions to a lope.

187 EXT. FORT WALSH - BARN - DAY 187

Carrying her saddle and still limping, Charlie passes two or three OFFICERS.

OFFICER
(barely audible)
...still won't wake. He might never

Seeing her, they halt their conversation. She ignores them. Syrus trots up to the fence of his corral.

188 EXT. FIELDS IN FRONT OF FORT WALSH - DAY 188

Syrus grazes not too far away. Charlie practices shooting wooden animals at thirty paces. She shoots out one, letting a small smile touch her lips. Aims. Shoots again. Misses.

She adjusts her stance takes a deep breath, focusing. CRACK! The shot doesn't come from her gun. The target wobbles, a hole clean through its center.

ETHAN (O.S.)
You really are a remarkably bad
shot.

Charlie lowers her rifle. And smiles.

FADE OUT:

THE END

CONTEXTUALIZING DOCUMENT

If you have never seen a screenplay before, they can be appear quite funny-looking at first. Written in present tense, always in courier, with scene headings, apparently random paragraph or line spacing, and sentence fragments galore. They appear to be an awkward cross between a novel and a stageplay, with some original format rules thrown in for good measure. Some argue that they are not works of literature but I disagree. They are a work of literature and they can exist on their own, expressing their own meaning outside of the film that builds upon them. Yet, they are defined by their purpose. The purpose of providing a foundation for another work of art - they are meant for something bigger to be built upon them.

That said, my goal as a writer is always to make the screenplay a whole, entertaining and satisfying story experience in itself. This document will provide some context for that story, and explanations for certain decisions I made as a writer. I discuss characters and plot events in detail, and so I highly recommend that if you have not read *Eden Ridge* yet you put this document down immediately and start with the script.

ORIGINS

The stories I write tend to sit in my head for years before I actually attempt to write them. They arise from multiple interests or sources; sometimes I become intrigued by specific questions, or decide I want to write in order to inspire a specific emotion, and then I spend months gathering story material. History often feeds into the stories, usually parts of history that are murky - gaps that we're not entirely sure about, events and people who have elements of mystery. In fact, the areas that most frustrate historians are the ones that I find most fascinating and fruitful for a writer of fiction. In the case of *Eden Ridge* - previously titled *Crossings* - there were three streams which merged together in my first year at York:

- My desire to write a Western
- A female protagonist who disguises herself as a man
- H.H. Holmes and the serial killers we don't know

THE WESTERN

I have an affection for horses which began in childhood and influenced the films I watched as I grew up. In particular, I loved the two Australian westerns *The Man from Snowy River* (1982), and *Return to Snowy River* (1988), and the epic *Dances*

With Wolves (1990). However, I decided I wanted to write something connected with Canada, and this quickly led me to research the formation of the Northwest Mounted Police.

The NWMP presence in film is miniscule when you compare it to representations of the U.S. Marshals or Texas Rangers. Colonel James Morrow Walsh, a significant figure in the police's early history, makes a brief appearance in *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, but his historical significance in the narrative is downplayed. Paul Gross's film *Gunless* (2010) features a slightly bumbling, good-natured Corporal Kent who grins toothlessly in the shadow of Gross's rugged, hard-riding, gun-toting American cowboy. Granted, the film is essentially poking fun at the stereotypical American view of Canada, but to do so it must uphold many a cliché.

The two films are prime examples of what I perceive to be the two faces of the "mounties" in modern cinema: overlooked, minor players or bumbling, goofy idiots. My goal was to present a new face, not necessarily more historically accurate, but hopefully a little more compelling.

THE DISGUISE

Secondly, for some reason, I had always wanted to tell the story of a woman who disguises herself as a man (this was before

Albert Nobbs (2011), but perhaps it was because I love *Mulan* (1999)). Shakespeare frequently dresses up his heroines as men, but I'd always wondered whether it could really work, in the real world? How would a woman successfully conceal her gender under pressure?

THE VILLAIN

Finally, I was inspired after reading Erik Larsson's acclaimed non-fiction work, *The Devil in the White City*, a narrative history which tells the true story of two men in 1893 Chicago. One is an architect, the designer of the World Fair, the other H.H. Holmes.

Holmes confessed to killing 27 people, but there is evidence that he may have killed as many as 100¹. Yet, Holmes is far less famous than his contemporary Jack the Ripper, who killed five women before disappearing. After reading the book, a chilling question took hold of my mind: How many other killers, like Holmes, existed at times when their crimes might have been overlooked? Today, we have a fascination with this breed of murderers; dozens of films and television series, from *The Bone Collector* (1999) and *Seven* (1995) to *Criminal Minds* (2005) and *Dexter* (2006) tell their stories. It seems they are everywhere in modern day fiction, and turn of the century Chicago and

¹ Erik Larson *The Devil in the White City* (New York: Random House, 2004), 385.

London have their monsters as well. So where were they even before that? Did they exist in the wilderness north of the 49th parallel?

From all of these elements emerged the ghost of a story: a serial killer sweeping from East to West, striking on both sides of the border, on Canadian and American soil; a group of characters using very basic skills to stop a criminal whom they barely understand, a predator with whom they have no experience. A story unfolding in 1876, when Canada and the Northwest Mounted Police are in their infancy.

The killer's motivation, character and profile would be filtered through the observations and deductions of the hunters, people who do not possess the modern technology so often featured in this genre. The audience would receive an image that is tainted by the characters' fears, biases, superstitions and assumptions.

And the protagonist, the person hunting this killer, would not be a sheriff, or an experienced gunman, it would be a Young Woman disguised as a man.

CREATIVE PROCESS

Every time I begin work on developing an idea, I wonder how exactly I did it the last time; it's as if every new script

erases the memory of writing the previous one. Thankfully, I have notes and records to guide me. My stages are as follows:

- One-two page synopsis
- Step outline (hook, inciting incident, central question, turning point, progressive complication, midpoint, false ending, low point, crisis, climax, resolution)
- Beat Sheet
- First Draft
- Re-writes

The first document I write after gathering all the limbs of my monstrous idea is usually a one to two page summary of the very basic story elements. This document is usually very vague, but offers a sense of my intended tone and the characters involved. Following this, I brainstorm the major story events; these are elements of a structure I learned during my studies in the UCLA Professional program. I believe there is no single way to craft screenplay structure; it depends very much on the writer and what works for them. I do argue that structure is vital, and many - if not most - of the successful films in the western world follow distinct patterns which can be learned and emulated. For me, I am inspired by the mythic structure, and take cues from structural analysts like Christopher Vogler, whose application of Joseph Campbell's theories on the

"monomyth" and "Hero's Journey" give a deeper, more emotional dimension to the story elements².

After identifying the major story elements, I write a beat sheet - a numbered document, in which the writer summarizes the action and arc of each particular sequence from beginning to end. For my purposes, a beat is a series of scenes or events that are centered on a particular objective or setting. For example, one beat begins with Charlie's seclusion in the hay loft, hearing her mother scream, and goes until her decision to flee after murdering her step-father and brother. Each beat can be fairly detailed, but it remains focused on conflict and the questions meant to be raised and answered by a series of actions.

Once I have written and re-written the beat sheet and feel comfortable with the structure, I go straight to draft. Some writers prefer to write a treatment - a document similar to a beat sheet but broken down scene by scene and written with scene headings, often using script software - before writing the first draft, but I find them more tedious than helpful. Working from a beat sheet allows me to discover more of my story during the script stage, something that I feel is vital for my process. It means I am less attached to an idea, and I find it easier to let

² Joseph Campbell. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 3rd Ed. (Novato: New World Library, 2006).

go of scenes that are causing problems or see alternate ways to write a sequence that does not translate from beat sheet to screenplay.

STRUCTURE BREAKDOWN

Logline: In 1876, a fugitive young woman survives the attack of a serial killer and joins the posse of men hunting him down, all the while trying to keep her own crimes from coming to light.

Step one: The Hook.

In most films this is an explosive event in the world of our main character, a plot element that will directly affect their journey, or simply an interesting introduction to our main characters doing what they do best. Or worst. In *Seven*, it's the introduction to William Somerset first in his cool, clean, home and then in the filth of a gruesome crime scene. No matter what, the hook must grab the audience's attention and set up some stakes for the journey.

In my first draft, the opening scenes were with Ethan, when MacDonald brings him the body of our killer's latest victim. At first, there were questions about opening the script with a character other than the protagonist. Quite often, the audience knows whose story they are watching by the fact that the character is very first on the scene. I knew how I wanted to introduce Charlie, though, and it was going to be in a world

very separate from our serial killer. It would be twenty pages before her story intersected with his, and by that time the audience would have decided what kind of story they were in - and a serial killer would feel like a sidestep. So they needed to know what this script is really about, that there is another story soon to intersect with Charlie's journey.

Step 2: The Inciting Incident or Call to Adventure³.

The shooting scene in the barn was in fact one of the first scenes I wrote, and I re-wrote it more than any other except perhaps the final sequence on the ridge. For some, Charlie is unlikable. The fact that she ends two human lives in defense of her horse makes her cold blooded. She was safe in the loft, out of danger, and she made the choice that the life of an animal was more important than two people. Not everyone has reacted this way though. Others sense her kinship with Syrus, and are repelled by these men enough that they are fully behind Charlie when she pulls the trigger. The division is exactly what I hoped for when writing the sequence. I decided I wanted Charlie's act of murder to be in defense of her horse not because I disagree with the first point of view, but because it was consistently

³Christopher Vogler, *The Writer's Journey* (Studio City: Michael Wiese Productions, 2007)

eliciting both opinions. I wanted to begin the story with this kind of moral conflict.

Step three: First Act Turning Point.

I picture my script - and actually my individual scenes - as a pinball machine. This is a little strange, given I do not have a great deal of experience with pin ball machines, but for whatever reason, it works. The end of the first act is where the ball - my protagonist - is smacked by a flipper and sent in a direction they did not expect, or at the very least a direction they have been consistently avoiding. Usually, there is a decision involved, which requires the protagonist to fully accept the call to adventure posed to them during the inciting incident. They also have to overcome an obstacle before they can continue on this new road. Mythic structure calls this obstacle the Threshold Guardian⁴.

In Charlie's case, the inciting incident started her running, and an unfortunate meeting with The Wolf forces her into a situation where she has to make an unexpected decision. She wants to get to Canada, but because she is a potential witness she is being held against her will, with Craig most likely hot on her trail. Originally, I had Ethan decide to bring

⁴Vogler, *The Writer's Journey*, 49

"the boy" along, against "his" wishes, but I realised this took the power away from Charlie for too long. Instead, she realizes she can still get to Canada, she just has to do it in the company of four men. Four law men. Ethan becomes the "threshold guardian", the obstacle she has to bypass in order to continue moving forward, and to win him she also gives us the first glimpse of her useful talents. Her abilities as a tracker translate into reading a crime scene, which gives Ethan a reason to keep her in the posse.

Step 4: Complications

Charlie wants to go with the posse because they will take her into Canada. She remains focused on her original objective: freedom. Escape. A new life. Because this is such a clear and strongly motivated desire, I knew I couldn't have her simply abandon it to join the posse, but I also needed her to stick around long enough to become invested in the hunt, and in the people she meets along the way. It was therefore crucial that she make an escape attempt. The consequences of the attempt, would then tie her tighter to Ethan and the others.

My first outline made the scene with the Red Headed thief the turning point into Act Two, but it ended up happening too late, and I felt it was a strong character moment for all those involved. We see another glimpse of that rage burning just

beneath Charlie's surface; catch sight of the predator she could become. My first draft had Ethan pull the trigger and shoot the Red Head, but even though I liked the action itself - someone taking one violent step in order to prevent a more extreme act - it felt out of character. It wasn't until I became more familiar with Porter that I recognized him as the one holding the smoking gun.

More crucial even than Porter's shot, is Ethan's lie regarding why Charlie is in the barn so early. By covering for her, he places Charlie in his debt - or so she feels. And Charlie does not like being in debt to anyone. To be in debt, means someone has power over her. It is why she refuses to take the wolf pelt Amos Pratt practically begs her to accept at the beginning of the script. It is also why The Wolf's mercy is so baffling to her. Mercy is but another face of owing something to someone.

This victim keeps Charlie interested long enough for her to become emotionally invested. It's the peg that knocks her spinning sphere in yet another direction. Ethan has told her that all the victims are men, and so the question that Charlie wrestles with - "Why was I left alive?" is apparently answered. The Wolf realized she was female and spared her. Then Ingrid is killed, and Charlie's question becomes even more unsettling.

Outwardly, she remains secured to the posse because she is obligated to remain with them - they have taken that choice away from her. However, she is now more motivated to stay because of her internal changes.

Step 5: The Midpoint

The Midpoint, the scene between Charlie and Ethan in the Lucas Barn, after having examined Ingrid Crouse, was the second hardest scene to write. Midpoints usually are the most challenging for me as a writer, largely because I find myself trying to do a number of things at once. Yet, it should also provide a moment of stillness. Not necessarily peaceful stillness, but at the very least it leaves room for the great breath before the plunge. This scene solidifies Charlie's commitment to the hunt. Ethan releases her from obligation, gives her the opportunity to exit without consequence. She decides to stay. This time, she stays because she wants to. Needs to.

She needs to, because she has just seen a woman ripped and clawed as she was ripped and clawed, and so the thing that was haunting her, this feeling that The Wolf is more discerning than the men believe, becomes a certainty. She says that it feels personal, and Ethan thinks she means the Wolf is making it personal with the entire group, but in fact she means with her.

She knows without a doubt that the Wolf is aware of her presence in the posse, and for some reason she has influenced his decisions. So she tries to go and saddle Flash, to run, to leave, but she cannot. Recognizing the deliberation behind the Wolf's decisions, gives Charlie the massive piece of the puzzle that the group has missed. He chose not to kill Charlie, therefore he is aware of what he is doing and he is motivated by something. Finding out what that motivation is, might be the key to catching him.

The Midpoint is also another moment of connection between Charlie and Ethan. Most notably, it is the moment in which she is trying to show him who she is. A prevailing myth about serial killers - one I certainly thought to be possible - is that many want to be caught. In truth, a serial killer becomes "empowered" by their unchecked actions, they begin to feel out of reach and so take greater, often taunting risks, which go badly and lead to their capture⁵. In that moment though, Charlie does want to be found out. Henri recognized her as a woman because of her hands, and in this scene I deliberately wanted her to remove her gloves, to desperately wait for Ethan to see, as his friend did. This tells us something about where she is on her emotional arc - not able to confess, but beginning to desire absolution

⁵ "Serial Murder: Multi-disciplinary perspectives for Investigators," accessed November, 2013, <http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/serial-murder>.

through detection. It also says something about Ethan. He is still too narrow in his vision, he is still focused on the Wolf. Which is why I realized the Wolf is the one who has to reveal Charlie's disguise.

Step 6: The False Ending

Audiences are too sophisticated to buy false endings, but they are usually still there. Often it is a false victory, or a major question that appears to be answered. Though it does not feel like any sort of victory, many questions are answered in the sequence at the Stockyards. For example, Charlie finally interacts with the Wolf and her true gender is revealed.

At symposium in November, 2012, a fellow graduate student asked how the other characters learn that Charlie was actually a woman? The most predictable answer - one that I decided immediately to avoid - was that she be injured, forcing Ethan to remove her clothing. I considered having Charlie simply tell him at the midpoint. But this raised questions of how she would show him - and Charlie suddenly stripping to make her point simply didn't fit with her character, or the rest of the script. So I decided the Wolf would be the one to make the reveal.

At the same time, the sequence feels like a partial ending, because the posse disbands. It also leads to their first major

breakthrough: Henri recognizes the latest victim and the connections between all the dead begin to appear. The revelation gives the remaining hunters new understanding and new hope.

Step 7: The Low Point

Of course, after you give them hope, you must rip it all away. The Low point is the moment when the protagonist has lost everything they appear to have gained over the course of their journey. Charlie loses Henri, she loses Flash, she loses Ethan when her true identity comes to light, and the very thing she wanted becomes poisonous to her. Her physical freedom is finally secured, the entire nation of Canada lies open to her; unfortunately her emotional self has awakened to the fact that it will remain in chains until her journey with the Wolf, and with Ethan, is complete. The Low point leads directly into a decision, a crisis, where once again the protagonist changes direction.

Step 8: The Crisis

For Charlie, it's the moment she chooses to stop running and build a fire. She knows it will make her easy to spot, and waits for her pursuers to catch up to her. They do, but they are not whom she expects. Because of her decision to cease fleeing, Charlie and the audience learn that Ethan has been taken by the

Wolf. He is not dead, and this particular action does not match the Wolf's previous behaviour, so Charlie knows it is for her. After all, how do you catch a Wolf?

Step 9: The Climax

When I first imagined the ending, I had a very elaborate chase scene in mind. One in which Charlie would finally show the audience why Syrus is so special. He would run down the Wolf and Charlie would take him out. It would be epic. Unfortunately, reaching the end of the script, ready to begin crafting this sequence, I hit a wall. What I had imagined, no longer fit with the rest of the script. My supervisor pointed out to me, that this was actually the climax of a relationship - Charlie and the Wolf's. The question of why he spared her, why she is special will be answered, and more importantly the inner war Charlie has been fighting, will rage one final battle. Is she like the Wolf or is she not? Even more challenging for me, was resolving the conflict between Craig and Charlie.

My first outline had Charlie face the Wolf, defeat him, and return to Fort Walsh where Craig was waiting. I wrote the first draft of the script until the crisis, and found I did not like what I planned to happen next. Again, my supervisor encouraged me to look at what I had already set up in the script. Look for ways to use something I had already written. Since the end often

reflects the beginning, I went backwards all the way to the first twenty pages. I realized the Wolf would catch Charlie, not the other way around. It was also important to me that Charlie be brought to the point of total destruction on the ridge. Important, because it is the Wolf who offers her a way back. But he would do it by manipulating Craig, and giving Charlie a chance to repeat her actions at the beginning of the script, this time getting rid of the last brother, the last tormentor.

My hope is that the audience will be completely shocked when it's Craig who emerges to gloat over Charlie in the wolf trap. And they will be equally shocked, when the Wolf saves her. As I wrote the sequence, it was difficult not to think back to *Seven* (1995), and I will not deny that I was inspired in part by that film's fantastic ending. The whole hunt comes down to a moment when all the characters are in one place, yet the audience quickly realizes that the power can still change hands.

BREATH OF LIFE

If my previous studies taught me how to assemble the bones of a screenplay, my time at York taught me more about giving a story flesh and blood and heart. I have learned to look at a script as a whole organism, and find ways to make individual elements connected to one another. The result is a more cohesive, functioning screenplay that looks good structurally

and, hopefully, strikes emotional and intellectual chords with the audience. All this largely has to do with Character and Theme. In both cases, I felt I had the freedom to explore different aspects of my characters, and let the theme emerge through them, rather than impose it as a creator.

THE CHARACTERS

Charlene Willows/Charlie Wilson

Charlie emerged quickly, even though my understanding of her backstory was slow to follow. I had a young woman who was ferocious, talented, a woman of few words, who would disguise herself to get where she wanted to go.

But why would someone wish to hide their identity? If she was being pursued.

Why would someone pursue a twenty year old woman? Because she killed someone.

Making Charlie's flight the result of her killing someone not only made the stakes high, it also meant I was telling the story about a murderer tracking a murderer. Someone haunted by their own crimes, fearful of seeing their own mask ripped away, even as they pursued another fugitive.

The set-up for Charlie's crimes never changed. As mentioned, I was influenced in part by the films *Return to Snowy River* (1988) and *Dances with Wolves* (1990). Both films feature a protagonist whose survival and affections are tied to a particularly special horse. They are, however, sweeping and somewhat romantic films, and I aimed to keep *Eden Ridge* on a grittier path. I wanted to take the same bond between horse and rider that was represented in other films, but make it something potentially dangerous.

This is not the story of a girl and her beloved horse, the creature that becomes her best friend and teaches her the value of life and responsibility. Syrus represents freedom for Charlie, and therefore he is the thing she will kill for. He allows us to see the wounds and flaws that are beginning to define her entire identity. Syrus is her salvation, but he's also the thing for which she will commit any sin.

My full understanding of Charlie's character emerged after watching the documentary *Buck* (2011). The film tells the story of horse whisperer Buck Brannaman, the man who aided and partially inspired the lead character in Robert Redford's adaptation of *The Horse Whisperer* (1998)⁶. The documentary tells

⁶ *Buck*. Dir. By Cindy Meehl. Back Alley Productions, 2011.

the story of Buck's life, and follows his present day profession as he attempts to help horse owners solve problems and behavioural issues with their horses - and with themselves.

The segment which impacted me, centred on a buckskin stallion who suffered a head trauma at a very young age, lost his dam and was raised by hand, isolated from other horses, until he was too large. Horses are prey animals, their first instinct is to flee at a sign of danger. They are fast, agile, and strong, with acute senses of smell and hearing. They are also highly social herd animals; therefore they exist naturally in an environment where these senses are multiplied. However, this stallion had never learned the body language and social interactions normally passed between foal and dam, and he also clearly suffered from cerebral damage, or post-traumatic stress. His behaviour deteriorated rapidly and he became something terrifying.

Having handled dozens of horses myself, what I saw in the footage left me completely stunned. After attempting to work with him, Buck's assistant narrowly avoided having his skull crushed by the animal's teeth. The stallion attacked people, viciously and with purpose, without any warning and, most astonishingly, when there was plenty of room for him to flee instead. He was the closest thing to a prey animal transformed

into a predator that Buck had ever seen. His instinct was no longer flight, but fight.

Charlie is on the same road. She is on the brink of transforming into a predator. Her instincts have switched from those of an ordinary human, to someone whose first thought is to kill anything that threatens her, regardless of the other options. The moment when the Red Headed man attempts to steal Syrus, and Charlie catches him, illustrates how quickly and completely she can lose control. She has every intention of shooting that man, as Porter realizes, in front of God and everyone. Consequences simply do not enter her depth of field.

Porter's ability to see Charlie's true intention and take action is what saves the thief, and Charlie. However, it's Ethan's inability to see the dark side of his new recruit that offers her any hope. Porter sees her as a villain, and she is. Ethan sees her has a talented protégé, and she is this as well. Both eventually cross to the opposite of their first impressions, and in the end see Charlie in her whole form: a talented, brave young woman with the capacity for cold blooded murder.

Because unlike that young stallion, and unlike the other killer in my story, The Wolf, Charlie has not transformed completely. Her journey will determine whether she falls over

the edge, or crosses back to high ground. To be entirely honest, when I began the script, I didn't know which ending it would be.

Doctor Ethan Langford

At the beginning of the script, Ethan is introduced before Charlie. He's described as being priest-like. He is a collision of spiritual and scientific - meaning there is something reverent and patient about his manner and he thinks in terms of black and white, good and evil; the lawful and the criminal. Ethan has spent little time contemplating the grey zone of morality. He has to become clinical and devoid of emotion when analyzing the gruesome scenes left to him by a killer. He attempted to become something else when he left England for the clean, new promise of Canada. Like Charlie, he adopts a new identity - someone who helps the living, those for whom there is still hope. But he is a reader of flesh. A forensic doctor. He can't escape it. His vision has to change though, he has to begin seeing in shades of grey if he is to catch this killer, and truly learn the ability to keep the demons of his profession at bay.

James MacDonald/The Wolf

Initially, I wanted The Wolf to be terrifying but mindless - akin to the shark in *Jaws* (1975), just doing what his animal instincts dictated, but doing it in a ferocious manner. I knew during this time period death, murder, mysterious demise, were not uncommon. It would have to be something extraordinary to catch the attention of both the NWMP and U.S. Marshals. A man who kills like a wolf, ripping out the throats of his victims, severing their hamstrings and leg ligaments, possible using his own teeth, might be enough to make authorities snap to it. Thus, the persona of the Wolf was there from the very beginning.

However, making the killer mindless, without motivation, a man driven only by blood lust with entirely random victims, simply did not work. For two reasons.

One, it made for a less compelling character, especially opposite Charlie and Ethan, both of whom, in their own ways, are highly self-aware and intellectual. It meant the killer would have nowhere to go in terms of his arc. He would be unchanging, and therefore less likely to affect change in his adversaries.

Two, it made it difficult to write a plot in which he could be caught. Modern forensic technology allows investigators to piece together miniscule particles of physical evidence and

gather behavioral clues to create highly accurate profiles which can lead to a serial killer's capture. Even if his victims are random, cutting edge technology can lead law enforcement to a suspect. But in 1876, even fingerprinting was new⁷. It had only recently been discovered that individuals have unique ridge patterns, and the theory that these could then be used to catch criminals was still just an idea, not common practice. Without technology, my characters would simply be riding aimlessly, hoping that luck would somehow lead them to the right place at the right time. Not likely, and not cinematic. Give the Killer motivation, intention and a plan, and suddenly that plan might be uncovered. Make his victims important and his reasons for choosing them might throw light on his true motivation. So the same questions arose.

Why was this man killing?

Because he was taking justice into his own hands.

Because he and Charlie are essentially the same. They kill the ones who injure them. The more I unraveled this concept, the more it made sense to the story. The Wolf is what Charlie will become, should she lose the battle with her animal instincts. They are connected, and both sense that connection. At first,

⁷Colin Wilson, *Written in Blood: A history of Forensic Detection* (London: Collins Publishing, 1990), 105-106

Charlie believes the Wolf left her alive because he discovered her true gender and wouldn't kill a woman. The theory shatters when the next victim is Ingrid Crouse. Slowly, Charlie realizes the killer left her alive because, as Ethan states, he wouldn't kill one of his own kind. And Charlie has never had a kind. At the end, The Wolf says to Charlie that they are both scarred, both survivors. If I had written the scene after he attacked Charlie, the scene where she lay unconscious at his feet with the poor dead man behind her, it would have been a quiet scene of revelation. The Wolf would have been about to kill her, only to see the small line of raised white flesh peeking from beneath her bindings. Curious, he would have unraveled these and been surprised not just by the fact she's female, but by her scars. These are what save her. Because The Wolf has scars on his chest too. Four bullet holes, wounds that should have killed him. He is in fact, the character from the very first scene, who is spotted by the Assiniboine elder and Translator. Not far from him is the Assiniboine woman clutching the tartan blanket. His wife.

I knew early on that I wanted to use the prejudices of the age and have some characters believe that the violence was the work of a "mad indian". In fact the killer would be a middle-class, well-spoken, charming white man who once served on the

Northwest Mounted Police. As for the Wolf's reasons for killing, I discovered this almost entirely by accident, in the pages of history and the Cypress Hills Massacre.

THEME

I think most writers struggle to articulate their theme until their work is entirely finished – and even then I equate it to that quote “Writing about music is like dancing about architecture”. Writing about theme is like dancing about architecture. Robert McKee writes that “theme has become a rather vague term in the writer’s vocabulary⁸.” In my first proposals, I said that this story would be wrapped up in themes of “identity” and “justice”. In my Thesis Precis I wrote:

The plot itself is driven by a literal search for identity – a hunt for what we now call a serial killer. Charlie and her allies piece together the mystery through analysis of the crimes but are of course limited by the knowledge and tools of the time period. The antagonist’s threat is as much psychological as it is physical; he is terrifying not because of his quick draw but his ability to keep hidden. At the same time, the identity of the heroine is also distorted since she too is a murderer. Thus, the audience

⁸ Robert McKee *Story* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 114

will be asked to question the nature of good and evil as well as the qualities expected in "the Hero".

To a large extent, I am still asking those questions, and urging the audience to do the same. Almost all of the main characters are struggling - or struggled - with a part of their identity, the thing by which they define themselves, or by which others define them.

- Charlie - hides her gender and her crimes. Her actions make her a murderer, and she wrestles with urges that make her more like the Wolf, than the lawmen she rides with
- Ethan - has attempted to leave behind his profession as a forensic doctor, ignore the gift he has for "reading" the dead.
- Henri - turns his back on his ancestry and lies about being Metis. He also denies his role in the massacre, and attempts to distance himself from the "sin" of his past.
- Porter and Owen Sims - have been U.S. Marshals for years, it's the only life they've known, it's who they are, but Porter hates that he has made his little brother into a hunter of men. He wants to stop, and plans to after they catch the Wolf...or planned to.
- The Wolf - was once a man of the law. But he gave up on justice through lawful means and became a predator. The guise of the wolf was one he could put on and take off at first, but eventually that identity was all he had left.

This is also a story about justice, and the question of whether what is just may differ from what is lawful. After

researching the time period and learning about the Cypress Hills Massacre, I realized the setting, time period, and actions of my killer, were all threads of the same thematic fabric, and all interwoven with Charlie's journey. The white men who attacked and killed the Assiniboine were hunters, specifically wolfers. By the time they reached the forts near Battle Creek, they were already in a rage over - what else - horses. Horses stolen by a group of Cree raiders⁹. The spark that set them off was another stolen horse which they believed one of the Assiniboine had taken. The crimes of others were heaped upon the heads of innocent men and women, and the response to theft was death. They took the horse, so the wolfers took their lives. The wolfers took the life of his wife and family, so the Wolf took theirs in a brutal and ironic fashion. The audience is meant to see the parallels between the killer they hope will be stopped, and the heroine they hope will succeed in her quest. They might recognize that Charlie's story is essentially another version of what happened in the Cypress Hills, and if Charlie was justified, is there some justice in what our killer was doing as well? Perhaps. But at the heart of both these characters' journeys is the main theme of *Eden Ridge*. McKee also writes that a "true theme is not a word but a sentence", something he terms

⁹ "Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan: Cypress Hills Massacre", accessed July 25, 2012, http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/cypress_hills_massacre.html

the "Controlling Idea"¹⁰. I still find the concept quite baffling, and I do not quite follow McKee's exact format for this sentence, but I believe this is an articulation of what *my* theme is: **When you take a human life to achieve justice, you give up your humanity. Only by finding mercy, can you take it back.**

There is no historical account of the Assiniboine women throwing themselves off a ridge, as MacDonald describes to Charlie. There is no place near the massacre site called Eden Ridge, as far as I know. I chose the place and the name, and gave it a history meant to articulate the theme more completely. Eden Ridge is a place of sacrifice, a place of inequity, a place where there was a literal and emotional great fall. But it is also the place where Charlie takes back her humanity by showing mercy to her enemy. She steps back into grace, rather than completing her fall from it. After Craig and the Wolf are dead, she almost ends her own life too, believing that she still isn't free of her crimes. It was intentional that Porter, the one who was initially so suspicious of her and represents the Law of her country, prevents her from making the leap.

¹⁰ McKee, *Story*. 115.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sir John A. MacDonald (Prime Minister 1867-1873) first attempted to create a mounted police force to patrol the Northwestern territories of the new nation in 1869, but unfortunately had to postpone his plans¹¹. Everything changed when, in 1873, a group of American hunters and some Canadian trappers from Fort Benton gunned down at least 23 Assiniboine Indians in what would come to be known as the Cypress Hills Massacre¹².

As MacDonald tells Charlie, it did in fact take nearly two months for news to reach officials in Ottawa. The Canadian Government realized that they did not have a strong enough presence in the territories beyond Fort Garry and Winnipeg, they required a force of significant size and with federal jurisdiction, to provide law and order in the Canadian "Wild West".

The Northwest Mounted Police was formed upon the basis of the Royal Irish Constabulary system, which had a "dual character" combining "the military capabilities of an armed force with the judicial functions of peace officers"¹³. Today, their

¹¹ Hugh A. Dempsey, ed, *Men in Scarlet* (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1974), 15

¹² Dempsey, *Men in Scarlet*, 17

¹³ Dempsey, *Men In Scarlet*, 15

counterparts, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the men in the scarlet coat astride black horses, are a Canadian symbol.

Funnily enough though, in their early days, they almost didn't survive because their recruits had never ridden horses and the mounts were far from majestic stallions, they were surly, half-wild cow ponies more akin to mustangs. Most of the recruits couldn't stay in the saddle long enough to salute. They persevered though, and three years later were beginning to make a difference.

Meanwhile, the last trial attempting to bring three of the Cypress Hills perpetrators to justice occurred three years after the killing spree in June of 1876. The men were acquitted, due to lack of evidence. The Wolf begins his killing spree on June 2nd 1876, after it becomes clear that the law has failed.

Though I had already decided about the use of the wolf as a persona and method for my killer, it seemed all the more fitting when I learned that the men responsible for the massacre were "wolfers", wolf hunters. The Wolf takes the identity of the prey and becomes the predator.

My research for this script was focused predominantly on major events that happened within the three year time period. However, I did not want the story to be a work of "historical fiction". I make no claims that it is an accurate depiction, I

was definitely allowing my imagination to take the lead. The story was more important to me than facts. For example, I tried desperately to include events directly linked to the Battle of Little Big Horn, and Sitting Bull's flight to Canada. In the first draft of the script, Sitting Bull was a character; but I realized quite quickly, as I revised, that I was including scenes with the historical figure in an effort to give the story historical padding, and really it needed to be much leaner.

My other areas of research were specific to story elements. For example, through research into the birth of forensic medicine, I learned that fingerprinting wasn't proposed as a tool for the police until 1877¹⁴. But Ethan, being a great reader, might have learned that there were scientists already suggesting uses for the discovery that ridge patterns are entirely unique to every individual. I also researched specific instances over the past hundred years where men and women survived hanging, to confirm that Ethan's recovery was not only possible, similar instances happened fairly frequently.

Early on, before I began writing the story itself, I researched real women who disguised themselves as men. Sarah Emma Edmonds was perhaps the most influential. Edmonds was Canadian born, but after suffering at the hands of a controlling

¹⁴ Wilson, *Written in Blood*, 105

and abusive father, she left home. Unable to get work as a woman, she began disguising herself as a man. She then joined the U.S. Army and fought in the American Civil war, acting as a particularly talented spy. Her specialty (or rather his) was to dress up as a woman in order to gain information¹⁵. So Sarah played a man, playing a woman. To be honest I very nearly scrapped my whole plot and decided to write a biographical story.

THE "STRONG" FEMALE

There were some consistent questions about my decision to let Charlie adopt the identity of a young man. Was I trying to make a comment on gender and sexuality? Would it be revealed that Charlie was transgender, and that she in fact wanted to remain a man? Would there be a romance between her and Ethan while she was still in the male role?

My answers have remained the same from the very beginning. Charlie is not transgender. She is happily female and sexually desires men. She dresses in men's clothes, cuts her hair and acts out the role of a male because, as she states in her own words, her pursuers are not looking for a fugitive son. Had there been an opportunity to dye her hair, change her eye

¹⁵ "Civil War: Sarah Emma Edmonds" accessed August 05, 2012, <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/biographies/sarah-emma-edmonds.html>

colour, wear sunglasses and a different style of woman's clothing, she might have chosen that route. In 1876 though, such options were definitely not a possibility. Her male persona is a disguise, it is not a gender identity.

My intention, was to write a character who was whole. A complete picture. Her body is female - so she has to deal with menstruation, but not as a weakness or even a serious burden, rather as a potential give-away. She is put off by staying in a room alone with Ethan, not because she has any notion of propriety, but because it means it will be harder for escape. All that said, to ignore the themes, questions and discussions that arise from making a character who defies the traditional gender symbols of clothing and behaviour, would be a missed opportunity and I am happy they have arisen.

Another concern, was the fact that I have written a "strong" female character, but seem to have covered her up entirely by men's clothing. I've thrust her into the male role in order to allow her total freedom. My response is this: Charlie's behaviour does not change with her clothing. She is strong, independent and intelligent from the opening scene, until Fade Out. Her decisions and her character arc is entirely independent and unrelated to her outward appearance and her desires change only with internal growth. She is not a stronger person as a

man, she is not a stronger person as a woman, she can play herself in both roles, and in the end the story is not about her taking back her femininity, or even her female identity. It is about taking back her humanity, the thing she lost the moment she pulled the trigger and took two lives.

There were also questions regarding the romance between Ethan and Charlie; whether there would be one, whether it would ignite while she was still in disguise as a man. I decided I simply wanted to let the characters and the story play out as naturally as possible. As a writer, I would argue that you should always be aware of your audience's expectations and desires, but you have to be careful not to write solely for them. I imagine an audience will expect a romance - most films have at least a minor subplot. However, too many films create a situation where this relationship between protagonist and love-interest balloons out of nowhere and feels like an unsatisfying afterthought, or obligatory treat tossed to the expectant audience. My goal was simply to give Ethan and Charlie moments, and to make the reader long for Ethan to wake up and be reunited with Charlie; the audience's imagination will complete their journey.

The best example of this that I have seen in recent films is the closing sequence of *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (2013), when the main character Adele walks away down one street and is

pursued by a potential new lover. He turns the wrong way, down different road, seconds after Adele has stepped out of sight. Romantics might imagine he will surely catch up to her, round the corner and see her standing just down the street. Others accept this as the indication that Adele's path will remain without romance for a time. Either way, we are left with the feeling of bitter sweet incompleteness that is nonetheless satisfying.

Future Drafts

Although I believe I have a strong script that meets my thesis goals, I know it can be strengthened. Writing is re-writing. As I receive more feedback from my committee, and from producers and story editors within the industry, I will hone in on areas that need to be improved. Already, I would like to streamline the plot, make the descriptions more concise, and delve even deeper into character development. I would also like to add more humour; give this dark story a lighter edge.

By writing these drafts, and allowing the process to feel complete, I acquired a vantage point from which to see my work better. There is no way to skip from one step to the other - though I hope with more time and experience the first few drafts will get closer to the final products. Then again, writing is

not something you ever stop learning - perhaps that is why I
find it both exciting and terrifying.

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