

LABYRINTH OF DESTINY

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. BETHEL, OHIO - DAY

People on foot, on horseback and in wagons travel the main street of a farm-based community of shopkeepers.

SUPER: "BETHEL, OHIO, 1845"

ULYSSES GRANT, 22, trudges through red mud past a sign:

"TANNERY, JESSE R. GRANT, PROPRIETOR."

Sulphur fumes shroud the air as Ulysses enters the grounds of the tannery operation and walks toward a small wood-frame structure in need of a fresh coat of paint.

Slender, boyishly handsome, clean-shaven Ulysses wears the dress blues of a newly commissioned 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Army.

Ulysses hurries past the slaughter pen where swayback horses await their fate at the hands of a sweat-drenched, barrel-chested MAN WITH A SLEDGEHAMMER.

A skinny mare, ribs protruding, limps to the fence toward Ulysses, lowers her head over it.

Ulysses pauses to focus sad eyes on the horse before continuing. But then he abruptly halts, returns to the fence, removes a glove and softly strokes the mare's neck.

The animal presses against his gentle touch.

On the far side of the pen, SIX MEN in blood-stained leather aprons remove fresh hides from steaming lime vats.

With one final stroke, Ulysses takes his leave -- strides quickly to the wood frame building and enters.

INT. JESSE'S OFFICE - DAY

JESSE GRANT, 40s, short, stout, seated behind a rolltop desk piled high with ledger books, peers through thick spectacles at rows of numbers. He does not notice his son's entry.

Ulysses removes his cap and brushes specks of dried mud from his coat. Waits patiently. Clears his throat.

ULYSSES
Father? I need to be on my way.

Jesse startles. Peers at Ulysses. Consults his pocket watch.

JESSE

Sorry, son. Lost track of time.

Jesse rushes to put on his coat and hat. He steps to the door, then turns to inspect Ulysses's uniform. He brushes away lint... refastens a button.

JESSE

Ulysses, I know life at the Point wasn't always to your liking, but you stuck it out. You graduated.

(steps back)

I'm proud of you, son.

A cautious smile lights Ulysses's face.

ULYSSES

Father, I didn't tell you but I received a letter from Professor Mahan. It mentioned a possible appointment teaching mathematics at the Academy. He said that--

JESSE

--No, son. You don't want that.

ULYSSES

But... I'd be on the faculty at West Point, Father.

JESSE

And you'd never advance beyond the rank of captain. Major at the most.

The flicker of hope in Ulysses's eyes goes out behind a practiced mask of stoicism.

Jesse pats Ulysses's arm and gestures for them to proceed outside.

EXT. TANNERY YARD - DAY

Jesse and Ulysses negotiate a muddy dirt pathway leading to the nearby Grant house.

Ulysses looks toward the slaughter pen.

The barrel-chested man with the sledge secures the lame mare in bracing irons, rendering her unable to move.

JESSE

Son, you know I don't approve of this war we're trying to pick with Mexico. It's just a pretext to bring more slave states into the union. That's all it is.

Ulysses averts his eyes when the man raises the sledge above the mare's head-- a THUD, followed by a tragic GURGLING WHIMPER. Ulysses winces.

JESSE

This war will be fought for evil purposes, Ulysses. But... well, in wartime an officer can advance up the ranks. You could come out of it a major. Maybe even a colonel. Do you understand?

ULYSSES

Yes, sir.

JESSE

But to do that, son, you're going to have to be more assertive than is your habit. Get yourself noticed. By the generals. You do understand that, Ulysses?

ULYSSES

(emotionless)

Yes, sir.

EXT. WOOD FRAME HOUSE - DAY

HANNAH GRANT, 40s, stands on the porch of the house. Gaunt and stern, she watches the approach of her husband and son.

Ulysses walks to his distraught fiancée JULIA DENT, 18. She embraces him. If Ulysses looks younger than his years -- Julia, with her deep worry lines, looks older.

JULIA

Ulysses, please. Don't go.

Glancing awkwardly at his mother, Ulysses gently loosens Julia's tight grasp.

ULYSSES

Julia, by the time we get to Texas, everything'll be settled. Be no need to fight. We'll just turn 'round and come back home.

JULIA
If something happens to you...

ULYSSES
Nothing'll happen to me.
(shrugs)
It never does.

Ulysses wipes her tears. Smiles indulgently.

He turns to Jesse. The men shake hands. Jesse gives Ulysses a big smile and a playful slap on the shoulder. Ulysses gestures to a wagon hitched to a mule.

ULYSSES
When I get to Cincinnati, I'll hire
someone to drive the rig back.

JESSE
Don't let 'em charge you too much.

Ulysses steps toward his mother who does not come down from the porch. Hannah pulls her black shawl tight around her shoulders and folds her arms close to her body.

ULYSSES
Mother... goodbye.

HANNAH
Do your duty, Ulysses. With honor.

Ulysses rejoins Julia, who accompanies him to the buckboard.

One last embrace.

JULIA
You come back to me!

ULYSSES
I'll come back, Julia. To you.
(looks toward house)
But I'll never come back here.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Shimmering waves of heat rise over a harsh countryside of sage, prickly pear cactus and mesquite chaparral.

SUPER: "TEXAS"

EXT. BARNYARD - DAY

LAURA SANDERS, 16, a slave, tends a fire under a pot. Petite and attractive, a hard life has not destroyed her beauty.

A white woman, RITA HUDSPETH, late 20s, WRINGS a chicken's neck with vigor. Then sits to pluck its feathers beside a pecan tree. A flintlock musket leans against it.

Tall and raw-boned, Rita wipes sweat from her brow.

RITA
(to Laura)
Bring that water over here like I
tol' you. Now!

A gopher snake slithers under the raised foundation of a plank-wood house -- DANNY and GERALD, 4, Rita's twin boys, scamper under the house after it, causing a ruckus.

RITA
You boys cut out that yellin' or
I'll whup you!

EXT. FIELD - DAY

In a nearby field, Rita's husband, amiable GORDON HUDSPETH, early 30s, weeds cotton along with DEMAS JOHNSON, late 50s, a grey-haired slave who views the world with trepidation.

A few yards away, BETO GARZA, 17, a smooth-faced Mexican youth, attacks a tree stump with an axe. He keeps a wary eye on the barnyard, on Laura and Rita.

EXT. BARNYARD - DAY

Rita looks again at Laura.

RITA
How many times I hafta tell you,
girl? Bring that water over here!
Now! Now! Do it now!

Laura struggles to lift the pot of boiling water. Fails.

Flinging the headless chicken to the ground, Rita leaps to her feet and stomps to the fire. Points to the pot.

RITA
You lift that pot!

Laura makes another attempt to lift the pot.

LAURA
It's too heavy, Miss Rita.

RITA
Don't talk back to me!

LAURA
I'm not... please... I-I just...

Rita reaches down and lifts the pot easily.

RITA
Well now, look at that. Guess it weren't too heavy. Guess you're too purty to lift it?
(mimicking)
"I'm jest too purty to do an honest day's work!" That 'bout right?

LAURA
No, ma'am. It's just that if it's too heavy for me to lift, I can't lift it. It's as simple as that.

Rita furiously HURLS the boiling water on Laura.

Laura shields her face -- most scalds her bare arms. She screams.

The men in the field come running.

Grinning eagerly, Danny and Gerald, each grasping the opposite end of the gopher snake, scamper to the fire.

GORDON
What happened here?

Laura sinks to her knees, her thin body lapsing into shock.

Demas starts toward Laura -- stops at Rita's glare. Lowers his head in practiced obeisance.

Gordon, whose ample waist and plump face suggest a preference for leisure over labor, looks from Laura to Rita.

RITA
She sassed me again!

GORDON
Rita, we paid a hundred dollars for that girl. And you pour scalding water on her?
(beat)
One hundred dollars!

Beto creeps toward Laura. Rita stops him with a steely glare.

RITA
Stay away from 'er, meskin!

Laura places her hands to the ground. The flesh on her hands and arms is swollen and inflamed.

BETO
Señora, she needs help.

GORDON
Beto's right.

RITA
Well, she not gonna get it. She gonna spend the night under the house, and stay there till she learns I won't tol'rate sass.

GORDON
Rita, the chickens roost under there at night. It's filthy --

RITA
Git down there, girl! Now!

Laura crawls, shaking, toward the house.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Holding a plate of food, Demas glances about nervously and then squats next to the edge of the house.

DEMAS
(whispers)
Psst. Food here for you, girl.

Cramped under the beams, Laura stares vacantly at nothing.

DEMAS
Eat these vittles 'fore they gets cold.

Tears trickle down Laura's cheeks. She closes her eyes.

LAURA
Go away, Demas. If they catch you here, you'll get in trouble.

DEMAS

Damn, girl! When you gonna learn to
keep your mouth shut with Miss
Rita? Just do what she tell you and
you won't get hurt no more --

GORDON (O.S.)

Demas? I need you.

DEMAS

Gotta go! Eat, girl.
(beat)
Please.

Demas shoves the plate under the house and scampers away.

EXT. BARNYARD - DAY

The plate of food, now covered with ants, sits untouched.
Laura, curled up, her eyes closed, remains under the house.

In the yard, Demas hoes cotton and the twins hunt snakes.
Rita, hanging clothes, turns as Gordon comes outside.

RITA

Looks like your meskin done run off
last night. Now Miss sassy pants
ain't so purty no more, he don't
want 'er.

GORDON

Beto's out working the north field,
like I told him.

Gordon peers under the house at Laura.

GORDON

She's needs to come out from under
there, Rita. Can't have her getting
sick. Pickin' time's coming.

RITA

She gonna stay there till she
'pologizes for sassin' me. You let
'em get away with sass, you won't
get a lick of work outta 'em.

Gordon starts to respond -- then spots a group approaching on
horseback. Rita follows his gaze.

RITA

Oh lord! Meskins!

Rita rushes to retrieve her flintlock by the pecan tree.

The riders are four men and a woman. In the lead is Beto. Riding next to Beto is LUIS ESQUIVEL, 30s, who wears a gentleman's frock coat and top hat.

Next to Luis is MARINA CALDERON, 17, dressed in ranchero attire similar to TWO VAQUEROS who trail behind.

Gordon looks back at his wife -- aiming her musket.

GORDON

Rita, put that thing down!

The riders arrive and dismount. Beto rushes to Laura, still under the house.

Tall and graceful, Marina is an attractive young woman. Her eyes and mouth shape into the kind of warm and embracing smile that makes anyone she encounters feel at ease.

Marina approaches Rita, prepared to greet her...

Rita whips the gun directly at Marina's heart.

Marina's smile transforms to puzzlement. She backs away from Rita and joins Beto, who clutches Laura's blistered hands.

Though rugged, Luis has a friendly and courteous bearing. He uses a cane and walks with a limp. Removing his hat, he approaches the Hudspeths.

LUIS

Señora. Señor. My name is Luis Esquivel. I'm a physician. I understand there is a girl here who has suffered a burn.

RITA

We don't need no doctor!

GORDON

She's under the house there. We... uh... We had an accident.

Marina and Beto help Laura crawl out. Luis examines the clear blisters on Laura's arms and hands.

Laura looks up at Marina, who smiles kindly at her.

Luis gets up. Beto gathers Laura in his arms and carries her to his horse.

RITA

Whar you think you goin'? Put that girl down!

LUIS

This young woman is hurt badly. We're taking her where she can recover.

GORDON

You'll be bringing her back...

Luis eyes him.

LUIS

No. She won't be coming back.

RITA

Wait a minute here. Whatya mean, won't be comin' back? That girl's our property! We have documents. Gordon, go get the bill of sale!

Gordon starts toward the house.

LUIS

That will not be necessary. I'm sure your documents are in order. But they have validity only in the United States.

RITA

Whar you think we are? We're in Texas, and Texas's now part of the United States!

(derisive laugh)

Case you ain't heard.

LUIS

Yes, Señora. Texas has been annexed by the United States. But the southern boundary of Texas is the Nueces River. And you are south of the Nueces.

(beat)

You are in the Republic of Mexico.

Rita looks at Gordon whose expression indicates he knows Luis is speaking the truth.

GORDON

You can't just ride up and take our property. Even in Mexico. I paid one... uh, two hundred dollars for that girl!

LUIS
Señor, slavery is illegal in Mexico.

Luis limps to Marina, who helps Beto place Laura on the back of Beto's horse to ride double. He turns toward Demas.

LUIS
Señor, will you come with us?

Demas lowers his head. Eyes the ground.

DEMAS
No, sir.

Luis and Marina mount and all ride off slowly in deference to Laura's wounds. Rita and Gordon stare after them. The vitriol in Rita's eyes indicates this is not over...

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The party rides through country thick with stands of sage heavy with purple blooms.

Cradled in Beto's arms, Laura looks about.

LAURA
Where we going, Beto?

BETO
Señorita Calderon's hacienda. You will be safe there.

They begin to descend into the Rio Grande Valley.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

Marina sits next to Laura in the shade of an oak tree.

A short distance down river, Luis, Beto and the vaqueros water the horses and visit with a TROOP OF MEXICAN DRAGOONS.

Marina helps Laura sip water from a tin cup.

MARINA
We'll camp here tonight and ride to my father's house tomorrow.

Hanging at Marina's neck is a gold medallion engraved with a circular labyrinth.

LAURA
Your pendant... It's beautiful.

MARINA

Thank you. It was my mother's. She gave it to me before she died.

LAURA

When'd she pass?

MARINA

Two years ago. Yellow jack. We lost many people to it.

Marina looks toward Luis and Beto, who are bidding farewell to the soldiers.

MARINA

Luis lost his wife and son to it.

LAURA

Dr. Esquivel is a kind man.

MARINA

Where's your family, Laura? Texas?

LAURA

No, ma'am. They're in 'Bama. I was sold to the Hudspeths there. They took me to Texas.

MARINA

Well, nobody will ever sell you again, Laura. Never again.

Luis and Beto join them.

LUIS

How do you feel, Laura?

LAURA

Much better. Thank you.

LUIS

You must drink much water.

(to Marina)

The captain of the dragoons says American soldiers are camped at Corpus Christi.

MARINA

Corpus Christi? That means... they're in Mexico.

Marina's smile fades.

EXT. CALDERON HACIENDA - DAY

The party dismounts. Marina runs to greet her father, DON ALBERTO, 50s. Dignified but cheerful, he embraces her and then embraces Luis.

MARINA

Papa, this is Laura Sanders.

Don Alberto embraces Laura carefully, avoiding her burns.

MARINA

And Beto Garza. Laura's friend.

DON ALBERTO

Both of you. Our house is your house.

Laura glances at a smiling Beto and back at Don Alberto.

LAURA

Gracias, Señor Calderon.

DON ALBERTO

Everyone inside! We have pan dulce fresh from the oven! You too, Luis!

LUIS

Thank you, Don Alberto, but I must be getting on to Matamoros. Marina, may I see you a moment?

All but Luis and Marina enter through the double mahogany doors into the large hacienda. Don Alberto looks back at Marina and Luis with an approving smile.

Marina and Luis walk to his horse.

MARINA

You cannot stay? For just a while?

LUIS

I have patients to see. And I've received a letter from my friend. Benito Juarez. He's going to campaign for governor of Oaxaca. He's asked for my help.

MARINA

So you will be going to Oaxaca?

LUIS

Yes. I leave tomorrow.
(holds Marina's hands)
(MORE)

LUIS (CONT'D)

Marina, I hope that while I'm gone
you'll think about what I asked you.
I know there is a great difference
in our ages but --

MARINA

(smiles)

--Not so great a difference, Luis.

LUIS

Marina, I would be honored if you
would become my wife. Will you
think about it while I'm away?

MARINA

Yes, Luis. My father will remind me
about it every day. He is anxious
to have grandchildren!

Luis kisses Marina, mounts his horse and rides away. Marina
cheerfully returns his wave.

INT. CALDERON HACIENDA - SECOND-FLOOR BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marina awakens to a distant rumbling noise. She goes to a
window and looks out. VOICES from below.

She sees Laura and Beto in the FRONT YARD talking with her
father and other workers at the hacienda. Some hold torches.

Wrapping a rebozo around her shoulders, she hurries from the
room.

EXT. CALDERON HACIENDA - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Don Alberto stands with his vaqueros and their families, most
in bedclothes. Beto and Laura turn when Marina joins them.

MARINA

What's happening?

BETO

We don't know.

Three vaqueros ride up, dismount and rush to Don Alberto.

Marina hurries to her father.

MARINA

Papa? That noise? What is it?

DON ALBERTO
Soldiers, Marina. Thousands of
them. The sounds are made by their
caissons. They are coming this way.

MARINA
Soldiers? From Matamoros?

DON ALBERTO
They are not Mexican soldiers. They
are from the United States.

Marina gazes to the horizon apprehensively.

INT. CALDERON HACIENDA - SECOND-FLOOR BEDROOM - DAY

Marina sits at her desk writing on blue parchment with a
feather quill.

She pauses at the sound of approaching horses. She steps from
her desk to a window and looks below.

EXT. CALDERON HACIENDA - FRONT YARD - DAY

In field uniforms, Ulysses and LIEUTENANT FRED RISLEY, 21,
ride their horses to the hacienda.

Fred is a strapping, freckle-faced redhead, good-natured and
friendly to any and all.

Ulysses and Fred dismount and are met by a gardener, who
points them to a corral west of the house.

INT. CALDERON HACIENDA - DAY

Marina descends the stairs, runs into Beto coming up.

BETO
Marina, soldiers! Norteamericanos!
They want to purchase horses.

MARINA
Where's my father?

BETO
With the herd in the north pasture.

MARINA
Go for him. I will talk to the
soldiers until he returns.

EXT. CORRAL - DAY

Two vaqueros stand at the wood rail fence with Fred. In the corral, Ulysses walks slowly toward a black mustang. The mustang jerks his head wildly and flares his nostrils.

Marina runs to the corral -- slows when she sees Ulysses nearing the nervous stallion. She stops next to Fred, who turns and stares wide-eyed at Marina.

FRED
Morning, ma'am.

MARINA
Who are you? What do you want?

FRED
(straightens)
I'm Lieutenant Fred A. Risley. 4th
Infantry. Quartermaster Corps. United
States Army. We've been told you
folks have the best horses here
'bouts. We'd like to buy a few.

Ulysses gently strokes the mustang's neck. The stallion paws the ground menacingly.

MARINA
That's a dangerous horse. Your
friend's going to be hurt.

FRED
(relaxing)
Don't think so, ma'am. Nobody knows
how to talk to horses like Sam Grant.

MARINA
Talk to horses?

FRED
(laughs)
Sam doesn't do much talking to
people, but him and horses are the
best of friends.

Marina climbs over a wood rail into the corral and hurries to where Ulysses is now standing, touching his lips to the mustang's ear.

Ulysses massages the mustang's neck with both hands. The stallion lowers his head and relaxes.

MARINA
Señor!

Ulysses turns. Quickly doffs his cap.

ULYSSES
Good morning... Señorita.

MARINA
Señor, I... I must ask you to
leave. For your own... safety.

ULYSSES
Has this horse been ridden?

Marina looks into Ulysses's eyes, her expression one of
perplexity. Confusion.

ULYSSES
Señorita?

MARINA
Uh... No. No one can stay on him.
He's high strung. Wild.

ULYSSES
May I try?

Marina continues to stare into Ulysses's eyes.

ULYSSES
I think I can ride him. If your men
here can put a saddle on him. He's
a beautiful horse.
(returns Marina's stare)
Very... beautiful...

Marina gestures the vaqueros to saddle the mustang. Which
they do gingerly.

Ulysses mounts. Rides slowly around the corral.

ULYSSES
Would you have them open the gate?
Please.

Marina signals the vaqueros to open the gate. Ulysses spurs
the horse to a gallop and races out of the corral into a
field. They disappear over a rise.

Don Alberto runs toward the corral ahead of Beto and three
other vaqueros who are dismounting. He doesn't look happy.

DON ALBERTO
Marina, what is going on here?

MARINA

Papa, these soldiers are here to purchase horses.

Don Alberto steps to Fred who draws to attention.

DON ALBERTO

Why are you here, young man?

FRED

As your daughter said, we've been sent by our commanding officer to purchase horses. Sir.

DON ALBERTO

No, Lieutenant. I'm not asking why are you here at our rancho. Why are you here...

(beat)

In Mexico?

FRED

Mexico, sir? We're in Texas.

DON ALBERTO

The southern boundary of Texas has always been the Nueces River. You are in Mexico.

Ulysses returns to the corral and dismounts. Don Alberto does a double-take to see the horse he has ridden.

MARINA

Papa, this is... Sam?

ULYSSES

Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant, sir. 4th Infantry. Quartermaster Corps. United States Army.

The mustang nuzzles Ulysses's arm. Ulysses gently strokes the horse's mane.

ULYSSES

How much for this one, sir?

DON ALBERTO

Lieutenant, I will not sell you this horse. Or any horse.

Ulysses turns to Marina, confused. He starts to turn back to Don Alberto, but hesitates as his eyes lock on Marina's.

Fred looks at Ulysses and observes that Ulysses is attentive to nothing but Marina. He shifts nervously.

FRED

Uh... Sir. I don't understand. Why would you not sell us horses? We are authorized by our commanding general to pay you a fair price.

DON ALBERTO

Across that river over there, the Rio Bravo, is an army led by fools who have destroyed our Republic. But the army they command is made up of young men of my country. I will not sell horses to soldiers sent to kill those young men.

Don Alberto paces away a few steps, takes a deep breath, regains his composure, turns and steps back.

DON ALBERTO

Forgive me. I know you are young officers and you follow the orders of your superiors. I do not wish to be rude.

(ponders)

Can you join us for dinner this evening? As our guests? I will explain why I cannot sell you horses.

Fred turns to Ulysses who continues to return Marina's unbroken gaze.

FRED

Sam? Can we--

Ulysses comes to.

ULYSSES

We would be honored, sir.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Ulysses and Fred ride their mounts at a leisurely gait.

FRED

These people think we're in Mexico, Sam. They think we're invaders.

Ulysses stares straight ahead. Fred waves a hand in front of his face -- he snaps out of it momentarily.

ULYSSES

That woman, Fred. Marina. She's...
she's beautiful. Her eyes...

FRED

We're here to protect them and they
think we're the enemy.

ULYSSES

She looks at you like... like she
can see right into your head.

He spurs his horse to a gallop. Fred follows.

INT. CALDERON HACIENDA - DINING HALL - NIGHT

Ulysses sits across from Fred. Both are clad in full dress
uniform, complete with gold epaulets and swords.

Marina sits across from her father at the head of the table.
Attired in a colorful Mexican dress, Marina glances at
Ulysses from time to time. As he does at her.

DON ALBERTO

From the beginning of our Republic
there have been those who enjoyed
privilege under the Spanish, who
have attempted to reimpose tyranny
upon us. Today, generals who fought
against our independence control
the government.

FRED

Are there people in Mexico who will
fight these generals?

Marina and Ulysses make eye contact. Marina smiles.

DON ALBERTO

Yes. Many. But we need leaders and
many of our best leaders have been
arrested. Imprisoned. Executed.

FRED

Don Alberto, these generals
threaten war with our country. We
could help the people of Mexico
defeat them.

DON ALBERTO
Lieutenant Risley, do you think
that is why your government has
sent its army here? To restore our
Republic? I don't think so.

He gets up. Fred and Ulysses quickly stand.

DON ALBERTO
I hope you enjoyed your meal,
gentlemen. Join me in the library
for brandy, will you?

MARINA
Please excuse me.

Ulysses follows Don Alberto and Fred. But watches Marina
through a series of large ARCHWAY WINDOWS, as she walks to
the FLOWER GARDEN where families are gathering for a fiesta.

INT. CALDERON HACIENDA - LIBRARY - LATER

Don Alberto pours brandy in glasses and offers cigars. Fred
accepts both. Ulysses declines both with a shake of his head.

DON ALBERTO
From where in the United States do
you gentlemen hail?

FRED
I'm from Illinois, sir.
(notes Ulysses is not
listening)
Uh... Sam is from Ohio.

Ulysses peers through the window at Marina talking with
people in the garden.

Don Alberto follows Ulysses's gaze and sees what is absorbing
his attention. He narrows his eyes in disapproval.

ULYSSES
What's happening out there, sir?

DON ALBERTO
A celebration. One of our vaqueros
has just proposed marriage to a
young lady who was until recently a
slave in your country.

ULYSSES
I'd like to join them. With your
permission, sir.

Ulysses leaves the room. Don Alberto watches him, nettled.

FRED

Don Alberto, tell me more about
these generals who've taken over
your government.

EXT. FLOWER GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

Ulysses stands at the edge of a group of people listening to
an ELDERLY BLIND WOMAN play a guitar.

Marina approaches Ulysses. They greet each other with awkward
smiles. When the song is over, they join in the applause.

MARINA

Tell me, Lieutenant. I'm curious. If
your name is Ulysses, why does your
friend call you Sam?

ULYSSES

My name is Hiram Ulysses Grant. The
man at the Academy wrote my name as
Ulysses Simpson Grant because he
knew my mother's name was Simpson.
(shrugs)
U.S. Grant. United States. Uncle
Sam. All the fellows started
calling me Sam.

MARINA

Why didn't you correct them?

ULYSSES

It didn't matter to me. One name's
as good as another.

Laura scurries by near where they are standing. Marina snags
Laura's hand to halt her.

MARINA

Laura, I'd like you meet someone.

Laura ventures a wary glance at Ulysses.

MARINA

Laura, this is Ulysses Grant.
Ulysses, this is Laura Sanders.
Laura is going to marry one of my
father's vaqueros.

ULYSSES

Congratulations, Miss Sanders.

Laura manages a small smile.

LAURA
Thank you. Uh...
(beat)
Marina, I must attend to something.
Excuse me.

Laura pulls her hand from Marina's and hurries away. Marina watches her with a puzzled expression.

ULYSSES
Is Laura your slave?

MARINA
My slave? No! Of course not!
Slavery is illegal in Mexico.

She drifts along. Ulysses follows. She glances back at him with narrowed eyes.

MARINA
Do you own slaves?

ULYSSES
No.

MARINA
Slavery is a terrible thing! No one
has the right to own another person.

ULYSSES
I agree.

They stroll through a lemon tree grove.

ULYSSES
Marina... do you like to ride
horses?

Marina looks at him, both amused and perplexed.

MARINA
My father owns a horse ranch. Would
it not be odd if I did not enjoy
riding horses?

ULYSSES
Would you go riding with me?

Marina looks up at the night sky.

MARINA
Now?

ULYSSES

No. Not this moment. But... maybe tomorrow. I'd like to see the gulf. Maybe we could ride over there...

(beat)

Marina.

Marina suppresses a smile. Shrugs an assent.

SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY

Side by side, Marina and Ulysses ride through the mesquite and sage chaparral.

They burst from the chaparral and onto the coastal plain.

They race at full gallop along a white beach bordered with date-laden palms and blue salt cedar.

Seagulls wheel up, protesting, as they splash through the foam of the shallow surf.

EXT. LAGUNA MADRE - CABIN - DAY

They rein to a halt at a wood cabin on the bay.

Ulysses rushes to help Marina dismount. Her hand grips his. She does not let go. She leads him to the deck of the cabin.

ULYSSES

Who lives here?

MARINA

No one. My father's vaqueros built it for when they hunt geese. There's no one for miles. I come here when I want to sit and do nothing. Just me and... and the pelicans.

Ulysses surveys the blue bay.

ULYSSES

Is this the Gulf of Mexico?

MARINA

No. It's the Laguna Madre. The bay between the coast and the barrier island out there. *La Isla Padre*. The Gulf is on the other side of the island.

ULYSSES

It's so blue. Sort of reminds me of
the Ohio River. Back home.

MARINA

You live near a river?

ULYSSES

The town in which I grew up was
some distance from the river. But I
would go there whenever I could.
Get away from my father's business.

MARINA

Why would you wish to get away?

Ulysses's face hardens.

ULYSSES

My father owns a tannery.
(stares across the bay)
I love horses. I don't like to see
them killed.
(lowers his eyes)
I don't like to see anything
killed. So I stayed away as much as
I could.

MARINA

Is that why you became a soldier?
So you could get away from your
father's business?

Ulysses laughs humorlessly.

ULYSSES

Being a soldier was my father's
idea. He admired men like General
Washington. Jackson. He wanted one
of his sons to be like them. A
soldier.

(beat)

Wasn't what I wanted.

MARINA

What did you want to do?

Ulysses relaxes.

ULYSSES

Oh... go out west. Raise horses.
Have a ranch. A horse ranch.
Like yours here. That's what I
wanted.

MARINA

Why didn't you? If that's what you wanted.

ULYSSES

I don't know. Circumstances always did shape my course different from my plans. Things just seem to have a way of happening the way they want to happen. Not the way you want them to.

Marina rubs her hands across a smooth red mesquite wood rail framing the deck of the cabin.

MARINA

Things happen according to our destiny.

Ulysses studies Marina's pensive expression.

ULYSSES

Destiny. You believe in that?

Marina looks at him and smiles.

MARINA

I don't know. I'm not sure. But it's what my mother believed. What she told me when she gave me this.

She fingers the gold medallion at her neck.

MARINA

She said we each have a destiny to fulfill. Everything that will happen to us has been written from before we're born.

Ulysses touches the medallion.

ULYSSES

It's beautiful. There's engraving on it. These broken lines... in circles. What do they mean?

Marina unclasps the thin gold chain on which the medallion is fastened and holds it in her hand for Ulysses to see.

MARINA

It is *un laberinto*. I think the word in English is labyrinth? There is such a word? Yes? Labyrinth?

Ulysses looks closer at the engraving.

ULYSSES

Yes. Labyrinth. I see it now. It is a labyrinth.

MARINA

My mother called it the *laberinto del destino*.

ULYSSES

Labyrinth of destiny.

Marina flashes an expression of mock surprise.

MARINA

You know Spanish!

ULYSSES

Just a guess. *Destino*. Destiny.

(shrugs)

Why did your mother call it that?
Laberinto del destino.

MARINA

And your pronunciation is *muy bueno*! Very good! *Bravo*!

She claps her hands.

MARINA

She called it the *laberinto del destino* because she said life is like winding your way through a *laberinto*. We go one way and then another seeking... How do you say?

(struggles)

Felicidad. Happiness? Yes. We seek happiness. But our way is often blocked. The unexpected happens. We have to start over. Go another way. Wind through the labyrinth, back and forth, around and around, this way and that, until...

She taps the center of the medallion with the tip of her index finger.

MARINA

Until we arrive here. Right here!

(smiles happily)

Our destiny!

Her smile fades as she looks up at Ulysses who is staring vacantly toward the bay.

MARINA

Ulysses?

Ulysses snaps to. Looks at her. Pained.

MARINA

I didn't mean to make you sad. What I said. About destiny. I'm sorry.

She touches his hand. Softly.

ULYSSES

No, Marina. You didn't make me sad. I was just... I have a strange feeling about the future. I guess you might say... my destiny. There is something not good... that...
(beat)
I don't know. I can't put it into words.

He takes her hands in his hands. Gently.

ULYSSES

But, no. You don't make me sad. To the contrary, you make me feel... *Felicidad. Muy!*
(smiles)
Marina.

Marina looks into his eyes.

MARINA

I'm glad... Ulysses.

She withdraws her hands from his and twirls away a few feet. Looks out at the water, then back with an eager smile.

MARINA

Let's go wading!

Ulysses gestures -- lead on!

MARINA

I will help you with your boots, then you with mine.

She gives Ulysses a playful push. He drops to the deck, smiling. She wrests off his boots, then sits and raises a foot to him.

He pulls off her riding boots. Touches her bare feet. Looks deeply into her eyes. She lets the moment breathe, then --

MARINA

Race you!

She jumps up and runs down the steps of the deck. Ulysses clumsily catches up.

They run side by side to the shoreline. They tiptoe into the water. Marina stumbles -- Ulysses takes her hand. She laughs merrily. He continues to hold her hand as they wade.

ULYSSES

What is your destiny, Marina?

MARINA

My destiny? Oh...

(shrugs)

I don't know. I suppose I, too, sometimes dream of going away.

ULYSSES

But you have a such a wonderful home here. The horses. The ranch.

MARINA

Since I was a child, all I heard about was fighting and killing. The revolution in Texas. Coahuila. The Yucatan. Fighting and killing. I'd like to go some place where this does not happen and -- Oh, look!

Marina points upward. Seven whooping cranes, their long white wings tipped with black, glide in a V formation.

MARINA

One, two, three, four... Seven! My *abuela*... my grandmother... used to say that when you see seven cranes in the sky it is a sign a change is coming to your life...

She looks at Ulysses, gleeful. He looks back at her, eyes shining at her enthusiasm.

MARINA

(laughs)

My grandmother was superstitious.

She wades off in a new direction. He follows.

ULYSSES

Where would you go, Marina? If you left here.

MARINA

Who knows? Maybe out west.

(excited)

I've heard California is very beautiful! And there is no fighting. Yes. I would go to California.

Ulysses stops walking. Marina turns and smiles at him.

ULYSSES

Do you someday plan to... to get married? I mean... is there someone in your life now that... You know.

Marina stares across the bay.

MARINA

There is someone my father would like for me to marry. A very good man. Kind. But...

Ulysses lowers his head.

MARINA

And you? Is there someone that you... might marry... someday?

Ulysses picks up a conch shell, examines it and then gently returns it to shallow water.

ULYSSES

I guess... there is. Someone...

Marina forces a smile.

A long beat of silence as each tries to busy themselves with meaningless glances at the water, the beach. The seagulls. Finally, Marina looks up at the sky.

MARINA

We should be starting back.

Ulysses grips her hands. A flash of unguarded emotion --

ULYSSES

Marina...

Her eyes search his. Abruptly they embrace. And kiss. Tentatively at first. And then with passion.

EXT. CALDERON HACIENDA - LATER

Ulysses and Marina return to the house. Fred stands with Don Alberto. As they dismount, Ulysses marks Fred's anxious face.

FRED
 Sam, the Mexican army is
 approaching our camps. In force!
 We're to report immediately.

Ulysses glances at Marina and then at the dour Don Alberto.

ULYSSES
 (to Marina)
 I... I have to go.

Ulysses and Marina gaze at each other, their eyes expressing volumes. Ulysses mounts his horse and rides away with Fred.

DON ALBERTO
 Marina, where were you?

Marina watches Ulysses disappear over a rise.

DON ALBERTO
 Marina! Answer me!

Marina runs into the hacienda.

SERIES OF SHOTS - BATTLE OF PALO ALTO - DAY

Soldiers of the opposing armies take position on a field north of the Rio Bravo, the Palo Alto.

Units of cavalry and mounted dragoons flank columns of infantry.

Behind the infantry, cannons are wheeled in, braced, sighted on the enemy lines.

On a hill, MEXICAN ARMY OFFICERS sit astride magnificent horses to direct the battle. They are attired in splendid uniforms. A MILITARY BRASS BAND PLAYS.

On an opposing hill, AMERICAN ARMY OFFICERS, in plain field uniforms, consult maps. The only music comes from drums and fifes played to march units to their assigned stations.

The SOLDIERS in both armies wait, quiet, staring across fields of brush and weeds at their counterparts. Soldiers eye each other, clutching muskets with bayonets fixed.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

At one corner of the battlefield, Ulysses and Fred stand before a squad of FORTY MEN. They look across the field at the MEXICAN SOLDIERS soldiers three hundred yards away.

Sweating under the hot sun, the men exchange nervous glances.

FRED

Well Sam, this is it. Our first battle.

Ulysses peers through field glasses.

ULYSSES

They're just boys over there. Some of them are carrying muskets longer than they are tall.

FRED

Sam...

(swallows hard)

Sure is hot out here. Don't you think? Sam? It's hot?

Ulysses trains his glasses on the hill. At the officers, high above the fray.

FRED

Sam! General Taylor!

GENERAL ZACHARY TAYLOR, 60s, commander of the American forces, rides casually up at the head of SIX AIDES. His well-worn green frock coat bears no insignia of rank. On his head is a tattered palmetto-palm straw hat.

Ulysses and Fred salute. The leather-faced, laid-back general remains mounted. He spits a stream of tobacco juice.

GENERAL TAYLOR

How's it lookin' over here, boys?

ULYSSES

Sir, within the past hour they've been adding more infantry on this side.

GENERAL TAYLOR

'Pears like they gonna launch the main attack up over this a way.

ULYSSES

I think that is what they are preparing to do, sir.

GENERAL TAYLOR

Well, you boys gonna have to hold
'em. Turn 'em back. Then we'll
drive 'em back 'cross the river.
Iffen that happens, we can get this
over quick and go on home.

ULYSSES

Yes, sir.

GENERAL TAYLOR

If we don't turn 'em back, this
battle could drag out for quite a
spell. Then a passel of us won't be
goin' home at all.

ULYSSES

We'll turn them back, General.

General Taylor studies Ulysses's calm demeanor.

GENERAL TAYLOR

Somethin' tells me you will,
Lieutenant. Good luck, boys.

Ulysses and Fred execute crisp salutes. Taylor acknowledges
with a casual wave, spits tobacco juice and rides slowly
toward the next unit ahead of his cadre of aides.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - LATER

Ulysses scans with his field glasses. His men, drenched in
sweat, wait. Some sharpen bayonets, hatchets and knives on
whetstones.

On the distant hill the Mexican band begins to play.

ULYSSES

Stand ready, men.

A series of explosions signals the beginning of the Mexican
bombardment. The balls fall short and roll toward the
American lines. Some American soldiers step back.

ULYSSES

Hold your ground, men.

A ball sails into their line -- strikes A SOLDIER in the jaw,
severing it from his head. His tongue distended, he falls and
writhes on the ground before dying.

Horrified, more men fall back.

A PRIVATE next to the fallen man is near panic.

PRIVATE
Lieutenant, them fellers over
there, they gonna kill us all!

ULYSSES
(calmly)
Well, they might.
(beat)
But they can only kill us once.

The men look at each others' frightened faces. They begin to laugh. They fall back into line.

Ulysses draws his sword and steps in front of the line.

ULYSSES
All right, men. Let's have at it.
Sooner we get this over, the sooner
we go home.

Ulysses and his men charge across the field and into the Mexican soldiers. Fierce and bloody combat ensues. Some men fire their muskets -- but they mostly fight with bayonets, swords, knives and hatchets

A YOUNG MEXICAN SOLDIER, 15, charges Ulysses with his bayonet. Ulysses deftly parries his awkward thrust and PLUNGES his sword into the soldier's chest.

He pulls it out. Blood jets. The soldier drops his musket and claws at the bubbling wound. Ulysses hesitates, rooted to the spot, as the boy crumples to the ground.

FRED
Sam, come on!

Ulysses shrugs off Fred's hand and kneels beside the body. He brushes back locks of hair from the boy's forehead.

ULYSSES
This boy... needs help...

The boy's glazed eyes freeze in a lifeless stare.

FRED
He's dead.

Ulysses starts to lift the boy's body.

ULYSSES
I'll take him to... back to...

Fred grabs Ulysses's arm. The body spills to the ground.

He pulls Ulysses up and forward toward the line of their men who stare back at them.

FRED

For god's sake, Sam! Lead us!

Ulysses snaps to, sees that the men are retreating. Raising his sword, he rushes to the front of the wavering line. Glances back once at the dead boy -- and runs forward.

For a moment, Ulysses is the only one running toward a fresh line of advancing Mexican infantry. Then, one by one, his soldiers join him.

The Mexicans stop, unnerved -- and retreat toward their officers on the hill.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE BATTLE CONTINUES

Ulysses leads his men in pursuit, his eyes fixed on the officers.

Ulysses and his men work up the hill, hurdling dead Mexican soldiers killed earlier by American artillery.

The Mexican officers see what's coming and panic. They spur their horses toward the river, abandoning their men who are in full retreat.

On top of the hill, the American soldiers load their weapons and fire at the retreating Mexican soldiers.

AS NIGHT FALLS, heavy Mexican cannon across the river boom, slowing the American advance.

American cannon are brought forward to respond from atop the hill Ulysses and his men have secured.

EXT. CALDERON HACIENDA - NIGHT

Marina, standing alone, hugs herself. Over the hills, flashes of light followed by explosions mark the distant battle.

Don Alberto, Laura, Beto, the vaqueros and their families stand nearby, watching apprehensively.

Marina winces with each flash, and the muffled report that follows seconds later.

Laura walks to Marina and puts her arm around her. Marina lowers her head and closes her eyes. In the palm of her hand, she grips the gold medallion around her neck.

EXT. RIO GRANDE - DAY

The guns are silent. Ulysses and Fred, dirty and haggard, stand and survey the carnage.

Mangled bodies are strewn along the banks, and bob in the river. Some of the floating bodies jerk and quiver as schools of catfish aggressively feed on them.

Hundreds of vultures circle in the sky, land and gorge on the bodies of dead soldiers, Mexican and American.

FRED

Guess we won... the battle.

Ulysses stares vacantly across the river.

FRED

We... We did win, didn't we, Sam?
We won the battle? Sam?

Ulysses hurries away from the river. He scrambles up the embankment, unfastening his leather belt -- letting his scabbard and sword fall carelessly to the ground.

EXT. LAGUNA MADRE - CABIN - DAY

Marina stands on the porch deck overlooking the bay. Hears an approaching horse.

She turns as Ulysses -- sweat stained, uniform dirty and bloody, reins his horse and slides off.

He walks slowly to her, his face lined and haunted. Opens his mouth to speak. Can't.

Slowly he falls into her arms and she enfolds him in her embrace.

EXT. LAGUNA MADRE - LATER

The two swim in the calm azure water. Yellow-billed geese flap, seek shelter in the reeds. The sun shafts down from piled blue-grey clouds.

Ulysses treads water, catches a ray of sun. Slowly closes his eyes. But they open again. Faraway.

He turns as Marina surfaces next to him and places her hand on his bare shoulder.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

A low wood fire burns in a stone fireplace.

Wrapped in a blanket, Marina and Ulysses hold each other and gaze at the flames.

MARINA

It can get very cold at night. Even
at this time of year.

Ulysses adjusts the blanket. Holds Marina closer.

ULYSSES

I'm going to resign my commission.

Marina turns to look at him.

ULYSSES

I never wanted to be a soldier. The
battle... it... it was horrible! I-I
can't spend my life like this.
Killing other men. Boys. I can't do
it. I won't!

MARINA

What will you do?

ULYSSES

Go out west. Raise horses.

He strokes Marina's hair.

ULYSSES

Come with me, Marina.

She stares, wide-eyed.

ULYSSES

Marry me. Be my wife.

MARINA

Ulysses. What of...

ULYSSES

Marina, it's you I love. I didn't
know what it meant to love someone
until now. And I do. I love you!

They kiss.

MARINA

I don't understand it. I've never felt like this. It makes no sense, but... I love you, Ulysses. I love you with all my heart!

ULYSSES

Then come with me. To California! You said you wanted to go to California...

(beat)

We'll be free there. Away from all this... insanity! To live as we want. Forever.

They embrace, then recline. And make love.

EXT. LAGUNA MADRE - BEACH - DAY

Marina and Ulysses stroll along the beach. They stand in the water and let the incoming waves wash over their feet. Ulysses picks up an oyster shell.

A rider appears on a rise. Ulysses spots him.

The rider draws nearer. At a gallop.

ULYSSES

It's... Fred.

Fred rides up, dismounts, removes his cap. Nods at Marina.

FRED

Ma'am.

ULYSSES

How'd you know where to find me?

FRED

I stopped at the ranch. Laura told me...

(anxious)

Sam, there's going to be more fighting.

ULYSSES

They've come back? From across the river?

FRED

No, Sam. They continue to retreat. But we've been ordered to pursue them... into Mexico.

Ulysses looks at Marina and then at Fred.

ULYSSES

We did what we were supposed to do.
We drove the Mexican army across
the Rio Bravo. Go after them? No.
That is wrong. And I won't be a
part of it. Just so rich men back
home can own more land and more
slaves? No! I won't do it!

FRED

Sam, I know how you feel. Most of
the men feel the same.

ULYSSES

I won't go, Fred. No.

FRED

Sam, I told them you'd gone to look
for some of our men. If you don't
come back with me now, you'll be
shot for desertion.

(beat)

Please. You've got to help bring
our boys back home. Alive. It's
your duty.

Marina turns toward the bay.

FRED

Sam, officers like you will shorten
this conflict. This war. Save lives.
Remember what General Taylor said.

MARINA

(softly)

Your men need you, Ulysses.

Ulysses stares at Marina. Sad resolve is in her face. She
forces a weak smile. Takes his hands.

ULYSSES

But... California...

MARINA

California will be there tomorrow.
(weak smile)
There is always... a tomorrow.

Ulysses slowly drops his eyes.

Marina removes the gold medallion from her neck and places it in Ulysses's right hand. He starts to speak -- she quiets him with a gentle touch of her finger to his lips.

MARINA

Carry it with you. Always. It will protect you and...

(lowers her eyes)

And guide you to your destiny.

Ulysses grips the medallion tightly in his hand.

ULYSSES

I'll bring it back to you. As soon as this is over. I'll bring it back because... you are my destiny.

Marina looks up. Smiles. Ulysses embraces her.

EXT. LAGUNA MADRE - HILLSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Now mounted, Ulysses waves to Marina.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Marina returns the wave.

She turns to the sound of water crashing in the bay behind her. A single large wave billows across the tranquil water.

Marina looks back at the HILL. Ulysses is gone.

Bracing against the wind, Marina tightens a blue rebozo around her shoulders and folds her arms tightly to her body.

She lowers her head as tears glide down her face.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Cannons ROAR. Smoke fills the air. MEXICAN AND AMERICAN SOLDIERS struggle in vicious combat.

SUPER: "MONTERREY"

Sword in hand, Ulysses leads his men through the thick of battle.

EXT. HILL - DAY

SUPER: "BUENA VISTA"

General Taylor, mounted on his horse and surrounded by STAFF OFFICERS, surveys the field of battle from a hilltop.

A COLONEL peers through field glasses. Excited.

COLONEL
Sir! We're making a breakthrough.
They're starting to retreat!

Taylor focuses his field glasses.

GENERAL TAYLOR
Who's that leadin' that platoon on
the left flank?

COLONEL
Grant, sir. Lieutenant Ulysses
Grant. 4th Infantry. Ohio.

Taylor continues to look through the field glasses.

GENERAL TAYLOR
Good tactician. Damn good.

COLONEL
Grant's one of our best junior
officers, sir.

Taylor lowers his glasses.

GENERAL TAYLOR
Grant, you say. Ulysses Grant? I
think I know 'im. Watched 'im in
Texas. Palo Alto.
(spits tobacco)
Mark Grant down for promotion.

EXT. SEASHORE - DAY

American soldiers storm ashore on white beaches under the heavy fire of Mexican shore batteries.

Mexican defenders charge out. The battle rages amidst much carnage.

SUPER: "VERACRUZ"

EXT. BUILDING - LATER

A tattered Mexican flag is lowered from atop a battered masonry building -- an American flag rises.

In a courtyard below, Ulysses and Fred stand at attention with their comrades.

Ulysses's eyes are dead. Empty. Emotionless.

INT. MARINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Seated on the bed, Marina dry-heaves into a pan on her lap.

Laura wipes her face with a damp cloth.

Marina catches her breath.

MARINA

Laura... how could I have been so foolish?

LAURA

You're not the first woman to follow her heart, Marina. You won't be the last.

Marina dries her face with a towel.

MARINA

I'll never see him again, will I?
He'll never come back.

LAURA

No, Marina.
(beat)
He's from a different world.

MARINA

(softly)
A different world...

Marina stands. Walks to an open window. Stares out.

MARINA

I can't tell my father. It... it
would kill him. He...
(turns)
Laura... what am I going to do?

Laura rushes to Marina and puts her arms around her. Marina puts her head to Laura's shoulder and weeps.

EXT. CALDERON HACIENDA - DAY

Laura opens the front door -- to Luis.

LAURA
Dr. Esquivel!

They embrace. Don Alberto appears.

DON ALBERTO
Luis! When did you get back?

The men embrace.

LUIS
I arrived in Matamoros yesterday.

DON ALBERTO
Come in, Luis. Come in! Laura,
please tell Marina Luis is here!

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Don Alberto and Luis sit down in chairs near an open window.

DON ALBERTO
We heard the news. Benito Juarez
won the election.

LUIS
Yes. Benito is now governor of Oaxaca.

DON ALBERTO
And the war?

LUIS
The norteamericanos captured Mexico
City. The war is over.

Laura returns with Marina, who slips quietly in behind her.
Smiling, Luis rises to greet her.

DON ALBERTO
Marina, look who's back!

Luis takes Marina's hands. Overjoyed to see her.

MARINA
Welcome back, Luis.

DON ALBERTO
Luis, Laura and Beto got married
while you were away! And they are
expecting a child!

Luis throws up his hands in celebration. Embraces Laura.

LUIS
Congratulations!

LAURA
Thank you, Dr. Esquivel.
(to Don Alberto)
Don Alberto, would you help me with
something in the garden?

DON ALBERTO
The garden? Help you...
(catching on)
Oh, yes! Of course. The garden!

A beaming Don Alberto follows Laura from the room. He steals a glance back with a large smile before closing the door.

Marina strolls to the window and gazes outside. Luis frowns at her pallor.

LUIS
You look tired, Marina. Do you not
feel well?

MARINA
I'm fine, Luis.
(turns)
But... there is something I must tell
you.

EXT. VEGETABLE GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

Don Alberto fidgets, glancing back toward the hacienda. He holds a basket into which Laura places tomatoes.

DON ALBERTO
Soon we shall be preparing for a
grand wedding! Yes?

Laura retrieves the basket from Don Alberto. She can only smile at him.

DON ALBERTO
And soon, children! And there will be
laughter in this house again! There
has been too much sadness. It is now
time for happiness. And laughter.
Children's laughter!

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Luis leans heavily on his cane, stares vacantly at nothing.

Marina slumps in a chair next to her father's writing table.

MARINA

I'm sorry, Luis. I never wanted to hurt you.

Luis sighs deeply. Gathers up his strength --

LUIS

I will help you, Marina. Your father will never know. But afterward, you and I...

(beat)

We will go our separate ways.

He turns and limps slowly toward the door. Marina watches him go, inexpressibly sad.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Ulysses, in dress uniform, rides his horse up the dirt road to the Calderon hacienda. Now bearded, his wind-burnt, battle-hardened face looks older than before.

SUPER: "1848"

EXT. CALDERON'S HACIENDA - DAY

Ulysses knocks. He brushes dust from his coat, removes his cap and adjusts the sabre hanging at his side.

Laura opens the door. She holds her son JOEL.

ULYSSES

Good morning, Miss Sanders.

Laura stares at him, wide-eyed.

ULYSSES

I guess you don't remember me. I'm Captain Grant. Ulysses Grant.

Laura continues to stare.

ULYSSES

I didn't have the beard then. I was a lieutenant.

LAURA

Yes... I remember you.

Ulysses smiles at Joel.

ULYSSES
Your son, ma'am?

 LAURA
Yes.

Joel returns Ulysses's smile.

 ULYSSES
Uh... Is Marina--

 LAURA
Marina's not here. She's gone to
town for supplies.

 ULYSSES
When do you expect her back?

Laura tries to speak. Looks away.

 ULYSSES
Could I wait here? Until--

 LAURA
(blurts)
--Marina's married.

Ulysses stares at Laura.

 LAURA
She and... her husband... They have
a child.

 ULYSSES
A... child?

 LAURA
Yes. A girl.

Ulysses glances about at nothing in particular.

 ULYSSES
I see.

He draws a deep breath.

 ULYSSES
Would you give Marina a message?
From me?

 LAURA
Yes.

ULYSSES

Tell her... tell her Captain Grant
is... is happy for her. Will you
tell her that? Please.

Laura looks at the ground. Then nods.

LAURA

Yes. I will tell her... Captain
Grant.

ULYSSES

Thank you.

He dons his cap, paces briskly to his horse and mounts.

Without a look back, he digs his spurs into the horse's
flanks and gallops away.

INT. PROTESTANT CHURCH - DAY

Ulysses, somber, in full dress uniform, walks from the altar
with a happy Julia in her white wedding dress.

The MINISTER who has just performed the ceremony beams as
GUESTS applaud and cheer their congratulations.

INT. RECEPTION HALL - LATER

The wedding cake has been cut. Tables are covered with food.
Guests eat, chat and dance to fiddle music. Many of the men
are in military uniform.

Ulysses stands in a corner, apart from the others. Receiving
a lecture.

JESSE

The rank of captain is respectable
son, but... well, it's a shame you
couldn't have done better.

Ulysses's jaw works. Expressionless.

JESSE

Still, with all these Indian wars
in the territories we took from
Mexico there'll be plenty of
opportunity to move up the ranks.
(sips from a cup)
Where are they sending you?

Ulysses stares at the floor.

ULYSSES
California.

JESSE
Wild country out there. Can't take
your wife to a place like that.

ULYSSES
No, sir.

JESSE
You know, son, the war's been good
to us. Business is booming. Things
don't work out, you don't get
promotions, you can always come
work with your brothers and me.

Ulysses nods imperceptibly. Jesse's attention is elsewhere --

JESSE
Son, excuse me. I need to talk to
that man over there about some
horses he's gotta sell. Cheap.

Ulysses watches his father rush toward a huddle of men. He
pulls out a flask, unscrews the cap, takes a long drink --

HANNAH (O.S.)
That's not going to help.

Startled, Ulysses turns quickly. Hannah stands there.

HANNAH
You never drank before, Ulysses. Now
you're doing quite a lot of it.

Ulysses returns the flask to his coat pocket.

HANNAH
Ulysses, this is a hard and
unforgiving world. If you are to
achieve anything in it, amount to
anything, you must be strong. You
must never succumb to weakness.

ULYSSES
Yes, Mother. You've told me that.
Many times.
(beat)
Good night, Mother.

Hannah watches Ulysses walk rapidly to a door and exit the
reception hall still crowded with happy celebrants.

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

A long, pinewood table is barely visible in a room faintly lit by the amber glow from a beeswax candle in a mariner's brass lantern.

A long object on the table is covered with a grey woolen blanket.

A door opens. Ulysses, in full dress uniform, enters.

Barefoot.

Ulysses approaches the table, hesitates, then pulls away the blanket. He jumps back at the sight of--

THE NAKED CORPSE of the young Mexican soldier he killed in Texas. Fresh blood snakes from the sword wound.

The boy's eyes OPEN -- darkness, like two holes in space. He grabs Ulysses's hand.

Ulysses struggles frantically to break free from the boy's claw-like grasp. He cannot.

The boy pulls Ulysses toward the darkness of his eyes...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ulysses flails, almost striking Julia in bed next to him.

JULIA

Ulysses, wake up! Wake up!

Ulysses bolts up in bed. Drenched in sweat, huffing.

JULIA

Ulysses?

Ulysses stumbles out of bed. Pulls on his pants. Walks to a dresser on which sits coins, a pocket knife... and Marina's gold medallion.

He picks up the medallion and holds it tightly in a trembling right hand. His breathing steadies.

JULIA

Are you all right? Did you have
another bad dream?

Donning a blue wool army jacket, Ulysses walks to the door.

ULYSSES
(raspy voice)
Heard something outside. Got to
go... go check on the horses.

Julia watches Ulysses exit the room.

EXT. FURROWED FARMLAND - LATER

Ulysses staggers across plowed ground under a gibbous moon
and a million bright stars.

He stops to imbibe from a flask. Then continues to slip and
stumble over the loose mounds of dirt.

He stops next to a barren tree. He sinks to his knees, brings
his closed right fist close to his face. Opens his hand,
gazes at the labyrinth engraved on the gold medallion.

He presses the medallion to his lips and closes his eyes.

EXT. WOOD FRAME COURTHOUSE - DAY

Activity bustles around a newly constructed courthouse.
Overhead flies the Lone Star flag of Texas.

Men on horseback come and go. Buckboards filled with lumber
and workers reflect the postwar prosperity and building boom.

SUPER: "1853"

EXT. CORRAL - DAY

Attired in vaquero clothes, Marina leads a mustang pony and
looks back at her daughter ADELA, 7, -- who sits in the
saddle with pert aplomb. Reddish curls frame a fresh face.

ADELA
I'm not a baby, Mama. I know how to
ride. Let me have the reins!

MARINA
When he gets used to you, Adela.

Don Alberto approaches the corral, watches with pride.
Returns Adela's wave.

ADELA
Abuelo, look!

DON ALBERTO
Yes, Adelita. You have your own
horse now! Bravo!

Marina leads the pony to where her father is standing. She
gives the reins to Adela.

MARINA
All right, Adela. You may ride him
around the corral. But be careful.

Marina and Don Alberto watch Adela ride off.

MARINA
She was born to ride.

DON ALBERTO
Just like her mother. You rode
before you could walk.

MARINA
Adela, not too fast! Be careful!

Don Alberto smiles at his anxious daughter. Then...

DON ALBERTO
Marina, when was the last time you
saw Luis?

Engrossed in brushing dirt from her jacket, Marina pretends
not to hear her father's question.

DON ALBERTO
I can't remember the last time Luis
was here. A wife's place is with
her husband. And Adelita needs to
be with her father.

MARINA
Luis is with Benito Juarez in
Oaxaca. There have been more
setbacks. Santa Anna overthrew the
government in Mexico City.

DON ALBERTO
(hotly)
Every time we make a little
progress, Santa Anna returns and
there is more fighting! That man is
a curse to our nation!

MARINA

Our nation, Papa? Where we live is
no longer Mexico. We are citizens
of the United States now.

DON ALBERTO

(grimaces)

Be that as it may, Marina. Luis is
your husband and you should be--

Wanting no part of this conversation, Marina whirls, barks --

MARINA

Adelita, not so fast! Be careful!

EXT. CALDERON HACIENDA - DAY

Marina and Laura prune roses in the front garden. Adela and
Joel, now 8, play a chaotic game of tag.

A hundred yards off, two vaqueros dig postholes for a fence.

Marina looks up to see a horse drawn buckboard approach the
vaqueros and halt. The vaqueros listen, point down the road.

MARINA

Someone asking directions again. So
much traffic on the road.

LAURA

Marina, there is something I've
been putting off. But I must tell
you. Beto and I... we're moving
away.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The lone driver of the buckboard peers toward the garden at
Laura and Marina. He shades his eyes from the sun --

It's Demas, the Hudspeths' slave.

MARINA (V.O.)

Moving away? Laura! I don't
understand. You're not happy here?

Demas drives his team away but continues to glance back over
his shoulder at the garden.

LAURA (V.O.)
We love it here, Marina. But every day, more and more white folks move to this area. And... well, I'm still a slave.

Demas's eyes are wide with recognition.

EXT. CALDERON HACIENDA - DAY

MARINA
You're not a slave, Laura! Why would you say such a thing?

LAURA
Under the laws of the state of Texas, I am. I could be forced to return to the people who purchased me. They could take my son too.

MARINA
I would never let that happen!

LAURA
Marina, you and your father could be arrested for harboring a fugitive slave. Your property confiscated. I can't let that happen. Beto and I must leave Texas. The United States.

MARINA
But... where will you go?

LAURA
Santa Rosa. Just across the Rio Bravo. Less than a day's ride from here. In Mexico.

Marina gazes forlornly at nothing in particular.

LAURA
Other fugitive slaves have gone there. They farm. They ranch. They're free there. There is no slavery in Mexico.
(beat)
Luis told us of Santa Rosa. He goes there often to help people who are sick. He's there now.

Marina lowers her head.

LAURA

Marina. Go to him. Despite all
that's happened, Luis loves you.

Laura smiles at the sight of Adela and Joel playing.

LAURA

And he loves Adelita. As much as if
she were his own.

MARINA

How could he love me, Laura? After
what I did? After...

LAURA

You were young, Marina. He... the
soldier... was young. We all make
mistakes.

She touches Marina's hand.

LAURA

Luis never stopped loving you,
Marina. His pride was wounded
but... he never stopped loving you.
That is why he married you.

MARINA

He married me to appease Papa. To
avoid scandal.

LAURA

And because he loves you.

She waits until Marina looks at her.

LAURA

There is such a thing as
forgiveness, Marina.

MARINA

I don't know if I can forgive
myself. And I can never forget...
(whispers)
I can never forget.

EXT. CALDERON HACIENDA - DAY

Demas and the buckboard have returned -- accompanied by a
SHERIFF and FOUR DEPUTIES on horseback.

Seated next to Demas in the buckboard is Gordon Hudspeth.

In the back -- Rita -- older, and meaner. And the twins, Danny and Gerald, now hardy TEENAGE BOYS.

The men dismount. All but Demas exit the buckboard.

Rita clutches a rifle.

SHERIFF

I'll do the talking, Mr. Hudspeth.

And put that rifle away, ma'am.

(to deputy)

Ross, you and Foley go 'round back.

Have a look see.

The two deputies, ROSS, 30s, and FOLEY, 20s, depart.

Tired and world-weary, the Sheriff lumbers to the hacienda, heaves a sigh, and knocks. Don Alberto opens the door.

DON ALBERTO

Yes? May I help you?

SHERIFF

There's been a report of a runaway working here. I have a warrant to search the premises.

DON ALBERTO

Run... way? I don't understand.

What is... how you say... run way?

Marina appears at the door.

RITA

That's her, Sheriff! The Meskin woman I tol' you 'bout. The day they stole our girl. She was right thar with 'em! Actin' all high and mighty. Thievin' Meskin!

SHERIFF

That true, Miss? You take these folks' slave?

MARINA

Laura came with us of her own volition at a time when this land was a part of Mexico. Slavery was illegal in Mexico.

SHERIFF

I see. Where's this Laura now?

MARINA

She lives in Mexico.

GORDON

See, Sheriff? She admits she helped our girl run off to Mexico. That's a violation of the fugitive slave law.

RITA

Anyone who steals a slave must forfeit his properties to compensate the 'grieved party. It's the law!

MARINA

We didn't steal Laura. This was part of Mexico at the time. Slavery was illegal in Mexico. What we did was not illegal.

RITA

This property now belongs to us! Do your duty, Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Ma'am, I'll handle this. Go on back to your wagon.

Ross returns from behind the hacienda, marching three of Don Alberto's vaqueros before him at gunpoint.

ROSS

Found this bunch 'round back.

SHERIFF

Any sign of the girl?

ROSS

No. But Foley's checkin' inside.

Marina turns quickly to go back inside.

ADELA (O.S.)

Mama!

Adela appears at the door, her right arm grasped in the hard left hand of Foley. He jerks her roughly.

Marina runs to Adela --

Foley SLAMS the barrel of his pistol across Marina's head. She falls down, dazed.

DON ALBERTO

Marina!

Don Alberto rushes toward Marina --

A SHOT rings out.

Don Alberto falls to the ground.

Rita lowers the rifle. Smoke wafts from the barrel.

Demas stares in horror.

Marina crawls to her father and takes his hand.

MARINA

Papa?

Don Alberto gasps for breath. Blood flows from his mouth.

DON ALBERTO

Marina... my angel...

Don Alberto dies.

MARINA

Papa!

Terrified, Adela runs to and clutches her mother.

Furious, the Sheriff rounds on Rita.

SHERIFF

Goddamn, Miss Hudspeth! Why'd you go and do that? I tole you to put that rifle down. Goddamn!

RITA

He rushed yoar deputy, Sheriff. He had a knife! Was gonna cut 'im!

FOLEY

He'd a kilt me with that knife, Sheriff. Kilt me for shore.

The sheriff surveys Don Alberto's body.

SHERIFF

Knife? He don't have no knife! Do you see a knife? Anywhere?

FOLEY

Uh... no, but... you know they all carry knives. He coulda had one! Comin' at me like he did. Can't take no chance. The lady here mighta saved my life.

(MORE)

FOLEY (CONT'D)

(nods his head)

I'm a thankin' you, ma'am.

Rita's expression of righteous indignation does not waver as she watches Marina and Adela clutch Don Alberto's body.

The deputies keep their pistols trained on the vaqueros. For a moment the only sounds are Marina's sobs.

ROSS

Sheriff? She admitted she stole these here folks' property. What we gonna do with her?

The Sheriff removes his hat and wipes beads of perspiration from his face. Ponders.

SHERIFF

We'll send her to Austin. They're the ones makin' all the fuss 'bout Meskins helpin' slaves run away.

ROSS

You gonna send for rangers to take her up there?

SHERIFF

No. Don't want her in my jail. Don't need no trouble with the Meskins round here. You and Foley take her up to Laredo. The ranger station there. They can take her to Austin.

As the men disperse, ARMANDO, 60s, a grey-bearded vaquero, hides in some shrubs. He watches the deputies position the limp Marina and terrified Adela on the back of a horse.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Ross leads Marina's horse. Foley follows. Clutching Adela, Marina stares straight ahead.

FOLEY

We ain't gonna make Laredo tonight. And I'm a gettin' hungry. Let's call it a day.

ROSS

We'll make camp up here a ways by that crick.

Foley pulls even with Marina's horse and leers at her.

ROSS

Foley. Get your mind offen it.

Foley grins broadly as they ride on.

A hundred yards behind, hidden by mesquite bushes, Armando shadows them on horseback.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Around the campfire, the deputies finish their meal. Marina and Adela huddle nearby. Foley rolls a cigarette and watches Marina. He takes a swig from a jug.

FOLEY

(shouts)

Eat them vittles, woman!

ROSS

Leave her be. That was her papacito got kilt today.

FOLEY

(laughs)

That old hag sure shot him good, didn't she? Square in the belly!

ROSS

Them Hudspeths gonna be mighty rich folks in these parts. The Calderons had some the finest horses in Texas. Now Hudspeths own 'em.

FOLEY

You think they gonna hang this here sinyurita up in Austin, Ross?

ROSS

Might. Been a lotta trouble with Meskins helpin' slaves run away down to Messico.

Foley stands. Takes another swig. Adjusts his pants.

FOLEY

Well hell, iffen they gonna hang 'er... ain't no use her goin' to waste.

ROSS

I said forget it. And put up that jug. We got a long ride tomorrow. I wanna get an early start.

Foley walks to where Marina and Adela are sitting and squats. He breathes into her face. She turns away from him.

FOLEY

Sinyurita, I'm jist gonna take a
lil' peek at how purty you be...

Foley slips his hand under Marina's blouse -- Marina SLASHES him across the face with her fingernails.

Foley jumps up, touches his face -- blood drips from deep cuts. He draws his knife.

ROSS

Foley! Put that away!

Foley seizes Adela by the hair, backs off two steps, and touches the blade to Adela's throat. He glares at Marina.

FOLEY

You do what I tell ya, woman, or
I'll cut her! Comprenday?

MARINA

Yes.

Lowering the blade from Adela's throat, Foley relaxes.

FOLEY

All right then. That's better. Now
get them clothes off. Shirt. Pants.
Everthin'! Be quick 'bout it.

Marina starts to unfasten her blouse.

LUIS (O.S.)

Let the girl go.

Foley turns in the direction of the voice.

Luis aims a pistol at Foley. Behind him stand Beto and Laura. Backed up by Armando and SEVEN BLACK MEN. All hold rifles trained on Foley and Ross.

Foley wavers... then his mouth twists into a snarl.

FOLEY

No greaser tells me what to do! You
drop that pistol, or I'll cut her
throat! Comprenday?

Foley starts to raise the knife.

Luis FIRES.

Bloody tissue oozes from a hole in Foley's head. He falls stone dead to the ground.

Luis hands the pistol to Beto, kneels, smiles at Adela and gestures for her to come to him.

ADELA

Papa?

Luis nods. She runs to him and flings herself into his arms. He holds her tightly.

ADELA

Papa!

Carrying Adela, Luis walks to Marina. He holds out his arm.

Marina goes to him. They embrace. Marina rests her head against Luis's chest. Tears flow from her eyes.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - GAMING HOUSE - NIGHT

Torches illuminate a gaming house in a seedy neighborhood. A sailor and a lady of the evening move aside as a drunk man almost stumbles into them.

SUPER: "SAN FRANCISCO"

INT. GAMING HOUSE - NIGHT

Men and women drink, talk, laugh and play games of chance at tables in a dimly lit, smoke-filled room.

Ulysses, in a crumpled uniform, disheveled, sits at one of the tables and plays poker with THREE LIEUTENANTS. They sip whiskey and smoke cigars.

At a nearby table, a CIVILIAN, 40s, plays cards with FOUR COMPANIONS. His suit is almost as loud as his voice.

CIVILIAN

And I tell you somethin' else. After we won the war, we shoulda put the meskins on reservations. Same as injuns. That's right. Reservations.

Ulysses stiffens. Eyes the man.

LIEUTENANT #1

He's drunk.

CIVILIAN

'Cause that's all a meskin is. An
injun too dumb to speak en'lish!

The companions laugh. Ulysses gets up.

CIVILIAN

Better yet, send 'em to Messico! We
won the war. To the victor belongs
the spoils!

(burps)

So, shouldn't be no meskins still
livin' here. Send 'em to Messico.
Ain't nothing but desert down there
no how. Send 'em all!

The companions's laughter fades as Ulysses approaches their
table. Stands over the loud civilian.

The civilian sneers at Ulysses.

CIVILIAN

Wadya gawkin' at, soldier boy?
Forget where you was--

Ulysses jerks the civilian from his seat, then slams his fist
into the man's jaw, sending him reeling backward over a
table. Cards and poker chips go flying.

The companions stand but step back when Ulysses, his fists
poised to strike again, glares at them.

On the floor, the civilian spits out a tooth and wipes blood
from his mouth. He slithers backwards as Ulysses approaches
him again.

CIVILIAN

Get him away! Get him away! Look at
him! His eyes! He's crazy! Get him
away from me! He's crazy!

The three lieutenants grab Ulysses and usher him from the
tavern as the civilian spits another tooth from his mouth.

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

A company of soldiers stand at ease before a table on which
is stacked money. A gruff, burly SERGEANT faces them.

Ulysses steps from the barracks. His beard and hair are
unkempt. His bloodshot eyes are swollen and his face puffy.

SERGEANT
Attention!

The men snap to attention.

Ulysses walks unsteadily toward the table. The sergeant executes a smart salute.

SERGEANT
Sir! Company B. All present and
accounted for. Sir!

Ulysses sways back and forth. He returns the salute. The sergeant does a crisp about face.

SERGEANT
Company B! Form single line!

The soldiers shift to a line formation. Ulysses continues to sway. He closes his eyes and nods off.

SERGEANT
Sir?

Ulysses opens his eyes. Looks about.

ULYSSES
(hoarse voice)
Why are these men here?

SERGEANT
Sir. It's pay day. Sir.

Ulysses steps toward the table... stumbles. Reaches out to stop himself from falling -- the table tips over and money and papers spill everywhere. And Ulysses lands among them.

Some of the men laugh but stop abruptly when the sergeant glares at them.

INT. COLONEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Ulysses stands at attention before the desk of LT. COLONEL ROBERT C. BUCHANAN, 50s, whose hawkish eyes are magnified by the thick lenses in his steel-rimmed spectacles.

BUCHANAN
Grant, how many times have I warned
you about your drinking?

Ulysses stares straight ahead at nothing.

BUCHANAN

Did you hear me, Captain Grant? I asked you a question!

ULYSSES

I do not recall the number. Sir.

Buchanan holds up a stack of papers.

BUCHANAN

These are the protocols for your court martial.

(beat)

But because of your outstanding record of service to our nation in time of war, I'm willing to waive a court martial on condition that you resign your commission. Immediately.

Ulysses closes his eyes.

ULYSSES

My resignation will be on your desk within the hour. Sir.

Buchanan returns Ulysses's unsteady salute and watches him slump to the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WOOD FRAME FARMHOUSE - DAY

Ulysses, in dirty civilian work clothes, trudges toward the house.

SUPER: "1857"

Bounding down the porch steps of the house, FREDDIE, 7, playfully rushes his father.

FREDDIE

Mister, you want to fight?

ULYSSES

I'm a man of peace -- but I'll not be hectorred by a man of your size.

They wrestle. Julia comes to the door.

JULIA

Freddie, go wash up. Dinner's almost ready.

Freddie goes inside. Ulysses sits on the porch steps and glumly surveys the surrounding fields.

ULYSSES

Not going to make a crop, Julia.
Everything's drying up. Just not
enough rain.

Julia steps outside and sits beside Ulysses.

ULYSSES

Don't know what we're going to do.
I suppose I can try selling
firewood again. What we've got left
from those trees I cleared off the
north pasture last spring.

Julia places her arm around her husband.

ULYSSES

I'm sorry, Julia. Guess I wasn't
cut out to be a farmer. Or...
really much of anything.
(beat)
Only thing I was ever a success at
was... killing men... boys...

JULIA

Please don't start talking about
that again, Ulysses. Please.

Ulysses stares out at the fields -- barren of all but a few stalks of wilting corn.

JULIA

You could work for your father. The
tannery? Remember what he said.

Ulysses closes his eyes. Julia looks at him with a moue of concern and disappointment.

JULIA

Well, get washed up. Mrs. Simms
brought us a quarter of the hog
they butchered yesterday. We won't
go hungry. Not today anyway.

She goes in the house. Ulysses slumps down in a posture of shame and resignation.

EXT. PAWNSHOP - DAY

Ulysses steps down from a ramshackle buckboard drawn by a blind mule. Cords of firewood lie stacked in the bed.

Hands in pockets, Ulysses ambles slowly to the store. Outside, a crude, handpainted sign reads "PAWNSHOP".

INT. PAWNSHOP - DAY

Ulysses stands before the OWNER, 40s, an amiable man who makes an attempt to camouflage pity with an overstated grin.

OWNER

Still got quite a bit of firewood left over from what you brought me last month, Cap'n Grant. And, you know, with summer comin' and all.

Ulysses nods, turns to go.

OWNER

Cap'n Grant?

Ulysses turns as the owner retrieves Marina's medallion from under a counter.

OWNER

This medallion you pawned last month? Feller came by and looked at it and--

ULYSSES

--You didn't sell it, did you? I still have thirty days to redeem it. Don't I? Thirty days?

OWNER

Yes, sir. Sure do. I'm not gonna sell it, but this feller that come by knows 'bout these things. Says it's real old and worth more than I give you for it. Considerable more. I didn't realize it was made out of gold. Pure gold.

The owner retrieves a money box from under the counter, opens it and removes some paper money.

Ulysses steps back.

ULYSSES

You gave me a fair price. I'll be
redeeming it shortly. But thank you.

He starts to leave, hesitates, turns.

ULYSSES

Do you have some work you need
doing around here? Today?

OWNER

Not really, Cap'n.

ULYSSES

Your johnny-house is a little rank.
Let me swab it out for you.

The owner looks uncomfortable.

OWNER

Cap'n Grant, I can't have you doin'
that. You bein' a cap'n in the war
and all. I fought in that war
and... and I just can't have you do
that. No, sir.

ULYSSES

Let me clean it out for you. I
could... I could use a couple
dollars right now.

OWNER

Oh, Cap'n Grant...

EXT. WOOD FRAME FARMHOUSE - EVENING

Ulysses, covered in filth, reins his mule to a halt. Climbs
down from the buckboard. He shambles toward the house.

Julia throws open the door. Her face is stricken.

JULIA

Ulysses! It's Freddie!

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MRS. SIMMS, 50s, a matronly neighbor, stands over a weak and
feverish Freddie in his bed. Julia and Ulysses rush in.

Mrs. Simms removes a wash rag from a bowl, wrings out water
and wipes Freddie's sweat-drenched face.

MRS. SIMMS

I fear it's pneumonia, Mr. Grant.

Ulysses hurries to the bed, wipes his hands on a towel, touches Freddie's forehead.

ULYSSES

Where's Dr. Gorlitz?

JULIA

We haven't paid his bill in months.
How can we ask Dr. Gorlitz to come
if we can't pay him?

Ulysses starts for the door.

JULIA

Ulysses...

Ulysses turns.

ULYSSES

He'll be paid, Julia.

INT. TANNERY OFFICE - DAY

Dressed in the attire of a store clerk, Ulysses sits alone at a roll top desk. Stares blankly at an open ledger book.

He gets up from the desk, crosses to a window. Pulls back the shade and peers out.

EXT. TANNERY YARD - DAY

Horses are being led to the bracing irons where men with sledges wait. Beyond, men remove hides from steaming vats.

INT. TANNERY OFFICE - DAY

Ulysses closes the shade. Returns to his desk.

He pours whiskey into a glass. Downs it in one swallow. Refills the glass, downs another shot.

He sits back. Breathes deeply. Several times. Stares blankly at the open ledger book. Closes the book.

He reaches into his coat pocket. Pulls out something clutched tightly in his fist. More deep breaths. Opens his hand -- Marina's gold medallion.

He traces the tip of his index finger over the labyrinth engraved on the medallion. Gently. Closes his eyes. Lowers his head.

EXT. MEXICAN VILLAGE - DAY

Small, neatly-kept houses, some with thatched roofs, others with red slate tiles, border well-tended fields of cotton.

DOZENS OF MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN -- Mexicans and former American slaves -- work in gardens or make preparations for meals at outside fireplaces.

SUPER: "SANTA ROSA, MEXICO, 1861"

EXT. PATIO - DAY

Marina and Laura prepare a meal. Marina turns toward the garden where Adela and Joel, now a HANDSOME COUPLE IN THEIR TEENS, pick tomatoes.

MARINA

Adela! Joel! Hurry up with those!
Dinner's almost ready.

Adela casts an admiring glance at Joel.

ADELA

We need to feed the horses before
dinner, Mama!

MARINA

Bring us the tomatoes first!

Adela drops off the basket of tomatoes on the table before Marina and Laura. She and Joel race away.

LAURA

Horses. That's all those children
think about.

MARINA

They're starting to think about a
few other things.

She cast a smile to Laura, who chuckles.

LAURA

Time flies, doesn't it?

MARINA

At least the fighting's over. We finally have peace.

Laura sits down to slice yellow squash.

LAURA

Do you ever miss Texas, Marina?

Marina shakes her head that she does not.

LAURA

When Beto goes to Matamoros for supplies, he sees the vaqueros who used to work at the hacienda.

Marina empties ground corn into a bowl of water.

LAURA

Mr. Hudspeth started a freight company with your horses. He seems to be doing quite well.

Marina stirs the corn and water into a paste.

LAURA

I was the reason you lost your ranch. It was--

Marina turns on her with passionate eyes.

MARINA

--Don't ever even think that, Laura. Your life means more to me than all the ranches in Texas!

Luis and Beto rush quickly into the patio.

BETO

The norteamericanos are at war!

Laura drops the bowl in her lap.

LAURA

They're... they're invading Mexico again? They're coming here?!

Beto embraces and comforts a frantic Laura.

BETO

No. They're not coming here. This time the norteamericanos are fighting each other.

MARINA

Each other? What...
 (looks at Luis)
 I don't understand.

LUIS

The southern states formed their own
 country. They declared war on the
 United States.
 (beat)
 There has been much fighting and the
 southern states are winning.

EXT. CALDERON HACIENDA - DAY

DOZENS of well-dressed PARTY-GOERS enjoy a celebration. Women
 in hoop skirts and men in long-tailed frock coats chatter
 happily, eat, drink and dance to fiddle music.

Demas, wearing a long-tailed frock coat, a black tie and
 white gloves, supervises FIFTEEN SLAVES -- men, women and
 children -- who scurry about with refreshments.

Rita and Gordon float from group to group, making certain
 that everyone is well-fed and having a delightful time.

Danny and Gerald, now high-spirited YOUNG MEN, dance with
 young belles, drink spirits and whoop and holler.

Suddenly, Danny points at the road.

DANNY

Yankees!

A squad of SOLDIERS IN GREY march a group of BLUE-UNIFORMED
 SOLDIERS before them at gunpoint.

The music stops as everyone turns to watch the procession --
 led by A SOLDIER holding aloft the Confederate battle flag.

GORDON

Union garrison from Fort Brown. Our
 boys takin' 'em up to the prison in
 Huntsville.

RITA

Prison? Oughta hang 'em! Damn
 Yankees tellin' us how to run our
 country. Hang 'em all and that
 nigger-lovin' Abe Lincoln too!

GORDON

Now, now, Mrs. Hudspeth. Don't get yourself all in a huff. Calm down.

Gordon and several of the men offer patronizing chuckles to each other's grinning faces.

DANNY

Look at them fancy uniforms our boys are a wearin'!

GERALD

Papa, let us join up! We wanna kill Yankees and wear fancy uniforms like them boys are a wearin'!

The older men nod their approval of the youthful enthusiasm. A GREY BEARDED MAN lights a cigar.

GREY BEARDED MAN

Better let your lads enlist soon, Mr. Hudspeth. This war's gonna be over in two months. Three at most.

GORDON

Let's hope it lasts a bit longer than that, sir.

The men look into each other's puzzled faces.

GORDON

Lincoln's blockaded all our ports. Only way we can ship our cotton abroad is through Mexican ports. Shippin' cotton through Texas to Mexico is good for the freight haulin' business. There are fortunes to be made in this war!
(laughs)
Let's not get it over too quick.

The smiles fade to disapproving frowns. Gordon notices.

GORDON

Uh... but you're right, sir. The war can't last too long. We got all the good generals? Lee. Jackson. Beauregard. Who the Yankees got? Nobody. Least ways, nobody who knows how to fight!

The men relax and join in appreciative laughter.

EXT. GALENA, ILLINOIS - HOUSE - DAY

Ulysses, wearing a crumpled brown suit and a ragged bowler hat, takes his leave of Julia and their four children and ambles down the street.

EXT. MUNICIPAL BUILDING - LATER

Ulysses drifts up to the edge of a CROWD OF MEN AND WOMEN as a clerk posts lists of soldiers killed in battle.

SUPER: "GALENA, ILLINOIS"

People in the crowd press forward to see. Some of them wail loudly. Some sob. Others close their eyes in relief.

Lowering his head, Ulysses walks away --

RIGHT INTO a man wearing the blue uniform of a major in the Illinois militia -- FRED.

Fred grabs Ulysses's arm.

FRED

Sam! I've been looking for you!

ULYSSES

Hello, Fred.

FRED

Sam, you've got to enlist and request a commission!

Ulysses, hands crammed in pockets, resumes walking at an aimless pace. Fred follows.

FRED

We're going to lose this war unless we get some officers who know what they're doing.

ULYSSES

The army's not going to give me a commission. Not after California.

FRED

Maybe not the regular army. But I know Governor Yates. He'll make you an officer in the Illinois militia. It'll most likely be federalized in a few weeks, and you're back in the regular army.

Ulysses stops. Turns his gaze back to the people comforting each other outside the municipal building.

ULYSSES

Fred, we shouldn't be losing this war. With the blockade, their economy should be in a shambles by now. They can't export their cotton. But they're well equipped with first class weaponry and gunpowder.

(beat)

Where are they getting it? How are they paying for it?

FRED

The southern growers freight their cotton overland down through Texas and into Mexico. They ship their cotton through Mexican ports. Tampico. Veracruz. Sell it to the French, who in turn sell them weapons and powder.

Ulysses stares at Fred.

ULYSSES

Mexico's letting the rebels use its ports? I thought Benito Juarez was our friend.

FRED

His opponents control the ports, backed up by French warships. Just a matter of time before the French bring down Juarez's government entirely.

Ulysses frowns.

ULYSSES

If the French take over Mexico...

He stares in the distance at empty space.

FRED

Sam, if France takes control of Mexico, this war will drag on for years.

(beat)

And we could lose it.

Ulysses comes to.

ULYSSES

You said you know Governor Yates?

EXT. VERACRUZ - DAY

The FRENCH FLAG waves in the breeze on the mast of a French man-of-war in Veracruz harbor. Lights FLASH. Cannons ROAR.

SUPER: "VERACRUZ, Mexico"

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

French troops advance. Mexican soldiers fall back in retreat.

EXT. MEXICO CITY - NATIONAL PALACE - DAY

A tattered MEXICAN FLAG flies. Below, people flee the plaza under the bombardment of French cannons.

SUPER: "MEXICO CITY"

INT. OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT - DAY

BENITO JUAREZ, 40s, packs papers into a satchel. Stone-faced and somber, Juarez's black hair and dark complexion reflect his Indian heritage. He wears a simple black suit, a white shirt and a black ribbon tie.

SIX AIDES scurry about with boxes and satchels.

AIDE

Hurry, Señor Presidente! The French
are just outside the city now!

Juarez and his entourage rush from the room.

EXT. PRESIDENTIAL PALACE - BACK DOOR - DAY

Aides look about anxiously as Juarez walks to a horse-drawn carriage. An escort of twelve dragoons calm horses made nervous by sounds of artillery.

AIDE

Señor Presidente, where will our
new capital be?

Juarez gestures to the carriage.

BENITO JUAREZ

This is our capital.

He climbs into the carriage --

A cannonball WHISTLES in and SMASHES the brick wall next to the back door.

The horses gallop away in the shower of dust.

EXT. SANTA ROSA - GARDEN - DAY

Assisted by Adela and Joel, Luis and Beto secure gear to saddled horses. Marina and Laura watch.

Luis steps to Marina. They embrace.

LUIS

Let me see you smile. Before I go.

Marina manages a weak smile as tears stream down her face.

Beto embraces Laura. He pulls away and picks up his rifle.

JOEL

Papa, I want to fight the French too!

BETO

You must stay here, son. In case...

(beat)

Well... we need you here.

Luis and Beto mount and ride away, joined by other men, Mexican and former American slaves. They wave farewell to their loved ones.

Those left behind wave until the men are gone.

EXT. MISSIONARY RIDGE - BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Union Soldiers, bayonets fixed, advance shoulder to shoulder up the embankments of a steep hillside.

SUPER: "MISSIONARY RIDGE"

At the crest of the long stretch of hillside, CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS fire rifles and artillery at the approaching columns of UNION TROOPS.

As Union soldiers fall, their comrades close ranks to maintain the advancing lines. They raise their rifles and return fire.

Confederate soldiers, hit by the fusillade, collapse -- their places taken by reserves who fix bayonets and prepare to stand against the Union onslaught.

EXT. ADJOINING HILL - DAY

Ulysses peers through field glasses at the battle.

On the shoulders of his blue uniform are two stars.

FIVE STAFF OFFICERS and SEVEN RUNNERS await his orders.

EXT. MISSIONARY RIDGE - DAY

The Union and Confederate soldiers engage in bloody hand-to-hand combat.

The soldiers cut, slash, slice and hack at each other with bayonets, swords, knives and hatchets.

A Confederate soldier SLAMS a hatchet into a Union soldier, who grunts and falls.

A Union soldier SLASHES his sword across the Confederate soldier's throat. The Confederate drops his rifle, clutches his throat... blood gushes through his fingers.

The blue and grey colors of the uniforms disappear under layers of dirt, blood and gore.

The CLANGS and RING of weaponry and the CRIES and SCREAMS of men in anguish become an indistinguishable ROAR.

EXT. ADJOINING HILL - DAY

Ulysses lowers the field glasses.

A cry of birds in the sky. He raises his head.

Seven cranes fly in V formation, high above the carnage.

QUICK FLASHES

Hand in hand, Marina and Ulysses, on the shore of the Laguna Madre. They wade in the shallow sea water.

Marina's face is filled with joy -- she points --

Seven cranes fly in formation, high in the soft blue sky.

Marina and Ulysses embrace.

RUNNER (O.S.)
General... Sir?

BACK TO SCENE

Ulysses snaps to. Accepts a dispatch from the runner.

EXT. MISSIONARY RIDGE - DAY

Waves of Union troops surge over the crest of the hill -- then pursue the Confederates, now routed and in full retreat.

The Confederate Battle Flag falls to the ground and is trampled underfoot by Union soldiers.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - LATER

Smoke shrouds the now silent battlefield. Men tend the wounded.

The dead are placed side by side in a long line of corpses and body pieces.

Next to an overturned caisson, a Union CORPORAL, 22, kneels over a Union PRIVATE, 17. The Private clutches a gaping stomach wound with trembling hands.

PRIVATE
(hoarse whisper)
I-I'm... th-thirsty...

The Corporal, face caked with dried mud, places a canteen to the private's lips.

The hollow-eyed Private is too weak to swallow. Water flows out of his mouth and washes over his trembling chin.

CORPORAL
You gonna be fine, Jamey. Try to
sleep iffen you can --

PRIVATE
T-tell my maw... w-where they... where
they bury... m-me.

CORPORAL
You gonna see your maw right soon,
Jamey boy. You just--

A shadow falls over them. The Corporal looks up to see Ulysses standing over them.

Ulysses touches his hand to the Corporal's shoulder to prevent his rising.

He kneels down next to the Private.

CORPORAL

Looky who's here, Jamey! Gen'rul
Grant. It's Gen'rul Grant!

PRIVATE

(weak smile)
Gen'rul... s-sir...

Ulysses grasps the Private's bloody outstretched hand.

Several feet behind Ulysses stand staff officers and aides.
They watch in respectful silence.

PRIVATE

Gen'rul... please. M-my maw...
Please t-tell my maw... w-where
they lay m-me...

He coughs up dark blood.

ULYSSES

I will tell your mother that you
are a brave soldier. She will be
proud of you. As am I.

A dispatch runner delivers a paper to a STAFF OFFICER. The
officer reads the paper.

The Private goes limp. His eyes glaze over. Ulysses loosens
his hand from the soldier's frozen grasp. Gets heavily to his
feet.

Holding the paper, the staff officer approaches Ulysses.

STAFF OFFICER

Telegram, sir. Washington City.

Ulysses reaches into a coat pocket. He withdraws the gold
medallion, grasps it tightly in a clenched fist which he
brings to his lips. He closes his eyes.

STAFF OFFICER

It's from President Lincoln, sir.

The staff officers exchange glances with each other.

STAFF OFFICER

The president wishes to see you,
General. Immediately. Sir.

Ulysses returns the medallion to his coat pocket and walks a
few yards to kneel beside another dying soldier.

INT. DEPT. OF WAR - MAP ROOM - NIGHT

Ulysses and PRESIDENT LINCOLN sit opposite each other in wood-frame chairs. They are alone in a corner of a spacious room lined with tables covered with maps and documents.

The only light is a soft amber glow beaming through the open door of a cast-iron, pot-belly stove.

ULYSSES

I was in the army less than eight years before I returned to civilian life. I enlisted in the Illinois militia just a little more than a year ago. I've not had sufficient experience to undertake what you are asking me to do.

Lincoln's face is obscured by shadow as he holds his hands open to absorb heat from the stove.

ULYSSES

I served under several of your generals when I was a junior officer in the war with Mexico. Sixteen years ago. It would be inappropriate for me to serve as their commander now.

Lincoln leans forward. The deep creases lining his gaunt face are accentuated by the shadows of the flickering light.

LINCOLN

General Grant, you've demonstrated an ability unique among my generals. The ability to defeat rebel armies decisively and with dispatch. That is what I'm asking you to do. End this war. And end it quickly.

ULYSSES

I'm honored by your confidence in my abilities as a soldier, but I'm only forty-two years old, sir. It is all happening too quickly. Frankly, it all seems somehow... improbable.

Lincoln stands. He gestures for Ulysses to remain seated. He steps to the stove and stokes the fire with three small logs.

He wipes his hands on a soiled rag, folds it carefully, neatly, then stuffs it into a coat pocket.

LINCOLN

General Grant... Ulysses... much of what happens to us in life is improbable, as you put it. None of us truly understand the things that happen to us in this world. Why they happen as they do. When they do. What I've come to believe is that all events that occur, large or small, probable or improbable, do so in accord with divine ordinance.

(smiles)

Someday I hope we have the leisure to discuss this in more depth. It's a topic I find most fascinating.

(beat)

But for now, I require your answer to my request. There is much work to be done. And little time to do it.

INT. MARINA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Adela and Joel rush in with packages. Laura and Marina sit at a table rolling cloth bandages.

ADELA

The supply wagon came from Laredo. I think the instruments Papa ordered came. Joel, open this one.

Joel uses a knife to cut wrapping from a bolt of cloth.

ADELA

Yes. Papa's instruments. And Mama, your newspaper from San Antonio.

Marina takes the paper, opens it, reads silently as Adela and Joel remove wrappings from more packages and Laura rolls more bandages.

LAURA

Anything about what's happening in Mexico?

MARINA

There is a report about a former president of the United States. John Tyler. He's been meeting with French generals in Mexico City.

(continues reading)

This Tyler is from Virginia and he's representing the president of the Confederate States. Jefferson Davis.

Laura stops rolling a bandage.

LAURA

Davis? If Louis Bonaparte helps the Confederate States and they help him in Mexico...

(beat)

It could be bad. For us. And for the United States. Does it explain why they're meeting?

MARINA

No. Nothing more. There's very little news about Mexico. Most of the news is about the war in the United States.

She turns a page.

MARINA

It says here that President Lincoln named a new general to command all of his armies. His name is...

Marina looks up. Lays the paper on the table. She stands, hesitates, then bolts from the room.

ADELA

Mama?

Laura picks up the newspaper. Scans the lines.

ADELA

Is Mama sick? I'd better go--

Laura stops Adela's leaving with a touch on the arm.

LAURA

No, Adela. She'll be fine. She's just been having... uh, an upset stomach today. She'll be alright.

(smiles)

Come on, you two! Make yourselves useful. Help me with these bandages.

EXT. MEXICAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A convoy of twelve wagons, stacked with bales of cotton and pulled by teams of oxen, moves slowly under the escort of THIRTY CONFEDERATE CAVALRY.

Demas drives the lead wagon. Seated beside him, Gordon, in an elegant frock coat, a ruffled blue silk shirt, a string tie and a stove top hat.

Gordon smiles as Danny and Gerald, wearing the uniforms of Confederate cavalry officers, gallop past his wagon.

GORDON

Look at those boys, Demas. Officers in the Confederate cavalry! Isn't that something?

DEMAS

Yes, sir. And right handsome in them uniforms too.

GORDON

Should be. Mrs. Hudspeth had six of her girls working on nothing but those uniforms for three weeks.

TEN HORSEMEN appear on the horizon.

Gordon raises his hand to halt the convoy. All peer anxiously in the distance.

They relax to see the riders are FRENCH DRAGOONS escorting a convoy of horse-drawn artillery.

Their CAPTAIN, a debonair man with a painstakingly coiffured mustache, halts before them.

CAPTAIN

Bon Jour, Monsieur Hudspeth.

GORDON

Captain.

CAPTAIN

I apologize for being late. We were scouting a report that Benito Juarez has been sighted in this area. We are satisfied the report is unfounded.

(beat)

So now we are ready to take possession of your shipment.

GORDON

Fine. Fine. And I see you have the pieces we requested.

CAPTAIN

Yes, Monsieur. Ten eight pounders.

GORDON
Wonderful. We'll --

Everyone turns at the RUMBLING SOUND of approaching horsemen.

CAPTAIN
Merde! Juaristas!

Beto leads TWENTY MEN men on horseback as they charge the convoy. Fifteen of the men fire rifles -- the others carry torches.

The French Captain is hit and falls from his horse.

Demas and the other drivers jump from the wagons and get under them for cover.

The torch-bearers move from wagon to wagon, setting their loads of cotton ablaze. The cotton flames up furiously.

Gordon fires a pistol at the Juaristas.

Beto aims his rifle at Gordon -- hesitates at the sight of his former employer.

Gordon continues to fire. Beto takes a bullet in his arm. He shakes it off. FIRES back --

Gordon falls from the wagon. Dead.

The French dragoons and Confederate cavalrymen try to calm their frenzied mounts. Several are shot before they can even bring their weapons to bear.

The Juaristas beat a retreat toward nearby hills.

The French dragoons and Confederate cavalry pursue. Danny and Gerald spur their horses to an excited gallop.

Demas crawls from under a wagon. Stares at Gordon's body.

EXT. HILLS - MOMENTS LATER

The Juarista horsemen race through a pass between two hills.

The dragoons and cavalrymen speed after in pursuit.

Suddenly, ONE HUNDRED JUARISTAS spring from concealment on the heights. Among them is Benito Juarez. Beside him, Luis.

A thunder of gunfire rains down on the pursuers.

Juaristas with machetes run down and engage the survivors. The battle is brief and bloody. Victorious for the Juaristas.

EXT. HILLS - LATER

Luis dresses the wound Beto has suffered. He ties off a bandage. President Juarez approaches them.

LUIS

He has a bullet in his arm. I can't take it out here.

PRESIDENT JUAREZ

You're familiar with this country, Luis. What is the nearest village?

Beto looks up eagerly.

BETO

Santa Rosa, Señor Presidente!

LUIS

It's our village, Benito. Our families are there.

PRESIDENT JUAREZ

Then that is where we will go.

The bodies of the Hudspeth twins are carried to a row of shallow graves. Beto, Louis and President Juarez watch.

PRESIDENT JUAREZ

Soon there will be crying. Mothers and fathers. Wives and children. There will be tears. But they will not be French tears or American tears or Mexican tears.

(shakes head sadly)

They will just be tears.

EXT. SANTA ROSA - DAY

Outside the town, the Juaristas, bedraggled and weary, are met by villagers. The villages rush to help those in need.

Along with Laura and Marina, Joel and Adela anxiously survey the faces of those who trudge by.

A WOMAN from the village rushes to embrace her limping HUSBAND, who uses a tree limb as a makeshift crutch. A SMALL GIRL runs to her FATHER, who swoops her up happily.

Luis appears, beside Beto, being carried on a stretcher. The families run to them.

JOEL

Papa!

LAURA

Beto! You're hurt!

LUIS

He'll be fine, Laura. I need to remove a bullet, but he'll be fine.

(to stretcher-bearers)

Take him to my house. Over there.

Thank you.

Laura and Joel follow the men carrying Beto. Luis embraces Marina and Adela.

President Juarez approaches, and removes his hat.

LUIS

Benito, this is my wife. Marina.
Our daughter. Adela.

MARINA

It is an honor, Señor Presidente.

PRESIDENT JUAREZ

Please, Marina. I am just Benito.

Marina offers a weak smile. Lowers her head.

LUIS

Marina... is something wrong?

MARINA

President Lincoln, Luis. He's dead.

LUIS

Dead? He was killed in a battle?

ADELA

No, Papa. He was shot by an assassin.

President Juarez lowers his head.

JOEL

The Norteamericanos' war is over,
Papa. The north won.

LUIS

Good. Finally, it means the end of slavery in the United States.

Luis looks back at President Juarez and motions to his house.

LUIS

Benito, you will stay with us.

Benito Juarez nods, waves them to go ahead.

Holding hands, Luis, Marina and Adela walk to the house.

Benito Juarez gazes forlornly at the horizon.

EXT. FLOWER GARDEN - DAY

A war council is taking place in the garden. Several dozen Juaristas and villagers are in attendance. Some sit on the ground, while others stand.

Beto, a clean bandage on his arm, sits on a blanket with Laura. Nearby on a bench, Marina holds the hand of her tired husband. Adela and Joel stand behind them.

Benito Juarez sits on a cane bottomed chair. He is flanked by officers of the republican army, including GENERAL PORFIRIO DIAZ, late 40s, a compactly-built, strong-willed warrior.

GENERAL DIAZ

Sir, I am telling you nothing you do not know. The few weapons we have are falling apart in our hands, most beyond repair. Our stores of powder are exhausted. We are reduced to fighting with swords and machetes.

Diaz steps to a wood table. Points to Mexico on a large map of North America.

GENERAL DIAZ

The French have pushed us into a corner. Our only chance to survive is to cross the Rio Bravo.

PRESIDENT JUAREZ

If we enter the United States, Bonaparte will have won.

GENERAL DIAZ

If we stay in Mexico, we will die.

An eager YOUNG OFFICER stands to the right of General Diaz.

YOUNG OFFICER

Daily the French bring more troops,
more artillery and powder, into
Mexico. Why do they need so many
men, so many weapons, to defeat us?

PRESIDENT JUAREZ

Because we are not their only
target.

The young officer looks from Juarez to Diaz and back.

YOUNG OFFICER

I do not understand, Señor
Presidente.

Juarez stands, steps to the table and looks down at the map.
He draws his hand from Mexico up through the United States.

PRESIDENT JUAREZ

Louis Bonaparte dreams of a North
American empire. He wants back the
land his uncle sold to the United
States. The Louisiana territory.
And the lands to the west we lost
to the United States in the war.

His hand sweeps toward California.

PRESIDENT JUAREZ

Though Lee surrendered his army of
Virginia, there remain Confederate
armies in the west. If the French
enter Texas and ally with them, they
would form an unstoppable force
against the United States. The
Confederacy would win their war and
Bonaparte would have his empire.

YOUNG OFFICER

Then the norteamericanos should
join us to fight the French!

PRESIDENT JUAREZ

I had hoped that President Lincoln
would provide us with the weapons
we need to defeat the French. He
was a friend to our government. But
his successor, Johnson, seems
unsympathetic to our struggle.

GENERAL DIAZ

What then of General Grant?

Marina looks up.

GENERAL DIAZ

He is the commander of their armies. Perhaps he would send what we need if he understood the threat we both face. He defeated the Confederacy once. He would not want to fight them again, this time in alliance with the French.

PRESIDENT JUAREZ

I know nothing of General Grant. If we had someone who knew him and could speak to him on our behalf...

Luis turns to Marina.

MARINA

(whispers)

No, Luis. No.

LUIS

(softly)

We have no choice, Marina. You must go to him. Laura can go with you. To Washington City. And...

(beat)

Adela. She will go as well.

He looks up.

LUIS

Benito. There is someone we can send. Someone who knows General Grant.

Marina lowers her head and closes her eyes.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Marina, Laura and Adela exit the house and walk to a waiting carriage. An armed escort of soldiers of the Republic of Mexico stand ready to mount their horses.

Laura embraces Beto and Joel. Adela embraces Joel and Luis.

Marina turns to Luis. They step away from the others.

MARINA

I wish you would come with me. I know you are needed here, but...

LUIS

There will be more fighting. This
is where I must be.

Marina gazes at him, overcome by emotion. She wraps her arms
around him.

MARINA

Oh Luis... I love you! I don't want
you to think that... that I
still...

Luis touches his finger to her lips.

LUIS

And I love you, Marina. That is all
that need be said.

He kisses her softly. He helps her enter the carriage where
Laura and Adela are already seated. She smiles at him.

Luis returns her smile and, with the others, waves as the
carriage and the escort disappear from view.

EXT. STEAMER - DAY

An old but sturdy steamer chugs over the blue waters of the
Gulf of Mexico. The flag of the Republic of Mexico waves from
the stern.

Marina, her arms folded close to her body, stands by a deck
rail and watches the coast of Mexico recede.

Laura stands beside her.

MARINA

Laura, what am I going to do if I
see him and...

She looks down at the waves.

LAURA

Do you have the same feelings for
him that you did?

MARINA

I love my husband, Laura. With all
my heart. My soul.

LAURA

I know, but... do you still have
feelings for... the soldier.

MARINA

I cannot say that I do. It would
not be the truth. But at the same
time, I cannot say that...

(grips the deck rail)

I do not. Oh, Laura!

Laura places her hand over Marina's hand on the rail

They gaze at the horizon until there is no land in sight.

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER - DAY

The steamer churns its way up the river.

Marina, Laura and Adela stand on the deck and watch the
sights.

They pass a building draped in black bunting. Above it, the
American flag flies at half staff.

EXT. DOCKS - DAY

FIVE MEXICAN SOLDIERS from the escort help Marina, Laura and
Adela load their bags on a horse-drawn carriage.

EXT. DEPT. OF WAR - DAY

NINE SOLDIERS stand guard at the entrance of a red brick
building. A brass plaque affixed to it reads: DEPARTMENT OF
WAR.

The American flag over the building is at half staff, and
black bunting drapes the windows.

Marina, Laura and Adela step from their carriage.

INT. DEPT. OF WAR - ULYSSES'S OFFICE - DAY

Ulysses, his uniform coat draped over a chair, sits at his
desk. He is reading and signing documents.

Engrossed in work, he does not respond when there is a knock
at his door.

A second knock.

ULYSSES

Yes.

BAILEY WEBB, 40s, a black Sergeant-Major, enters. Tall and broad-shouldered, Bailey projects strength, discipline and fierce dedication to his commanding officer.

BAILEY

Sir, there are three women here to see you.

Ulysses continues to work.

BAILEY

Sir?

ULYSSES

I told you not to make appointments for me today. I have too much paperwork to catch up on.

BAILEY

The women don't have an appointment, General.

Ulysses stops writing.

ULYSSES

Widows?

BAILEY

No, sir.

Ulysses resumes work.

ULYSSES

Make an appointment. Next week.

BAILEY

I told them you were seeing no one today, sir. But one of the women asked that I give you her name.

Ulysses retrieves an unlit cigar in an ashtray on his desk. He strikes a match and prepares to light the cigar.

BAILEY

She said her name was... Marina.

Ulysses freezes in place as the match burns.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Ulysses, now wearing his uniform coat with four stars on the shoulders, bolts through the door ahead of Bailey.

Marina, Laura, and Adela stand.

Ulysses's eyes lock on Marina. His lips part to speak. But nothing comes out.

MARINA
Hello, Ulysses.

ULYSSES
(whispers)
Marina...

Ulysses steps to her, extending both hands.

She places her hands in his.

Adela notices how Marina and Ulysses look at each other. Finally Marina rouses herself.

MARINA
Ulysses, do you remember Laura
Garza? She was at my father's ranch
when you were in Texas.

Ulysses lets go of Marina's hands and faces Laura.

ULYSSES
Yes. I remember. How are you,
Señora Garza?

LAURA
I'm fine, General Grant. Thank you.

Marina turns to a nervous Adela.

MARINA
And this is... my daughter. Adela.

Ulysses stares at Adela. Adela makes a slight bow.

ADELA
It is an honor to meet you, sir.

Ulysses continues to stare.

He looks at Marina. Then back at Adela.

He takes Adela's hand.

ULYSSES
The honor is mine... Adela.

Again he looks at Marina. Then back at Adela.

Marina touches his arm.

MARINA

Ulysses... we are here on a mission
from the President of the Republic
of Mexico. Benito Juarez.

Ulysses still holds Adela's hand.

ULYSSES

(puzzled)
Benito Juarez?

MARINA

My husband is a physician in the
army of the Republic of Mexico and
a friend of Benito Juarez.

Finally, Ulysses releases Adela's hand.

MARINA

President Juarez asked me to visit
with you on a matter of urgent
concern to both of our countries.

ULYSSES

Come into my office.

Marina starts to enter. Looks at Laura and Adela who do not
move to follow.

LAURA

We'll wait for you, Marina.

Hesitantly, Marina follows Ulysses into his office.

Bailey closes the door and turns to Laura and Adela.

BAILEY

Can I get you something? Coffee?

LAURA

Yes. That would be nice. Thank you.

Adela sits and stares at the closed door.

INT. ULYSSES'S OFFICE - DAY

Ulysses escorts Marina to an armchair. He sits in an armchair
across from her, then immediately jumps to his feet.

ULYSSES

May I offer you something? Tea?
Coffee? Something to eat?

MARINA

No thank you, Ulysses. I'm fine.

Ulysses sits.

ULYSSES

How... how little you've changed...
Marina.

MARINA

And neither have you, except...
the beard.

(smiles)

And the insignia on your uniform.
You are no longer a lieutenant.

ULYSSES

No. I... I was promoted.

MARINA

Promoted? Yes. You are a general.
In command of all the armies of
your country. And you are still a
young man. You must have worked
very hard over the years to achieve
your nation's highest rank.

For a moment, Ulysses gazes at Marina.

ULYSSES

No, Marina. I didn't work hard over
the years for this rank. Most of the
time I wasn't even in the army.

Ulysses gets up and walks toward his desk.

ULYSSES

I resigned my commission just a few
years after...

(turns)

After the war with Mexico.

(beat)

When the insurrection in this country
gained momentum, I enlisted in the
militia. One thing led to another.
Before I knew it, Mr. Lincoln asked
me to come here. Take command of his
army. It happened so fast, I... I
can't explain it.

MARINA

It was your destiny, Ulysses.

Ulysses returns to his chair. He studies Marina's face.

ULYSSES

I remember your telling me that
your mother believed in destiny.
You said you didn't know if you
believed in it or not. Now you
sound certain.

MARINA

Yes. I am. For a long time I was
not certain. About that and many
other things.

(beat)

But life has a way of removing
uncertainties. So now, yes, I have
come to believe in destiny.

ULYSSES

Marina, over the past three years I
have given orders resulting in
thousands of deaths. Tens of
thousands. Many of them just...

(beat)

Just boys. Their lives hardly
begun. Was it my destiny to be the
cause of so much death? So much
pain and suffering. So much...
sorrow?

Marina's lips part as she reads the anguish, the appeal, in
Ulysses's expression.

ULYSSES

It was not the destiny I sought. It
was not what I wanted.

(leans forward)

It was not what I wanted!

(slumps)

Why, Marina? Why did it happen...
the way it did? Why?

Marina lowers her eyes, aware of what he is asking.

MARINA

I can't explain why, Ulysses. All I
know is that like my mother, I have
come to believe that what is to
happen in our lives is written from
before we are born. No one can
prevent what is meant to happen.

(MORE)

MARINA (CONT'D)

And if something... what we want...
is not meant to happen, nothing can
be done to make it happen.

ULYSSES

And so we must accept our destiny?

MARINA

It is not ours to accept. Or reject.
It is ours to live as best we can.
And even that is not in our hands.

Ulysses starts to speak but Marina leans forward.

MARINA

Ulysses, I'm here on a very
important matter. There is much I
must tell you. And very little
time.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Laura and Adela sip coffee. A plate of pastries sits on the
table in front of them. The Sergeant-Major works at his desk.

ADELA

Aunt Laura... my mother... and General
Grant... they were friends?

LAURA

Yes, Adela. At the time of the war
between the United States and
Mexico.

ADELA

Did my father know General Grant?

LAURA

Your father was in Oaxaca most of
the time during the war. Helping
Benito Juarez.

Adela stares across the room.

INT. ULYSSES'S OFFICE - DAY

Ulysses and Marina stand before a map of North America. Arms
folded, Ulysses studies the map.

ULYSSES

I've long suspected that what Bonaparte is doing in Mexico was connected to the insurrection in this country.

MARINA

Each week the French bring more troops and munitions into Mexico. They are shifting their armies to the north. Bonaparte has placed them under the command of his best general, Marshal Achille Bazaine. He does not require such a force or such a general to defeat our depleted forces.

(steps back)

Their plan is obvious.

Ulysses points to an area on the map north of Texas and west of the Mississippi.

ULYSSES

In this region here, a rebel general, Kirby Smith, commands what the insurrectionists call their Trans-Mississippi Army. He leads as many as 40,000 men. They've never surrendered. Cut off from supplies, they live off the land. Waiting...

(beat)

Yes. The plan is obvious. The French link up with rebel armies in the west and supply them with weapons and powder. Together, they will secure the Confederacy as a nation, and France will gain a North American empire, stretching from Mexico to Canada. From the Mississippi to the Pacific.

MARINA

The future of both our countries is at stake. And... my...

(voice breaks)

My husband is in the Mexican army, Ulysses. The Juaristas will never surrender to the French. They'll fight until... until...

Tears well in her eyes. Ulysses goes to her. Comforts her with an embrace. Which she accepts.

ULYSSES

All you wanted was to get away from
the fighting. The killing.

MARINA

As did you. Remember?
(faint smile)
Go out west? Raise horses?

ULYSSES

Out west...

For a moment, they gaze into each other's eyes.

Ulysses pulls away gently from the embrace. He walks to the
door. Opens it.

Bailey stands.

ULYSSES

Sergeant, is General Sheridan in
the building?

BAILEY

Yes, General. He is.

ULYSSES

Have him come to my office.

BAILEY

Yes, sir.

Ulysses looks at Adela, smiles and then steps back into his
office and closes the door.

ULYSSES

Your daughter... Adela. She... she
is very beautiful.

He steps closer to Marina.

ULYSSES

Her eyes. Her hair. Marina, is
she...

Marina nods.

ULYSSES

Does she know?

MARINA

She believes my husband is her
father. And he is. A good father. A
wonderful father. Who loves her.
(MORE)

MARINA (CONT'D)

I thought I would tell her when we came here. It is why I allowed her to come with me. To meet you. But now, I... I can't tell her.

ULYSSES

I will tell her.

Marina shakes her head.

MARINA

No, Ulysses. It is a matter for myself and my husband. Something we must tell her together. I realize that now.

Ulysses nods his understanding. They stand in silence a beat.

ULYSSES

Marina... I did come back. To the ranch. I came back.

MARINA

I know. Laura told me.

There is a knock at the door.

Ulysses and Marina gaze at each other.

The knock again.

ULYSSES

Yes.

The door opens and GENERAL SHERIDAN, 40s, enters. Lean and weather-beaten, a battle-hardened field commander.

GENERAL SHERIDAN

You wanted to see me, Sam...

(sees Marina)

Uh... General Grant?

ULYSSES

Yes, Phil. Marina, this is General Philip Sheridan. Phil, this is Marina... Calderon...

Puzzled look. Marina smiles.

MARINA

Marina Calderon y Esquivel. I'm pleased to meet you, General Sheridan.

Sheridan executes a shallow bow and smiles.

GENERAL SHERIDAN
My pleasure, ma'am.

ULYSSES
Phil, I wanted you to meet Señora Calderon y Esquivel because she has brought to my attention a grave matter of very great urgency.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - LATER

A pensive Adela stands at a window and gazes down at A MAN lighting gas lamps on THE STREET BELOW.

Laura and Bailey sit at a table he has brought in to serve dinner. They enjoy an after dinner coffee.

LAURA
Adela? You didn't eat much.

ADELA
I'm not hungry, Aunt Laura.

She turns and walks to the table.

ADELA
Sergeant. You worked for General Grant during the war?

BAILEY
Yes. He was my commander in the field. After Mr. Lincoln brought him here to Washington City, he asked me to come with him.

Adela sits down at the table.

ADELA
I would like to know more about General Grant. Could you tell me about him? Please.

Bailey smiles. Nods.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - LATER

The door to Ulysses's office opens. Bailey stands. Marina walks out, followed by General Sheridan and Ulysses. General Sheridan carries maps.

Ulysses looks at Laura and Adela.

ULYSSES

I'm sorry we took so long. I see you had dinner.

LAURA

Yes, it was wonderful.

Ulysses places his hand on Bailey's shoulder.

ULYSSES

The Sergeant-Major knows how to do the impossible. Find good food in an army mess hall.

GENERAL SHERIDAN

I'll be getting to work on this immediately.

(to Marina)

I'll see you again soon, Señora Calderon y Esquivel.

MARINA

I look forward to it, General Sheridan.

Sheridan leaves the room.

Ulysses turns to Adela and reaches into his pocket.

ULYSSES

Adela, I have something I would like for you to have.

Adela's eyes widen as she focuses on the gold medallion Ulysses retrieves and holds in his hand.

ADELA

Oh, it's beautiful! And it's a... Look, Mama. Aunt Laura. It's a labyrinth! So beautiful...

(looks at Ulysses)

But something so precious must mean a great deal to you, General Grant. I can't take it.

ULYSSES

It means a very great deal to me.

He places the medallion in Adela's hand.

ULYSSES

I want you to have it.

Adela's eyes request permission from her mother to accept it. Marina smiles her assent.

ULYSSES

I've carried that medallion for many years. It has protected me. Keep it with you at all times. Will you do that... Adela?

Adela clutches the medallion tightly to her heart.

ADELA

I will, General Grant. I will keep it with me. Always!

Marina looks through moist eyes at Ulysses. He smiles.

They walk to the door. Bailey opens it. Laura and Adela enter the corridor.

Marina faces Ulysses. They embrace, holding each other tightly for a moment. Then part.

Marina enters the corridor. She does not look back.

When they are gone, Ulysses turns to Bailey.

ULYSSES

Accompany them to their ship. See that they depart safely.

BAILEY

Yes, sir.

EXT. DEPT. OF WAR - LATER

Marina, Laura and Adela are in their carriage.

Mounted and holding a rifle, Bailey and TEN CAVALRYMEN flank the carriage and escort.

Marina looks up to THE WINDOW on the floor where they were. Ulysses looks down.

He raises his hand in a wave.

Marina returns the wave.

Adela puts an arm around Marina. She gently wipes away a tear trickling down Marina's cheek.

She looks up at Ulysses. Smiles. Hugs her mother tightly.

The carriage lurches forward.

At THE WINDOW, Ulysses lowers his head as the carriage disappears into the night.

EXT. RIO GRANDE - DAY

A convoy of wagons sits on the north bank near a ford. The wagons are loaded with crates of rifles and kegs of gunpowder. A U.S. Cavalry platoon guards the convoy.

On horseback, General Sheridan and SIX STAFF OFFICERS watch THIRTY RIDERS navigate their mounts from the south bank toward them.

The riders reach the north bank. All wear the uniforms of soldiers of the Republic of Mexico -- except for Marina. She's dressed in the clothes of a vaquero.

Marina approaches. General Sheridan removes his hat.

GENERAL SHERIDAN
Señora Calderon y Esquivel. It is
good to see you again. We are ready
to make the transfer of the first
shipment.

MARINA
Good morning, General. Our
teamsters are ready.

Sheridan turns to one of his officers and nods.

The transfer begins. Marina and General Sheridan watch.

GENERAL SHERIDAN
I wish I could cross this river,
Señora. It would be an honor to
fight with your army.

MARINA
When men and women fight for their
freedom, General, a river does not
divide them. We are of the same
army. Vaya con Dios.

Sheridan salutes Marina with a smile. Watches her ride to the river and cross.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

On A RISE, NINE FRENCH OFFICERS in magnificent uniforms sit astride their horses to direct the battle.

A band plays martial music.

Across the field, SOLDIERS of the republic of Mexico stand ready to engage. Most wear the simple white cotton garments and the straw sombreros of peasants. They carry machetes.

And rifles.

On a NEIGHBORING HILL, Benito Juarez surveys the field.

SERIES OF SHOTS

FRENCH LEGIONNAIRES advance. French artillery fires a barrage over the heads of the advancing troops.

Though many of the balls land in Mexican lines, the soldiers of the Republic hold. Behind the Mexican lines, a line of cannon FIRES.

The balls decimate the advancing French army. Many soldiers fall. The French lines reform and the advance resumes.

More Mexican cannon are fired.

The French lines stagger.

The MEXICAN INFANTRY charges. Their rifles cut down those French soldiers who are trying to advance.

The French are routed.

The French generals beat a retreat. Flags and banners fall to the ground. In haste, musicians discard their instruments. Trampled by spooked horses.

Benito Juarez's expression is one of sadness, combined with relief.

INT. ULYSSES'S OFFICE - DAY

Brandishing a newspaper, Fred bursts into the office.

FRED

Sam, the French are withdrawing
their troops from Mexico!

Ulysses holds up cables.

ULYSSES

I know, Fred. Believe it or not, sometimes I find out things before the newspapers do.

FRED

The Mexicans have been fighting so long. At last the war is over for them.

ULYSSES

Yes, Fred. For them...

(beat)

And for us.

Fred stares at Ulysses.

FRED

For us? Our war's been over for months. Lee surrendered.

(laughs)

Didn't you know? It was in all the papers.

ULYSSES

Yes. Lee surrendered. But many of the rebel armies in the west didn't. Kirby Smith. Others. Waiting for the French to provide them artillery. Powder. Rifles. Combine their armies. Move on us.

FRED

So with the withdrawal of the French from Mexico...

ULYSSES

It was their last hope. The holdouts are going home. The insurrection is finally over.

Fred reclines in one of the armchairs. Ulysses sits down across from him.

ULYSSES

Haven't seen much of you lately, Fred. Still lobbying for that farmers' association back home?

Fred retrieves a cigar from an inside coat pocket.

FRED

I am. Keeps me pretty busy when the Congress is in session.

ULYSSES

I hear you've become active in the Republican Party. You planning on running for governor?

Fred laughs.

FRED

No. But a lot of us back home are getting involved in the party. We're casting about for a candidate to run for president next year.

(lights cigar)

And I think you know who we favor.

Ulysses fixes his gaze on a painting on the wall -- an oil of two black mustangs in full gallop -- on a white beach bordering a blue sea.

ULYSSES

No, Fred. Not interested.

FRED

We need you, Sam.

ULYSSES

I want to watch my children grow up. Go west. Raise horses.

FRED

There'll be plenty of time for that. But for now, you have a duty to your country, Sam. A duty!

Ulysses looks at him.

ULYSSES

A duty, Fred? Have I not fulfilled that duty?

FRED

Well... yes, Sam. Of course you have. Many times over. But after this terrible war, all the division and hatred, we need a strong leader. It's not so much your duty. It's... it's your... your...

As Fred struggles for words, Ulysses returns his gaze to the painting of the mustang by the sea.

ULYSSES

(whispers to himself)

Destiny?

FRED
What, Sam? What'd you say?

ULYSSES
Nothing, Fred. Nothing.

EXT. CALDERON HACIENDA - DAY

The garden is choked with weeds. The plants are dying. The hacienda is in need of repair.

Marina, Luis, Laura, Beto, Adela and Joel survey the grounds.

MARINA
It could use some work.

LAURA
A little water and the garden will
be as beautiful as before.

The front door of the hacienda opens. Rita Hudspeth, bent, shaky, emerges. Demas follows. They creep down the stone walk to where the others stand. Rita surveys their faces.

RITA
Who're they?

DEMAS
These people have come to say
goodbye, Miss Rita.

Rita relaxes. Squinting, her eyes focus on Laura.

RITA
Bet you don't know where we're
goin', do you?

Laura shakes her head.

RITA
Gonna go see my boys. They're up in
Austin.

Laura lowers her head.

RITA
They look so handsome in their
uniforms. All the girls'll wanna
dance with my boys. At the
guv'ner's ball.

DEMAS

C'mon, Miss Rita. We gotta get goin'.

Demas takes Rita's frail arm and escorts her to a wagon hitched to a mule. He helps her climb aboard.

Laura hesitates, then goes to him.

LAURA

What're you going to do, Demas?

DEMAS

Gonna take Miss Rita up to Austin. They got a place there for ladies like her to live.

LAURA

What will you do then?

DEMAS

I'm hopin' they'll have some work for me to do at this place so I can stay 'round. Take care of Miss Rita.

LAURA

You don't have to do that, Demas. You're a free man now.

Demas climbs to the driver's deck.

DEMAS

I guess being free is just too hard a thing for some of us.
(tips his hat)
So long... Señora Garza.

Demas drives the buckboard off the property.

MARINA

(to Luis)

We'd better start packing if we're going to leave tomorrow.

ADELA

Mama, why can't you and Papa live here? This is where you grew up.

MARINA

This ranch is yours now, Adela. Yours and your husband's.

Adela and Joel exchange glances.

ADELA

We don't know anything about running a ranch, Mama.

MARINA

Maybe not right now. But I think you know some people who do.

LAURA

That's right. Won't be long before we'll be raising the finest quarter horses in Texas!

Adela goes to Luis and embraces him.

ADELA

Oh, Papa. Mexico City is so far away.

LUIS

We won't always be in Mexico City. President Juarez wants us to travel all over Mexico. Build clinics and hospitals. We're always going to be needing good horses. Where else will we come to buy them?

MARINA

Adela, there are a couple of mustangs in the corral. We might have time for a quick race before lunch. Would you like that?

ADELA

Let's go!

Adela grabs Marina's hand and they run to the corral.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Side by side, Marina and Adela ride their horses through the mesquite and sage chaparral.

They burst from the chaparral and into the coastal plain.

They race at full gallop along a white beach bordered with date-laden palms and blue salt cedar. Seabirds wheel up, protesting, as they splash through the foaming surf of the shimmering sea.

INT. DEPT. OF WAR - ULYSSES'S OFFICE - DAY

Alone in the second-story office, Ulysses directs a vacant gaze out the window. His arms folded against his body as if warding off a chill.

A RUMBLE.

Ulysses unfolds his arms.

The sound of GALLOPING HORSES AND LAUGHTER.

Ulysses looks below. The sound comes not from the street. He cocks his head in puzzlement.

The laughter becomes more distinct -- WOMEN'S LAUGHTER.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LAGUNA MADRE - DAY

The horses stand tethered to the wood rail of the cabin. The same WOMEN'S LAUGHTER.

Hand in hand, Marina and Adela laugh as they wade in the shallows of the blue water. Kick up surf.

Marina points upward.

Seven whooping cranes, their long white wings tipped with black, glide in V formation.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ULYSSES'S OFFICE - DAY

As the WOMEN'S LAUGHTER continues, the puzzlement in Ulysses's face transforms into an expression of joy.

FADE OUT.