

AT PEACE
WITH WAR

Written by

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INSERT

"THE ONLY THING NECESSARY FOR THE TRIUMPH OF EVIL,
IS FOR GOOD MEN TO DO NOTHING."

EDMUND BURKE

FADE IN:

Title:

1859 WEST TEXAS

1 EXT. WEST TEXAS PRAIRIE - DAWN 1

A sun is about to rise and the soft glow from its fire can be seen on the desolate prairie for miles.

A long quite stillness is broken by the sound of two large covered wagons being pulled by Oxen on a rocky trail.

The first wagon is driven by JOSIAH WASHINGTON SHORT (WASH), 50 and HETTIE SHORT, 36. Their three youngest children, MARTHA SHORT, 15 - and LUKE SHORT, 5 are in the wagon as well.

LUKE is sick with a fever. He lay on a pallet behind Hettie's seat and Martha is tending to him.

The second Wagon that follows is driven by Hettie's well armed brother's, LUKE BRUMLEY, 22 and WILL BRUMLEY 25, ex-sheriff and Indian fighter respectively.

2 EXT. BRUMLEY RANCH - DAY 2

They pull up to a welcoming Brumley family ranch after many hard miles and are greeted with hugs, tears of joy and relief.

JOHN BRUMLEY, 56 greets Josiah with a firm hand shake, meeting him for the first time.

JOHN BRUMLEY
Welcome Josiah!

WASH SHORT
Nice to meet you sir, please call
me Wash.

They are not far apart in age. A big welcoming smile comes over John's face.

Hettie rushes Luke in doors quickly. Many hearts and hands are looking after his every need to quell the fever with cool towels and medicine.

3 INT. BRUMLEY HOME - NIGHT

3

A bustling kitchen and dinning room. Luke, now feeling better, playing with his brothers. John and Will are carving a dinner bird.

The women are in the kitchen preparing food and hurrying the others to the table. Martha is almost tripped by Luke running.

MARTHA SHORT

Well...looks like LUKE SHORT is feeling better.

Hettie smiles at Martha in a way that only a mother would.

A meal is spread out on a large table and glasses are raised to celebrate the arrival of the Short family and their daughter, now Hettie Short. As they settle down at the table, Wash raises his glass.

WASH SHORT

I would like to propose a toast. To the Brumley family. Thank you all for everything you have done to help us move out here. The rich farm land, the absence of a bitterly divided state and with the love, support and help from our new family we plan on spreading fruitful roots here, with those we love and respect.

John stands up and raises his glass.

JOHN BRUMLEY

We welcome our daughter home and her new family which is OUR new family. We'll work hard together to plant, grow and build. Let's enjoy this meal and celebrate our union.

The sound of the glasses clinking reverberates into a harmonious RING!

4

EXT. BRUMLEY RANCH - MORNING

4

A nail is driven in a plank of wood and the sound that it makes, is a sharp metal PING!

A group of men are erecting an A-frame on a small rise, pulling it up with Oxen while men use large poles to push it up from behind. Dust is flying and the men are watching as it's raised, acutely aware of the dangerous nature of this task.

Hettie see's Luke up and out of bed.

HETTIE SHORT

Now Luke, I want you to take it easy. You over did it last night and you don't want to exert yourself and have a relapse.

LUKE SHORT

(reluctantly)

Yes Maw

Luke exits the house to watch the work from the Brumley's deck.

EXT. BRUMLEY RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Wash looks back and smiles seeing young Luke finally leave the confines of the house and at their accomplishment, happy to share the moment with his son. Luke smiles back being emotionally fed by the moment.

5

Hettie comes out right behind Luke and puts her arm around him sharing in the moment.

EXT. BRUMLEY RANCH - LATER

Luke is helping as much as he is able. Picking up wood pieces and cleaning up around the construction of their soon to be new home.

Slots are purposefully put into the walls of the house and Luke notices them.

LUKE SHORT

Hey you forgot to fill those holes.

JOHN BRUMLEY

(amused)

Those are there for a purpose Luke.

(MORE)

JOHN BRUMLEY (CONT'D)

We are not forgetting that we live in dangerous times and although we are safe here, we can never be too careful.

LUKE SHORT

How does this make us safe?

John slowly pulls the pistol from the leather holster. The belt is not worn as a gunfighter, but as a rancher. High up, not needed for fast drawing but for utility.

John kneels down beside Luke pointing the gun out of the hole.

JOHN BRUMLEY

We are safe because we have made preparations for emergencies and because we understand how to Keep safe.

John stands up and let's Luke see through.

JOHN BRUMLEY (CONT'D)

Here we can get a good aim on the intruders and still be pretty well protected against enemy fire.

Luke stares at the pistol, not being used to seeing one. His father does not own one. Luke is a little scared but interested in what he is saying. John can see that his words are not wasted on the young man.

JOHN BRUMLEY (CONT'D)

We have to learn to defend ourselves and what's ours. We want to live in peace but that is not always so easy.

Wash is looking on and sees that John is telling young Luke something that he hasn't made him aware of yet.

Men are tending to horses in the corral.

Women are in the garden.

The sun is setting slowly in the west.

The adults sit around the dinner table enjoying coffee and conversation after supper as the women clean up.

JOHN BRUMLEY

Luke's a fine boy. What's he taken to...pistols or rifles?

WASH SHORT

(to John)

Luke is still young John and I'm not sure that this talk of protecting yourself is such a good idea this early in the boy's life.

John looks at Hettie as if he is surprised to be addressing this concern.

We see Martha and Luke are up stairs looking down between the balusters listening to the adults talk.

JOHN BRUMLEY

This is dangerous country Wash. Hell there's a war started out there. We got tough, bitter Comanches and Kiowa natives that don't so much appreciate us being here. Their using this divided country to their advantage. I don't want to sound like I know what's best for yer boy but you got to get used to the fact that we get raided here from time to time and it ain't pretty. We lost four horses last spring to bunch come up here a hooting and holler'n and got a away with em and slaughtered what livestock they couldn't take.

WASH SHORT

These natives might be open to living together and working together. I have heard of many tribes being very friendly and not hostile at all. We could work with them and learn from them and they from us. Have you tried to approach them?

JOHN BRUMLEY

Before or after they started attacking us? Look I am sure there are peaceful tribes but these tribes aren't friendly Wash, they are waring and they mean to kill us if they're able.

Wash looks at Hettie and around the table at the other adults. Everyone is staring at there plates thinking of the reality of the situation.

JOHN BRUMLEY (CONT'D)

Hell I thought you had been privy to this Wash. It's a beautiful life here and I wouldn't trade it for the world but that's the darn reality we live in here. The ugly truth of it.

- LONG BEAT -

JOHN BRUMLEY (CONT'D)

Hell, who knows what's comin.

John looks off out the window as if something is there.

CUT TO:

Titles

1862

7 EXT. SHORT RANCH - DAY

7

A loud, THUNDER OF HOOVES! Luke, now 8, is exercising a horse in the Corral. He is using one hand to hold the rope attached to the horses hackamore bridle and the other hand is swinging the end of the rope in big circles behind the horse to hurry him on.

The Short brothers, Luke and Will Brumley along with Wash are clearing trees to make way for Cotton fields.

Water is being brought from the well by Martha.

Hettie and HENRY SHORT, the newest addition to the family, are hanging clothes on the line, Henry is on mama's back.

Will and Luke Brumley are patrolling on horses in the distance with gun-belts on and rifles cradled at the ready.

8 INT. BRUMLEY HOME - NIGHT

8

The two families are together sitting around the living-room smoking cigars and drinking coffee.

William and Luke Brumley take look at each other momentarily while the others talk.

Luke and Martha, wanting to be at the table with the adults, settle in again upstairs and listen from between the upstairs balusters to the conversation.

John talks to Wash but the dialog takes a back seat to the tension brewing between Will and Luke Brumley.

JOHN BRUMLEY

(to Wash)

...I really like the way the roof beams came out. (Pointing to a sketch) You're supported there and there with this joist. I told you that I saw one of those Amish structures and I wanted to see if I could recreate it. I think it came out well. Strong!

WILL BRUMLEY

(Interrupting)

We've decided to go enlist...we're heading out in the morning.

The silence is audible. Wash looks at the boys with a concerned surprise.

John keeps his eyes on his coffee cup and shakes his head with approval and a distant smile.

LUKE BRUMLEY

We're going to join the Confederates and head east to fight.

Luke is listening to the conversations with much anticipation and curiosity.

LUKE BRUMLEY (CONT'D)

We don't own no slaves and we never will. A man is his own man. I believe that, you taught us that paw. You know were not fighting because we believe in slavery...we're going to fight because we believe that the federal government should not dictate to any state what is right and what is wrong. States rights! Even if we disagree with slavery the principle is still in question and the right for that state to do so, so long as it doesn't break the constitution.

WILL BRUMLEY

I just read about a Massachusetts
Colonel who wrote his governor...

Will picks up a news Paper and reads from it.

"The thing we seek is permanent
dominion...They think we mean to
take their slaves? We must take
their ports, their mines, their
water power, the very soil they
plow" he said!

John thinks a moment about what he said.

JOHN BRUMLEY

I couldn't be prouder my son's!

WASH SHORT

It seems a hell of thing to put
yourself in front of. I think all
war is senseless. Can't folks work
out their differences with out all
that killing?

JOHN BRUMLEY

Wash, I know your a peaceful man,
an honest man and a righteous man.
I can see that. I wish this world
had evolved that way but it hasn't,
at least not yet and we must do
sometimes what we don't want to do
but what we need to do.

WILLIAM BRUMLEY

They want to take what's ours Wash,
they want to take the south's
resources. We're just obstacles to
be disposed of to them. Even
Dickens said before the war.

William picks up a periodical and reads from.

WILLIAM BRUMLEY (CONT'D)

That "The Northern onslaught upon
slavery is no more than a piece of
specious humbug designed to conceal
it's desire for economic control of
the southern states."

Luke and Martha exchange glances of fear and curiosity.

WILLIAM BRUMLEY (CONT'D)
 We're talking about the same reason
 we always fight. When there is no
 other thing we can do.

WASH
 (to John)
 We're talking about sending our
 son's into WAR! Your son's!

A tear is seen in Wash's eye above his visibly beating chest.

WASH SHORT
 There has got to be a better way.

LUKE BRUMLEY
 "The tree of liberty must be
 refreshed form time to time with
 the blood of patriots and tyrants".
 The die is cast. There is no other
 way.

9

INT. SHORT HOUSE - LUKE AND JOES BEDROOM - NIGHT

9

Hettie is tucking Luke into bed with care. Making sure that
 sheets and blanket are pushed under him and tight as armor.

Martha is in the bed across the room and already tucked in.
 She has her hands behind her head looking up at the ceiling
 thinking.

Hettie walks to door and starts to close it.

HETTIE SHORT
 Goodnight my loves.

Hettie closes the door.

LUKE SHORT
 (to Martha)
 Things are going to be different
 around here without Will and Big
 Luke.

MARTHA SHORT
 You mean dangerous

LUKE SHORT
 How so?

MARTHA SHORT

Dad wasn't half in tears just because he was scared that they might get killed goin' off to war, paw was thinking about how they help protect this place.

LUKE SHORT

Protect it from what? You mean like John was sayin about how we live in dangerous times and such...and we got to protect what's ours?

MARTHA SHORT

While dad and John are out working you think big Luke and Will are out trail riding for fun. They are guarding this place and theirs from raiding indians, drifters and all sorts of men who rather steal than work.

Luke sits up in bed.

MARTHA SHORT (CONT'D)

Just the other day I heard will and big Luke talking about how before we got here a family a county over, was all killed by them. Killed and scalped with knives.

LUKE SHORT

(trying to pronounce)
What's sc-al-p-ed mean?

Martha, Takes her hand, with her thumb as the blade, imitating taking her scalp off.

Luke swallows hard and his eyes get wide with fear.

10 INT. SHORT HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

10

Hettie and Wash are downstairs locking up the house.

WASH SHORT

The boys will probably be leaving in a couple days and it wont be long until the indians that are around will take note of our absence. We need to be ready.

HETTIE

We need to teach the kids.

Hettie, pretending that she isn't nervous at what Wash said made her and goes to the coffee kettle and pours a refill with nervous hands.

11 EXT. SHORT RANCH - MORNING

11

Luke and his Hettie sit at the large kitchen table by themselves. A look of worry Hettie face can't hide. Hettie stares outside and then at the coffee in her cup.

Luke watches his mother as he slowly chews his breakfast. A Box Elder bug is slowly crawling on the table as Luke put his finger in front of it and the bug stops. Totally still they sit waiting for each other. Luke stays perfectly still trying to earn the bugs trust when the bug finally crawls on his finger, ever so slowly. Luke gets up and sets his finger on the porch and waits for the bug to crawl off and slowly does.

LUKE SHORT

When they comin back maw?

HETTIE SHORT

Probably in the morning but if they ride through, then late tonight. Saint Jo just aint right there.

12 EXT. SHORT RANCH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

12

Luke is exercising his horse in a round-pen while Hettie and Martha are in the kitchen making something for supper. Hettie looks out the window at Luke.

Hettie sees a group of Comanches at the ridge line and looking down at the ranch studying it.

Hettie drops what she is doing and without looking, grabs the Shotgun in the corner on her way out the door to the barn.

She's practiced this so many times in her head it's second nature.

HETTIE SHORT

Martha, come with me and grab those shotgun shells. LUKE!! Get that horse over here now!

Luke looks at his mother and then around at the Comanche's on the ridge. Luke tries to get the horse to come but he is spooked by the excitement and can't get him to follow.

HETTIE SHORT (CONT'D)

LUKE!! L EAVE THE HORSE!!

Luke tries one last time but the Horse rears up pulling Luke off his feet. He wouldn't let go of the rope voluntarily and lands down on the top of the fence, hitting his side hard. He rolls off landing on the dirt just outside the pen and struggles to catch his breath. Luke looks up and sees the Indians approaching fast.

Quickly, Luke runs into the barn where his mother tries to lock the barn door. Luke grabs the gun from Martha as Hettie struggles with the door lock.

Towering shadows are seen everywhere from behind the slits between the shrunken wooden tongue and groove barn walls larger than life. The Indians now gathering just outside the door. Hettie struggles with the lock noticing an obstruction under the door, making the door hard to close and secure.

We hear a horse NEIGHING in a painful panic off screen.

A tall Indian warrior kicks the door open and enters as Luke and Hettie moves back and he is followed by another smaller Indian. Luke struggles to cock the hammer back on the shotgun with his little thumb as the Indian advances. Holding the shotgun awkwardly, Luke FIRES, blasting the first one into the second one and both to the floor. Luke is also thrown to the floor from the recoil of the blast. The second indian struggles to get free of the body that lay on top of him and to get to his feet. Luke is up quickly and cocks the second hammer on the shotgun and blasts the second indian as he is running away, hitting him mostly in the back of the leg spinning him around and to the ground. Fear got the indian up quickly and kept him sprinting faster than Luke could reload and get another clean shot off. The rest of the indians scatter and head back up where they came down from.

Luke and Hettie emerge from the Barn after the commotion stops. Luke rushes to his horse that is still NEIGHING in pain. Luke discovers his horse is injured and struggling to get up. Blood covers his back right leg and we see that his achilles tendon has been sliced.

Tears and panic fill Luke's eyes because he knows what he must do. Luke looks at his mother and she see's the last countenance of a child on her son's face.

Luke quickly raises the shotgun and shoots his Horse. The last muscle twitches in his horses dead body. Luke drops the shotgun and his head as he walks past slaughtered pigs that have arrows sticking out of them.

13 INT. SHORT HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

13

Wash and the Brumley brother, Luke and Will enter the house in a rush. Hettie is sitting at the kitchen table. Her dried sweaty hair is fallen over her dirty, bloody face. They all stop in anticipation of worse news than what they saw outside with the obvious carnage.

HETTIE SHORT

We're okey. Luke is upstairs but don't wake him...he'll swing atcha'. Let him rest.

CUT TO:

Title:

1865

14 INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

14

A small newly constructed Schoolhouse sits on the edge of town. Ten children are at their desks and listening to MR. ABRAMS, late 40's with a medium build, who is lecturing them.

Luke, now 13 and small for his age, is sitting in the front of the class.

Most of the children are dirty, with clothes that look hand made and have patches from many mendings.

Mr. Abrams walks around the room between children's desks as he speaks. Interacting and among them holding a book but not reading from it.

MR. ABRAMS

"For this was Ocean meant. For this a Sun(Son) was sent and Moon was lent and winds in distant caverns spent...for this?"

The children are quite and paying close attention. Turning their heads to watch Mr. Abrams as he walks around the room.

MR. ABRAMS (CONT'D)

What do you think Mr. Thoreau meant by this phrase? Anyone?

The children are intrigued by what they hear, many having never heard such beautifully orchestrated and poetic words.

We see the children thinking, having to switch their brains from survival to living.

MR. ABRAMS (CONT'D)

Bud?

BUD, is a large boy with bad posture and eyes that sit close together. He is almost the size of a full grown man and one of the oldest kids in the class. His hat sits on his desk in front of him and he fiddles with the rim of it.

BUD

(unsure)

Sounds like he has a lot of questions?

The children all bust out laughing. Bud, not expecting that response, sheepishly laughs like he meant to be funny.

Mr. Abrams smiles and keeps walking around the room.

MR. ABRAMS

""

Looking at each child as he reads and walks.

MR. ABRAMS (CONT'D)

Makes you wonder.

Mr. Abrams see's Luke's interest. Luke smiles. Mr. Abrams returns the smile and puts the book on Luke's desk while he looks up at the rest of the children.

Bud looks on their interaction and smirks.

Luke reads the author.

INSERT book spine: HENRY DAVID THOREAU

MR. ABRAMS (CONT'D)

That's all for today kids.

The kids storm out of their seats right after Mr. Abrams utter's "THAT'S ALL". They know the sound and tone. Luke, hesitantly sets the book down on the corner of Mr. Abrams desk.

MR. ABRAMS (CONT'D)

Would you like to read that?

LUKE SHORT

Is it home work?

MR. ABRAMS

Passions are never work. Take it home and read some. You might enjoy it.

LUKE SHORT

(Enthusiastically)

Yes sir, thank you sir.

Luke quickly grabs the book back off the desk and hurry's out the door.

15

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - CONTINUOUS

15

Luke see's Bud harassing Martha and Henry as he walks up sticking the book in his bag.

BUD

(to Luke)

Oh and here is the little teachers darlin'.

We see them both now standing, Luke is half Bud's size.

Luke grabs Henry's hand and put his arm around his sister walking them away from Bud. Bud grabs Luke by the shoulder swinging him around. Bud's fist lands square in the middle of Luke's face hard and quick.

Luke falls back hard. He is out!

Fade to Black

- BEAT -

Luke slowly opens his blurry eyes. He is being mumbled to, from his perspective, by Henry and Martha.

Henry and Martha both have minor cuts and scraps and both dirtier than we last saw them. Obviously they got roughed up a bit from Bud as well. Luke comes to, and sits up. Martha is pushing him from behind and Henry is pulling his hand.

Luke reaches for his bag and see's that the book is still there and is relieved that it is.

MARTHA SHORT

How are you feeling?

HENRY SHORT

It was a cheap shot!

Luke gets up and shakes off the hurt.

LUKE SHORT
Where did he go?

MARTHA SHORT
Back to his cave I guess.

Luke turns to start walking and notices a COWBOY sitting on a fence across the street. He is looking at them, cigarette in one hand, the other in a sling. The Cowboy slowly drags his smoke and cock's his head never taking his eyes off them as they walk home.

16 INT. SHORT HOUSE - NIGHT

16

Hettie is cleaning up the kids and mending their wounds.

HETTIE SHORT
Why didn't you hit him back?

HENRY SHORT
He didn't have time maw...

Wash is standing in the kitchen with his arms crossed listening.

WASH
(Interupting)
That is not the solution. What provoked him to do such a thing?

LUKE SHORT
(to Hettie)
I never saw it coming. He spun me around and that's the last thing I remember.

WASH
Luke! I'm talking to you boy.

LUKE SHORT
I didn't provoke anyone paw. I was just minding my self.

HENRY
Bud was grabbing on Martha and I was about to set him straight when Luke came out of the Schoolhouse he started picking on him.

WASH
(To LUKE SHORT)
What was taking so long in the school house?

LUKE SHORT

I was talking to Mr. Abrams after class. He gave me a book to read. A book we are reading in class.

Luke grabs the book from his bag and holds it up to give Wash a look at it. Wash comes over to Luke and takes the book. Wash spins it around holding out in front of him with the spine facing him.

WASH

This...This is what I like to see. What a beautiful thing. To pull THIS from leather instead of a gun.

HETTIE

(under her breath)
Only if you hitem with it.

WASH

"The people shall perish for a lack of knowledge"

HETTIE

"Sell your cloak and buy a sword"
Jesus said

Wash gives Hettie a stern look.

HETTIE (CONT'D)

This is just wrong. Luke is half his size.

LUKE SHORT

I can take him if he would fight me square.

WASH

There will be no fighting! Use your head and your words. We can heal these issues with understanding and compassion. Try talking to him.

Hettie is finishing up the mending of Luke's scrapes and bruises and shaking her head.

The class settles down as the kids find their seats and Mr. Abrams stands behind his desk.

Luke is sitting in front of Bud and turns his head around to see him glaring at him. Bud is pointing his finger at him in a threatening manner.

MR. ABRAMS

The fields we plow, the fences we mend and livestock we tend to. All of these tasks we do every day are important. They are needed to our survival. We struggle at these so that we can have a better life. We do these tasks because we want to enjoy the desert of life, if you will. Fall in love, maybe have time to investigate the mysteries of being alive. Great literature will help us do so. As well as the writings and teachings of beautiful souls who have gone before us who lifted some of the stumbling stones on the path to enlightenment...and poetry is one way to articulate what beauty or pain life has in store for us.

MR. ABRAMS (CONT'D)

Let's get started.

Trying hard to focus, Luke is distracted by Bud and his hostility. Luke sighs and opens his book to begin his lessons.

18

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - LATER

18

As Bud leaves the school house and clumsily walks with other kids, he is approached by Luke from behind wanting to talk to him, tapping him on the shoulder.

LUKE SHORT

(innocently cautious)

Bud?

Bud turns around and immediately takes a swing at Luke. Luke ducks the punch and throws one of his own, low and to the gut. Luke's punch connects with Buds stomach with little effect. A smashing right hand sends Luke to the dirt, biting his lip so he wont cry. Instead, he forces a smile. Bud commences to pounce on Luke until he's bloody.

The kids gather around Luke as he lay there in a heap. Only his Brother and sister help him up.

HENRY

Well that one lasted a little longer.

MARTHA

He doesn't need to hear your sass Henry.

Catching his breath, Luke spits out dirt and blood. He notices that Cowboy in the same place as yesterday. The Cowboy waves Luke over with his Cigarette hand. Luke excuses himself from Henry and Martha. Dusting himself off and walks slowly toward the Cowboy. Martha and Henry remain there.

19

EXT. COWBOY'S FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

19

The Cowboy is leaning against the gate. One arm in a sling and a cigarette sits on his lip.

THE COWBOY

You could shoot that Porker

LUKE SHORT

I've been thinking about it but then I'd be trading in one mess for another. Did you get into a fight too?

The Cowboy notices that he is referring to his arm in a sling.

THE COWBOY

Naw, I was on a trail herd coming up from San Antonio way. Horse stepped in a hole and threw me.

LUKE SHORT

Is it broke?

COWBOY

Only in a couple places. I'm just healing up here then I'm signing up for another drive. They're gathering up cattle all over down south. No money in Texas. Yankees got it all.

Pushing off from the gate with his boot, the Cowboy gets closer to Luke.

COWBOY (CONT'D)

You know you don't have to take any shit from that boy?

(MORE)

COWBOY (CONT'D)

Don't try and fight him with your fists. Hit with anything you can lay your hands on.

The Cowboy reaches in his pocket and pulls out a strange looking knife. He pushes a button on the side and the blade springs out surprising Luke.

COWBOY (CONT'D)

(handing it to Luke)

Here take this. You cut ol' chubby a little and he'll cry like a baby. Hell, just show it to him and he'll probably run.

Luke looks at the knife and at the Cowboy. A little awkward with the knife, Luke tries to put the blade back but its not happening. The Cowboy Grabs the cigarette with his lip and reaches for the Knife to show Luke how to use it.

COWBOY (CONT'D)

Here, like this.

Handing the knife back to Luke with a wink.

COWBOY (CONT'D)

The worlds full of bullies like him. You'll be fighting it all your whole life.

20

INT. SHORT BARN - NIGHT

20

A small hand is wrapped around a Switch Blade knife. We see his thumb reaching for the button and out swings the blade shiny and sharp.

Luke's reaction to the quickness of its ejection startles him a bit. He begins to feel the balance and weight with the blade out compared to it not. Practicing with both hands, swinging it back and forth up and down and throwing it from hand to hand as he becomes more use to it.

Luke notices that one of the horses that he cares for is watching him. He puts the blade back into the handle and goes to pet the horse's nose, rubbing him lovingly. Luke looks at the horse as if she knows he is bruised and swollen. Turning, so the horse can't see him, he begins to practice again like a parent would to one of their children, protecting them from the violence.

21

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - AFTERNOON

21

Luke and Henry stand near the place that Bud walks by everyday on his way home.

HENRY

Are you really going to cut him?

LUKE SHORT

The Cowboy said that all I have to do is show it to him and he'll probably just split.

HENRY

Paw said that he is going to come to the school and talk to the teacher.

LUKE SHORT

That's not going to do anything. Its just going to make him pick on us more.

HENRY

So your going to deal with them like those Indians you shot?

Luke drops his head.

LUKE SHORT

(trying not to think about it)

Hopefully not.

Bud and his friends come walking by a moment later and Bud takes notice of Luke and Henry.

BUD

(sarcastically)

I'll tell yah Luke, you sure did a number on my fist yesterday with your face! I can hardly turn the pages of my poetry book.

The group of kids with Bud start laughing and patting Bud on the back.

LUKE SHORT

Laugh all you want to but come at me again and you won't like the outcome Bud.

Bud gets up to Luke's face and pushes him to the ground.

BUD

Come on! What you got!

Luke rises from the ground, reaching in his pocket as Bud charges Luke. Bud comes at Luke and within a second Luke has the switch blade out, swinging it back and forth not having time to just show him. Bud sucks his belly in with arms out wide trying to avoid the blade and falls back to the ground.

Lying there with his elbows holding him up off the ground we see red blood starting to seep through Bud's shirt. In a panic, Bud gets up, holding his gut but his grey intestines are visible through his hands.

The kids all start to scream and some run for help.

HENRY

Jesus Luke, I think you've killed em'.

Shocked and scared, Luke starts to run off with Henry towards the Cowboys house.

EXT. COWBOY'S FRONT YARD

The Cowboy is outside and standing in the direction of the fight.

LUKE SHORT

(breathing hard)

Here's your knife back Mister! I might have killed that kid.

COWBOY

What are you going to do?

LUKE SHORT

I don't know...leave the county I guess.

The Cowboy takes a piece of paper from his pocket and a stub of a pencil and writes something on it, then hands it to Luke.

COWBOY

There's a big tall guy that we call Red that brings a trail herd around Llano County who was about a month behind us. Was I you, I'd take off and go to Red River Crossing. Ask them at the store if the herd come through yet.

(MORE)

COWBOY (CONT'D)

The cattle will have several brands, but their brand is JD. If you find them, give Red that Note. Maybe he'll take you on. A trail drive is a hell of a place to hide out for a man on the run.

Luke nods, grabs the paper and takes off running.

COWBOY (CONT'D)

See yah on the trail!

22

INT. SHORT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

22

Blasting through the door, Luke and Henry hurry to get things together for Luke's escape. Hettie and Martha are concerned what the rush is about.

HETTIE

What's going on Luke? What happened?

HENRY

Luke cut Bud, cut em' real bad. I think he might be dead maw.

Hettie runs in to the room where Luke is throwing some of his belongings into a satchel.

LUKE SHORT

Maw I've got to run and run far. I think I might have done worse than hurt him.

Hettie, with tears in her eyes, knows what he must do.

HETTIE

Martha, grab the bed roll and some dried food for Luke.

Hettie runs to her bed room and grabs something from under the mattress.

A tightly rapped gun is revealed when she unwraps it. She digs again to find the bullets she hid as well.

Martha throws the bedroll and some dried goods on the kitchen table as Luke throws his bag there as well.

Henry comes barging in the door.

HENRY

I've got your horse ready for yah
Luke.

Hettie turns Luke around to speak directly to him. She hands him the gun and a few dollars she had saved.

HETTIE

Here...take this. A knife is only going to get you only so far in this world. Learn it, before you try and use it on someone and remember, guns make a good servant but a tyrannical master. Use it only if you have to and don't let it replace you head, your heart or your tongue.

He holds the gun in his hands and looks at his mother, for what he thinks might be the last time. Tears start to stream down Luke's face as he turns to see Martha and Henry crying as well.

HETTIE (CONT'D)

Whats going to happen to you Luke?

LUKE SHORT

I'll make out and I'll write when I can.

23 EXT. SHORT RANCH - CONTINUOUS

23

Throwing his satchel over the horses back and securing it, Luke take one last look at his crying family and spurs his horse into a full sprint.

LUKE SHORT

Yaaa Nellie!

Dust is flying up from under Nellies blurred hooves. Luke is holding on tight. He is a good rider and has a connection to his horse.

24 EXT. WEST TEXAS PRARIE - DUSK

24

Tired and sweaty Luke and Nellie approach the rivers edge. Nellie drinks as Luke fills his canteen. Luke looks around wondering if this might be a good place to camp.

Removing his saddle and unpacking his gear, Luke makes camp for the night.

Cold, tired, scared and alone this thirteen year old boy huddles under the blankets that his mom not long ago tucked him into bed with.

25 EXT. WEST TEXAS PRARIE - DAY 25

A whole world spread out in front of Luke.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE:

- The Sun rising over the horizon as luke rides.
- A Hawk flying over head and Luke smiles.
- Mule deer herds in the distance.
- Rain falling on him and his horse.
- The Sun setting slowly after a long days ride as Luke dismounts his horse.

26 EXT. TEXAS PRARIE - DUSK 26

Luke is almost all settled for the night. He walks around the perimeter taking close note of his surroundings as a camp fire burns near his bedroll.

He notices a RIDER, on a large black horse in the distance approaching coming from the opposite direction from where Luke came. The rider stops in an elevated position and stares in his direction.

Luke is behind tall shrubs, relieving his bladder and is hidden, so he thinks, but the fire is giving off a plume of smoke and his location.

The rider's face is cast in shadow and does not move. Luke looks back at the fire thinking what he can do to stop the smoke.

Looking back the Rider is gone. Luke crouches down and goes to grab his gun in his waist but no gun is found.

He looks over and sees it on his bed roll and scampers over to get it when he hears a figure close behind him. Luke stops and turns quickly seeing the tall rider, shrouded by the setting sun rays and behind dust from Luke's crawling, giving the Rider the appearance of emerging out of smoke.

The Rider reaches down as if to grab him. The dust clears and the rider is more visible now and Luke sees...a greeting face with a hand offered to help him up.

Luke collects his fears and accepts the gesture being pulled up by the six-foot, two inch man, CLAY ALLISON, 26 years old.

CLAY ALLISON
Clay...Clay Allison

LUKE SHORT
(with a lump in his
throat)
Good way to get your self shot,
Sneaking up on a man's camp!

Luke is several yards from his gun. Clay is looking round

CLAY ALLISON
(Looking around)
Yah, jeez you almost got me. Is
your paw around?

LUKE SHORT
NO! Why would he be?

CLAY ALLISON
Well you said "Man". How old are
yah?

Luke dusting himself off from the dirt from which he crawled.

LUKE SHORT
Man enough to take care of myself.

Clay turns back and starts walking to his horse. Clay has a noticeable limp.

CLAY ALLISON
You don't mind if I camp out here
tonight do you? I just hate making
fires.

For a moment Luke was almost hoping he would say that.

LUKE SHORT
Suit yourself.

CLAY ALLISON
And your doing WHAT out here all by
yourself?

LUKE SHORT
Got myself a job on a trail drive,
a big herd is coming through and I
plan to get on it.

(MORE)

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)
 Heading over to Red River Crossing
 to hopefully meet up with em'.

Clay is digging in his bag and walks over to the fire.

CLAY ALLISON
 Well I can't say I envy you. Been
 there before. Hardest work I've
 ever done. Make you old quick.

Clay sets out some beans and dried meat out.

CLAY ALLISON (CONT'D)
 Hungry?

A flask is revealed from under Clay's coat.

CLAY ALLISON (CONT'D)
 Thirsty?

27

EXT. WEST TEXAS PRARIE - NIGHT - LATER

27

We see a tin cup, dirty with bean juice.

PAN OUT: to see Luke lying against his bedroll, holding his
 stomach and a little glassy eyed from the drink with a
 thousand mile stare looking into the fire.

CLAY
 A knife fight and a gun fight all
 before fourteen...not bad.

Clay get's up puts the rest of the food in a sack and throws
 the rope around a tree to hoist it up off the ground.

LUKE SHORT
 What did you hurt yourself doin'?

Clay thinks for a minute and realizes that it's the limp Luke
 referring to.

CLAY ALLISON
 Lets just say its the price of
 doing business.

LUKE SHORT
 How so?

Clay draws his gun with lightening speed. Luke is mesmerized.
 Clay slowly slides the gun back into his holster.

CLAY ALLISON

I used to practice so much that my hammer thumb would bleed but its all callous now. All that practicing and your bound to make a mistake or two, at least it didn't happen in a gun fight, I'd be a pound or two heavier...with lead that is. Now, I just walk with a limp.

LUKE SHORT

Hammer thumb?

Clay walks over and grabs a few pieces of wood from around the perimeter of the camp as he talks.

CLAY ALLISON

The faster you can get that gun out of your holster the better chance you'll have of firing first and you want that advantage in a gunfight. Aim and a steady hand is a different story. Can't teach that but you can practice it and some are just naturals.

Clay puts the wood down and stands across from Luke. His guns sit differently than Luke remembers his uncle would wear them. Clay's sit lower on his hip and a strap tied around his thigh to the bottom of the holster. He holds his hand out showing a thick, well established callus on his thumb. Clay stands, with his hand at his side in a gunfighter stance.

CLAY ALLSION

You see when you draw, you need to cock the hammer as you go back.

Clay points to the hammer on the gun. A thick, well established callus is seen on Clays thumb.

CLAY ALLISON

...With your thumb as you go back. Not every gunfighter draws this way but happen to think its the quickest way to draw. Now there's a lot more to being a good Gunfighter than that but it's the fastest way to get your pistol out and shoot if you do it in one motion.

LUKE SHORT

I don't need to know this. I'm not going to be a gunfighter.

CLAY ALLISON

I don't know anyone who ever wanted to be a gunfighter, just like I never knew anyone who wanted to be in the war.

LUKE SHORT

You were in the war?

Clay shakes his head yes.

CLAY ALLISON

I served. I got a medical discharge for an old head injury though and got released. I tried to reenlist but was captured as a spy.

LUKE SHORT

Sounds like you was itch'n to fight!

CLAY ALLISON

Most of the time fighting is a reaction, not a response. Just because you fight doesn't always mean you want to.

Clay scoots down in his bed roll.

CLAY ALLISON (CONT'D)

I went to fight because I believed in what I was fighting for. Not, fighting for the sake of fighting. You may not want to be a gunfighter but there are times when you might need to be a gunfighter.

Clay slides his hat over his face.

CLAY ALLISON (CONT'D)

You never want to kill a man that don't need to be killed but some times in life we need to learn to be...at peace with war.

Luke pulls the covers over his torso and slides down in his bed roll looking up at the stars taking in deep what he just heard. Luke pulls out his Thoreau book and begins to read under the moonlight.

28 EXT. TEXAS PRARIE - MORNING

28

Luke and Clay are packing up their belongings and getting ready to ride out. Clay mounts his horse.

CLAY

Welp, best of luck to yah Luke.

LUKE SHORT

Where are you headed?

CLAY

Might get on as a ranch foreman over in Cimmaron, New Mexico. Who knows for sure. See you on the trail sometime maybe. Thanks for the fire!

In a cloud of dust, Clay heads down the trail.

Luke mounts Nellie and they ride the opposite direction. Luke looks back down the trail in the direction that Clay rode.

29 EXT. RED RIVER CROSSING - DAY

29

Another long day of riding and Luke reaches RED RIVER CROSSING. Luke ties Nellie up out front next to several others. Luke, with a more confident walk, strolls in.

30 INT. RED RIVER STATION - CONTINUOUS

30

We see three MEN at a counter talking to the PROPRIETOR. Luke looks around having never been here before and walk up to the them in the middle of a conversation.

MAN #1

(To the Proprietor)

Might be head'n up towards Louisiana way and see what I can get for em' out there.

PROPRIETOR

Some folks say'n Missouri give yah top dollar...

The men stop and look at Luke coming in. Luke walks confidently up to the counter.

PROPRIETOR (CONT'D)

Howdie young man.

LUKE SHORT

Looking to see if anyone has seen a herd come through here with a brand JD and a man named Red drive'n em'

MAN #1

They haven't come through as far as I've seen.

Man #1 looks over at the Proprietor.

PROPRIETOR

No sir, I would know, they all stop here for supplies though. If you head south you probably run into them in a day or so, heard they was coming through.

LUKE SHORT

Can I get some supplies?

PROPRIETOR

That's what I am here for.

LUKE SHORT

Do you sell...

31 EXT. RED RIVER STATION - CONTINUOUS 31

A close up on an old pistol grip sticking out of a new holster. We PAN OUT to reveal it's sitting proudly on Luke's hip. Luke hurries Nellie on and heads south on the trail.

32 EXT. TEXAS PRARIE - DAY 32

A scattering of Long Horn's are making there way across a wide expanse of land. An enormous cloud of dust is being kicked up and Luke brings his Bandana up over his nose and mouth.

Luke rides down and passes several cowboys riding along and Luke just waves. Luke notices several cattle with the brand "JD" on their side. Riding up behind the drag horse, Luke files in on one side and starts herding cattle that go astray.

Evening comes and Luke peels off and makes camp for the night.

EXT. TEXAS PRARIE - NIGHT

Luke has fallen asleep with his Thoreau book opened and lying on his chest. The last bit of fire is just fading out.

33

EXT. TEXAS PRARIE - MORNING

33

A glow over the horizon and the sun is just cresting a beam of blindingly bright light.

The drive is back on. Luke files in and starts herding and receiving strange looks from several cowboys. A tall rider, RED, approaches Luke pulling down his bandana and yelling over the loud din of the cattle's movement.

RED

Who the hell are you?

Hesitating for a minute.

LUKE SHORT

Jim Brumley

RED

What the hell are you doing back here?

LUKE SHORT

Looking for a job.

RED

Why didn't you ride up and ask for one then?

LUKE SHORT

I was afraid maybe you wouldn't give it to me on account of how old I am...so I thought I would prove myself first.

Luke pulls out the note from the Cowboy and rides over to Red handing it to him. Red reads it and waves for Luke to come and follow.

Red rides up to a place along the side of the herd and motions to Luke to stay in that position.

MONTAGE:

- Many scenes of Luke and fifteen other cowboys herding.

Luke is going after a small group of cows that are heading for a ledge and sprints his horse after them. A few of the cowboys look impressed at Luke's speed and riding abilities.

34

EXT. CATTLE DRIVE - LATER

34

The Cowboys are filing in from various directions and Luke is the last one to ride up. Everyone is looking at Luke as they dismount and take their horse's saddles off. Red walks up to Luke and waves for his Son COLE, to come over.

RED

Jim (Luke), They call me Red and this is my son Cole. Can you help handle the Horse Remuda if I take you on?

LUKE SHORT

Yes, Sir!

Cole, starts jumping around in excitement.

Red starts walking over to the wagon and Luke follows.

RED

Cole is doing it now but he badly needs help. I'll try you out for a few days and if you can handle it I'll pay you fifteen dollars a week. You'll also gather firewood and help out the cook if need be.

LUKE SHORT

Yes, Sir.

RED

Get yourself some grub.

COLE

Welcome aboard Jim!

Luke does a double take not used to being called Jim.

LUKE SHORT

(to Cole)

What the heck is a Remuda?

Cole just smiles.

COLE

Come on, you can put your stuff here with the other gear.

Luke, really liking the sound of his new title smiles and puts his things up with all the other cowboy gear.

35 EXT. TEXAS PRARIE - NIGHT

35

A Crock-Pot bubbling with stew sits above a campfire. The COWBOYS are sitting in small groups of five or more in various places taking turns getting seconds for supper.

Luke is sitting with Cole 17, BILL 20's, CARSON 19, JOHNNY 20'S all sitting around telling lie's, drinking and cutting up.

CARSON

...that boy come at me with a knife!

Luke looks over with a concerned look on his face.

JOHNNY

(Laughing)

What did you do sit on him?

The gang cracks up, partly because they are all laughing any way and part because Carson is a bit over weight and they all raz him as much as possible.

BILL

Whatdidedo?

CARSON

I ran...of course!

More laughter.

Bill is shuffling the cards and doing tricks with them.

JOHNNY

You must have gotten on your horse cause you wouldn't be able to out run much!

CARSON

Hell nothin could catch me on that horse!

BILL

I think Luke could.

The gang goes silent then...

COLE
Ooooooooooh

JOHNNY
Ooooooooooh

BILL
I saw him ride today.

CARSON
I don't race for free, what's in it
for me when I win?

BILL
Let's say twenty dollars!

LUKE SHORT
(Whispering to Bill)
I don't have twenty dollars.

BILL
You will when we pull this herd
into Abileen.

LUKE SHORT
(Acquiescing)
Alright, your on!

Carson and Luke shake on it.

COLE
On our day off then.

Bill goes up to Luke and pats him on the back holding a deck
of cards and cuts them with one hand.

LUKE SHORT
How did you do that?

BILL
Win that race and I'll show you.

36 EXT. TEXAS PRARIE - DAY

36

A group of cowboys are pacing off a distance for the race.
Another group are gathered around Carson and yet another
around Luke.

We see Carson from a distance and various Cowboys seem like
they are giving him advise.

Luke is tightening his saddle and checking Nellies hooves.

BILL

It's a short run their marking off
Luke so try and get the jump from
the start.

COLE

Looks like they are pacing it off
that way on purpose looking at ole'
stubby he's on.

Luke rides over to the starting line where people are
gathering and several are walking to the finish line.

Carson walks over besides Luke.

CARSON

(sarcastically)
You want to double it?

LUKE SHORT

I'm going to do you a favor and
decline.

Carson changes his tune a little and we see him get a little
nervous.

A random COWBOY holds a handkerchief and raises it above his
head. Luke and Carson are in position. The Cowboys are loud
with excitement. The cowboy signals to each rider and the
riders signal back that they are ready.

The cowboy's arm lowers fast and the two horses take off.
Carson and his horse take the immediate lead. Luke is a horse
and a half behind. Carson is looking back at Luke and now
Carson's horse isn't increasing his lead. Luke's horse now
has the momentum and starts to gain on them. Nellie is giving
it all she has now. Luke and Nellie are now neck and neck
with Carson and his horse but Luke and Nellie are pulling
away fast. Luke and Nellie cross the finish line several
lengths ahead.

Half the group goes wild and the other half are throwing
their hats on the ground and kicking dirt.

Luke rides his horse up to the celebrating crowd who are
congratulating them both.

BILL

Yeeee Hawwww boys!

COLE

I new I should have bet more.

Red walks up to Luke and shakes his hand.

RED

Thank you son, you just made my week.

Carson walks past the group with his head low and gives Luke a nod of approval. Luke smiles and dismounts shaking everyone hand. Some more exuberantly than others.

Carson walks over to Luke and reluctantly hands Luke twenty dollars. Luke looks at it as if he has never seen that much money in his life and he hasn't.

37

EXT. ABILENE, KANSAS OUTSKIRTS - MORNING

37

A thousand Texas Longhorn's litter the horizon. The herd is just outside of town and they are on the last part of their journey.

Every cowboy is smiling from ear to ear. We see several gathering the last few in to the stalls to be weighed.

COLE

THAT'S THE LAST OF EM' BOYS!
WEEEEEE HOOOOOOO!

Luke looks around and feels the sense of accomplishment like he has never felt.

Cole rides up to Luke.

COLE (CONT'D)

We're going to town! Lets grab our pay and head in.

EXT. ABILENE, KANSAS TOWN - LATER

Luke and Cole ride into a bustling Abilene, Kansas. Cowboys, business folks and all classes of women are everywhere. Cole looks at Luke and they share a smile knowing they could be in for a good time or get into a lot of trouble.

COLE

Let's get a hotel and clean up.

LUKE SHORT

Let's get a drink first

The busiest saloon on Main street, the Bull Head Saloon they park their horses at.

There is a picture of a bull with an erection on the sign.

COLE
(laughing)
This is the place

A couple of high collar buttoned older ladies are reading the riot act to a large, longhaired, 34 year old man, this is Marshal WILD BILL HICKOK. They are yelling and pointing to him and the sign. Wild Bill has his head down and nodding in disapproving acceptance.

Luke and cole are walking past taking a second quick glimpse of the sign shaking their heads and smiling each other.

INT. BULL HEAD SALOON - CONTINUOUS

It is a big room, with gaming tables on either side, a piano player in the corner and a crude bar at the end with a Bull's head that hangs over it. The saloon is loud and energetic.

The boys walk past a lot of sorted people and find a space at the bar to order a drink. Luke sees that the bartender is busy and turns to face the action. Luke is taking notice of the gaming tables.

One table stands out from the rest. A man in his early 50's is dressed like nothing he has ever seen. Wearing a white ruffled shirt, black string tie, and black suit. Hanging from his embroidered vest, is a heavy gold nugget chain with a Jürgensen watch tucked into one of the pockets that he takes out to see what time it is. His tie has a large diamond pin right in the middle of it, this is DICK CLARK, the dealer. Luke is fascinated by this man and his elegant attire.

The table has a higher class of people at it. Luke notices the way Dick is dealing. His hands shuffling the cards adroitly and with panache, almost entertainingly. Dick looks around the room and notices Luke studying him, he gives a nod to Luke.

Luke turns and looks in the mirror at his side and sees himself for the first time in a long time. He is wearing old dirty clothes and its all he has ever known.

Cole has two whiskies delivered by the bartender and Cole sets two bullets down. The bartender picks up the bullets as Cole picks up the Whiskies and hands one to Luke. They cheers to each other as a toast and Cole's eyes widen as it goes down.

COLE
Yike's that's good!

Their faces disagree with that statement as they set the shot glasses down on the bar.

COLE (CONT'D)
(squinting)
I think.

The Saloon doors open quickly but quietly and a tall skinny cowboy with an obviously large bullet hole through his hat, hurries his way to the bar. Luke and Cole have a small space between them and this cowboy, JOHN WESLEY HARDIN, all of seventeen years old, slides right in.

JOHN WESLEY HARDIN
(anxiously and
breathing hard)
Anybody follow me through those
doors?

Luke and Cole are a little taken back, looking at the very obvious hole in his hat, Luke's looking at the front and Cole at the back and then at the doors and back to John.

	LUKE	COLE
No		(condescendingly)
		No

John's eyes go back and forth quickly.

JOHN WESLEY HARDIN
The Marshal ain't right there?

John turns quickly and sees that this is true. John's hand swipes Cole's gun belt on his return glance and lifts a bullet out palming it.

JOHN WESLEY HARDIN (CONT'D)
Well I'll be...

leaning to look down the bar.

JOHN WESLEY HARDIN (CONT'D)
(screaming)
Bartender?

Cole felt something slight and turns looking down at his waist then back up not knowing what John did but suspecting something. Cole moves around to the side of John that Luke is on.

The bartender sets down a shot and keeps his hand on it. The bartender looks incredulously at the bullet hole in John's hat.

John shows the bullet with a disappointed look on his face. The bartender is not going to let go until John sets the bullet on the bar.

We see a gambler at Dick's table, a large man named BEN THOMPSON, notice John. Ben is well dressed and wearing a bowler hat and two pistols. Ben whispers in another large, well dressed man's ear he is sitting next to. This is PHIL COLE. Ben get's up and starts walking around the bar keeping his eye on John.

Luke throws the bullet up in the air and the bartender releases the shot glass from his grip to try and catch the bullet with both hands. John grabs the whiskey and slams it a split second before the bartender catches the bullet.

JOHN WESLEY HARDIN (CONT'D)
(pointing his finger like
a gun)
Gotcha!

John winks at the unimpressed bartender and the bartender throws the bullet in a box on the back bar shaking his head as John turns to Luke and Cole with his hand still making a gun with his thumb and forefinger.

JOHN WESLEY HARDIN (CONT'D)
(to Cole))
Can I borrow your gun? See, there were these vaquero's that ambushed me out on the Chisholm. I got two of em' when my cap and ball jammed. It's no real tool for a surgeon like me but what'd yah gonna do? We all gotta walk through the fire boys!

John looks back and forth at Luke a Cole and then releases his finger pistol to a raised hand.

JOHN WESLEY HARDIN (CONT'D)
Well I guess not.

The Ben gets to them on the other side of the bar.

BEN THOMPSON
(to John)
Hey...Little Arkansas?

John turns to talk to Ben.

Luke and Cole look at each other.

LUKE
 (whispering)
 Little Arkansas?

COLE
 (whispering)
 Little Arkansas?

JOHN WESLEY HARDIN
 (pointing to the empty
 glass)
 I paid for that Ben!

BEN THOMPSON
 Meet Phil and I in the back, we
 need to talk to you.

John turns back to Luke and Cole introducing himself.

JOHN WESLEY HARDIN
 (whispering proudly)
 John, John Wesley Hardin. Well, a
 good man's always needed.

John makes his way through Luke and Cole and turning back.

JOHN WESLEY HARDIN (CONT'D)
 Thanks for the drink! I mean...nice
 drinking with yall.

John hurries off to the door where we see Phil Cole and Ben
 Thompson waiting for him.

COLE
 I knew that sonofabitch took a
 bullet from me!

LUKE SHORT
 (laughing)
 Crazy sonofabitch, but I like him.

Luke turns to look back at the action and see's Wild Bill
 walk in. Bill looks at Luke and Cole and squints as if he
 can't make out who he's looking at. Bill proceeds to walk
 around to the office door that the three men walked into.

Luke is watching the Faro table dealer. He studies his hands
 removing cards from The Box, moving the Abacus beads across
 the string to which the CASEKEEPER moves to the correlating
 cards that were called.

COLE
 Let's get out-a-here.

Luke hesitates to take his eye off the DEALER but he knows
 Cole isn't going to watch that all night. Luke watches Dick
 deal as he leaves with Cole.

Dick's hand is flicking cards out like a gun being drawn quickly and we hear the sound of STEEL LEAVING LEATHER as the room goes silent.

40

EXT. ABILENE, KANSAS HOTEL - MORNING

40

The sun comes beaming through the window of Luke and Cole's hotel room window and it's directly over Cole's face as he sleeps and we hear the same sound of STEEL LEAVING LEATHER.

Cole can barley open his eyes but sees a faint figure in front of the mirror that's blurred with quick hands and the sound gets louder but stops as Luke hears Cole waking.

COLE

What the heck happened last night?
Aaaaaaa! Did I get shot in the
head?

Still blurry but getting clearer, Luke takes off his gun belt and sets it in the chair out of eye sight from Cole.

LUKE SHORT

Yah...you took a few rounds by the
bartender. Right out'a the barrel
of a whisky bottle

Luke goes to the window that looks out over main street and pensively gazes out.

COLE

How are you feeling?

LUKE SHORT

You remember that one saloon we
went to, after we left the Bull
Head? The one where that girl was
dancing on the bar?

COLE

(sheepishly)
Kinda.

LUKE SHORT

That guy I was talking to, Six Toed
Pete, they called him...

COLE

...on account he shot all his other
toes off?

LUKE SHORT

Yah, he was talking to us about the Buffalo hunts and how they're getting rich on killing em'? Hides and all?

COLE

Where you going with this? You want to kill Buffalo?

LUKE SHORT

I don't want to kill anything? How many you figure out there doing all that killin though? LOTS! What do they need out there? Provide that and you'll be making more than any of em'.

Cole sits up in bed holding his head as if it were a soft boiled egg.

COLE

You want to quit wranglin so you can go peddle something on the prairie?

LUKE SHORT

I get that wranglin is an honest livin Cole and I really appreciate Red and you taking me on but how many years you think you can do that before it gets the best of yah. Most of those guys look like they're half dead already. Sitin on that saddle too beat up to feel the pain. Your never going to get rich doing that!

Luke eyes his new hat, sitting on the table and walks to it. Looking at the hat and around the spacious room they are in, Luke then looks at cole...

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

I like sleeping in a bed at night. I like walking across the street and sitn down to a warm meal that a pretty lady's serving me that I don't have to cook over a camp fire. I want to make some real money Cole and herding ain't going to do it.

Inside Luke's hat he pulls out a deck of cards and starts playing with them after he puts the hat down.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

I have something I need to confess.
My name isn't Jim...Its Luke. Luke
Short.

Cole gets up and walks around the room confused.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

I ran from a situation I was in.
There was no other way. It wasn't
my fault completely. But what ever
my name is, I am who you know.

EXT. ABILENE, KS TOWN - LATER

41 Luke and Cole are at his horse saying there good-bye's. A 41
large crowd in the distance is gathering as they talk.

COLE

(hesitating with the name)
I sure hate to see you go...Luke.

LUKE SHORT

I'm gonna miss yah Cole. Tell Red
that I'll see yall down the trail
I'm sure.

Luke and Cole shake hands. Luke gets on his horse and trots down the street. Cole looks down and sees blood on his hand. He wipes it thinking at first it's his but realizes it's not and take a quick look at Luke. The crowd gets more and more rowdy and we here Hickok's voice yell out...

WILD BILL HICKOK O.S.

Y'all stand back! Break it up!!

Luke is uninterested in what's going on and starts to trot a little faster as two shots are fired from the crowd. Cole darts over to see what going on.

A dog is heard barking and two more shots are fired. Screams are heard and Luke is fading in the distance without a backwards glance.

CUT TO:

KANSAS 1874

A wide expanse of land stretching as far as the eye could see. Large numbers of Buffalo roam wild and blanket the landscape.

Many hunters are gathered in camps that speckle the horizon.

Luke, same eyes but older, is standing at a small table with a three HUNTERS gathered around him. Luke is dealing three card Monte and his hands are quickly shuffling the three cards over one another. Luke has a, not so fancy vest on that seems a bit out of the ordinary but it is similar to the one Luke saw Dick Clark wearing back in Abileen. There is a cheap watch chain hanging down just the way he Dick clark wore his. The men are arguing as to which card PETE, the old Hunter, should pick. They all disagree.

PETE

(thinking hard)

I got this, I got this! That one!

LUKE SHORT

(Pointing to the middle card)

That's the one Pete? Are you sure?
You can choose anyone of em'?

His three buddies are yelling for him to choose other cards.

PETE

That's the one dammit! Don't try to switch my mind!

LUKE SHORT

Okay...your the boss.

Luke flips the card over and we hear them all groan except one.

HUNTER 1

I told yah, I told yah.

Pete looks defeated and frustrated.

A bunch of other Hunters are approaching in need of supplies.

LUKE SHORT

Should of stopped while you were ahead Pete.

(MORE)

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)
Your eyes must of gotten tired.
Lets take a break fella's. I've got
some customers.

Luke walks around to the back of his wagon. It's an old wagon
and has many barrels on the back with pour spouts

Several hunters gather and RUSTY hands Luke a Whisky jug and
Luke grabs it, looking underneath it.

RUSTY
What's the matter?

LUKE SHORT
Just looking for the hole, Rusty.

Rusty laughs and looks back at the others as if its been an
on going joke. Luke turns the nob on the barrel and fills
Pete's jug with whisky.

A line starts to get longer of hunters wanting whisky and
other various things that Luke sells.

BAT MASTERSON is next in line and Luke addresses him by name.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)
Bat! How are you sir?

BAT
Good Luke. How was town?

LUKE SHORT
Same old debauchery

A tough leathery figure emerges from the back and stands
besides Bat, he is wearing a cigar on his lip...this is WYATT
EARP. He smiles at Luke.

WYATT
(to Bat)
This kid's got it figured out.
We're all aiming at the same ole
Buffalo and he's got his sights on
us.

Bat laughs at Wyatt's statement and nods to the truth of it.

LUKE SHORT
Whisky sir?

WYATT

No but I will take some of that coffee and beef jerky. What did you say your name was?

BAT

Wyatt Earp...this is Luke Short.

LUKE SHORT

Pleased to meet you Mr. Earp

Wyatt hands Luke money for the supplies and Bat pays for his whisky as well.

WYATT

I bet you do alright out here.

LUKE SHORT

Sure beats herding Longhorns. Are you two working together hunting Buffalo?

BAT

Doing this until we can get on in to Witchita, Wyatt's brother is open'n up a saloon there. Open'n pretty quick here.

LUKE SHORT

yall going to have gaming tables there?

Luke pulls out a deck of cards and starts doing tricks with them.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

I'm only doing this until I can bank roll a Faro game. I've been out here for awhile now and damn near have enough.

WYATT

(Amused)

Have enough or HAD enough.

Bat and Luke laugh.

WYATT (CONT'D)

There's more to gambling than being able to throw around a deck of cards. But that's pretty good.

LUKE SHORT

Oh I know. I would practice at
night with fells out on the drives.
We'd play Poker mostly but I like
Faro! Its fast and odds are on
house - thats me!

Luke wipes some sweat from his face with his right hand. A streak of blood noticeably appears. Wyatt smiles as if he knows what it is from. Wyatt and Bat turn and start to walk away.

WYATT

We'll be there this Saturday. Stop
by...I'll buy you a drink kid.

LUKE SHORT

I'll do that! Thank you sir.

Luke smiles and takes a minute to watch them walk towards their camp.

CUT TO:

43 EXT. TEXAS DESERT - DAY

43

A lifeless landscape surrounds a lone figure on a half dead horse slogging past a sign that reads - FORT WORTH 3 MILES

They move slowly across the dry Texas desert. The languid horse is kicked along by the more visible now, long haired rider, JIM COURTRIGHT.

The slow, labored gate of his horse and Jim's indifference is clearly visible. We see the raw flesh on the back of the horses belly and Jim's bloody spurs which threaten it.

45 EXT. FORT WORTH TEXAS - LIVERY - CONTINUOUS

45

Reaching town and stopping at the Livery, Jim dismounts the Mare. The LIVERYMAN rushes out with concern noticing the horses condition and wounds.

LIVERYMAN
(Concerned)

Your horse is half dead mister!

Jim, looking around town unconcerned with the horse or the Liveryman.

The Liveryman is examining the horse; touching his bloody sides and lifting his legs and hoofs revealing cracks. There is visible lacerations and severe swelling in his joints.

The horses head will not lift.

JIM COURTRIGHT
What's he worth?

LIVERYMAN
You mean if he lives?

JIM COURTRIGHT
Or hanging weight for the meat.

The man is speechless of Jim's cold concern for his horse.

Jim removes his saddlebags while the Liveryman struggles to get the saddle off fast enough to give the horse some relief. The absence reveals a mass of soars and rubbing burns that has blistered the horses back.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
See what you can get for it. Clean
and fix that saddle too...I'll be
back.

LIVERYMAN
(angrily)
He got a name?!

JIM COURTRIGHT
Craw-bait!

46 EXT. FORT WORTH TEXAS STREETS - CONTINUOUS 46

Jim walks along the boardwalk taking note of everything and everyone, observing his surroundings; the conduct and actions of others. Something catches his eye across the street and Jim's course is averted.

47 INT. GUN'S AND GEAR SHOP - CONTINUOUS 47

Entering a shop we see guns and gear adorning the walls and case in the front counter. Jim locks eyes with the old shopkeep behind it.

The shop keep is no stranger to tough men but Jim's intensity is arresting.

Jim pulls his guns out in an adroit manner.

The shopkeep ducts behind the counter.

Jim sets them down on it in front of him and stares over the counter as the shopkeep slowly rises, now assured that he didn't mean to draw on him.

JIM COURTRIGHT

Don't worry old man, you'll know if
I drew on you. For a split second
any way.

Jim looks down on his guns.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)

I need them cleaned and tightened.

The shop keep lets out a sigh.

SHOPKEEP

Aaaa well then...okay...umm how
does next...

JIM COURTRIGHT

(interrupting)

I'll wait

Jim walks to the window where he hears an altercation outside in the alley on the side of the Saloon and see's..

48 EXT. FORT WORTH TEXAS STREETS ALLEY - CONTINUOUS 48

A DRUNK MAN exchanging words in a hostile manner with another man with a badge.

They both have their hands on their guns and screaming at each other.

DRUNK MAN

You sonofabitch!

SHERIFF GUTHRY

(voice quivering)

Don't do it mister! Don't pull
that!

The Marshal is visibly shaking.

49 INT. GUN'S AND GEAR SHOP - CONTINUOUS 49

Jim squints his eyes and shakes his head almost embarrassed for the man with the badge.

JIM COURTRIGHT
 (amused)
 Jeeesssuss Christ. Is that the
 Sheriff?

The Shopkeep looks past Jim and sees the men in the street through the window.

SHOPKEEP
 Well that's Marshal Guthry with
 another one of those gamblers that
 come in town a few days ago tearing
 up the place. Why do they all come
 here for?

JIM COURTRIGHT
 Because they can get away with it.

50 EXT. FORT WORTH TEXAS STREETS - CONTINUOUS 50

The DRUNK MAN pulls his pistol and the Marshal pulls his. They are stumbling all over the place. Several shots are fired at close range. Bullets are whizzing everywhere before the Drunk Man is hit in the chest and falls in a heap.

Marshal Guthry is in a state of shock over the affair and looks rattled. Holstering his pistol and looking around to see who was a witness to it. The Marshal hurry's off before the Drunk Man friends exit the saloon.

The saloon doors swing open and DRUNKEN MEN and the Barkeep rush out and see the man that lie dead in the alley.

51 INT. GUN'S AND GEAR SHOP - CONTINUOUS 51

SHOPKEEP (CELEBRATING)
 The Marshal got another one!
 Arrested the last one...barely.

JIM COURTRIGHT
 (to the shopkeep)
 He won't live long. Let's hurry up
 with those pistols.

The shopkeep heads towards the counter and turns his head to ask...

SHOPKEEP
 Right away misterrrrrrrr?

JIM COURTRIGHT
 (with a determined smile)
 Courtright, Jim Courtright but you
 can call me Marshal Courtright here
 soon.

52 EXT. FORT WORTH TEXAS STREETS - CONTINUOUS 52

CLOSE UP on polished pistol grips, we PAN OUT to see that they are holstered on Jim's waist with the butt of the handles pointing out, the style he likes to wear them.

Jim is leaving the Guns and Gear store and starts to walk across the street to the saloon.

We see the sign above - QUEEN OF THE PRAIRIES SALOON

53 INT. QUEEN OF THE PRAIRIES SALOON - CONTINUOUS 53

A smoke filled, long and narrow space with the bar on the right as Jim enters. There are several card games going on at various tables. The bar has a hand full of people standing and drinking whisky.

Many heads turn towards Jim, others are too drunk to lift. Jim walks to the bar with an air of masterful certainty.

Jim motions to the bar keep and sets a single .45 Pistol cartridge on the bar. The barkeep picks it up and sets a shot of whiskey down in its place as Jim scans the bar and its patrons.

Five DRUNKEN MEN are at a table at the opposite side of the bar keep glancing over and chuckling in a potentially hostile manner. They are the same guys who ran out of the Saloon once the shooting started and picked up their dead friend.

Jim slowly drinks his whisky, never taking his eyes off the men. We see Jim's eyes measure the men by their actions and study the particular manner in which they wear their guns. He identifies the leader.

Jim nods to the BARKEEP as if to say, "watch this" and slowly walks over to the table. One by one, the Drunken Men each turn and watch Jim approach.

One of the Drunken guys sitting with this back to the wall, facing Jim, notices that he has locked eyes with him. It changes the drunken guys demeanor.

GUY #1
 Can I help you friend?

Jim, nodding his head yes, reaches down and pulls one of his spurs off his dirty boot. He takes the Spur and dunks it in Guy #1's beer. Removing a handkerchief out of the guy standing next to him's pocket and begins wiping the dried blood and beer off of it.

Guy #1 starts to draw!

Jim, within an instant has his two guns out and blasts bullets in Guy #1, ripping into his head and heart. We hear the fall of the spur hitting the ground a moment after with the echo of the shots fired. It's still rolling on the dirty floor.

The ring of the spur lingers as the rest of the drunken guys watch in amazement. One of the guys standing next to Jim reaches down and picks up the spur and holds it out. Jim holsters his smoking pistols and takes the spur handing him back the handkerchief. Jim's eyes leave Guy #1 finally and turns to locks eyes with each one of them as he turns and walks back to the bar.

The drunken guys scurry out one by one as if not to bring attention to them.

CUT TO:

54

INT. WICHITA SALOON - NIGHT

54

A crowded saloon with as many women as men. Gambling tables here and there but the gambling is not the main attraction.

Luke enters with excitement. Looking around the room he spots Wyatt and Bat over by the bar. They are talking to Wyatt's brother MORGAN EARP.

Luke moves toward them navigating through tables with half naked women on the laps of cowboys.

Morgan takes a look at Luke as he talks to Wyatt.

MORGAN

...I make more from the girls than
I do from the gambling.

WYATT

(sarcastically)
Well yah do now because all of your
high rollers are choked out. There
are too many distractions Morg!

(MORE)

WYATT (CONT'D)

It's a dealers worst nightmare not to mention yours.

Morgan looks back over at Luke standing there.

MORGAN

Who's this?

LUKE SHORT

Your new Faro dealer sir, Luke short.

WYATT

(to Morgan)

Alcohol is distraction enough. You mix in girls and your going to need experienced dealers and folks to back them up.

MORGAN

Well that's what I thought you were doing here.

Wyatt rolls his eyes and looks around the room assessing the situation.

WYATT

Well let me separate the gaming tables and if you control the girls we'll see what we can do.

MORGAN

(To Luke Short)

You got experience, Luke was it?

WYATT

Were going to find out.

Morgan sees something going on in a corner of the saloon and heads in that direction.

MORGAN

Excuse me.

Wyatt and Bat start moving through the crowd with Luke in tow.

WYATT

(To LUKE SHORT)

You've got to be the Dealer, Casekeeper and Lookout. Your to keep your eye on Coppering the bets and don't let them pull bets before you spot the Whipsaw.

(MORE)

WYATT (CONT'D)

Make sure that before the Hock you try to lure them in on the final bet...odds are on the house at that point.

The three of them stop and stand next to the Faro table.

BAT

(To LUKE SHORT)

Its a game of emotion. You work the crowd and create the excitement.

WYATT

...and remember to teach the customers that once a number is closed out that its every man's prerogative to grab that bet if someone lays it down. You'll save yourself a lot of trouble not to mention the house. We don't need unwanted fights, gun or fist. We all end up losers or worse.

Wyatt takes a hard look at Luke and then to Bat. Luke is a little glassy eyed from all the information but looks confident.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Let's practice this week and try to have you ready for the big drive coming trough the next week. It'll be busy.

Not wanting to screw thing up Luke remains silent but inside, he is exploding with excitement.

INT. WICHITA SALOON - NIGHT

A group of dealers is gathered around Wyatt. Most have cards or chips in their hands and are dressed sharp.

WYATT

We're here gentleman! The big night. The town is full and I mean full. There isn't a room left in town and most are sleeping where there is a space big enough for a man to lay flat. This is one of the biggest herds of Long horns coming through this year. These boys are going to be everywhere wanting to drink, fuck, fight and win. We'll let'em drink and fuck.

Wyatt looks to Luke and then addresses all the men. Luke is fidgeting with his cards and we see a raw hammer thumb, slightly calloused but the callous is ripped up and raw.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Remember what I taught you. No one likes to loose and these cowboys are going to be on serious benders. Armed, and after they loose most likely mad. Not a good combination. Let's be careful with how we handle them. Work with the girls and bartenders to manage the situation...they can take a lot of the weight off. The big looser's will get a shot or a lay for free to help lessen the shock. When morning comes and the realization that their three months of earnings are gone is a much better time.

INT. WICHITA SALOON - LATER

The saloon is packed. Cowboys and girls are everywhere. Wyatt is in the corner drinking coffee and keeping a close eye on the establishment.

A cowboy is sitting at Luke's table and looses a big hand. He throws his cards on the table in disappointment and let's out a big sigh. Luke has a visibly good rapport with him and makes him laugh it off and keeps him at the table. A girl comes over and sits on the Cowboys lap.

Wyatt and Luke catch eye contact and Wyatt gives him a wink of approval.

INT. WICHITA SALOON - LATER

Luke is at the bar. Then night is winding down and the early morning sun is starting to beam through the window. A hostess that seems to be fresh on her shift is flirting with Luke in a friendly manner.

CUT TO:

55

EXT. FORT WORT - DAY

55

A frantic crowd is outside the courthouse. People are talking and arguing and making a fuss about a matter.

The crowd parts, as if it was the Red Sea and the chest of a man emerges with a badge that reads Marshal pinned to it. We PAN OUT to reveal that its Jim Courtright. Marshal Courtright!

Jim is indifferent to the mumblings but we can see that they are about him.

56

INT. MARSHALS OFFICE - FORT WORTH, TX - CONTINUOUS

56

Several deputies are gathered around the office. BROOKS has his feet kicked up on the Marshals desk. He is a large man with his shirt almost too small for him. JACK, an older tough looking sort, is standing in the corner chewing on tobacco and RUCKUS, a nervous fidgety man is pacing the room.

RUCKUS

Funny how one day your fix'n to arrest or get shot by a man and the next your working for him!

JACK

You know what the difference between breaking the law and keepin the peace are Ruckus?

Ruckus and Brooks look up at Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)

Dates! Thats all, just dates.

BROOKS

It was only a matter of time till Sheriff Guthry was gonna get killed. He didn't know what he was doing. Likely get us all killed.

RUCKUS

At least he was law abiding. He had some sense of what was right and wrong and he didn't let the badge on his chest determine that. God knows what were in for now.

JACK

Well, let's just see how it goes.

RUCKUS

See how it goes? He killed three cowboys in cold blood Jack. I know they weren't the best of men but they didn't have that comin to em'!

BROOKS

Bartender said they drew on him first.

RUCKUS

A lawman has to have TACT! You know what tact is Brooks?

BROOKS

(Laughing)

Something you hang your panties up on Ruckus?

As stoic as Jack is he can't help but to crack a smile.

RUCKUS

It's the ability to make a point without making an enemy. A good Marshal is supposed to be able to disarm a situation not inflame it.

BROOKS

Well that really worked out well for Guthry didn't it? He was a regular sweet talker he was!

Jim makes his entrance and looks around at all HIS men now.

The deposes "Ten-hut" to his entrance. Brooks hurries up out of his seat as Jim moves in.

JIM COURTRIGHT

Sit down Ruckus! Grab a stool. I know some of you are protesting this changing of the guard but it's the way it is. You might think my methods extreme but I can assure you they are effective. This town will not be ruled by the ineffective. You can waist a life time on ineffectiveness and half measures. We will protect this town and its interests...at what ever costs.

The men look around the room weighing the gravity of the situation.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)

Now there's your objectors, your fence sitters and your hard supporters.

(MORE)

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
 We don't have any room for anything
 other than committed hard
 supporters so everyone else exit
 the room. There will be no
 animosity brought upon those who
 do.

Ruckus is the only one who is visibly not sure and Jim takes
 note.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
 Good, well lets get to work. I know
 what the pay is here for you and
 I'm going to double it...

Eyes up and wide from around the room in excitement.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
 ...because things are going to get
 dangerous.

Eyes up and wide form around the room in concern.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
 Peace, doesn't come cheap and we
 are the one's to bring it so we
 should be able to be some-what
 rewarded by it...am I wrong?

No one verbally objects.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
 Meeting is adjourned! Meet back
 here tomorrow morning. We will have
 one everyday this week at six A.M.
 so be prompt and ready to work.

57 INT. FT WORTH - COURT HOUSE / JUDGES CHAMBERS - DAY 57

A card game is in progress in the back of the courthouse.
 JUDGE BLYTHE is frustrated and loosing.

Four other MEN are calmly waiting for Judge Blythe to
 respond. One of the men is JAKE JOHNSON, the owner of the
 prominent White Elephant saloon.

Judge Blythe has a look of anger on his face that he is
 trying to hide while looking at his cards. The Judge pushes
 his chair back.

JUDGE BLYTHE
 Hold on...I have some court
 business to address.

Jim and several other men are gathered in the back of the room.

The judge approaches Courtright.

JUDGE BLYTHE (CONT'D)
 (Under his breath)
 Go out and find me some miscreant.
 These boys are not going to take us
 here!

Jim signals to his deputes.

58

INT. FT WORTH - COURTHOUSE - LATER

58

Ruckus and Jack enter the courthouse with a limp man being dragged between them.

Judge Blythe slams his whisky glass on his desk like a gavel.

JUDGE BLYTHE
 Is he drunk?

JACK
 He's dead, sir

JUDGE BLYTHE
 Dead drunk?

JACK
 Plain ol' dead, sir

JUDGE BLYTHE
 Explain yourself

JACK
 He died up there, sittin' at the
 bar. People wanted us to take him
 away.

JUDGE BLYTHE
 You imbecile. This is a court of
 law. How am I supposed to have
 inquest?

JACK
 Couldn't say, sir

JUDGE BLYTHE
 Well, the Writ of Habeas Corpus is
 there for a reason. Bring the
 accused forward

RUCKUS
What's the charge, sir?

JUDGE BLYTHE
Never mind that for now. Did you
frisk the man?

RUCKUS
(reluctantly)
Here and there, sir.

JUDGE BLYTHE
Does he have any money?

RUCKUS
A little better than twenty
dollars, sir. And some pennies,
sir.

JUDGE BLYTHE
Splendid.

JUDGE BLYTHE (CONT'D)
(Addressing the corps)
What do you have to say for
yourself? Well? Talk Man!

Ruckus looks at Jack with discussed and Jack looks at Ruckus
with a look of indifference.

The judge raps his whisky glass on the desk like a gavel
again.

JUDGE BLYTHE (CONT'D)
Your arrogant silence leaves me no
choice but to find you in contempt
of court. For that you will pay a
fine and court costs to the tune of
twenty dollars. Court is adjourned.
Since its too late to call the
undertaker, haul the prisoner out
to the shed before he starts to
ripen.

The judge slams his glass on the desk one last time to
conclude as Jack hands the judge the twenty dollars.

Ruckus is struggling to hold the dead body as Jack comes back
to help carry the man out.

The judge hurries back to the card game.

INT. FT WORTH - COURT HOUSE / JUDGES CHAMBERS - CONTINUOUS

The judge places his twenty on the table and removes his gown. The men look around the room as they all know what just took place.

JUDGE BLYTHE

Now, where were we? I bet Twenty.

EXT. FORT WORTH TEXAS STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Jim exits the court house grabbing a rolled cigarette from his pocket and begins to light it as he looks both ways down main street with a look of controlling arrogance and saunters to his next task.

CUT TO:

INT. WICHITA, KS - CUSTOM HOUSE SALOON - NIGHT

Older hands are shuffling cards with the utmost skill and precision. Luke is showing off with all his talent. A well established but scratched up callous is seen on the thumb of his hand that's protruding from a white cuffed-sleeved shirt with gold, "four ace" cufflinks, and various rings which adorn his fingers.

The same face but older and more confident, Luke flicks out the cards like bullets each hitting his four target's perfectly.

Four gamblers are his targets, each with a pile of chips in front of them. Player one, is SOL KOHN, the mayor of Wichita and sitting to Luke's immediate left. Next is COLONEL CHARLIE NORTON, SAM BLONGER, and JOE MASON respectively.

The private gaming room is small but comfortable with a bar and few other tables for observers. Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson are sitting at a separate table and Wyatt gives a smile to Bat as they watch Luke deal like an expert.

Sol is shifting in his chair and visibly nervous and out of place. The confidence of the other gamblers is noticeable and unnerving to Sol as they watch him squirm. Sol keeps eyeing Luke as if he is waiting for something and the other players take note.

LUKE SHORT

Bet starts with you Sol.

Sol's "tells" are obvious and the other players look around the table as wolves would look each other concerning who will eat first.

Hesitating for a second Sol gathers himself and throws a couple of chips in the pot looking at Luke for approval. Luke doesn't acknowledge his glance. Luke deals cards as obvious as he can from the top of the deck so the other players have no reason to think that he is helping Sol. Luke looks over at Wyatt and Bat sitting a table who are now very interested in the action.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

Your bet again Sol.

Sol bites his lip and catches himself before he looks up at Luke again. With a contrived look of confidence, Sol grabs a big stack and slides it over to the center of the table. The Colonel and Sol are the only players left vying for the pot. Almost immediately after Sol takes his hands off his chips, the Colonel goes...

COLONEL

All in!

The colonel pushes his stack forward and Sol throws his cards in with frustration.

SOL

Dammit!!!

Shaking his head and rising from the table Sol looks with disappointing eyes at Luke.

LUKE SHORT

Sol.

Sol walking to the bar pouring himself a rather large drink of top shelf whiskey.

Wyatt and Bat holding back their smiles of laughter as Luke glances over shaking his head ever so slightly.

INT. WICHITA, KANSAS - CUSTOM HOUSE SALOON - LATER

The game raps up and each player throws a high-dollar chip to Luke as they shake hands. Two out of the three give looks of gratitude but slight suspicion.

LUKE SHORT

Colonel, Sam, Joe

A well dressed BLACK GENTLEMAN walks over and starts helping the gamblers stack and count the chips. Luke gathers his tips and slides one in the Black Gentleman's pocket, patting him on the back and giving him a wink. The Black Gentleman is surprised and elated.

Luke walks over to Wyatt and Bat and sits shaking his head.

WYATT

What was that all about?

LUKE SHORT

Likely get me killed. He asked me if I'd help him. I thought that meant to instruct him not stack the deck for him.

The bartender brings a beer for Luke.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

(shaking his head in
disappointment)

I just don't know if there's is an honest man left. Sometimes I think you have to compromise everything you believe in just to survive in this world.

BAT

(amused)

A few years here and this town is already played out. Even the Mayor is looking for an angle.

WYATT

It not the town it's the natural progression of things. But having said that, You ever heard of a town called Tombstone?

Luke grabs the bottle that is on the table and a dirty glass from the table over and pours a waist deep shot.

A close up shot on the whisky in the glass sloshing like a river in slow motion. We hear the sound of a river as he does.

CUT TO:

EXT. KANSAS - RIVERS EDGE - DAY

A stream runs sedulously down its course and we are witness to the sound that it make's.

The ground shakes and three horses come to an abrupt stop at the river edge. Luke, Wyatt and Bat settle in their saddles.

WYATT

We'll send word from Tombstone.

LUKE SHORT

I'll get it in Leadville.

Luke waits a beat and watches Wyatt and Bat ride off before Luke heads off in a different direction.

EXT. KANSAS PRARIE - LATER

Luke stops his horse next to a river after a days ride. He walks his horse down to the edge so he can drink. Luke unloosens the front Cinch and rubs The horses sweaty side.

A sound of rustling branches is heard in the bushes on the other side of the river. The horse lifts his head quickly. Luke readies his hand.

A figure appears from the tall reeds. Waving his hand in a non-threatening manner. Luke lifts his head and steps off from his fighting stance.

A second, FIGURE #2, appears cradling a Winchester carbine in his arms.

Luke takes note that FIGURE #1 one has two six shooters around his waist.

FIGURE #1

Were fix'n to set up camp over
yonder and was wondering if yall
had any hootch to sell?

As Figure #1 was speaking, Luke notices that Figure #2 was making his way slowly around. Figure #2 start to raise his Carbine and Luke draws his pistol firing two shots, almost immediatly after one another and then whirls around as Figure #1 shoots. Luke gets two shots off then hits the ground firing two more shots as he sees Figure #1 fall to the ground.

Luke feel's a burning sensation in his side.

As the smoke clears Luke gets up, noticing that he broke his watch chain. Picking up his watch, he walks towards Figure #1, who is making moaning sounds, and halfway turns to see if Figure #2 is getting up. Reaching Figure #1, Luke sees that he is clearly dead with three shots in the man's torso. Luke turns to Figure #2 and feels his side that is bleeding.

Luke walks to Figure #2 and after acknowledging he is dead, holsters his pistol and opens his shirt to reveal a deep bullet graze that cut to the white of his rib bone.

EXT. KANSAS PRARIE CAMP - LATER

A half set up camp, Luke sits in the middle of, tending to his wound mixture of Brown Sugar, Coal Oil and Lard in a bowl and applying it to his wound. A large white bandage Luke wraps around his torso holding the mixture in place. Rising from the ground, Luke puts his shirt back on that still has a wet pink spot where the blood was before he cleaned it, having had cleaned the shirt before tending to his wound.

EXT. KANSAS PRARIE CAMP - LATER

Luke stands pensively over two fresh grave spots.

A long beat.

Luke take a deep breath, looks around and then down noticing that he is bleeding again. Looking at his side that is clean he notices that his hammer thumb has trickle of blood from a broken callous. Luke brings the wound to his lips as he turns to go, tasting the blood.

EXT. LEADVILLE OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Cresting the mountain pass, Luke and his horse see the town of Leadville below and a sign on the trail that reads:

TOWN OF LEADVILLE 10,100 FEET ELEVATION.

Luke dismounts his horse taking his canteen off the side of his saddle. Cupping his hand Luke pours water for his horse to drink while he stares down at the town and appreciating the view. Luke pours water for himself and drinks from the same hand as his horse did.

EXT. LEADVILLE - CONTINUOUS

Riding into town, Luke sees all the prosper the town folks of Leadville are enjoying. The town is beaming with wealth and success.

INT. BOARD OF TRADE HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

A DOORMAN opens the doors to the opulent interior of the Board of Trade saloon and Luke enters taking a mental pause to take it all in. For an instant, the horrible events of his trip out for a moment had been forgotten. Luke gets winks from various hostesses on his way up to his room and Luke tips his hat with no other interest knowing who they are.

INT. BOARD OF TRADE HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Putting his bags on his bed and taking off his coat, Luke passes by the mirror where he notices blood under his arm pit from his wound. Reminded and upset, not from the pain, but from the sight of it.

INT. BOARD OF TRADE SALOON - LATER

Luke enters the room with panache and swagger. Luke is holding nothing back in his attire and the accoutrements that adorn him. This is what he had imagined that one day he would be a part of and possibly own.

A large Brunswick bar with beveled and stainless glass behind it, haunts the back of the establishment.

All sorts of characters populate the saloon. Cowboys, miners, the dregs and the affluent. Luke approaches the bar, wading over the multi hued english flooring and orders a drink. Surveying the premises, Luke studies the gaming operation. Taking his pocket watch out to check the time, we notice that it is a Jürgensen watch, just like the one that Dick Clark wore.

A couple of rough looking DRUNK GUYS are glancing over at Luke and are laughing under their breath. Luke spots the action that he wants a part of and goes to sits at the table. Luke puts his money down and the dealer exchanges it for chips. Luke nods at the various players when the two men approach from behind Luke and start making fun of the way he is dressed.

DRUNK GUY #1

I like his fancy coat.

DRUNK GUY #2

(Laughing)

Yah...my girlfriend's got one just like it.

Luke rolls his eyes and ignores them. Drunk Guy #1 tips Luke's Derby enough to make it fall over the front of him and before his hat hits the table, Luke has his revolver right between his eyes cocked and read. Drunk Guy #1 becomes white with fear, starts to back up. Drunk Guy #2 bulls up to Luke and Luke pistol whips him, knocking him to the ground leaving him with a deep cut over his left eye.

Drunk Guy #1 picks up Drunk Guy #2 and they both scatter out the door. Luke sits back down and nods his head as an apology to the dealer as he gets the table ready again.

A man, JOHN MORGAN in the corner is watching the situation from a far table and casually motions with his head to two men and they hustle over to help contain the crowd. Luke is dusting off his Derby when he is approached by John Morgan.

JOHN MORGAN

Sorry about the hassle, this town is diverse but none the less colorful. I'm John Morgan...can I buy you a drink while they get back set up?

Luke nods and John extends his hand out for Luke to go first, making their way back to John's table.

JOHN MORGAN (CONT'D)

Please sit down.

Motioning to the Bartender for drinks.

JOHN MORGAN (CONT'D)

So what line of work are you in mr....?

LUKE SHORT

Luke Short...I'm a gambler.

John Morgan has a look of recognizing the name.

JOHN MORGAN

How long you in town for?

LUKE SHORT

That depends on the town and so far I'm not liking what I see.

A HOSTESS walk over and sit in Luke's lap.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

(lifting her off)

Thanks darlin but I'm here to gamble.

JOHN MORGAN

Don't mind her, she's just a companionable attendant...one of the many perks here at the Board of Trade, what I like to call a cultured sporting palace.

Luke is unimpressed, not liking the fact that these establishments can't control the drunk patrons.

JOHN MORGAN (CONT'D)

I'll pay top dollar for a dealer who can handle themselves.

LUKE SHORT

I came to Leadville to gamble.

JOHN MORGAN

You can still Gamble. Just not against the house here. As a matter of fact I have a high stakes game in mind that I think you'll be quite happy with. It's in two nights time. At the Horace Taber Opera house. I'll make all the arrangement. The who's who, of not just Leadville but people from all over the world Mr. Short will be in attendance.

LUKE SHORT

And by "handle themselves" I am assuming you mean, know how to be effective with a gun?

JOHN MORGAN

Well, I would obviously like a man to be able to disarm a situation and use what means necessary to contain the matter but if guns are what is called for then yes, to be able to use them as well. Are you such a man?

LUKE SHORT

(Hesitating)

For two-hundred a week plus a percentage of the house take I am.

John notices a seep of blood on Luke's shirt under his vest.

JOHN MORGAN

(concerned)

Oh my, Are you hit?

Luke glances under his coat and sees the blood.

LUKE SHORT

No, that's from something else.

John smiles and shakes his head realizing the sort of man that is in front of him. Raising his glass and smiling.

JOHN MORGAN

(with a prideful glee)

"No more things should be presumed to exist than are absolutely necessary."

INT. HOTEL DOORWAY - EVENING

A classy, carved wooden door, with the number 17 on it opens and Luke starts to exit. A glance of a naked female is seen in his bed just before he closes the door.

INT. BOARD OF TRADE SALOON - LATER

Luke is dealing Faro to an almost full table. A packed house of all sorts of Leadville residents. Luke is busy with no help, having to be the dealer, case-keeper and lookout, but always alert to his surroundings.

A man, BROWN, out of sorts and obviously drunk enters the bar and Luke take no time to notice him. Brown approaches Luke's table and sets down a bet at the last minute and loses instantly. Luke takes the money and begins to deal again.

BROWN

Hey, I was just putting my money on the table!

LUKE SHORT

Well, you put it in the wrong spot, or, the right one depending on what card I dealt.

Brown glares at Luke and places another bet, this time moving it right when the card was dealt so that he would win. Brown goes to take his winnings and Luke stops him, looking over to see Mr. Morgan nod to Luke, as if to say its Okay, let him win that one. Luke let's go of the money. Brown smirks as he drags his winnings.

A few rounds go Brown's way while inconspicuously Removing his Jürgensen watch and rubbing his hammer thumb and forefinger together as if to warm them up.

Luke is watching Brown's movements to size him up, as to what challenge may lay ahead for him.

Brown moves a bet again.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)
Mister, you can take that stolen
money you have but you must cash in
your chip and leave the table.

BROWN
You calling me a cheat?

Gamblers start taking small, slow steps backwards.

LUKE SHORT
I'm saying that you have to leave.

Brown begins reaching for his pistol. Luke has his gun up and fires his heavy .45 Colt Slug in one side of Browns jaw and out the other before Brown could get his hand around his pistols grip. With Brown slumped over the table, gun arm elbow pointed to the ceiling with his fingers still on the handle and bleeding profusely, Luke looks around the room at everyone's amazed expressions.

Brown's friends come to collect him while Luke walks to the bar. Mr. Morgan console's Luke while a YOUNG COWBOY walks up to Luke.

YOUNG COWBOY
Mister, I've never seen anything
that fast before.

LUKE SHORT
(trying to ignore him)
I got Lucky kid, that's all.

THE SWAMPER, with white rags red with blood, signals to Luke that the table is ready. Luke finishes his drink and walks over giving the swamper a tip.

EXT. LEADVILLE STREETS - NIGHT

Luke is walking through the streets with purpose and a destination in mind, trying to forget last nights gunfight.

Many town folks are looking at Luke inquisitively. He is dressed in opulent fashion but with his gun strapped to his side.

Approaching the Horace Taber Opera House Luke see's there is a large crowd outside. Working his way through Luke enters the lavish interior of the lobby.

INT. HORACE TABER OPERA HOUSE LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

For the first time Luke sees and feels that he is not over dressed and that he fits right in. An attendant approaches Luke when HORACE TABER, an older, foppish gentleman, dressed in an all white suit makes Luke's acquaintance, wanting to greet him personally.

HORACE TABER
Mr. Short I presume?

The attention is a bit unsettling for Luke.

HORACE TABER (CONT'D)
I understand that the language you speak is very different than mine, I have just heard a great deal about you, I am very much looking forward to your company this evening. My name is Horace Taber and I will be your host.

Mr. Taber escorts Luke through to a private room where we pass theater Stanchions and a sign that reads A WOMEN OF NO IMPORTANCE by OSCAR WILDE.

INT. HORACE TABER OPERA HOUSE - GAME ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A large private gaming room, Luke and Taber enter. A small, well lit Mohogany bar and seating to watch the action. A plush gaming table right in the middle of the room sits like a colosseum.

A look of seriousness, focus and the over all demeanor of a dangerous man stands out in Luke from the rest of the high class, sheltered and mostly older crowd. They are all standing next the bar where an ice sculpture of a voluptuous naked women stands and Luke is amazed by it.

A tall man in a black cloak with thick wavy dark hair is the center of attention with the rest of the patrons and we know him as OSCAR WILDE. Everyone takes note of Mr. Taber and Luke as they enter. All eyes on Luke, like a wild animal they want to tame in there own way.

OSCAR WILDE

(to the group)

...and this dream, where I was a lion, hunting this lamb, the creature called out screams of help, but in german. I don't speak german but somehow I knew what they were saying and what I was.

HORACE TABER

Luke Short, may I introduce our fellow players and guests.

One by one Mr. Taber introduces them __names__ until.

HORACE TABER (CONT'D)

...And Oscar Wilde.

OSCAR WILDE

(to Horace with eyes on Luke)

Let's drink to wildness. "For in wildness is the preservation of the world."

Luke looks with surprise at Oscar's Thoreau quote and unsure of his meaning.

Horace motions to the bartender.

Oscar notices the gun on Luke's hip.

OSCAR WILDE (CONT'D)

With an evening coat and tie anybody, even a gunfighter can gain the reputation for being civilized.

LUKE SHORT

"Money, not morality is the principle commerce of CIVILIZED men."

Oscar Wilde looks with awe in Luke's eyes.

Drinks arrive and we can hear ice clinking in the glasses. No one is surprised but Luke.

HORACE TABER

(referring to Luke's gun's)

There will be no need for that in here.

Handing his glass to Mr. Taber, Luke hesitantly loosens his gun belt and holds it with one arm besides him as a MAN takes it from him for safe keeping. As the man does so, the ice POPS in Luke's glass and startles Mr. Taber and the rest except Luke.

HORACE TABER (CONT'D)

(laughing)

I don't believe I will ever get used to that.

(handing the glass back to Luke)

ICE, mr. Short. All the way from the Antarctic. It makes the drink, so much more palatable.

OSCAR WILDE

(looking at Luke and around the room)

Mr. Jefferson was correct in that statement Mr. Short I'm afraid but I have enjoyed my civilization. Will you be joining us for the play this evening? I think you might find it quite instructive.

HORACE TABER

If what I have heard is true about young Luke's card playing, we just might catch more of your play than we would like Mr. Wilde.

Oscar Wilde finishes the rest of his drink and inquisitively nods to Luke.

OSCAR WILDE

Well then, I will look forward to seeing you all later.

HORACE TABER

(extending his arm towards the table)

Right this way gentleman.

INT. HORACE TABER OPERA HOUSE - PRIVATE GAME ROOM - LATER

CLOSE ON

An intense game of poker is under way. The Pot is large and many have folded. Luke is dealing and shuffling the deck in an adroit manner. His hands are one with the cards. Luke uses all the shuffles he know's seamlessly;

the Hindu, Pile, Corgi, Mongean, and the Weave. Mr. Taber has a smile on his face, with enjoy watching Luke play, as someone who owns a snake would enjoy watching it eat a mice he has fed it.

Mr. Taber, Luke and MR. JOHNSON, an older well dressed serious fella are still in this game. Mr. Taber and Mr. Johnson are looking at their cards and Luke is studying them.

Mr. Taber has a smile on his face that he can't help and doesn't much care to hide. His chips are low and has been loosing the game but not minding paying for the sheer entertainment and a chance to play with a great gambler like Luke.

HORACE TABER
 (sliding his chips
 forward)
 Poker is a lot like my love life, I
 have to pay if I want to see
 anything and I really want to know
 what you have.

LUKE SHORT
 (turing over his hand)
 You make me feel cheap.

Oooo's and ahhhh's from around the room and a look of defeat on Taber face, as Luke drags the pot.

HORACE TABER
 (shaking his head with an
 almost proud smile)
 I don't know how you do it hand
 after hand.

The men rise from the table and Mr Taber walks to the bar, snapping off an icy arm of the sculpture and sucking on it.

HORACE TABER (CONT'D)
 Would you care to see the rest of
 the play Mr. Short?

INT. HORACE TABER OPERA HOUSE / PRIVATE BOX - LATER

A full house. The play is going as they sit.

VEIW OF THE STAGE:

The actor's are playing out a scene from act four of, A WOMEN OF NO IMPORTANCE. MRS. ARBUTHNOT, an older heavier set women is sitting in a chair.

MISS HESTER WORSLEY, a beautiful young lady is standing as well as GERALD ARBUTHNOT, his naive and rather inexperienced nature is obvious.

HESTER WORSLEY

Ask your own heart, not mine. I never had a mother to save, or to shame.

MRS. ARBUTHNOT

He is hard - he is hard. Let me go away.

Gerald rushes over and kneels down beside his mother Mrs. Arbuthnot.

GERALD ARBUTHNOT

Mother forgive me: I have been to blame.

MRS. ARBUTHNOT

Don't kiss my hands: they are cold. My heart is cold: something has broken it.

HESTER WORSLEY

Ah, don't say that! Pleasure may turn a heart to stone, riches may make it callous, but sorrow - oh, sorrow cannot break it. Hearts live by being wounded.

Luke is listening intently but stoically and his face cannot hide the sadness and a hint of a tear is seen, remembering his home life, the good and the bad.

INT. HORACE TABER OPERA HOUSE LOBBY - LATER

Luke is walking quickly to the exit as the play begins to let out.

OSCAR WILDE O.S.

Did you enjoy it?

Luke stops before leaving the building and turns to see Oscar Wilde waiting for him.

LUKE SHORT

(hiding his face)

I did, very much so, what I saw. I'll have to see the rest sometime.

OSCAR WILDE

If I couldn't express myself on the stage, (looking down at Luke's gun) I don't know what other outlet I would have.

Luke starts to look down in the direction of the gun on his hip but brings his eye back up.

OSCAR WILDE (CONT'D)

We are similar creatures you and I Mr's Short. We just have different ways of executing our ideals.

LUKE SHORT

Let's not judge ourselves too harshly.

OSCAR WILDE

"I do not complain of any tactics that are effective of good, whether one wields the quill or the sword."

INT. HORACE TABER HOTEL PRIVATE GAME ROOM - LATER

A thick, bright, wax dripped candle is the only light illuminating Luke and Oscar Wilde who are sitting at a dark otherwise, empty bar.

OSCAR WILDE

The era of the gunfighter will not live forever but for now...they are needed.

Oscar tries to make eye contact but Luke's head is weighted down.

OSCAR WILDE (CONT'D)

...Some cannot be inspired or refuse to be lifted. For me the stage is my method and is like a set of wings.

LUKE SHORT

Flight is for some it seems, for me, I know nothing but the cold hard ground...and putting people in it.

Luke is slightly moving his finger nail over the well established callous on his hammer thumb. Oscar Wilde notices it with much interest.

OSCAR WILDE
Tell me about that.

Luke catches himself and stops, realizing that he is referring to his callous and places his hand face down on the bar.

OSCAR WILDE (CONT'D)
How can one respect the art with out revering the process to which it was created? (putting his hand on Luke's shoulder)
Your not a killer Luke. There is too much life in you. I can feel that. You can't kill what is already dead.

LUKE SHORT
I can give you quite a bit to write about.

OSCAR WILDE
We live in a world of contrasting elements. Who knows the real purpose of "evil" but "good" must consume it to live just like "evil" must try to consume what we call "good".

LUKE SHORT
I don't want to have to kill to find my way.

OSCAR WILDE
That's not killing Luke. No more than the fire devouring the air so it can breath.

Luke looks over to the once voluptuous ice carving that has now melted to a gaunt, emaciated, dripping female form, almost ghost like besides the flame.

INT. MARSHAL COURTRIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY

Courtright is sitting with his feet up on his desk reading the paper. Ruckus and Brook's are fiddling with things around the office and making small talk.

BROOKS
(cleaning a gun)
Who names a Saloon after an albino elephant?

RUCKUS
 (doing paperwork)
 Maybe its got a deeper meaning.

BROOKS
 Yah About as deep as a pile of
 Elephant dung I wonder?

JIM COURTRIGHT
 I will say that this world is going
 to shit fast. It's full of PUSSY'S!

(amused)
 buuuut that makes it pretty
 attractive to a big dick like me.

BOOM! BOOM! Loud shots are heard from across the street at the saloon followed by screams. Ruckus and Brook's hustle up and grab what they need while heading to the door. Courtright never lowers his paper.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
 Wait! Gentleman, back to your
 positions.

Ruckus and Brook's freeze half way out the door.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
 ...and get Jack over here when you
 see him.

Jack, running toward the building from down the street, doing a double take over at the office doorway, abruptly stopping and wondering why they're not en route.

Brook's is waving Jack over.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
 Now this is someone I'd like to
 meet. Shot a man in the jaw at
 point blank range over a gambling
 dispute.
 (Putting the paper down)
 and you all call me wild!

People across the street starting to gather. Jack has run over by now and is out of breath, looking in at Jim

JACK
 (Confused)
 Do you not hear what's going on?

Getting up from his desk.

JIM COURTRIGHT
(about the article)
Well...gives me hope.

Courtright walks casually through the men and across the street to the saloon. Waving to the deputies who followed, telling them to stay and not to come in.

INT. FT WORTH SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Two men tearing up the place stop and look at Jim enter. Jim gives a look as if to say, "Well are you going to draw?" As they don't, Jim shakes his head in disappointment and walks to the GUY #1, knocking him out with one punch. GUY #2 runs out the door and the deputies grab him.

The owner, MR. HENNICK is behind the bar and shaking his head looking at the mess and then to Courtright.

MR. HENNICK
I guess this is what happens when
I'm not making payments?

JIM COURTRIGHT
This town is under funded Mr.
Hennick and we are doing the best
we can with what we have.

Jim takes a cigar out of the humidor on the bar.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
Now...some businesses need us more
than others. Would you find that
correct in your assessment?

EXT. FORT WORTH TEXAS STREETS - CONTINUOUS

The deputies are waiting outside holding Guy #2.

JIM COURTRIGHT
Let em' go. (To Guy #1) and YOU, go
clean your friend off the floor in
there.

Jack and Ruckus are not sure what's going on, trying to make sense of it all. Brook's has a Cheshire Cat grin and follows Courtright inside.

EXT. LEADVILLE - COURTHOUSE - DAY

A frantic crowd outside the courthouse and Luke emerges from the front doors. People all around him are patting him on the back and congratulating him.

MAN 1
Brown deserved it!

MAN 2
I heard you were really quick with
that gun!

Trying to down play the whole affair.

LUKE SHORT
(shaking his head yes)
Lucky, just Lucky

A BOY run's up to Luke with a telegram, like he has been waiting to give it to him.

BOY
(out of breath but
excited)
Here yah go Mr. Short!

Luke is surprised by the boys approach. Taking the note and reaching in his pocket for a tip he opens the telegram.

INSERT:

LUKE, WE ARE ROLLING! SEE YOU SOON. WYATT

Luke looks up and starts walking with purpose.

INT. ORIENTAL SALOON BASEMENT - NIGHT

A dark and damp large area. Not the brightest lights in the crowd but the boxing arena in the middle is well lit. Smoke fills the air and the sent of sweat and blood make the taste of the wet smoky air salty.

A well dressed MAN walks in but stay's in the shadow's, getting the lay out of the space and who's in there. Wyatt and Bat are below one of the corners of the boxing ring talking to one of team's boxer and manager. The Man looks around to the opposite corner and takes note of the people there.

We see the Man approach several people, always with his back to Wyatt and Bat. Wyatt glances over, always aware of his surrounding, and see's the Man's back but never his face.

The Man is now in the opposite corner and Wyatt takes more notice of him. We see some slight of hand and deal's going on and Wyatt's more concerned than usual. Bat is oblivious.

The fight get's ready to start and the crowd settles. The bell rings and the fight begins. The Man is well hidden in the shadows behind the opposite corner of Wyatt and Bat. Wyatt is cheering for his guy and his guy is winning.

Round after round Wyatt is getting more and more excited and the Man, still in the shadows, motionless and silent. The middle of the fourth round, just when it looks like the Wyatt's guy is a shoe-in for a win. The corner man looks over at the man, who signal's with a nod of his head slightly. The corner man nods his head to a his boxer and...WHAM! He knocks out Wyatt's guy.

Wyatt throws his rolled up papers on the floor and screams at the corner in disappointment. Shaking his head at Bat, Wyatt notices the Man collecting money from various people at the other corner and folks walking over form Wyatt's corner.

Wyatt starts off in that direction, making his way through the crowd, his eyes intent on not loosing sight of him. The Man is in and out of Wyatt's sight for various reason's but he know's he is heading the right way. Wyatt reaches the corner but there is no Man. Wyatt spins around looking and then see's the back of him by the door. Waytt pushes his way through the crowd. Bat is on the other side of the ring and moving fast toward's the Man as well. The Man is just standing there and as Waytt comes around he see's the large stack of money the Man is counting. Wyatt gets right up on him and turn's the Man with his hand on his shoulder. It's Luke, with a big smile.

LUKE SHORT
(excited to see him)
Wyatt!

Wyatt's eye's go limp. Bat see's what Wyatt see's and turns in disbelief.

BAT
You've got to be kidding me!!

INT. ORIENTAL SALOON - LATER

Luke, Wyatt and Bat are sitting at table having a drink. Empty plates from dinner remain. They are all laughing about what happened in the last scene. Luke, laughs and tongue's his tooth a bit in pain.

WYATT

(chuckling)

I swear if you weren't like a brother to me I would bring you up on charges of racketeering.

BAT

I say we hang him.

LUKE SHORT

Don't worry, you don't have to buy me dinner... I'll pay for my own steak, if that's what it was.

A young and very attractive hostesses, DARLEEN come's around and sets a drink down for Luke and gives him a look. Luke nod's but gives her no special attention.

WYATT

(to Luke)

Say, when are you going to find a women?

LUKE SHORT

When I have the time.

BAT

He's got nothing but time. He's just picky.

WYATT

Nature's his muse.

Luke smiles and grabs the side of his mouth in more pain.

WYATT (CONT'D)

What's going on Luke, something hurting you?

Luke shrugs it off dismissing it to Wyatt.

WYATT (CONT'D)

I tell you, its a lot nicer here not having to take bullets for whisky, gold dust in dirt, and just hoping your customers can even pay.

The doors of the Saloon swing wide and a group of COWBOYS wearing red sashes, walk in. They look like gunfighters, by the way they are dressed and act like they own the place giving hard looks over to Luke's table as they make their way to the other side of the bar and gaming tables.

LUKE SHORT
Who are these cultivated
individuals?

BAT
Those are the COWBOYS.

LUKE SHORT
(shaking his head)
Every town I swear.

A Cowboy who is throwing money around at the bar we focus on.
Tall, black hair, cocky and goes by the name of CURRY BILL
BROCIUS.

WYATT
That's the head of em' right there.
Curly Bill they call him.

Luke looks over at Wyatt.

WYATT (CONT'D)
He'd steal a hot stove.

BAT
(Shaking his head)
Just like those Camp Rucker mules.

WYATT
The fella to his right...

We see a better dressed gentleman with his hands around a
whisky bottle that the bartender, MILT JOYCE, just brought up
and JOHN RINGO, a tall well dressed, pensive gentleman, grabs
it to pour his own.

WYATT (CONT'D)
...is John Ringo.

Luke gives Wyatt a stern look like he had heard of him and
his reputation.

WYATT (CONT'D)
Behind them are, IKE CLANTON, TOM
MCLOWERY, PONY DEAL (looking at
Bat) and I think thats CHARLIE
STORMS?

BAT
(Shaking his head yes)
Yah he must have just rode into
town.

WYATT

I'd consider HIM the most dangerous gunfighter around the Cheyenne-Deadwood area. At least while I was there.

LUKE

Who Ringo?

BAT

(adamant)

No...Storms

CHARLIE STORMS, (57) and greying who is the only one out of the gang who is not wearing a sash, looks over at Bat then gives Luke a stern look as he slams his shot glass on the bar.

WYATT

They come here to gamble I guess.

LUKE SHORT

You mean cheat. What's the bartender doing letting these guys pour their own whiskey?

BAT

Milt aint got spine enough to hold'n him up let a lone to stand up to these guys.

LUKE SHORT

What are you guys thinking? You called me here for this? This is worse than most of the towns we had to fight for our place in. Did you need help with the over whelming business opportunity or the fight that's coming?

Bat looks over at Wyatt.

BAT

Luke, we need both. Your not going to get a place like this, with this much possibility and not have some obstacle's. This place is a gold mine.

LUKE SHORT

(abruptly)

Obstacle's? These aren't obstacle's this a gauntlet.

Charlie Storm's is staring at Luke in a vindictive way. Bat get's up and walks toward's Charlie and Charlie does the same. They meet in the middle and are cordial. Charlie is looking at Luke and pointing his finger and talking shit.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

Wyatt, I didn't come here for this.
You know I'd be the first one to
back your play but I have to tell
you I'm tired of all this fighting.
It's all I've done.

Luke gets up and grabs his coat.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

Ill see you tomorrow.

WYATT

I have a guy for your tooth. Let's
meet in the morning.

EXT. TOMBSTONE BOARDWALK - MORNING

Luke and Wyatt are walking down the boardwalk. Luke is holding his tooth periodically as they talk.

LUKE SHORT

(angrily surprised)
I slept with his ex-wife?

WYATT

Well that's what Storms told Bat.

LUKE SHORT

(irritated)
I've never seen him before in my
life or his wife. Where the hell is
this place? Where are we going?

Opening a door and walking up the stairs to an above business apartment.

WYATT

Shut up and follow me.

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

An above normal living space for a main street apartment with a make-shift dentist chair. There are various dental tools sitting out on a shaggy off white towel that might be clean.

Luke takes a look around the room.

DOC O.S.
 (yelling)
 What the hell are you putting that
 there for?

KATE O.S.
 (in a Hungarian accent)
 You coughed all over it!

A few sounds of things breaking and a scuffle off screen.
 Luke is headed out the door. Wyatt grabs him and pulls him
 back in.

WYATT
 (whispering)
 Sit. Relax, I know him well. He's a
 competent dentist.

The DOC, A tall, skinny, pale and unhealthy man walks out
 wearing a wrinkled off-white dentist coat and wiping his
 hands on a towel.

DOC
 (trying to hold back a
 cough)
 Life would be so much more pleasant
 if I didn't have an addiction to
 the female form. (To Luke) You must
 be Luke.

Luke gets up and shakes Doc's hand.

DOC (CONT'D)
 Now, what's ailing you?

WYATT
 Luke's tooth hurts Doc

LUKE SHORT
 It's feeling much better all the
 sudden. (Looking at Wyatt) It must
 have been that steak I ate at the
 oriental last night that made it
 hurt.

Wyatt glares at Luke.

DOC
 (coughing)
 Nonsense! Pay no mind to this
 shanty edifice. It has no ill
 effect on my skill.

EXT. TOMBSTONE BOARDWALK - LATER

Luke and Wyatt are walking back from Doc's. Luke is holding his jaw and Wyatt is grinning.

WYATT
It'll feel better.

Luke glares back at Wyatt.

INT. BIRD CAGE THEATER - NIGHT

A busy space occupied with cowboys, miners, ladies and hostesses. A fifteen by fifteen foot stage at the back with oil lamps along the front, illuminates the area and gaming tables on either side under the upstairs balcony seating box's. Hostesses are hoisting up whiskey, beer and cigar's to patrons in the balcony boxes using a Dumbwaiter.

Luke walks in and is instantly startled by a large object flying towards him from above and for a second, reacts by putting his hand on his gun when he realizes that it is a women, suspended by ropes and pulleys, "Flying" across the ceiling.

Luke looks down and see's a sign, introducing the acts for the night that reads:

THE FLYING NYMPH AND MADEMOISELLE DE GRANVILLE - THE FEMALE HURCULES

Luke see's the table where Wyatt is, over by the stage. Walking past the others; Curly Bill, John Ringo and Charlie Storms are sitting and throwing Luke the stink eye as he passes. Especially Storms who stands as if to face Luke. Luke pay's no attention to Storms.

CHARLIE STORMS
(to Luke)
I thought not.

Curly Bill laugh's an evil laugh and Ringo smirks.

The dealer looks familiar to Luke as he approaches Wyatt's table. Doc give's Luke a wink as he sits. Wyatt is with his wife MATTIE and Bat.

Luke looks at Wyatt and then at Doc pointing at him indiscreetly as if to ask Wyatt a question.

Wyatt gives an acknowledging smiles and places his cigar back on his lip. Luke nods as if he now understands who worked on his tooth. DOC HOLLIDAY.

Doc excuses himself from the table and comes to sit next to Luke. Doc is very drunk.

LUKE SHORT
(greeting him)
Doc.

DOC
(excitedly)
Why Mr. Short, thank you for attending this evenings festivities. As you can see we have all sorts of entertainers. (Looking towards Storm's) some more entertaining than others.

LUKE SHORT
(Referring to Storms)
What I've done...I do not know?

DOC
The wicked need no reason to pursue or flee.

LUKE SHORT
Maybe I should become wicked.

WYATT
It would be a whole lot easier.

Wyatt is distracted looking around as if he is looking for someone.

DOC
You both could no more become wicked than you could become a women.

A women comes out on stage. She is massively built, like a brick shit-house, this is MADEMOISELLE DE GRANVILLE. She walk's over to a large, heavy barbell sitting on the ground in front of the stage as the crowd goes silent. This is a weight substantially heavier than anyone in this room would consider attempting to lift.

Luke looks at Doc as if he might want to rethink what he just said. The ANNOUNCER, A small slight man comes out on stage.

ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentleman. The Bird Cage Theater is glad to present for our next act...Mademoiselle De Granville, the female Hurcules!
(MORE)

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Lifting weights that most men
couldn't lift and tonight she is
attempting to lift more than she
has ever before...

Ringo and Storm's make their way to the front, Ringo is
wearing a red sash and Storm's is not. They pass Doc as he
talks to Luke. Ringo and Storms are inebriated.

Mademoiselle De Granville is starting to pick up the heavy
barbell and a DRUMB ROLL is heard.

DOC

Hey Ringo, care to buck the tigers
odd's...it's the gutsiest game in
town Johnny?

Ringo turns and rips off his bandana from around his neck.

RINGO

(Holding out the end to
Doc)

Care to grab this bandana...it's
the deadliest game in town Lunker.

Both men draw at the same time. Shot after shot are fired
until both are empty, ten in total. People are diving to get
out of the way. When the shooting stops and the room is
filled with gun smoke, both men standing with out a scratch.
Luke is standing beside Storm's with his gun at his neck.
Storm's is wide eyed and paralyzed with fear with his hand
still on his gun and half out of it's holster.

Bat emerges from behind Luke and places his hand on his
shoulder in a calming way.

LUKE SHORT

(to Storms)

Take your bandana buddy and get!

Luke pushes him with the barrel of his gun towards Ringo.
Storms grabs Ringo and they stumble for the door. Wyatt is
dusting himself off and helping Maddie up while people are
starting to rise from the floor and from under tables.

Doc is checking himself for bullet holes.

DOC

(laughing)

And who says too much liquor is
dangerous? I think it just saved my
life.

A SCREAM is heard and we see that Mademoiselle De Granville is buried beneath the barbell unconscious and twisted. Wyatt sees JOSOPHINE MARCUS, half dressed in costume, rush to her aide and Wyatt quickly hustles up to the stage to assist leaving Maddie standing there still shaking.

Luke looks at Bat with a scowl, knowing that he and Storms are friends.

INT. ORIENTAL SALOON - EARLY MORNING

It's a big night winding down. Many drunks, gamblers and hostesses worn out. Luke is dealing faro and it's his golden hour to capitalize on the over confident gamblers trying to regain their losses but even Dick Clark, the veteran dealer, who was dealing next to him, gives a nod as he exits the saloon. Bat is sitting near the gaming tables in the shadows keeping an eye over the place.

Charlie Storms walks in obviously drunk and looking for trouble. Storm's walks over to the bar and demands a drink. Luke has a close eye on him as he deals.

Storms sees that Luke is dealing. Walking over to the table and sits with an aggressive attitude. Luke slides his Jürgensen watch chain away to tuck it in and out of the way.

Storms lays down a bet and loses right away cursing Luke under his breath.

LUKE SHORT

All bet's down, gentleman

Storms moves his bet late. Luke cancel's the bet.

CHARLIE STORMS

Hey, I won that!

The two guys at the table are sliding back from the table ever so slowly.

LUKE SHORT

Charlie, you won nothin!

Storm's takes his chips and throws them at Luke. Luke tilts his head casually and his hat blocks most of the chips. Luke looks up at Storms and Storms begins to draw. Both men have their guns up when Bat grabs Storms' gun hand and gets in between them before they could fire as the others dive for cover.

BAT
 (begging)
 Don't shoot, Luke!

Bat grabs Storms' pistol and sticks it in his belt. Bat put's his arm around him and walks him outside looking over at Luke who is white with anger.

EXT. ORIENTAL SALOON - CONTINUOUS

The cool February morning air, illuminated by the sunrise over the Dragoon Mountains, make's Luke's breath visible as he walks out of the saloon. Bat walk's up around the corner to Luke out of the thick chilly air and across the street.

BAT
 He's all tucked in and you won't have any more grievance's with Charlie, Luke. I got him set straight.

Luke gives Bat a stern look.

LUKE SHORT
 (acquiescing)
 All right then.

Bat walks Luke off the boardwalk and as they step off, Storm's grabs Luke by the arm whirling him round, just like Bud when Luke was little. Storms goes for his revolver.

CHARLIE STORMS
 You sonofabitch!

Without hesitation, Luke has his gun up and at Storms' chest pulling the trigger - BLAM! - sending Storms into the street with his shirt on fire from the blast. Storms is twitching in the middle of the wet dirt cart tracks. Storms' gun goes off in his hand from his body convulsing and the bullet lodges into the boardwalk across the street which startle's Bat.

Luke brushes some of the black powder off his white sleeve.

LUKE SHORT
 (Sarcastically)
 Bat, you have some of the damnedest of friends.

Bat is amazed at the speed, accuracy and dexterity of Luke's draw. Luke walks back in to the Oriental saloon pensive, reflective and somber.

DARLEEN

(rushing up to Luke)

What happened, I heard gun shots?

Are you alright?

Luke shakes his head, dismissing what he just went through. Darleen runs through the doors pausing just outside with her hand covering her mouth in shock.

In a haze of confusion, everything goes silent except for the ticking of the clock. Luke looks up at it, as the second hand ticks louder.

INT. LUKE'S ROOM - LATER

A well calloused thumb opens and closes the loading gate of his revolver, back and forth in the same rhythm and sound as the ticking clock. We see the blue tint steel gate reveal a large copper cartridges that reads - 45 WRACO COLT - stamped around the base as it is flipped open. A perfectly machined fit, as the gate is snapped back closed and the same sound that...

Is heard when the hammer is clicked back to free the cylinder and rotate the cartridge. Luke spins the cylinder and the candle light is shining on each copper cartridge reflecting a shot of light back.

The long feminine curve of the hammer resembles Darleen's thigh and hip, as she lay in bed. Skin and dried blood are buried in the grating at the end of the hammer.

The wood handle of the gun is caressed by Luke's soft palm pressing against it, in an almost affectionate manner.

This hard, heavy, steel revolver is played with like a deck of cards. Effortlessly the pistol is tossed, cocked and pointed with perfect precision, like the gun is an extension of Luke's arm.

The window is open and the cold night air is blowing the curtains, almost touching Luke, reaching out to him as he sits with the pistol between his preying hands, pressed up against his forehead. Dragging the end of the cold barrel down the bridge of his nose, to his lips.

Laughing, then an angry cry. Head, mouth and neck, like a Rooster, outstretched in a violent silent scream. Shooting saliva across the room like a bloody ejection from a wound.

INT. LUKE'S ROOM - MORNING

Luke stares out an open window with blood-shot, swollen eyes. The snow melting off the roof drips like rain.

A blurred figure passes behind him and starts out the door. Wyatt is caught just before he was about to knock, while Darleen, bundled up, exits sheepishly. Wyatt's eyes are fixed on Luke, he has never seen his friend this way before. Wyatt hesitantly knocks lightly on the open door to alert Luke that he is there.

WYATT

(light heartedly)

A little cold in here don't yah think?

Luke doest move.

WYATT (CONT'D)

(Somber)

I heard what happened last night. You alright?

Luke is almost hypnotized by the beauty out his window.

LUKE SHORT

(nodding yes)

"There is no serenity so fair as that which has just established itself in a tearful eye."

WYATT

Storm's was a wild man.

LUKE SHORT

No...he was a cretin. I still didn't want to kill him. (Pensively) Isn't that God's job?

WYATT

You did what you had to do.

Turning to Wyatt.

LUKE SHORT

Did I?

Blood, from the night before, has dried in streaks down Luke's hand from his callous.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

I learnt a great many thing's from you Wyatt.

(MORE)

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

None so important as the way you can disarm a situation using your words instead of wielding a gun. People admire you because you've shown them that an ordinary man with conviction, determination and courage can change things for the better, for peace, and for a life-affirming reason. But this is different. The people in this town, your friends and your family believe in you because they know you can do this without violence but if you bring those guns as the answer to this problem your no different than the cowboys...your just more of the same. More Like me.

WYATT

We've had this problem every town we've graced and this is no different. We have to stand our ground and end this.

LUKE SHORT

Jesus Wyatt, I hate having to ware a gun and shoot it out with some drunken gunman every town I enter! I'm a gambler - not a gunfighter.

WYATT

(laughing)

Well, your looked upon as one now. Look you just said it. I'll handle it. We can work this out Luke. Any place you see money and opportunity others will too. You can't run from it.

LUKE SHORT

(shaking his head)

This, I'm afraid your not going to talk your way out of Wyatt. This is going to take what happened last night over and over again. I know this sort. It's in their roots. You can smell their evil...some just want war.

Luke walks over to his gun that is laying on the bed and picks it up, putting it in it's holster.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

(looking at Waytt)

I'm tired of fighting! Its all I've ever done sense I left home nineteen years ago. I have killed gamblers, drunks, cheats and every time I fight I loose.

WYATT

Do you think your going to find something different out there? Where is this Utopia? Wichita? Leadville? Where yah going to go?

LUKE SHORT

(Angrily)

Even if you kill em' all, even if you paint their blood on the walls for all to see, you won't be cutting off the head of the snake, only the tail and another will grow back.

WYATT

I thought you were doing what you've always wanted to do? Gamble, deal and make a hellova lot of money I might add.

LUKE SHORT

No...not at the expense of my humanity. I'm moving on. I suggest you do the same Wyatt. I need a vacation. East coast maybe.

WYATT

(waving his hands)

Okay, go meet someone. Goooo rest...I'll have this whole thing put to bed by the time you get back.

LUKE SHORT

The autumn moon lights my way.

INT. FT WORTH SALOON - DAY

A group of cowboys are sitting around a table talking excitedly. An animated guy, RILEY, has all the guys listening intently.

Brooks is leaning against the bar listening and has an amused grin across his face.

Courtright walks in and up to the bar next to Brooks glancing over at the cowboys not being able to ignore them.

RILEY

(impressed)

...so he throws the chips in Luke's face! Luke, taking no shit, tries to draw on him when, I guess his friend, gets in between them so Luke can't blast him...

A young wiry guy, CLARK is chiming in.

CLARK

Saved HIS life!

JIM COURTRIGHT

(to Brooks)

What are they going on about?

Brook's is listening so intently to the story, he doesn't hear Courtright.

RILEY

...this guy comes back for more a couple hours later as Luke's leaving the saloon. Grabs Luke by the shoulder, spins him around off the boardwalk and BAM!!! Luke blasts him clear across the street.

CLARK

Just like that?

RILEY

Just like that.

Brooks looks over to Courtright who is staring at him and wakes up to the fact that he has been asking him questions.

BROOKS

(to Courtright)

Seems like we got a real shooter out there. I guess this Luke Short fella is making a name for himself.

JIM COURTRIGHT

Up there in Leadville?

BROOKS

No, I heard him say it was in Tombstone.

Courtright looks over at the cowboys shaking his head and slowly starts their way.

JIM COURTRIGHT

(condescendingly)

Any of you were there for this
gunfight or know this Short fella?

RILEY

No, my friend Henry come up from
Bisbey way through Tombstone the
day after. He says the whole town
talkin' about it. (Looking around
at everyone) Said his shirt was on
fire from the blast.

The whole table is wide eyed at the story.

CLARK

I bet the blast broke every rib in
his chest, being point blank an
all.

JIM COURTRIGHT

(breathing in through his
nose)

You know the smell when someone
shits their pants? The way it gets
riper and riper the longer it sits?
How it lingers and travels from one
person to the next? You all look
like you got a nose full of this
bullshit and I'm starting to smell
it!

The cowboys collect their things quickly from the table,
shoot the remainder of their whisky, put their hats on while
heading for the door.

Courtright turns slowly, watching them as they scat as Jim
walks back to the bar.

The bartender pours a thick glass of whisky for Courtright
and leaves the bottle on the bar.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)

I think this guy has it all figured
out. You got a kill someone every
now and then to get a little
respect. This guy shoots a drunk
idiot every time he comes to a new
town and they tell your story high
and wide.

BROOKS
(warningly)
This Charlie Storms was no...

RUCKUS
(Interrupting)
There you guys are! I have been
looking everywhere...

BROOKS
(to Ruckus)
What the fuck do you want? Can't
you see that Jim and I are...

JIM COURTRIGHT
(interrupting)
Ruckus? What ever it is, can't you
handle it? Jesus! I've got this
town so scared everyone has
blinders on not to offend anyone
for fear I'm going to get involved.
What is so goddamn important and
threatening that you can't deal
with it?

RUCKUS
(proudly)
I just thought I would let you know
that this Luke fella you were
admiring in the office awhile back
got into another scrap. He shot
this...

Jim Looks over at Brooks then grabs Ruckus by the collar and drags him out the swinging doors on his ass. Jim walks back shaking his head as the rhythmic sound of the doors swinging back and forth gets loader as...

INT. TRAIN - TRANS CONTINENTAL RAILROAD - BOX CAR - DAY

A wide expanse of land is moving to the sound of the Iron Horse's wheels turning on the tracks and the load exhale of the smoke stack spitting in the same rhythm as the swinging doors.

Luke is sitting in an upper class box car all by himself, pensively admiring the open, uninhabited country that stretches as far as the eye can see. The lonely landscape through the glass is like a mirror.

EXT. BOSTON TRAIN STATION - DAY

Luke exits the train taking in all that his eyes are able to.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

A well appointed hotel sweet. Rich decor with large windows. Luke tips the bell boy.

Luke takes off his shirt in the bathroom to reveal the gaping scar on his ribs as he feels the a hot bath water. Steam is rising from the water as..

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - LATER

A hot steaming cup of coffee Luke lifts to his lips. Alone he drinks at a table in a crowded restaurant. Two well dressed prostitutes flirt with Luke who are sitting at the bar. Luke pays little attention and pays his tab and exits. His purposeful steady walk resembles...

EXT. TRAIN - BOSTON - MORNING

The hard steel train churning leaving the station.

EXT. TRAIN - NEW YORK - DUSK

The same train pulling into Grand Central Station. Luke exits the train with a little less excitement and purpose.

INT. NEW YORK - HOTEL BRUNSWICK - LOBBY - NIGHT

A posh hotel lobby with all the expensive accoutrements that the wealthy could want. Luke passes a multitude of exceptionally dressed individuals in all their proper posses.

A beautiful women's eye follows Luke's stride through the lobby floor to the bar. She is dressed in a long elegant gown that makes her look like an impressionist painting, this is HETTIE BUCK. She pardon's herself from the group and walks confidently in Luke's direction stopping a safe distance away, studying Luke's demeanor as he sits alone at a table.

A curious smile radiates from her face watching him, with a thousand mile stare, distantly looking at the menu, rubbing his hammer-thumb callous like a crystal ball.

Hettie approaches.

HETTIE
Are we dinning alone?

LUKE SHORT
(not looking up)
Yes, I'll have the prime rib...

HETTIE
(interrupting)
Oh...I'm NOT your waitress.

Luke looks up. His eyes meet what he was not expecting.

LUKE SHORT
Lady, Why are people in your
profession so aggressive? Can't you
see that I'm here to eat?

HETTIE
(shocked)
And I'm not extending to you an off
menu item.

Hettie storms away. Luke realizes that she wasn't a
prostitute and quickly goes after her. Catching her half way
to the lobby, luke gets in front of her.

LUKE SHORT
(lamenting)
I am so sorry, please except my
deepest apologies. I left my
manners somewhere between here and
my...childhood.

HETTIE
Are you not familiar to a women's
approach?

LUKE SHORT
Too familiar, just all the wrong
one's. Please, would you join me.

Hettie smiles and walks with Luke back to the table. He is a
perfect gentleman and Luke is enamored with her. Smiles are
beaming from their faces as they enjoy dinner and drinks.
They laugh and look at each other as if they are old friends.

We cut to Luke and Hettie dancing - then walking through the
New York streets - taking a buggy ride in Central Park -
spanning time falling in love.

SPAN TIME! MONTAGE

Luke is touching Hettie's face in a tender way when she grabs his hand to examine it being rough to the touch. Hettie rubs the callous stares at Luke in a caring way.

INT. NEW YORK - HOTEL BRUNSWICK - NIGHT

LOVE SCENE

INT. NEW YORK - HOTEL BRUNSWICK- LATER

Luke is staring intently out the window as Hettie sits in bed reaching for Luke and seeing him up. Throwing the sheets off, she goes to Luke from behind wrapping her arms under his and around his waist.

HETTIE

Darling, are you okay? Can't you sleep.

LUKE SHORT

I'm used to late nights. Dealing cards and gambling is what I know.

HETTIE

I feel that there is so much to know about you that you haven't shared. I know we come from different worlds and that the city is not your home and never will be.

Luke turns and see Hettie reaching with her eyes to a distant Luke. She brings him back with her gaze and pulls Luke's head down to kiss him passionately. Luke's smile returns.

HETTIE (CONT'D)

I'll follow you. Where ever it is that you need to be, I'll follow you.

Hettie backs off and postures her body in rough and tumble way.

HETTIE (CONT'D)

(animatedly)
I can do ranch work and farm...

Putting her hands on her hips like she is strapped with six-shooters.

HETTIE (CONT'D)
 (drawing her finger
 pistols)
 ...and SHOOT!

Luke puts his hands up and fake's a fatal bullet wound,
 falling to the ground.

Hettie hurries over and gets on top of Luke pinning his arms
 above his head.

LUKE SHORT
 Your going to beat me up after you
 shoot me? your the meanest of
 sorts!

HETTIE
 (squinting her eyes)
 And don't you forget it!

Luke stares up at Hettie with a moment of hope.

LUKE SHORT
 You know...Hettie is my mothers
 name. Your spirit reminds me of
 her's...strong and witty.

Hettie sits up.

HETTIE
 Well, now she MUST be an amazing
 women. Where is your family?

LUKE SHORT
 Texas, I was thirteen when I left
 home and haven't been back sense.

Luke spins Hettie off and under him.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)
 Would you go back with me? To meet
 my family?

Hettie's face glows with joy and wraps her arms around him
 pulling him down in a bone crushing hug.

INT. NEW YORK - HOTEL BRUNSWICK - RESTAURANT - LATE MORNING

Luke walks in an almost empty restaurant with a news paper
 under his arm sitting at a table by himself. A table by the
 window, with snow, lightly falling outside, Luke takes a look
 around and then down at his paper. Front page reads:

INSERT:

OCTOBER 27TH 1881.

Flipping to page two, Luke sees the headline:

SHOOTOUT AT THE O.K. CORRAL IN TOMBSTONE, AZ

Luke reads intently to see who was killed. Hettie walks up with a couple of shopping bags.

HETTIE

There you are! I snuck out early. I wanted to let you sleep. I heard you up all night...

Hettie notices that Luke is not lifting his head.

HETTIE (CONT'D)

Luke?

Insert news paper:

TOM AND FRANK MCLAURY DEAD...VIRGIL AND MORGAN EARP WOUNDED...DOC HOLLIDAY GRAZED.

Luke takes a deep breath and vacantly looks up at Hettie.

HETTIE (CONT'D)

(dropping her bags)
What's wrong?

Hettie leans over and reads the headlines.

HETTIE (CONT'D)

(concerned)
Friends of yours?

LUKE SHORT

Like family.

HETTIE

Did they get hurt.

LUKE SHORT

You always get hurt. They'll be fine.

HETTIE

Do you want to go? Let's go.

LUKE SHORT

Left there not long ago and not going back. I warned them. Goddam I warned them.

Hettie sits next to Luke.

HETTIE

Let's not. Let's start over fresh somewhere. You've been flying for so long it's time to build a nest. You an me.

Luke smiles.

LUKE SHORT

You pick. Lets get a map.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS FT. WORTH TEXAS - CHISHOLM TRAIL - DAY

A covered wagon is taking its time down a dirt road. Luke is piloting and Hettie is riding shotgun. Two mules are carrying belongings in tow.

A sign reads: FT WORTH, TEXAS 20 MILES

Luke and Hettie are about to merge on to the Chisholm Trail and a large cattle drive is back aways. Two riders are catching strays ahead and a RIDER approaches Luke and Hettie.

RIDER

You folks go on ahead. We've got a big heard you don't want to be in back of.

Luke studies the man as the rider takes off his hat being in the company of a women.

LUKE SHORT

Cole?

Cole doesn't recognize Luke at first but squints enough to make out who Luke is.

COLE

Jim...I mean Luke? Is that you?

Hettie looks at Luke puzzled.

LUKE SHORT

(joking)

You still drinking yourself blind or just getting old?

COLE
Hot Damn!!

Cole gets right up next to Luke and Hettie.

COLE (CONT'D)
I can't believe its you! Look
atcha! All dolled up.

LUKE SHORT
Cole, this is Hettie Buck,
soon to be Hettie Short.

Hettie looks at Luke and smiles.

COLE
(nodding his head)
Mam.

LUKE SHORT
What are you trail boss now?

COLE
Yah can you believe it? Paw gave me
my own drive.

Cole looks as if he has a million questions for Luke.

LUKE SHORT
Good for you Cole.

COLE
I been nothing but hearing about
yah Luke. Really made a name for
your self around these parts.

LUKE SHORT
Moving to Ft. Worth. Come visit on
your way through next time. We'll
catch up.

COLE
Will do, I'll tell the gang I saw
you.

Luke waves and Cole rides off grinning from ear to ear.

EXT. FORT WORTH TEXAS STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Luke and Hettie pull into Ft. Worth proper. They pass the
White Elephant Saloon and Luke takes note of it. People are
looking at Luke, in particular, as if they know who he is.

Riding along and taking in the bustling atmosphere, they make their way to...

EXT. FORT WORTH - LINDELL HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Luke helps Hettie out of the wagon in front of a fancy hotel. Luke tips the BOY out front, who takes a longer than normal look at Luke, to deal with the horses and luggage as they walk inside.

INT. FORT WORTH - LINDELL HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Luke and Hettie are greeted by several couples and there is an heir of celebrity to the pleasantries. A MAN tips his hat as Luke and Hettie pass.

MAN 1

Colonel.

Hettie looks at Luke, having had him be addressed with that title of respect and doesn't understand. Luke plays it down not wanting the attention.

INT. FORT WORTH - LINDELL HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Luke changed his clothes and is buttoning his shirt as Hettie gets unpacked.

HETTIE

Did you used to live here at one point?

Luke gives Hettie a kiss as he is heading out the door.

LUKE SHORT

It s a smaller world out here compared to the city, that's all. I'll be back.

Hettie doesn't buy it.

HETTIE

Where are you going?

LUKE SHORT

Back to work.

INT. WHITE ELEPHANT SALOON - LATER

Luke walks in the White Elephant Saloon with swagger itching to be back at a table. Sizing up the establishment, he leans against the bar and orders a whisky, taking note of the gaming tables and the dealers at each. Many patrons take note of Luke and recognize him.

Looking to his left, a figure approaches. Bat Masterson is excited to see him.

BAT

Well what in the blazes are you doing here in Ft Worth of all places? I thought we lost you to the wicked ways of the east.

LUKE SHORT

(surprised)

Bat? Well...I thought you were in tombstone still?

BAT

I left right after you. Thank god I did considering what went down.

LUKE SHORT

I still fight with that decision.

Bat nods in agreement.

BAT

This place is it Luke! We're like celerities here. Granted, some of our exploits aren't true, they have, lets just say, "exaggerated" them a bit but To our advantage in many regards. Man I didn't know I killed that many men...and you! One group of guys I over-heard say'n that you killed twenty something...

Luke drops his head and takes a deep breath in disgust knowing what that means. Bat's nudging Luke.

BAT (CONT'D)

...but I tell yah, the ladies love it! I found a sweet little thing and think I might get hitched. Well you found the best game in town here at the White Elephant. Ole Jake Johnson over there.

We see Jake Johnson, a large portly, elegant man, faultlessly dressed with a cane adorned with a gold head on it. He is at a private table with city "big wigs" including judge Blythe.

BAT (CONT'D)
 (referring to Jake)
 He own's it. But getting in here won't be that easy Luke. He's had the same Faro dealer for some time. You'd have to break the bank here to have a shot.

We see a GUY dealing Faro and Luke smirks having watched him.

LUKE SHORT
 Is Jake backing him or is he the bank?

BAT
 (thinking)
 Not sure.

LUKE SHORT
 Oh, it doesn't really matter.

Luke makes his way over to the table and sits while Bat watches and smiles.

BAT
 There he goes.

INT. WHITE ELEPHANT SALOON - LATER

Luke is sitting at the Faro table and has a small crowd around him. The dealer is sweating and very nervous. Luke is way up winning big. Jake is in the background and watching calmly. Luke's eyes move quickly and calculatingly making bet after bet and dragging big chips.

Two cowboy's, Riley and Clark are looking at Luke suspiciously recognize Luke.

RILEY
 (tapping Clark on the shoulder excitedly)
 That's him, that's him!

Clarks finally, with a mouth-full of beer, gets it and can hardly swallow nodding yes.

It's dead quite and a card is slowly drawn. The crowd goes wild and patting Luke on the back congratulating him. Riley and Clark get Luke attention.

CLARK

You broke the bank! He broke the bank!

RILEY

Can't believe it's you!

Luke can't help but smile and Bat is clapping and shaking his head in the corner next to Jake as Luke looks over and confidently nods to them.

INT. FT. WORTH - LINDELL HOTEL RESTAURANT - MORNING

Luke and Hettie are enjoying a big breakfast.

HETTIE

Well I could count on one hand the amount of times I have eaten breakfast with you.

LUKE SHORT

Short day at the office last night what can I say. Slept like a baby. Thanks partially to you.

Hettie slaps Luke on the shoulder.

Jake Johnson approaches Luke and Hettie's table, removing his hat and nodding.

JAKE JOHNSON

Excuse me, I don't mean to interrupt you all but I wanted to introduce myself. I am Jake Johnson, the owner of the White Elephant Saloon,
(laughing)
the one you left without a Faro dealer last night.

Hettie looks at Luke puzzled and a bit concerned.

LUKE SHORT

I'm Luke Short and this is my fiancée Hettie Buck.

JAKE JOHNSON

Pleased to meet you mam. Luke, I was wondering if you would like to meet me, later of course, at my saloon? I have a proposal I think you would like to hear.

Luke looks at Hettie as if to ask permission.

HETTIE

Go! Don't worry about me. We can go riding any old time.

Luke nods at Jake.

JAKE JOHNSON

Let's say around 2 o'clock?

Luke nods again in approval. As Jake excuses himself, Luke smiles to himself and Hettie curiously looks at him.

INT. WHITE ELEPHANT SALOON - LATER

Jake is walking around the Saloon with Luke slightly ahead of him as if he had this all planned. The Faro dealer from last night is packing all of his gaming equipment up in wooden boxes. Luke and Jake pass him and Jake looks back to make sure that the dealer is out of ear shot.

JAKE JOHNSON

...I was really happy with him but I can see that he is not the caliber that I need. I need a man of your stature - and someone with money. Luke, I'm interested in a partnership. To set up and manage a first class gambling establishment upstairs.

Walking upstairs we see an empty large space.

LUKE SHORT

Tell me what you have in mind?

JAKE JOHNSON

I don't know anything about gambling and gaming and any of it. I want to run the saloon and the restaurant.

Looking around and considering the possibilities.

LUKE SHORT
 (waving his hands)
 I'd want to redo it completely.
 Crystal Chandeliers, woven carpet,
 hand painted murals and art...

Jake smiles and puts his hand on Luke's shoulder.

JAKE JOHNSON
 It all sounds like I would hope you
 would want it. Come on, lets go
 downstairs and work out the
 details.

INT. WHITE ELEPHANT SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Luke and Jake are talking but we can't hear them. Jake reaches over to luke extending his hand as if to shake hands. Luke takes a second and excepts. With hands clinched we head into...

Montage: Spanning Time

- Hands are clinched and quickly released to reveal a bunch of crates being unloaded and Luke thanking the delivery driver.
- Luke is pointing and directing to a group of workers in various places around the upstairs.
- Large covered wagon's with large creates pulls up again.
- Creates are being pried open to reveal wood, chairs, mirrors and crystal glasses, Persian rugs,
- Crystal Chandelier is hoisted carefully up to the ceiling.
- Oil paintings hung
- Poker, Faro, Keno, and Vingt-et-un tables being built of Mahogany with green felt stretched over them.
- An apartment for Luke and Hettie was being built in the far end and Hettie excitedly picking out all her favorite furnishings.
- Luke is placing all his literature books carefully in well organized places on the book shelf.
- A Dumbwaiter installed to get their food directly from the downstairs kitchen and Luke pretending to get his meal off and eat as a joke.

- A wedding scene where Luke and Hettie are being wed.
- Putting the finishing touches on the gaming room.
- Luke exercising his horse in a corral with Hettie brushing her's.
- Luke hands Hettie and finely wrapped gift. She rips it open excitedly and pulls out a hand-made Japanese parasol with custom design work on it.
- Hettie setting a crystal vase down as the final touch to their finished apartment and jumping on the bed to admire it as Luke pulls down the "Black Out Curtains" for sleeping late and jumps in bed too in a flirtatious manner.
- A set of ivory counters for the Faro table are set in place as the finishing touches of the gaming room are complete.
- Luke and Jake shake hands seeing the completion of the game room.

INT. WHITE ELEPHANT GAME ROOM - NIGHT

A blue icy clear image of a dark male figure moving slowly and ghostly...as STAB! An Ice-pick slams into an ice block and the figure breaking away and a large chunk of frozen water and image falls into a silver tray.

We PAN UP to see Luke in the background as the image through a large ice-block. A loud cheer of the grand opening patrons celebrating is heard.

Luke is raising his glass and so follow the crowd.

Ice is being dropped into many glasses.

A White Elephant ice sculpture is carved and sitting on the bar.

Hettie is by Luke's side.

HETTIE

Is this really two-thousand year old Alaskan glacier ice?

LUKE SHORT

Yep, went and got it myself... while your were sleeping.

Hettie rolls her eye's and smile's.

Bat walks up to Luke and Hettie getting Luke's private attention.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

(to Bat)

What were you saying about being "not easy"?

BAT

I've got to hand it to you Luke. It's everything you said you wanted.

Luke looks around the room nodding his head in agreement. Bat is looking at Hettie. Luke catches him and grabs bat around the neck in an aggressively playful way.

BAT (CONT'D)

You look happy.

LUKE SHORT

For the first time in a long time Bat. I wish Wyatt could have been here.

BAT

So - do - I.

INT. WHITE ELEPHANT - GAME ROOM - DAY

A slow week-day in the game room and Luke is sitting at one of the tables having a cup of coffee and cigar sits smoking besides it. A few well dressed business people are sitting in various booths and gaming tables.

The sound of a door opening and direct sunlight comes beaming across the floor right up to Luke's feet. The shadow of long legs and the sound of unfamiliar boots getting closer and Luke looks up. For a beat, Luke just stares. A hand comes down and grabs the chair in front of Luke and pulls it out. Jim Courtright sits. He wears no badge.

Jim weighs Luke with his eyes. Luke, having been around this sort man so many times before that it makes his callous itch.

LUKE SHORT

Yes...

JIM COURTRIGHT

Heard you was in town buuuut I didn't believe it. Your not what I had pictured though. I'm...

LUKE SHORT
 (interrupting)
 I know who you are what do you
 want?

Jim is taken back a bit by Luke not being immediately
 intimidated.

JIM COURTRIGHT

Well for one I wanted to meet the
 FAMOUS LUKE SHORT. The man who
 Killed...

Courtright looks back at Brook's who is standing by the door
 within ear shot.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
 (surprised)
 ...was it twenty-six?

BROOKS
 Twenty-six

Courtright looks back at Luke.

JIM COURTRIGHT
 (nodding his head yes)
 Twenty-six men.

Luke takes a deep impatient sigh.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
 Now I can appreciate hard work and
 believe me, I work hard at killing
 folks too but twenty-six would flat
 peter-me-out!
 (Looking around the room)
 And to build all this too? I don't
 know how you do it but I have a way
 you can leave all that kill'n
 behind yah and just focus on this
 here gaming joint you and ole Jake
 started. See I never been much of a
 gambler.

Jim leans over the table to get his eyes closer to Luke's.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)
 With my profession...there really
 is no gambling. It's a sure thing.

- Long beat -

Luke looks at Jim with the slightest hint of amusement but no fear. Courtright is showing cracks of frustration and lean's back in his chair.

JIM COURTRIGHT (CONT'D)

(casually)

Did you really shoot that man
through the jaw up there in
Leadville?

LUKE SHORT

Yah...and he didn't even talk as
much as you.

Courtright doesn't know how to handle Luke's confidence.

JIM COURTRIGHT

What I'm offering is a business
proposition. A simple service of
making sure that this place is not
to be messed with. A town like this
has all sorts of shady fellas
that...

LUKE SHORT

(interupting)

I heard you were removed as Marshal
of this town. Is that right?

JIM COURTRIGHT

I decided that my efforts were not
appreciated and not compensated
according to the level of...

LUKE SHORT

(interupting)

Its not what I heard. No, folks
were real clear about the "efforts"
you were put'n forth. The Marshal
now seems pretty competent and I
can handle the rest so I thank you
for coming by for a visit.

Jim stares at Luke intently.

Luke raises his hand fast like he's drawing his pistol and raps fingers around the cigar that's sitting on the table before Jim can get his hand to his gun. Courtright is startled as Luke slowly takes a drag and exhales the smoke with his mouth in popping sound like a gun and blowing the smoke in Courtright's direction, never taking his eyes off of him.

Courtright stands abruptly and launches the chair back against the wall. Courtright walks slowly out the door with Brooks following taking a long look at Luke as he exits.

Luke pays close attention to how Courtright is waring his guns.

Jake walks in holding three glasses and a bottle of top shelf whisky as Courtright and Brooks leave. Jake is looking around as if he doesn't understand what going on.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

(to Jake)

He a friend of yours?

JAKE JOHNSON

(stammering)

He is a...I lent him some money awhile back and we became...

LUKE SHORT

(interupting)

Never paid you back did he?

JAKE JOHNSON

It wasn't really a loan...

LUKE SHORT

(interupting)

He can go shake down them folks down at the stockyards but tell him if he comes around here again trying to hustle us, I'll throw him out myself.

Luke grabs the bottle of whisky and starts to pour it lifting it up to see the label.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

You were going to offer this to him? "Pearls before swine."

INT. T.I.C INVESTIGATION OFFICES - DAY

Insert:

T.I.C. INVESTIGATION COMMERCIAL INVESTIGATION

Between the T. and the C. is a painted watchful eye.

Courtright sits at a desk and with his feet up. Brooks is sitting across from him.

JIM COURTRIGHT

I don't think he is half the
gunfighter we have read about.

BROOKS

He looks like a fancy pants to me.

JIM COURTRIGHT

I think he is just a good marketer.
This whole town like's him because
of his notoriety of being this
gunslinger. I think we should put
it to the test. I say you call him
out.

Brooks has an undercurrent of fear run through him.

BROOKS

Me?

JIM COURTRIGHT

Well I can't do it. I need to still
sell them on the protection. One of
us needs to remain the good guy and
I think I warmed him up a bit the
other night. Don't forget that we
have Judge Blythe on our side and
he wants this as much as we do.

Brooks looks confused.

Jake is on board but says that Luke
is his partner. Tell you the truth
I think you could take him. Imagine
your reputation around here if you
put him under? Shit, I'll have to
give you a raise. Getting this
establishment is a big step for our
company Brooks.

Brooks forces a smile and takes a big nervous swallow.

BROOKS

What are you thinking?

Jim leans over and the desk with a grin.

INT. FT. WORTH - LINDELL HOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Hettie and Luke are lying in bed. Luke is reading a poetry
book and hettie is combing her hair.

HETTIE

Luke? The Smits, who I ran into at the stables said that they are taking bets around town on you and this fella Courtright. What's that all about? Something about a gunfight?

Luke turns his head curious to this news.

LUKE SHORT

Bets uh?

HETTIE

I know you told me about some fights you were in but they made it sound like you were more of a gunfighter than a gambler. You were known for it.

LUKE SHORT

You can't help what people say and they say a lot don't they?

HETTIE

Is this something I should be concerned about?

LUKE SHORT

No...I stopped concerning myself with it for some time now. Whether its going to happen or not that is. Seems like the more you try to avoid it the more likely it's going to happen.

HETTIE

Well you can control whether you pull your gun or not...Right?

LUKE SHORT

Its not a question of whether or not I want to pull my gun Hettie. It's whether or not I want to stand down to tyrants.

Luke gets up out of bed and walks to the window.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)

If you don't have the fear of God, you'd better have the fear of man.

Luke throws his britches and coat on and walks out

HETTIE

Luke?

EXT. FORT WORTH - TEXAS STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Luke saunters in the cold night air. Leaving the confines of the main street attractions behind him. A piercing light seduces Luke through the tree's. Luke walks around to free it from the branches and the full moon reveals herself. Luke takes a few steps closer.

INT. WHITE ELEPHANT GAME ROOM - NIGHT

A packed house of mostly upper-class Ft. Worth residents populates the room. Cigar smoke is like a haze floating above the top hats. Luke is watching his dealers closely.

A BOY walks up to Luke with a telegram. Luke tips the boy and Luke turns to open it.

INSERT:

LUKE, YOU WERE RIGHT...IF NOT FOR MY PRIDE I'D HAVE LED MY BROTHERS AWAY FORM TOMBSTONE, AND MORG WOULD BE ALIVE AND VIRGIL WHOLE. MISS YOU. WYATT EARP

A tall lanky businessman comes up to Luke named Thad.

THAD

Luke, Love what you made of the place. Are you taking bets on the boxing match?

LUKE SHORT

(half joking)

I take bets on anything but I don't like the odds on that one. Check back with me next week. We'll see how they look then. Maybe one of them knows how to structure a fight.

Luke gives Thad a wink.

THAD

(laughing)

Will do Luke.

Brooks walks in and is totally out of place the way he is dressed. Luke is immediately aware of him. Brooks walks up to a gaming table and pushes his way through players in a stumbling way.

Placing a late bet, Brooks wins and obnoxiously celebrates grabbing the attention of most of the patrons. The DEALER looks over to Luke. Luke shakes his head no, giving his dealer a chance to calm the matter himself and to test him.

DEALER

Sorry sir, late bets don't count.

BROOKS

Horse shit! What kind of place is this?

Reaching his hands across the table as if to take his money back. Luke walks over and stands behind the dealer.

LUKE SHORT

We have told you once sir...don't make us tell you a second time.

BROOKS

Or what? Is this the way you treat an honest customer?

Brooks stands postured. The dealer moves aside as well as everyone behind both Luke and Brooks. Luke picks up the money slowly and hands it back to Brooks.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

The patrons are mumbling to each other wondering if Luke backed down.

LUKE SHORT

Now leave.

Brooks pushes his way through the patrons with a shit eating grin on his face.

BROOKS

(to LUKE SHORT)

Your lucky!

Luke shakes his head walking away, as many are curiously looking at him.

Luke passes Thad who was a witness to the event. Thad doesn't understand and keeps looking at Luke curiously as he passes.

INT. FT WORTH SALOON - STOCKYARDS - NIGHT

A very drunk Courtright and Brooks are sitting at the bar surrounded with blue collar workers and cowboys.

BROOKS

(full of bravado)

...when I walked in that place, I had every eye on me. They didn't know what to think. I was like horse shit in a water trough.

Most of them gathered are scratching their heads at that description. Jim is acting like he hasn't heard this story three times already this evening.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

I, like any decent gambler would do, I put my money down and proceeded to risk my money. After I win that fancy pants Short fella comes over trying to bully me around. I stood my ground. No two bit hustler like him is going to fake an honest working man like me...

Courtright mouths what Brooks is saying at the same time.

JIM COURTRIGHT

(silently)

...like us

BROOKS

...like us. Maybe some of them starched collared paper jokey's but not me.

The crowd is listening intently.

Courtright is trying real hard to act like he is telling the straight truth having heard the story, each time more exaggerated than the last.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

So I square up. Who the hell is he? Well he backed down and gave me what I deserved. My winnings. He aint what everyone is making him out to be...I didn't want to stay there, who would?

The crowd is mumbling to each other like seeds scattered to the wind. Brooks takes a drink of his beer as he looks at Jim for acceptance and Jim nods, job well done.

EXT. FT. WORTH STREETS - DAY

A cold winter morning, Luke walks the main street boardwalk and Luke receives a very different look from the towns folks. A questioning is in the air and resolve.

Luke makes his rounds, tipping his hat with an observing, stoic and very cordial manner.

EXT. FT. WORTH STREETS - GUNS AND GEAR SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Luke exits the Guns and Shop and we see the sign clearly. The same one the Courtright exited before.

EXT. FT. WORTH STREETS - SHOE SHINE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Luke sits in the shoeshine booth where a YOUNG MAN starts shining Luke's leather boots while Luke reads the paper, lifting his eyes to his surroundings periodically. The young man is looking at Luke as if he wants to ask him something but won't dare.

Riley and Clark walk past Luke and have a look of disappointment on their faces.

INT. FT. WORTH - LINDELL HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Luke is taking extra care, slow and methodically putting on his attire and addressing his cufflinks like a boxer wraps his wrists, with fists clinched. Hettie is behind him.

HETTIE
(woefully)
This is the day?

LUKE SHORT
I think so.

Hettie has serious reservations about this but tries to act supportive.

HETTIE
I knew this early on but to have
this in front of me now is much
different.

Hettie goes to Luke and puts her hands on his shoulders from behind as Luke looks in the mirror.

HETTIE (CONT'D)

I had a dog once when I was a child, I named him Bow because his black fur had a white bowtie look to his chest. He protected me to a fault. One day a man approached me that Bow didn't like and he attacked him. The man out of nowhere attacked back like he expected it. They fought and Bow got stabbed in the side but got the man down and bit him in the neck and he eventually bled out and died in front of me. Bow, after it was over, came and laid down beside where I was sitting and crying and as if nothing ever happened...slowly died as I pet him.

Hettie's eyes well up with tears and Luke fights his, not being able to turn face to face to her.

HETTIE (CONT'D)

Later we found out that the man had attacked several little girls in the town. Bow knew instinctively that he was a threat and didn't hesitate. He knew. I don't know how but he knew.

Hettie turns Luke around to face her.

I'm going to trust that you know what's best because I don't see any doubt in your eyes or your actions.

INT. FT WORTH SALOON - STOCKYARDS - CONTINUOUS

Courtright is sitting at the bar and Brooks comes up and whispers in his ear. Courtright nods yes and Brooks heads out the doors.

INT. FT. WORTH - LINDELL HOTEL RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Luke is sitting having steak and eggs for breakfast as Ruckus, now the Marshal, and approaches Luke's table and sigh's deep.

RUCKUS

Luke, This whole thing is inevitable I know. Higher powers seems to want it to happen.

Luke wipes his mouth with a cloth napkin and drops it on the table.

LUKE SHORT

(casually)

I know Ruckus, I know.

RUCKUS

I'm a witness to the threats, I've heard them directly from him. Do what you can to resolve this peacefully would yah. He is asking for you to meet him out on main street to "talk" says.

Rising from the table as if being ascended, Luke marches out of the hotel not waring his holster.

EXT. FT. WORTH STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Slow and steady steps, Luke in perfect rhythm makes his way through the town folks. People are; looking, turning, following and talking about what's about to go down. As if he is the only one around, Luke readies him self.

His Jürgensen watch and chain still on his vest.

Luke is not rubbing his Callous.

Luke reaches main street and Courtright turns to see him steadily walking towards him. Luke is facing Courtright now and Courtright notices no gun on Luke's hip. Courtright looks confused.

LUKE

Folks are saying you want to talk?
Well I'm here.

COURTRIGHT

Have you re-thought things?

LUKE

Naw, haven't given it a moment of thought.

Courtright looks visually upset.

COURTRIGHT

Not much to talk about then I
guess.

LUKE

I guess not.

Luke steps a little closer as if to draw Courtright in.

Towns folks look like they are about to see a murder instead
of a gunfight.

Courtright postures being spooked by Luke's advance.

COURTRIGHT

Don't draw on me!

Opening up his waist to show Courtright that he isn't wearing
a gun belt.

LUKE

No gun here.

Courtright, using Luke's motion as an excuse to draw on him
unarmed.

Luke sees Courtright go for his gun. Luke pulls a short
barrel Colt .45 from a secret holster that he had built in
the side of his hip pocket and shoots in one smooth motion.

The smoke clears and we see Courtright standing there
shocked, with his gun in his limp hand pointed at Luke.

Luke stands supremely confident with his gun still pointed at
Courtright.

A POV from Courtright's perspective. We see that his Hammer
thumb is shot off. The gun is slumped to the side and
Courtright is holding it with his fore finger through the
trigger guard. Courtright, shocked goes to fan the hammer
with the other hand and Luke let's him get the jump on him.
No shot is fired from Courtright.

Luke waits a beat, for Courtright to look up at him then puts
another shot through Courtright's heart, sending him back and
slumped over a water trough. Luke sets his gun back in his
holster with no tricks. The crowd runs over to Courtright and
Luke. Hettie pushes her way through and rubs Luke making sure
he's okay.

Thad, Riley and Clark looks down at Jim's hand seeing that
his hammer thumb is shot off and back at Luke trying to put
together what happened and then down at the gun to see the
hammer of the gun was shot off as well.

THAD
 Damdest thing I ever saw!

RILEY
 Shot his darn Hammer Thumb off!

CLARK
 And the Gun Hammer!

Brooks is now over Courtright and looking at Luke in total shock having tested his fate and escaping Luke's wrath once.

Luke walks up to Courtright's dead body. A BOY approaches.

BOY
 Is he dead?

LUKE SHORT
 He's been dead a long time son.

BOY
 Mister! I can't believe what I saw!

LUKE SHORT
 (to the boy)
 Just Lucky

Luke looks at Brooks.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)
 Or maybe that was you.

Luke walks back to hettie and passes a smiling Ruckus on the way. Luke and Hettie walk slowly away through the on lookers. Thad shaking his head in disbelief.

LUKE SHORT (CONT'D)
 (to Thad)
 What were the odds as of this morning?

THAD
 Four to one.

LUKE SHORT
 Now that's how to structure a fight.

Thad smiles and shakes his head as Hettie gives a surprised look at Luke.

INT. FT WORTH SALOON - DAY

A large stack of money is being counted by a MAN and placed on the table in front of Luke. Thad stands in the back smiling.

MAN 1

Seems unconscionable betting on yourself on such a thing!

LUKE

Just couldn't pass on the odds.

Leaving, Luke sees a news paper.

Insert: CLAY ALLISON DEAD! RUN OVER BY A CART, DIES OF A BROKEN NECK.

INT. TELEGRAM OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Luke is finishing writing what he wants sent.

Insert: WYATT, AT PEACE - WITH WAR. YOUR FRIEND, LUKE SHORT

EXT. TEXAS - SHORT RANCH - DAY

A sun (son) is about to set and the soft glow from its fire can be seen on the desolate prairie for miles.

A long quite stillness is broken by the sound of one large covered wagon being pulled by A horse on a rocky trail.

A Thoreau book is bouncing in the leather seat as Luke and Hettie pull up to the Short ranch.

Luke's mother walks out on to the deck wiping her hands on a towel. She see's that its Luke and her eyes fill with tears of joy.

Luke takes a long distant look at his mother and then at his wife Hettie.

INSERT:

Luke Short died of Brights Disease in 1854.

Luke died in a way that certainly most who knew him would gamble that he wouldn't. With his boots on.

He was 39 years old.

FADE OUT