

AMERICAN TERRORIST: JESSE JAMES

Written by

Nate Myers

Based on

*Jesse James: Last Rebel Of The Civil War* by T.J. Stiles

EXT. BANK - DAY [1876]

CHYRON: Northfield, Minnesota - 1876

In a sleepy little town, eight gun-slingin' BANDITS saunter up to The First National Bank of Northfield.

Two Bandits peel off from the rest of the group and post up in front of the bridge that heads away from town.

The remaining six pause a moment in front of the bank. With a questionin' eye, FRANK JAMES (33, a haggard-looking white man) glances at his brother, JESSE JAMES (29, a white man with piercing blue eyes). Lip curlin' into a smile, Jesse nods.

INT. BANK - DAY [1876]

A few CUSTOMERS patiently wait in line of the small yet charming bank. The calm is broken, however when the front door is kicked open, as Jesse and Frank, along with the rest of the Bandits, barge in.

Jesse points his pistols in the air - he means bidness.

JESSE

Y'all thought you were safe up here, didn't ya?

Frank shoves a pistol into the gut of a CUSTOMER and maneuvers him to the ground.

Bandit #1 tucks his pistol under the chin of JOSEPH HEYWOOD (39, a white man with a beard), the bank clerk.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You should know by now, there ain't nowhere we won't go to dig a Yankee out.

Bandit #2 stands guard at the door - scanning back and forth between the street and the robbery.

They're as well-oiled a machine as the gears of commerce that they're robbin'.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Ain't got no one to blame but yourselves. You lie with dogs, you gonna get put down like 'em.

Frank starts herding the CUSTOMERS to the floor while Jesse plants himself in the middle of the room.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You want this to be the last time we mess with you's and yours? Tell General Ames that he ain't your kind of people and he best be on his way, or well, you can figure the rest out.

Bandit #1 catches Jesse's eye.

BANDIT #1

This fella says the safe don't open.

Jesse saunters over to Joseph, the clerk, while Frank continues pickin' peoples' pockets.

JESSE

(to Joseph)

Do you not understand what's occurrin'? Hand over the money.

JOSEPH

The safe is on a timer. I can't--

JESSE

You really ready to die for someone else's money, because I ain't believin' that for one goddamn second, Yankee.

JOSEPH

You can be assured, I'm not trying to pull one over on you, I was raised right.

A fire burns in Jesse's eyes as he sticks his pistol in Joseph's mouth.

JESSE

What, because I've got a pistol in your pucker I wasn't? My mama's as proud as a mama can be. You think you so smart? You ain't nothin', all right? All right?

JOSEPH

(pistol in his mouth)

All right!

JESSE

No, I need to hear you say it. You ain't nothin'.

Joseph starts to shake, unsure of what Jesse wants.

JOSEPH  
I... am... nothing.

Jesse removes his pistol from Joseph's mouth and presses it up against the clerk's chin.

JESSE  
I don't give a shit about you am,  
I'm aimin' for what you ain't. So,  
let's hear it again.

JOSEPH  
I ain't nothin'.

JESSE  
That's goddamn right, you ain't.  
Now, however you gotta do it, open  
that safe.

At that moment, Jesse overhears one of the CUSTOMERS (40s, a tall black woman) responding to Frank.

CUSTOMER  
You want my purse, you're gonna  
have to take it, cause God ain't  
gonna help ya.

Enraged, Jesse turns and points his pistol at her.

JESSE  
What'd you say?

CUSTOMER  
Just as I told him, if you want my  
purse, you're gonna have to take  
it, cause God ain't gonna help ya.

**BAM!** Gunfire erupts near the door. Jesse spins around to see Bandit #2 collapse into a puddle of leaky guts.

JESSE  
Dammit to Hell. Guess we best clean  
this mess.

Jesse turns back towards Joseph and **shoots** him as we SLAM TO:

**TITLE CARD**

INT. JAMES' DINING ROOM - DAY [1856]

CHYRON: Clay County, Missouri 1856

It's a mix of family heirlooms and pieces purchased third-hand. There's an air of unease about it, a place only a murderer could call "homey".

Jesse James (9) reads a book, slowly tracing his fingers along the page as he silently mouths the words.

ZERELDA JAMES SAMUEL (31, a white woman with a perpetual furrowed brow) reads *The Liberty Tribune* (a pro-slavery paper) at the table.

Across from her, REUBEN SAMUEL (28, a timid white man) plows his breakfast.

REUBEN

Jesse, come eat.

Jesse sits next to Frank James (13), who's quietly eating oatmeal. CHARLOTTE (36, a black woman with enduring grace) helps shovel food into SARAH JAMES' (7, a fussy little white girl) mouth.

Zerelda slams her paper down in disgust. The headline reads "Slave Owners Slaughtered."

ZERELDA

This is wretched, absolutely wretched! These Jayhawkers think they can come across the border and murder us in our beds.

Just as Jesse is about to take a bite of oatmeal, Frank intentionally bumps Jesse's elbow, which spills food everywhere.

REUBEN

C'mon, that's a little much.

ZERELDA

That family was just minding their own business. You know, we mind our business from time to time as well.

Cleanin' himself off, Jesse goes in for another bite.

REUBEN

That's not what I'm sayin' and you know it. Of course that's a tragedy, but that was in Kansas.

Frank bumps Jesse's elbow again, another spill.

ZERELDA

They're just a couple miles across that river. Furthermore, I heard they've been comin' into Missouri and stealin' slaves.

Finally, she has Reuben's attention.

REUBEN

Well, that is another matter entirely.

Angling his body away from Frank, Jesse makes one final attempt, but Frank succeeds in spilling Jesse's food again.

ZERELDA

They're jealous of what we got, so of course they're gonna destroy our way of life--

Jesse bursts into tears.

ZERELDA (CONT'D)

Whatcha blubberin' about already?

JESSE

(through his tears)  
He's messin' with me!

ZERELDA

You've been quick to tears for too long and that well has run dry. You ain't no little boy no more, today, it's long past time.

JESSE

Then what am I?

ZERELDA

We gonna find out.

INT. THOMPSON'S DINING ROOM - DAY

While the furniture is simple, there's an undeniable warmth.

ALFRED THOMPSON (32, a stocky black man) reads *The Liberator*, an Abolitionist newspaper while MYRA THOMPSON (30, a willowy black woman) reads a letter. LOUISE THOMPSON (9, a gawky black girl) sits in Myra's lap and tries to read the letter as well.

Alfred lowers the newspaper in disgust.

ALFRED

They did it. Those Border Ruffians  
burned Lawrence to the ground.

Dismayed, all Myra can do is shake her head.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

They snuck into town at night and  
set a whole mess of places on fire.  
A hotel and both newspapers are  
just gone.

Myra notices that Louise is reading the final paragraph, so  
she snaps the letter away.

LOUISE

Mama, I was readin' that.

MYRA

(to Louise)  
You can't read that.

LOUISE

I can, too. "There. Is. A. Man--"

MYRA

(to Louise)  
I know you can read it, but that  
don't mean you should.  
(to Alfred)  
The Knights of Liberty is gonna be  
ready to rise in three months time.

ALFRED

Truly? It took us ten years, but  
now it's all worth it. All that  
pain? All that slavery? Gone.

LOUISE

What's goin' on?

ALFRED

Don't worry about it, baby girl.

MYRA

Moses thinks we'll be a hundred  
thousand strong by then. But  
there's...somethin' else.

LOUISE

Is it about the man? What's he  
doin'?

MYRA

There's a man in a top hat with a red ribbon comin' on the riverboat to Clay County. He's strivin' to get to the Blue Lodge boys and tell 'em the list of every Knights of Liberty man in Missouri.

Alfred's eyes fill with an insistent look.

ALFRED

What's he want me to do?

MYRA

You gotta...this man can't reach the Blue Lodge. Moses said to do...whatever you need to do.

Alfred understands that she means murder.

LOUISE

Daddy, whatcha gotta do? Daddy?

ALFRED

Don't worry, baby girl. I all I gotta do is what's right.

Standing, Alfred folds the paper and clears his plate.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - DAY [1856]

Charlotte stands at the edge of the farm, just starin' out at the world beyond what she knows, enjoyin' being in her skin for a moment. Until Jesse walks up and breaks her reverie.

JESSE

Whatcha lookin' at?

CHARLOTTE

You startled me, child. I ain't lookin' at nothin'.

She takes his hand and they start walking.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - DAY [1856]

Jesse and Charlotte wander around. Charlotte points at a flower.

CHARLOTTE

See that one? That's a buttercup. It's pretty, ain't it?

JESSE

I like it. How do you know the name  
of everything?

CHARLOTTE

When you know a thing's name, it  
helps you know the thing.

They see a fox nestled in the tall grass.

JESSE

Can I pet him?

CHARLOTTE

No, he might bite you. Best to stay  
away.

Jesse nods as they continue along.

INT. BAKERY/BUTCHER SHOP - DAY [1856]

It's mostly a bakery, but roughly a third of the shop is  
emptier than the rest. JEREMIAH NELLING (30s, a white man  
with glasses) kneads dough on the bakery side. Louise enters  
with her arms full, dumping everything on the empty side.

JEREMIAH

Howdy, Louise. Don't tell ya Papa,  
but here's a little somethin'.

He hands her a small, sweet treat. She quickly gobbles it as  
Alfred enters with a bag of supplies on his back.

He can tell there are shenanigans afoot.

ALFRED

You got somethin' in your mouth?

LOUISE

(mouth full of food)

No.

ALFRED

(to Jeremiah)

I told you--

JEREMIAH

I tried to stop her, honest, I did!  
But she's a little monster, she  
just took and took!

Louise laughs and shakes her head "no." Jeremiah pulls Alfred  
off to the side.

JEREMIAH (CONT'D)

I know times ain't easy, and I  
ain't askin' for it all at once--

ALFRED

You've been mighty good to us, I  
know it. I'll have last month's  
rent for you next week.

JEREMIAH

Take your time, I know you're a  
good man, you'll do what's right.

ANTHONY HARSEL (30s, a white guy with a bushy beard) enters.

HARSEL

Jeremiah, Alfred, how do you do?

JEREMIAH

My back's been kickin' up somethin'  
fierce.

HARSEL

Yeah, but when's the last time it  
didn't give you problems? Alfred,  
I'd love some more of that roast  
beef that I picked up last week. It  
was delectable.

ALFRED

Certainly, sir.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN [1865]

CHYRON: Clay County - 1865

Jeremiah sets the table for several people. His beard is  
grayer, but he looks more or less the same.

We have a sense that there are other people in the room who  
we can't see.

A **knock** at the door startles him. He looks up at someone off-  
camera, who scurries a moment. Lifts something heavy, then  
closes it.

He waits a moment for the scurry to settle before he  
cautiously opens the door to reveal two Union SOLDIERS.  
They're doing a fine job of hiding under their caps, but the  
piercing blue eyes give away the fact that it's **Jesse** (18)  
and **Frank** (22).

JEREMIAH

Can I help you fellas with  
somethin'?

He obviously doesn't recognize them.

JESSE

We've been ridin' for days and we  
haven't been able to find a lick of  
water. Think you could help us out?

JEREMIAH

I reckon I can fill you boys up.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN [1865]

Jeremiah walks with the Jesse and Frank back to the well. The  
farm isn't too far behind them.

JEREMIAH

So, how's it been? You fightin'  
more Bushwackers or Dixie boys?

FRANK

Not too many Confederates around  
these parts. Mostly burnin' out the  
Bushwackers.

JEREMIAH

You're doin' the Lord's work, I  
tell you what.

JESSE

I reckon you look familiar. You  
ever help out the militia at all?  
You wasn't on the raid on the James  
farm a couple years ago, was you?

Jesse rests his hand on his revolver.

JEREMIAH

I don't like to talk about it, ya  
never know who's pryin', but I was,  
yeah. You?

JESSE

You bet I was.

Jesse quickly withdraws his revolver and tries to shoot  
Jeremiah in the head, but the gun catches on his belt loop,  
so it fires harmlessly away.

Jeremiah bolts back to his farm.

FRANK  
Goddamnit, Jesse, shoot the  
sumbitch!

Jesse keeps messing with his gun.

JESSE  
I'm tryin', Frank!

Frank pushes Jesse to get movin' as they run in hot pursuit  
after Jeremiah.

INT. JAMES' HALLWAY - DAY [1856]

Zerelda scurries around the house to ensure everything is in  
order. Jesse and Frank tie their shoes.

JESSE  
Where did Charlotte come from?

ZERELDA  
Quit askin' silly questions, you  
been spendin' too much time with  
her pickin' flowers.

Jesse nods and continues workin' on his shoes.

INT. BUTCHER SHOP - DAY [1856]

Alfred delicately cuts up a slice of beef. It's done with  
precision and care. Off in the corner, Louise plays with a  
doll.

ALFRED  
Hey, baby girl, come here, I wanna  
show you somethin'.

Louise walks over to him.

ALFRED (CONT'D)  
We ain't gonna do it all today, but  
I think it's time you learned about  
what we do.

Louise scrunches up her face.

ALFRED (CONT'D)  
Don't worry, it's not scary.

LOUISE  
Did you murder it?

ALFRED

Murder ain't the right word. This cow, helps us make our livin'. Even though its time has passed, it's sacrificin' itself so we can keep on for a little longer. So, we try to be kind in turn.

LOUISE

Even though it's gone?

ALFRED

We do our part as respectfully as we can, and we hope that respect comes back around to us. Let me show you what I'm workin' on.

We see Louise's eyes light up as Alfred begins to show her the first step.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - DAY [1856]

Zerelda spots Charlotte and beckons her over.

ZERELDA

If you're not happy here, I demand to know. I can send you off elsewhere where they won't treat you nearly as well.

CHARLOTTE

I'm plenty happy here.

ZERELDA

Then don't fill my children's heads with notions that you ain't.

Charlotte comprehends what must have happened.

ZERELDA (CONT'D)

You're important to this family, and it'd break my heart if it looked like you didn't feel the same. And no more flowers for Jesse, you're turnin' him mealy.

CHARLOTTE

Yes'm.

INT. CHURCH - DAY [1856]

It's a modest congregation, but full of faith. They're led by PASTOR HICKORY (50s, a stern white man). Zerelda, Reuben, Jesse, Frank, and Sarah are squished into a pew close to the front.

PASTOR HICKORY

But the path of the righteous is not the one of ease. If it were, it wouldn't be the path to God. We are the ones who know the way.

Zerelda notices that Jesse is zoning out. She quietly, but firmly, taps him to get his attention. He instantly focuses.

PASTOR HICKORY (CONT'D)

The wicked can't help themselves, which is why we must. They think they're in the light, but theirs is a false illumination, one with a source other than God. You here today, you know what is true. Be the light that shines from God.

Zerelda nods in agreement.

CONGREGATION

Amen!

EXT. CHURCH - DAY [1856]

It's a big ol' cookout. Seems like everyone and their mama is here. Reuben, Frank, Jesse, and Sarah are all scattered about in different groups.

With a plate of food, Zerelda meanders towards several CHURCHGOER's. The group includes LEONORA SCOTT (30s, a heavy white woman), ROBERT MILLER (30, a white man with glasses), MOLLY HARSEL (30s, a white woman with a limp), and Jeremiah.

ROBERT

(to Zerelda)

Ah, Mrs. Samuel, just the woman I've been wantin' to see. Is Jesse all right?

ZERELDA

Sure is. Why do you ask?

ROBERT

He was off by his lonesome earlier  
and I asked him what he was up to.  
Said he was tryin' to pet a fox.

LEONORA

He's always seemed different.

Zerelda fumes.

ZERELDA

He's... doin' just fine, thank you  
for your concern.

JEREMIAH

(changing the subject)  
Y'all hear about these sisters who  
just moved to town? Spiritualists?

LEONORA

People are sayin' they're spies  
from Kansas. Lookin' to see whose  
slaves they can steal.

JEREMIAH

Come now, I haven't heard nothin'  
about all that.

ZERELDA

What's Clay County comin' to?

CHURCH-GOER #2

Someone outta set 'em straight.

LEONORA

I shouldn't be talkin' about it  
here, but those fellas over there?  
With Senator Atchison?

They look to a circle of MEN, including SENATOR ATCHISON (49,  
a white man with penetrating eyes).

LEONORA (CONT'D)

That's the Blue Lodge. They--

ROBERT

You best not be talkin' about what  
you ain't supposed to be talkin'  
about.

Leonora looks away sheepishly.

ZERELDA

Excuse me, y'all, I best be  
checkin' on my rugrats.

Deep in thought, Zerelda wanders off towards Sarah.

She passes Jesse, sneaking a roll into his pocket.

As she does so, she spots Myra holding Louise's hand as they  
walk across the street.

EXT. STREET - DAY [1856]

Louise notices Zerelda across the street. She looks up at  
Myra.

LOUISE

Isn't that one of daddy's people?

MYRA

It is.

They pass a busy barbershop. One of the BARBERS sweeps hair  
out onto the street as Myra and Louise dodge the tumblin'  
hairballs.

LOUISE

Why didn't you wave?

MYRA

Around town, it's best to let them  
do the wavin' first.

Myra stops at fruit vendor. She lets go of Louise's hand as  
she inspects the produce.

Enthralled, Louise watches as a horse and buggy stops right  
in front of her. Louise reaches out to touch the horse when a  
RICH MAN (30s, white) hops out and swats her away. His RICH  
LITTLE BOY (8, white) gets out after him.

RICH MAN

Get back! That's not for you to  
touch.

The Rich Man and Rich Little Boy start down the street away  
from Louise.

RICH LITTLE BOY

(re: Louise)

Daddy, why is she alone? Mightn't  
she run off?

Louise doesn't know how to process this.

RICH MAN  
Hurry up, we're running late.

The Rich Man and Rich Little Boy head off, but the little boy can't stop staring back at her.

Myra, who hadn't noticed any of this interaction, pays for a couple of apples and reaches for Louise's hand.

MYRA  
You ready, sweet pea?

Louise bursts into tears.

MYRA (CONT'D)  
What's wrong?

Myra looks back to see the Rich Man and Rich Little Boy heading down the street. She can guess what might have happened.

Myra picks Louise up and carries her away.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - DAY [1856]

After the family returns home, Jesse runs out towards the fields.

REUBEN  
Don't you dirty up your church  
clothes!

JESSE  
I won't!

EXT. FIELDS - DAY [1856]

Jesse crouches real low and slowly sneaks around through the rolling verdant hills. From his pocket, he pulls out a roll. All of a sudden, Frank scares him.

FRANK  
Gotcha!

Jesse is startled half to death.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
Whatcha feedin'?

JESSE  
Foxes.

FRANK  
Why?

JESSE  
They're soft. Or I bet, anyway.

Frank punches Jesse in the shoulder and runs off.

FRANK  
(mocking Jesse)  
They're soooo soft.

Jesse continues prowlin'.

INT. BAKERY/BUTCHER SHOP - DAY [1856]

Myra and Louise (still in her Mama's arms) arrive just as Alfred closes shop.

ALFRED  
How are my two lovely ladies?

MYRA  
It's been a long day.

Alfred starts to inquire, but stops.

ALFRED  
All we gotta do is make a coupla deliveries, then we can head home.

Alfred gathers his family and they head out.

INT. JAMES' KITCHEN - DAY [1856]

Zerelda comes in from outside, a little dirtier than you'd expect. Reuben and Jesse sit at the table.

ZERELDA  
(furious)  
Reuben, they're at it again. You promised you'd take care--

REUBEN  
I did, foxes hate citronella, I--

Jesse's eyes brighten at the word, "foxes."

ZERELDA

You never see a job through til  
it's done, you think citronella is  
gonna keep 'em away? No wonder  
Jesse don't know how to be a man.

REUBEN

That's not--

ZERELDA

I'll do the doin'.

Zerelda storms out.

JESSE

(to Reuben)

What's she gonna do to the foxes?

REUBEN

Don't you worry about it.

But Jesse can't help himself, he worries about them.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - DUSK [1856]

Alfred, Myra, and Louise push their cart up to the James' farm with meat in tow. Zerelda, Frank, and Jesse come out to meet them.

ALFRED

Evenin', ma'am.

ZERELDA

Mhmm.

Jesse runs up to Louise and tags her and then runs off. She runs after him. There's an ease there that suggests it's a common occurrence.

ALFRED

Whatcha lookin' for today, ma'am?

After a little chase, Louise tags Jesse. Now "it," he runs after her.

ZERELDA

Whatcha got?

Louise continues to deftly dodge him.

ALFRED

We've got some nice beef chuck,  
some bacon, and some ham hock,  
ma'am.

ZERELDA

That'll all be fine.

Jesse's having trouble catching her. Frank notices and gets agitated.

ALFRED

(to Zerelda)

I'll bring 'em round back for ya.

By this point, everyone's focused on the game of tag. There's no way Jesse is gonna catch her, and everyone knows it.

Louise has a cocky look on her face as she keeps dancing away from Jesse's grasp, almost taunting him.

ZERELDA

(sharp)

Jesse, quit with this foolishness.

He tries harder. It doesn't help.

As Louise darts next to Frank, he sticks out his foot and trips her. She stumbles just enough for Jesse to catch up to her.

Jesse **shoves** Louise hard into the ground. Full of anger.

ZERELDA (CONT'D)

Attaboy!

ALFRED

Louise!

Myra helps Louise stand. She's bleeding a little.

MYRA

Baby, are you okay?

Louise **socks** Jesse, who crumples to the ground.

ZERELDA

You do not touch my boy!

Zerelda flies over to hit Louise, but Myra puts herself in between the two of them.

ZERELDA (CONT'D)  
 You give her to me right this  
 second.

Alfred stands next to his wife.

ALFRED  
 I am so sorry, we are so sorry this  
 happened. Ma'am.

ZERELDA  
 I said you give her to me.

MYRA  
 Please forgive us, ma'am.

Zerelda sees in their eyes that there is no way she's  
 touchin' Louise.

ZERELDA  
 You all get the hell outta here,  
 and if I ever see you again, the  
 only thing you gonna hear is my  
 whip.

ALFRED  
 Yes, ma'am. Of course, ma'am.

ZERELDA  
 Get!

Alfred, Myra, and Louise head to their cart and push it away.

Zerelda smacks Jesse over the head.

ZERELDA (CONT'D)  
 (to Jesse)  
 Don't you ever embarrass us again.

She walks away from him, disgusted.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DUSK [1856]

Alfred, Myra, and Louise trudge down the street in silence.

ALFRED  
 (fuming)  
 You can't, ya just can't.

Louise tries to hold back her tears.

LOUISE  
 I'm sorry.

MYRA

What were ya thinkin'? You can't go antagonizin' people like that. Especially those kinda people.

ALFRED

It's not fair, but the timin' of when we do a thing matters as much if not more than the thing itself.

MYRA

Even if you're right, it don't matter. Those kinda people been killin' our kinda people for far less.

Louise wells up with tears. Alfred stops walking and lowers himself to her level.

ALFRED

We've got a whole mess of folk who are relyin' on us to do what we gotta, so we gotta be so damn careful. All of life, it comes down to timin'.

LOUISE

I get it, it wasn't the time to hit him.

MYRA

Honey, no it wasn't the time to get cocky, but once he pushed you down, nothin' you can do but wallop him.

Myra puts her arm around Louise's shoulder.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - NIGHT [1856]

It's a smallish bedroom with a large, plain bed that takes up the majority of the room. Reuben is tucked in the covers while Zerelda puts on her coat.

REUBEN

You know, it worries me so when you do this.

ZERELDA

If it worried you that much then you'd accompany me.

REUBEN

I'm not sayin' that somethin'  
shouldn't be done... but I ain't so  
certain what y'all are gettin' up  
to is the way.

Zerelda stares at him coolly.

ZERELDA

If we were dealin' with rational  
human beings, but we ain't. All  
that matters is who's standin' at  
the end.

Cinching her coat, Zerelda leaves departs.

INT. THOMPSON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT [1856]

Sittin' in her mama's lap, Louise valiantly fights to stay  
awake as she listens to her parents whisper.

ALFRED

I can't do it, can I?

LOUISE

(sleepily)  
Do what?

MYRA

No, you can't. But you can't not  
either.

ALFRED

All of those people? If folks round  
here found out what's goin' down,  
bodies would line the trees for  
miles.

MYRA

We'd be danglin' right there with  
'em. All of us.

Myra can't help but look down at Louise.

MYRA (CONT'D)

They burned Lawrence to the ground  
for less.

ALFRED

I ain't ever done nothin' like  
this. You still gonna be able to  
look me in the eye?

MYRA

Always. But we know I ain't the one  
you gotta sort it with.

ALFRED

I think I can live with it. I hope.

Myra squeezes Alfred's hand.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

I started showin' her the work. She  
took to it like a fish to water.

Myra smiles.

MYRA

That's real fine.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT [1856]

Zerelda, along with a dozen or so BUSHWACKERS, sit around a  
flame facing their leader, Senator Atchison.

SENATOR ATCHISON

Many men can say what's right, but  
dammit if the doin' ain't as easy.  
Robert, you wrote it mighty fine  
today.

Senator Atchison nods at Robert Miller.

SENATOR ATCHISON (CONT'D)

If y'all haven't gotten a chance to  
read today's *Tribune*, those  
bastards assassinated some of our  
brothers across the border.

The group reacts with dismay as Robert stands.

ROBERT

Every little thing we do matters.  
We will not win with a flood, but  
rather a constant rain. Listen to  
what people say, because they will  
reveal themselves to you. If you  
think someone is strayin' from the  
path, they likely are.

ZERELDA

We heard a couple of Spiritualists  
moved into town, didn't we, Robert?

ROBERT

We did, yes, but I'm not so certain  
they're Jayhawker spies.

The gang chuckles as Zerelda crimsons with embarrassment.

SENATOR ATCHISON

All right, who's next?

ZERELDA

I thought if you think there's  
somethin' there, there probably is?

SENATOR ATCHISON

And when we credibly do, we'll do  
somethin' about it. But at the  
moment, some gossip you heard at a  
hootenanny ain't it. Who's next?

Zerelda stews in her seat.

INT. THOMPSON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT [1856]

Myra tidies up for the night. As she dusts off Louise's  
shoes, she recalls the scuffle at the James' farm and **sobs**.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT [1856]

Silent tears roll down her face as Zerelda trudges home alone  
through the woods with only the light of her lantern to  
comfort her.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT [1856] [DREAM]

In the dead of night, Louise wanders around the middle of  
town alone. Scared, she looks around, but there's no one to  
be found.

All of a sudden, a PERSON stands in the doorway and window of  
every surrounding building. Their faces are non-descript, all  
we can tell is they're white. Each person proceeds to light  
their building on **fire**.

Louise tries to run away from the flames, but the fire grows  
too quickly. Just as it's about to catch her--

INT. LOUISE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT [1856]

Louise wakes up in a cold sweat.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY [1865]

Jeremiah knocks over a lantern as he runs back into the farmhouse. He goes into the back and searches for a weapon.

Spotting a rifle, he ignores it, too much time. A large knife catches his eye.

He looks out the window towards the well. The James brothers don't appear to be outside.

Fuck.

Creeping through the house, trying not to make a sound, Jeremiah grips the knife.

He takes a step. Creaaaak.

Another step. Creeeeeeeeeeek.

Looks around. Maybe he's safe?

Another step. Frank appears from nowhere and with one hand grabs the knife and with the other smashes Jeremiah in the face. He falls to his knees, blood everywhere.

FRANK

When you're runnin', usually best  
to lock the door behind ya.

INT. THOMPSON'S KITCHEN - DAY [1856]

Myra makes breakfast for Alfred and Louise, who has a book in front of her.

MYRA

You ready?

ALFRED

I reckon I can't get much readier.

Louise looks up from her book.

LOUISE

Daddy, somethin's goin' on and I  
wanna know!

ALFRED

Baby girl, everyone don't get all  
of what they want when they want  
it.

LOUISE

You're always sayin' I can't keep secrets--

ALFRED

(losing his temper)

Just stop it! There's a time for askin' and time for listenin' and it ain't the time you think it is.

Alfred storms out the door.

EXT. STREET - DAY [1856]

Zerelda walks down the street and approaches a storefront. The sign reads, "The Sultry Smith Sisters." ASHLEY (30s, a tall blonde white woman) and LILLIAN (30s, a wispy white woman) Smith sit out front.

ASHLEY

My-oh-my you do seem curious.

ZERELDA

Just a member of this here community aimin' to find out what kinda trouble you folks is.

LILLIAN

Just the kind lookin' to make some money.

ASHLEY

Now, if a little pleasure came our way, we wouldn't turn it down.

ZERELDA

From Kansas, I hear?

ASHLEY

And I thought the gossip in this town was supposed to be of the utmost quality. Massachusetts.

ZERELDA

I hear a lot of Northerners been tryin' to stir things.

LILLIAN

Maybe so, but those would be different Northerners.

ZERELDA

I gotta say, I don't reckon you'll fit in around here. Might be a good idea to see what down the road looks like.

ASHLEY

Now that might be the case, but I don't think we're gonna take advice from a woman whose husband would rather die bent over lookin' for gold than be with her.

LILLIAN

The first husband, that right? The second made her give up her young'uns for a spell, and this third one, well, he seems too weak to do about anything at all.

ZERELDA

Whatcha... who you--

ASHLEY

You ain't the only one been hearin' things about folks. Now, unless there's anything else...

Fuming, Zerelda moves on down the road.

INT. BAKERY/BUTCHER SHOP - DAY [1856]

Alfred packs away his tools and slides them into the corner as Jeremiah keeps a curious eye on his friend.

ALFRED

Mind if I keep my things here tonight?

JEREMIAH

Of course it's not a problem, I've always offered it. Everything all right?

ALFRED

Sleep didn't come my way last night is all.

The sound of several gunshots outside makes Alfred jump. He looks out the window to see a horse and RIDER kick off, leaving town in a hurry.

ALFRED (CONT'D)  
That Dickerson?

JEREMIAH  
Looks like people had enough of an  
Abolitionist lawyer round town.

ALFRED  
Better he leave on the top the  
horse than dragged behind it.

JEREMIAH  
That's the third Free-Stater been  
run off this week. Something's  
goin' on with people lately.  
Everyone's scared and it's makin'  
'em mean.

ALFRED  
Fear'll make a man somethin' else,  
that's for sure. I best be off.  
(beat)  
If somethin' happens to me...please  
do what you can for my girls.

JEREMIAH  
You can't leave sayin' a thing like  
that!

Alfred smiles.

JEREMIAH (CONT'D)  
I'll only say yes if you promise  
the same to me.

ALFRED  
You've got yourself a deal.

INT. GENERAL GOODS STORE - DAY [1856]

It's got everything from chicken feed to taffy, and it's all  
nice and organized. It's a store ordered with care. Zerelda  
approaches the CLERK (60s, a white man with a patchy beard).

CLERK  
How can I help ya today, m'am?

ZERELDA  
I'm lookin' to purchase a pistol.

CLERK  
Oh, is your husband on his way?

ZERELDA

It's just me on this one.

CLERK

Well, this is a first. I'd recommend that one.

(points to a pistol)

And you'll need some of these.

The Clerk pushes a box of bullets towards her.

CLERK (CONT'D)

And ten should do it. You know what you're doin'?

ZERELDA

Not yet, but I've not known somethin' before and seen a path through.

CLERK

I'll bet you have.

EXT. STREET - DAY [1856]

Alfred drags himself down the street, deep in thought, when he notices two WHITE MEN staring daggers his way. Just as they're about to head over to him, Alfred ducks inside a...

INT. CHURCH - DAY [1856]

Alfred slides into a pew at the back. It's a small, cramped church with only three other black MEN in attendance. One of them nods at Alfred.

PASTOR JOHNSON (50s, a black man with grey temples) speaks to them, his voice barely above a whisper.

PASTOR JOHNSON

How is a man supposed to be a man when that's the last thing they want of you? You do your good. You do all that you can, even if that all seems small. There is a right and a wrong and nothin' in-between. You know what's in-between? That's wrong, tryin' to tell you it's a right, but know, this is not a grey world.

A silent tear rolls down Alfred's cheek.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY [1865]

Jesse appears from around the corner and takes the knife.

JESSE

This ain't gonna help you none.

FRANK

You don't get to kick him when he's down after behavin' like you did out there.

Jesse crimsons with embarrassment and anger.

JESSE

I was ready, it just caught on my belt is all.

FRANK

That ain't the way to put a notch in it.

JEREMIAH

It doesn't need to go down this way, boys.

JESSE

We ain't your boys, Mr. Nelling.

FRANK

What, you gonna call him sir, too?

Jesse scowls.

INT. THOMPSON'S SHED - DUSK [1856]

Myra delicately uses **scissors** to cut off **tongues** of beef and salt them. There's a row of already salted tongues.

BILLY (20s, a strong white man) runs up to the house.

BILLY

I'm sorry it's late, You said if you ever receive a letter from St. Louis to rush it over immediately. Two days in a row, I figured it must be important.

MYRA

Thank you.

Billy hands it to her, and she quickly reads it. We catch the words: "not memorized," "list of names in his boot."

BILLY  
Is everything all right?

MYRA  
Just some family troubles. I best  
be off though, I need to inform  
Alfred.

Billy nods as Myra puts the scissors in the pocket of her  
apron.

MYRA (CONT'D)  
(yelling)  
Louise? We need to head out!

EXT. STREET - NIGHT [1856]

With a heavy heart, Alfred heads towards the docks. He  
fingers the holstered knife as he looks up in prayer.

ALFRED  
(whispering)  
Lord, don't you leave my side  
tonight. Please.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - NIGHT [1856]

Zerelda gets ready to descend into the night. She pockets her  
new pistol.

Reuben wearily watches her pack, but he doesn't say anything.

ZERELDA  
I... ain't just what you think of  
me. When their father died, it was  
me and three little 'un's. There  
wasn't anyone else to do the doin'.  
I just wanted you to know this  
isn't how I want it to be.

Just as Zerelda is about to leave, Reuben stands and hugs  
her.

REUBEN  
I know these months have been  
tryin'. We're still... figurin'  
each other out. But I like what I  
see.

ZERELDA

I feel the same, but I do worry if something were ever to happen to me, I'm not certain you'd raise the children in my way.

Reuben is taken aback by her brutal honesty.

REUBEN

Well, I guess all we can do is hope we don't ever need to find out.

She nods and puts on a yellow overcoat. Grabbing a lantern, Zerelda heads out the front door.

EXT. DOCK - DUSK [1856]

Alfred waits around by the dock as the steamboat pulls in. Passengers get off. He waits until he sees a SCOUNDREL in a top hat with a red ribbon. The man from the letter.

The scoundrel walks by himself towards the hotel.

Touchin' the knife at his side for comfort, Alfred follows him, leaving a healthy distance in-between.

The scoundrel enters the shadows beneath a bridge. Alfred quickens his pace, when Myra and Louise startle him.

ALFRED

(a hard whisper)  
What the he--

MYRA

I'm sorry, but Moses sent another letter. That man doesn't have the names memorized - they're on a list in his boot. And the Blue Lodge knows it's in there.

It dawns on him.

ALFRED

So if I had... they still woulda had 'em.

LOUISE

If you had what?

MYRA

More than likely. You don't need to... do what you thought you had to before.

ALFRED

That's true. We just need the list.

MYRA

We?

ALFRED

I was shakin' like a leaf, I thought I could do it without ya, but I reckon you're here, so I might as well use all the help I can get.

LOUISE

Me, too?

ALFRED

I don't reckon we have much choice. Can you be a good girl for us?

Louise nods an emphatic yes.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT [1856]

Zerelda walks down the street with Jesse in tow. Even though we saw Zelzah leave the house alone, but all will be revealed in due time. The keen observer will notice that Jesse's hands have blood on them and he has a thousand-yard stare.

A couple candlelit windows guide their path, but for the most part, it's just the two of them, their lantern, and the wind.

Fiddlin' with the pistol in her pocket, Zelzah stops in front of the sign that reads: "The Sultry Smith Sisters."

From the sounds of it, it seems as if the Smith sisters are currently performing a seance.

JESSE

Mama, what're we doin'?

ZERELDA

We're just gonna scare 'em is all.

Hiding in the shadows, she cocks her pistol.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT [1856]

Alfred, Myra, and Louise watch the Scoundrel enter the hotel. From the outside they can see him pay for a room and head upstairs.

They see a candle light up one of the rooms on the second floor. Must be him.

They walk around to the side of the hotel where a doorway leads to a flight of stairs.

ALFRED

Baby girl, now we'll be back real soon.

LOUISE

Can't I go with--

ALFRED

You gotta trust me. You gotta stay right here and not make a sound. We're just goin' up those stairs, then we'll back right back down.

MYRA

Can you be a big girl for us?

Determined, Louise nods her head yes. Alfred wraps his jacket around Louise, then Myra and Alfred enter the hotel.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT [1856]

They sneak down the hallway. It's a bit seedy, so there's a good deal of commotion goin' on. Down a ways, it sounds like a lady is havin' the time of her life.

Outside the scoundrel's room, they hear some shufflin', then the squeak of the bed. The candle is blown out.

After a moment, they can hear some gentle snores.

Alfred pulls out his knife and slides it between the door and the wall. It unlocks. He gently pushes the door open, and they sneak into the room.

EXT. THE SULTRY SMITH SISTER'S - NIGHT [1856]

Zerelda and Jesse hide. Waiting. Until Senator Atchison comes outside with Lillian.

SENATOR ATCHISON

(to Lillian)

I can't thank you enough, that was truly somethin' else.

LILLIAN

That's what we're here for. You get home safe now, ya hear?

After Senator Atchison leaves, Zerelda turns towards Jesse.

ZERELDA

(whispering)

That pissant. I told him they ain't on the level, but does he listen? You can't trust no one for nothin'. All you got in this world is your lonesome.

JESSE

That's not true. Ya got me.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT [1856]

They see the scoundrel is fast asleep. His clothes are in a pile on the floor.

They sneak over to his boots. Empty.

Myra and Alfred look at each, concerned.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT [1856]

All by herself, Louise sticks her hands in her father's coat pocket and discovers the letter. She starts to read it. Her eyes widen. After a moment, she runs into the hotel and up the stairs.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT [1856]

Myra sees a piece of paper underneath a pistol on the Scoundrel's night stand. She gestures at it. Alfred nods.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT [1856]

Scared, Louise inches down the hallway.

LOUISE

(whispering)

Mama!

A GUEST (40s, a white woman) walks into the hallway.

GUEST  
(to Louise)  
You lost, little girl?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT [1856]

Alfred hears the conversation outside, grabs the pistol, hiding it behind his back and goes into the...

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT [1856]

ALFRED  
Thank you for your concern, ma'am,  
but we're all okay.

CUT TO:

The Scoundrel wakes up to see Myra holding the piece of paper. He tries to snatch it out of her hand, and they start to tussle.

CUT TO:

GUEST  
Whatcha thinkin' lettin' a little  
girl out at night, this ain't a  
reputable place.

ALFRED  
Thank you, kindly, but--

CUT TO:

It's a pretty even fight between Myra and the Scoundrel as she keeps a hand over his mouth to keep him quiet, but he's reachin' for a nearby knife.

CUT TO:

GUEST  
Boy, if you don't think about these  
things then what are ya? Ya  
nothin'.

The guest notices the sounds of the scuffle inside the room.

ALFRED  
That's good advice, but if you'll--

CUT TO:

Just as he's inches away from his knife, Myra removes the hand over his mouth to grab the scissors from her pocket.

SCOUNDREL

Help--

Opening the scissors, she jabs them into the Scoundrel's mouth and starts snippin'. It's not the cleanest job she's ever done, but she removes his tongue.

CUT TO:

GUEST

What the hell was that?

Alfred removes the pistol from behind his back. Both the guest and Louise's eyes go wide.

ALFRED

Please, don't make this your business.

There's a beat as the guest figures out her next move.

GUEST

Y'all have a nice night.

She books it down the hall.

LOUISE

(to Alfred)

Why do--

ALFRED

Not now. You close your eyes, ya hear?

Louise does as she's told and Alfred, scared of what he'll find, opens the door.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT [1856]

The Scoundrel is curled up in the corner, with his hands covering his mouth as blood gushes out. Myra stands over him with the scissors ready for more, if need be.

With his eyes, Alfred asks if she's "okay". She nods yes.

ALFRED

(to Louise)

Baby girl, you keep your eyes tight shut. I'm gonna guide ya.

Closing the door behind him, Alfred grabs her hand and walks her to the corner of the room.

ALFRED (CONT'D)  
No matter what, eyes closed, okay?

Louise nods. As Alfred turns towards the opposite corner, he spots what looks like a mangled tongue on the ground.

ALFRED (CONT'D)  
(whispering to Myra)  
He bleedin' out?

MYRA  
(whispering back)  
If we don't do somethin', yeah.

Alfred leans down and gets right in front of the scoundrel.

EXT. THE SULTRY SMITH SISTER'S - NIGHT [1856]

Zerelda and Jesse are silhouetted against the flames of the Smith sisters' house on **fire**.

ALFRED (V.O.)  
(to the scoundrel)  
This wasn't our intent, but we can help ya. We gotta make sure us and ours is safe, so you better answer real well.

Jesse reaches out to grab his mother's hand, but she doesn't notice. Zerelda turns to escape the scene of the crime. He lowers his hand and follows after her.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT [1856]

The Scoundrel vigorously nods yes. They continue asking questions, but we glide over to Louise, who can't quite make out what they're saying. After a moment, Louise opens her eyes and looks behind her.

She sees Myra run a knife through a lit candle, then stick the knife in the Scoundrel's **mouth** to cauterize the wound. Louise shuts her eyes at the sound of his screams.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY [1865]

Jesse points his pistol at Jeremiah, who's on his knees. Frank slowly circles the two of them.

JEREMIAH

Trust me when I tell you, once  
you've taken a life, there's no  
goin' back. Killin' ain't meant for  
people.

We move away from these characters over towards the back of  
the stairwell.

JESSE

I don't wanna hear nothin' you  
gotta say. You've got no sway with  
me.

As we get closer to the stairwell, we notice there's a hole  
in the wood.

FRANK

Don't listen to him. I'm the only  
one your ears need to be on. You  
know what he did to us. He said  
killin' ain't meant for people?  
Well this ain't killin' this is  
self-defense.

And in the hole in the wood, there's an eye looking out at  
the impending execution.

INT. BUTCHER SHOP/BAKERY - DAY [1863]

We start on that same eye, only now we pull out. Quickly we  
realize the eye belongs to Louise, now fifteen.

CHYRON: 1863

She's surrounded by Alfred, Myra, and Anthony Harsel, and  
Jeremiah (slightly younger than in the previous scene).

HARSEL

No, what I need is men who can  
fuckin' fight.

MYRA

Ten years we put into the Knights  
of Liberty that none of you even  
knew about, don't say we ain't got  
no fight.

HARSEL

We wouldn't be where we are today  
without what you all did, but your  
uprising never came. I'm here now  
and there's a war at my door.

(MORE)

HARSEL (CONT'D)

I've got folks murderin' their neighbors right here in Clay County because of some bullshit goin' on thousands of miles away. Then, on top of those murderin' sumbitches, I've got their families out here, aidin' and abettin' their tomfoolery, so I don't rightly know who to trust.

ALFRED

If I was a scout in your militia, I reckon I'd probably be one of your best. But not for long.

HARSEL

Every man is at risk--

ALFRED

And I would do it for the risk of a white man.

Harsel becomes enraged.

HARSEL

The bricks through my window mean nothing?

ALFRED

You're a slave-ownin' white man. They come after me, it's gonna be bricks through my brain, not my window.

MYRA

We ain't the only ones we're mindin', neither.

ALFRED

We have personally snuck thirty four slaves over to Kansas all the while givin' you as much information on who you can trust in Clay County and who you cannot.

HARSEL

That's very impressive, but I do not care about those slaves as much as I care about the Union.

MYRA

Which you've made abundantly clear.

HARSEL

I mean to say, without a Union,  
they've got nowhere to escape to.

ALFRED

I'm sorry, but at this time, you're  
gettin' as much of my help as I  
have to offer.

Frustrated, Harsel leans back and adjusts his strategy.

HARSEL

I've heard that Fernando Scotts'  
gang has come back home. Now, I  
figure they're either stayin' with  
his folks, or they're stayin' with  
Frank James' people. But I can't  
bring the whole goddamn regalia if  
I don't know where they're at. You  
don't wanna go out in the field?  
Fine. But get me what I need to  
know.

ALFRED

You'll know soon.

HARSEL

I better.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - MORNING [1863]

Zerelda (38), Reuben (35), Jesse (now 15), and Sarah (now 14)  
wait near the wooden fence (where Louise walloped Jesse in  
1856) as Frank (now 19) approaches them. Zerelda gives him a  
big ol' hug to welcome him home.

ZERELDA

I just, I'm so proud of what you  
boys been doin'. Your Papa woulda  
been, too.

FRANK

Aw, Mama, you don't need to be like  
that.

REUBEN

Heck, I'm proud of him.

JESSE

I bet you been yella.

Zerelda smacks Jesse in the head.

ZERELDA

You take that back, you know your brother ain't yella. I raised you boys right, ain't no time for yella.

FRANK

Don't you worry, I got stories. It ain't been like when I was with the Confederates, these Bushwackers is mean sumbitches, we do the doin'.

JESSE

You mean you doin' what Fernando tells you to.

ZERELDA

Jealousy green is not a good look on you, Jesse.

FRANK

It ain't nothin', he's just steamed he ain't ridin' with us.

JESSE

Well why ain't I?

FRANK

Ain't you a little little?

JESSE

No!

ZERELDA

Not just yet. How long we gotcha for?

JESSE

Fernando doesn't wanna dally too long. Lotta people around here who ain't too keen on us.

ZERELDA

Well don't you worry, I've got you some new names of neighbors who ain't sympathetic to your plight. Maybe you clear them out and next time, you can really hang your hat.

Zerelda ruffles Frank's hair as they all head inside.

INT. JESSE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT [1856]

CHYRON: 1856

Jesse wakes up to a shrill screech right outside his window. Terrified, he peers out. Something thrashes around out there, but he can't make it out.

He musters up his courage and enters the...

HALLWAY

While walking down the hall, he hears the beginning of a conversation we heard earlier.

ZERELDA (O.S.)

(to Reuben)

I... ain't just what you think of me. When their father died...

Jesse continues onward.

INT. FARM - DAY [1863]

Jesse is surrounded by a plethora of pistols. He's in the process of cleanin' and loadin' while he talks to Zerelda.

JESSE

Mama, if I don't go now, I'm gonna miss it all!

ZERELDA

This thing ain't gonna be over any time soon. There'll be plenty for you to do.

JESSE

I don't know why he listens to him, Fernando ain't nothin'. That's not how I'm gonna be. I'm gonna be the biggest, baddest so-and-so who ever lived.

Jesse polishes the hell outta a pistol.

ZERELDA

I know you is. Wanna know how I know?

JESSE

How?

ZERELDA

Because we--

**BANG!** - Jesse accidentally pulled the trigger, shooting off the tip of his finger.

He cries out in pain as Zerelda helps him stop the **bleeding**.

INT. THOMPSONS' KITCHEN - DAY

Myra and Alfred cook while Louise reads at the table.

LOUISE

You hear the carnival's in town?

ALFRED

We ain't got time to take ya,  
there's far too much to do.

LOUISE

What if I helped y'all out more  
with the doin'?

MYRA

You could start with these taters.

LOUISE

I was thinkin' more of Fernando  
Scott.

MYRA

You ain't ready. When people rush  
into this kinda thing, they often  
end up...

She can't finish her thought.

ALFRED

This whole world comes down to  
timin' and tools. When the Knights  
of Liberty decided to hold off  
because the timin' wasn't right,  
John Brown disagreed. He thought he  
had the proper tools, but Harper's  
Ferry was a powerful failure that  
set us back.

LOUISE

How do you know when you're ready?

They sit in a silence a moment, processing.

MYRA

You gotta ask yourself, am I doin'  
this now because of my ego? Or does  
it make sense with everything I  
know.

ALFRED

The right tools ain't just what's  
in your hand, it's knowin' the role  
you playin'.

LOUISE

You've been trainin' me for this  
all my life. If not now, when?

ALFRED

When it's a question in no one's  
mind.

Louise drops her peeled potato in a bowl.

LOUISE

Fine, if I ain't a help here, then  
I'm just gonna go to the carnival.

Louise storms out, leaving Myra and Alfred by themselves.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - NIGHT [1856]

As Jesse creeps closer and closer to that awful screech, his  
terror continues to grow.

EXT. CARNIVAL - AFTERNOON [1863]

Crowds navigate between dunk tanks, rooms of spectacle, and  
stalls peddling tasty treats.

Louise stands at the edge of the carnival, just starin' out  
at the world beyond what she knows, enjoyin' being in her  
skin for a moment.

Her reverie is broken when she spots a BEARDED LADY in a cage.  
Then a LITTLE PERSON in the cage next to her.

It's sobering seeing these people behind bars.

After a moment, she sees Jesse look around sheepishly, then  
enter into "The Sultry Smith Sisters" tent. His pointer  
finger is bandaged.

Louise sneaks over and tries to eavesdrop.

INT. "THE SULTRY SMITH SISTERS" TENT - AFTERNOON

Louise peeps in at Lillian (now covered in burn scars) sitting at the table across from Jesse.

JESSE

I really shouldn't... my Mama talks you up somethin' fierce.

LILLIAN

And we ain't a fan of her neither, but that ain't what brought ya.

Louise sees Ashley (also scarred) in the background getting things ready.

JESSE

I guess...I was hopin' to talk to my Pa.

LILLIAN

Let's see if he desires to speak to you.

Louise watches Ashley jangle some things in the background. It feels hokey to us, but it's having an effect on Jesse.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

He doesn't have much to say to you, but he's a listenin'.

JESSE

Oh... I... well... I wanna know if he's been watchin'. If he's proud of me. I wanna be like him, but sometimes I don't know.

More rattling in the background.

LILLIAN

He's with you always. Too much. He doesn't want you to do it for him, you need to do it for you.

JESSE

But what if I don't know what for me would look like?

LILLIAN

You're not far from bein' a man. You best find out. Now git.

Ashley really shakes things around. Scared, Jesse runs out.

Still watching, Louise is frozen for a moment before she skedaddles as well.

EXT. TENT - DUSK [1863]

Louise stands outside the tent, processing what she just saw when Jesse, in his own daze, stumbles upon her.

JESSE  
You spyin'?

LOUISE  
I ain't doin' nothin'.

JESSE  
Wait, you the girl who took that cheap shot at me.

LOUISE  
Sorry.

JESSE  
I'd like to see you try it now.

LOUISE  
I think I best be--

She tries to walk past him, but he **shoves** her back.

JESSE  
You think you somethin', don't you?

Just as he gets up in her face, Frank **grabs** him.

FRANK  
Quit messin' around. Let's get home already, I'm starvin'.

JESSE  
But I... ok.

Jesse heads off with Frank.

Louise takes a moment to suck in as much air as she can muster, then she **runs** off.

INT. THOMPSONS' HOME - NIGHT [1863]

Louise runs into her house, startlin' Alfred and Myra.

LOUISE  
They're not at Fernando's, they're  
at Frank's.

Alfred scowls.

                  ALFRED  
You run into him at the carnival?

                  MYRA  
Louise! Did he hurt you?

                  LOUISE  
He was thinkin' about it, but then  
Frank stopped him and said let's go  
home. So, that means they're  
stayin' there, not at Fernando's,  
right?

                  ALFRED  
I don't want you helpin' in this  
way again. But maybe.

Alfred stands and grabs his coat.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - NIGHT [1856]

Jesse closes in on the shrill screech. As his eyes adjust, it  
appears as if a fox's foot is stuck in a trap.

Jesse runs over and tries to pry the trap off it, but he's  
just a little boy.

Zerelda, in her yellow overcoat, suddenly appears behind  
Jesse.

INT. THOMPSON'S LIVING ROOM - PRE-DAWN [1863]

Alfred returns to find Myra and Louise dozing in chairs.

                  ALFRED  
They're strikin' at dawn.

                  LOUISE  
Really? Because of what I said?

                  ALFRED  
You ain't gettin' scared, are ya?

                  LOUISE  
No. You goin' with 'em?

ALFRED

I don't want that part of it.

EXT. JAMES FARM - DAWN [1863]

Jesse works in the field, not too far from the house.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAWN [1863]

Harsel, Jeremiah, and a cadre of other MILITIAMEN gather on a hill, looking down at the farm.

They see a surprising lack of horses, but a bounty of hoof prints.

JEREMIAH

Looks like we barely missed 'em.

HARSEL

But I reckon they know exactly where they is.

They quietly descend.

From a hidden vantage point, Louise watches it all unfold below.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - DAWN [1863]

Jesse is deep in thought while he strolls along the wood fence (where Louise walloped him), when all of a sudden, Harsel grabs a noose and starts choking Jesse.

The boy is suddenly surrounded by enemies.

HARSEL

Where's your brother? He in the house?

Jesse doesn't say a word as the militia drags him over to a nearby tree and raises him off the ground.

Harsel holds Jesse's legs up, so he's propped up, but occasionally he lets go and chokes Jesse.

HARSEL (CONT'D)

Where the hell are they?

JESSE

I dunno!

HARSEL

We know he's been here, so "I dunno" ain't gonna cut it.

JEREMIAH

We just need to know where they're hidin' out.

Zerelda and Reuben run outside.

ZERELDA

You're killin' him!

HARSEL

He's the one in control here.

(to Jesse)

You see what you're doin' to your Mama? Where are they?

ZERELDA

Please, just let him go!

JEREMIAH

You can help him, too, ya know?

ZERELDA

I haven't seen the boy in months!

HARSEL

I'm gettin' pretty fed up with all of this, Jesse.

Harsel lets him dangle some more.

HARSEL (CONT'D)

If you tell me where they all are, I'll do my best not to hurt Frank.

REUBEN

They're by Planter's Cavern.

ZERELDA

(to Reuben)

No!

Harsel cuts the rope and Jesse falls to the ground.

HARSEL

If it turns out that they were never there, what just happened here will look like playtime.

Harsel turns towards Jeremiah and the rest of his men.

HARSEL (CONT'D)  
 (to Jeremiah)  
 You stay here with a few. The rest  
 of us, we ride.

Harsel and the majority of the troops run back towards their horses.

After a moment, it's eerily quiet, just Jeremiah and two other MILITIAMEN stare at the James family.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAWN [1863]

Horrified, Louise can't bear to look any longer.

EXT. TREE - DAWN [1863]

Zerelda doesn't move towards Reuben to comfort him. She just continues holding Jesse.

ZERELDA  
 (to Reuben)  
 How could you?

Reuben has no answers.

A fire burns in Jesse's eyes as he rubs his neck.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - NIGHT [1856]

Jesse notices Zerelda towerin' over him.

JESSE  
 Mama, please help me.

ZERELDA  
 There ain't nothin' but to put it  
 outta its misery.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY [1865]

We're inside the stairwell with Louise, now eighteen. She's with HENRY (20s, a black man with a mustache) and SYLVIA (70s, a black woman with white hair). It appears as if they're on the run.

Louise watches the scene unfold. Looks back at the two people in her care.

FRANK  
Pull. The. Dang. Trigger!

Jesse points the pistol at Jeremiah's head.

JESSE  
I'm gonna, okay? I just need a  
minute!

FRANK  
More minutes is only gonna harden  
it.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - NIGHT [1856]

The fox whimpers.

ZERELDA  
There ain't no livin' left for him.  
Just pain, if you don't do  
somethin'.

Heartbroken, Jesse nods.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY [1865]

JEREMIAH  
I know you're a good boy. Man. I'm  
sorry for my part in the matter,  
but it doesn't have to go this way.

FRANK  
You shut it.

Louise grips her pistol, she turns to open the secret door in  
the stairwell, when she hears the softest sound. Someone is  
tip-toin' from down the hall.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - NIGHT [1856]

JESSE  
How do you--

ZERELDA  
You got hands, ain't ya?

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY [1865]

JESSE

I'm just workin' it up, all right?  
It ain't as easy as it is for you!

Frank takes Jesse's head in his hands.

FRANK

I'm sorry, you right. My first one  
was hard, but it gets easier, don't  
you worry.

Louise looks back through the peephole. They haven't noticed the tip-toin'.

Louise shuffles to the opposite side of the scuffle and quietly opens the hidden door to reveal: BOBBY (5, a sleepy white boy) standing a couple feet away from both Louise and the impending execution.

JEREMIAH

Son, you don't want it to get  
easier, trust me.

EXT. JAMES' FARM - NIGHT [1856]

Attempting to escape, the fox tries to dart back and forth. Crouching, Jesse waits a moment with his hands extended. We stay on his eyes as they well up with tears.

ZERELDA

How's it feel?

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY [1865]

FRANK

(to Jesse)  
You better not be gettin'--

EXT. JAMES' FARM - NIGHT [1856]

JESSE

Soft.

Jesse's cheeks glisten in the moonlight.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY [1865]

JEREMIAH

If you do this, even God ain't  
gonna help ya.

Louise waves at Bobby to join her, but he moves towards his father, which makes the floorboards creak.

Startled, Jesse hears the noise, pivots and **fires**. Bobby collapses to the ground, dead.

INT. BANK - DAY [1876]

CHYRON: 1876

Now back in the bank from the teaser, Jesse overhears a snippet of conversation.

CUSTOMER

...God ain't gonna help ya.

Enraged, Jesse turns and points his pistol at her.

JESSE

What'd you say?

He's a little shaken, almost as if he was hit with deja vu.

CUSTOMER

Just as I told him, if you want my  
purse, you're gonna have to take  
it, cause God ain't gonna help ya.

**BANG!** Gunfire erupts near the door. Jesse spins around to see Bandit #2 (who was manning the door) collapse into a puddle of leaky guts.

JESSE

Damnit to Hell. Guess we best clean  
this mess.

Jesse turns back towards Joseph and **shoots** him.

The Bandits assume different defensive positions.

Jesse crouches low and starts makin' his way over to downed Bandit #2.

Unbeknownst to the James' Gang, they're not the only ones in the bank carryin'.

Louise (now 29), sneaks in through the back door, and crouches out of sight behind a teller desk on the side.

Gunfire continues outside, but now, the Bandits are givin' as good as they're gettin'.

Through the legs of the chairs, Louise spots Jesse makin' his way towards the man at the door. The only clear shot she'll have is just right before he reaches Bandit #2.

Jesse passes behind a solid wall so she can't see him. She knows she won't lay eyes on him again until she has to shoot.

                  LOUISE  
                  (to herself)  
                  Gotta time it. Three... two... one!

Jesse, still focused on his man, steps out into the open.

Louise pulls the trigger - **BANG!**

BLACK.

END OF PILOT.