



ODYSSEY

Pilot

"The Spider and the Wolf"

written by

Alex D. Reid

Between 1865 and 1895 over 10 million cattle were
herded across the near lawless frontier.

These drives founded the mythos of The West.

TEASER

INT. LANE HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Albert Bierstad's painting *Among the Sierra Nevada, California*. A tableau of the West. Lush trees, overwhelming mountains, radiant clouds. The promise of an imagined land.

We pull back. It's inlaid in a humble frame against a wooden wall, candle-lit. Pull back further to reveal--

CASSANDRA LANE. Late 20s. Dark hair in a fashionable bun, wearing a maternity gown, late second trimester. She's dignified, fiddling with her DIAMOND WEDDING RING, analytical eyes considering the painting.

She breathes out, feeling her belly. The baby's kicking.

SUPER: New York. July. 1891.

The room's empty. Lighter patches on the wooden floor where furniture once sat. Wallpaper stripped, antiques removed, all paintings absent save this final Bierstadt.

A CREAK from the adjoining foyer. Footsteps. After a beat, the living room door inches open revealing--

JOSEPH DALTON. 30s, blonde, handsome, a rugged trim beard, long trench coat, a white hat atop his head. A voice like milk and honey. Two six-shooters on his hip.

JOSEPH

My apologies Mrs. Lane, I didn't mean to disturb.

Silence. He joins her, motioning to the painting.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Bierstadt?

She nods.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

It'd be my pleasure to find a buyer. I'm sure someone would be interested in purchasing your beautiful ring too.

He examines it close.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

They needn't know it's a counterfeit too. Tut-tut Hosea.

(MORE)

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 Always pretending to be anything
 but what you are.

He smiles, almost adoringly.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Arachne deserves better. When you
 gonna tell him 'bout...

He cocks his head towards her belly.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 Y'know.

Thinly-veiled HATRED burns behind Cassandra's eyes.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 Where is Hosea anyways? Leaving his
 good faithful wife down here on her
 lonesome. Why, just about anyone
 could walk in.

Cassandra stays silent.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 I'm an honest man Mrs. Lane. Hosea
 owes us a lot of money, but you
 have my word I'm not gonna hurt
 him.

CASSANDRA
 I can't imagine any other notions a
 limp-dick son of a bitch like you
 is even capable of entertaining.

Joseph grins.

JOSEPH
 'Spose you and Hosea never truly
 purged those charming backwater
 sensibilities.

CASSANDRA
 That ain't who we are.

Something CRASHES upstairs--

JOSEPH
 What's ol' Hosea up to now?

INT. LANE HOUSEHOLD - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

A basic bed. An empty bottle of OLD JIM GORE BOURBON on the floor. The doors to the balcony swing open, GRAY DRAPES blowing in the wind. A FIGURE stands on the balcony. Cassandra steps closer.

CASSANDRA

Hosea?

HOSEA

Leave me be darling.

Cassandra draws the drapes back--

HOSEA LANE, tall, well-groomed, drunken, suited, but a face that's received a severe beating. He stands at the edge of the balcony overlooking a peaceful moon-lit lake, an ORNATE REVOLVER to his temple. Tears stream down his face.

HOSEA (CONT'D)

We're finished... I can't--

The words catch in his throat as Joseph steps into the room.

HOSEA (CONT'D)

God please no.

Hosea points the gun at Joseph--

CASSANDRA

We can go back West, like we've always wanted to--

HOSEA

And return to inequity and squalor?
No, I can't do that again
Cassandra. We fought too damn hard.

JOSEPH

I'm just collecting what's owed.
You've gotta take responsibility
for your actions Hosea. Every
single last one of my boys will be
after you if you kill me.

HOSEA

You've RUINED me!
(to Cassandra)
I'm so sorry.

(MORE)

HOSEA (CONT'D)

I tried, I really tried to make sure you were safe but I'm so-- so fucking USELESS I-- I can't even look after my own goddamn wife and child from--from fucking PARASITES like him! What the hell am I if I can't do that, huh?

CASSANDRA

The man I love.

Joseph paces to Hosea--

HOSEA

NO CLOSER!

Grabs Hosea's hand holding the gun--

And bends it so the barrel lodges inside Hosea's mouth.

JOSEPH

Best to be certain friend.

Joseph steps back to Cassandra who stares at her husband, wide-eyed, not quite believing what's happening.

Cassandra meets Hosea's eyes--

INSERT IMAGE: Dead eyes of a CHARRED MAN.

Hosea retracts the gun from his mouth.

HOSEA

Good luck.

Puts it in his mouth and PULLS THE TRIGGER--

The back of Hosea's head SPLATTERS outwards, his body going limp in an instant, collapsing to the ground.

Cassandra stands frozen in place, her mind unable to process what her eyes just saw.

MAIN TITLES: Odyssey.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONEEXT. GREAT PLAINS - DAY - FLASHBACK - 1880

Two HORSES SPRINT across the golden plains--

Cassandra's on one. NATHANIEL, a wiry man in his 50s with deep sunken eyes rides beside her. WICASA, a Native American teenager with long, black, braided hair, is draped over the hind of his horse, blood trickling from a nasty bullet wound in his gut down the horse's legs.

SUPER: Kansas. April. 1880.

They SPUR the horses on at FULL SPEED--

The barely 18 Cassandra, glances behind her--

On the horizon, a horde of DARK RIDERS CHASE THEM, FIRING RIFLES into the sky, HOLLERING and YELPING--

She looks over to Nathaniel, shouting--

CASSANDRA

How's he doin'?

NATHANIEL

Not good. He need's a doctor.
Horses are too tired Cassie, they
ain't gonna be able to keep this
speed much longer.

Atop a hill in the distance, a small wooden shack--

Cassandra points--

CASSANDRA

Up there!

I./E. STAGECOACH - DAY - PRESENT - 1891

Cassandra JOLTS awake as the stagecoach BUMPS into a hole in the road--

DANTE

Gilipollas!

Opposite her, DANTE, 40s, burly, revolver on his hip, black wolf pelt around his shoulders and a scarf around his neck sweats... *profusely*.

Cassandra reads a rickety wooden sign on the road-side.

Sparta, Louisiana

Population: 97

Dante unties his neckerchief to cool down revealing a CRIMSON TRIDENT TATTOO on his neck. He takes a few breaths, trying to relax--

But Cassandra, sitting opposite him, notices the tattoo, a hint of recognition. Dante notices. His relaxed posture grows rigid.

DANTE (CONT'D)

I've used this coach for nearly 20 years. Never seen anyone like you before though. How badly did you fuck up?

CASSANDRA

Pretty bad.

DANTE

What happened?

CASSANDRA

I ran.

Cassandra doesn't look at him.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

I saw your face on a bounty poster.

DANTE

Is that so?

CASSANDRA

Grave-robber.

DANTE

Maybe.

CASSANDRA

Bandit.

DANTE

Probably.

They stare at each other.

DANTE (CONT'D)

You a gunslinger or a bounty hunter?

Cassandra shakes her head.

CASSANDRA
I'm just a woman.

The Driver WRENCHES the door open and leans his head in.

DRIVER
We're here folks.

They are. They didn't notice the coach had come to a stop in the center of Sparta. Dante grabs his bag and hops out of the stagecoach, nodding his head to Cassandra.

DANTE
Later Miss.

Cassandra waits a beat, and slides out of the carriage too--
As her RING FALLS out of her pocket and into the mud.
The Driver slides down to close the door behind her--
And spots the ring. A grin growing on his face.

EXT. SPARTA MAIN STREET - DAY

Cassandra holds the hems of her dress above the thick wet mud as she walks past frontiersmen, farmers, and a messy brawl that's spilled from the saloon into the muddy main street.

The GUNSMITH watches from his door and tips his hat.

GUNSMITH
(to Cassandra)
Welcome home Mrs. Lane.

Cassandra smiles, hurrying by.

But stumbles, supporting herself on the wall, breathing in and out. The baby's kicking, HARD this time.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The Driver rides the stagecoach back the way he came, wiping sleep from his eyes, yawning--

And seeing several RIDERS blocking the way ahead.

He scrambles for a shotgun he keeps under the seat--

JOSEPH
That won't be necessary.

He looks up. Joseph, the tall blonde cowboy trots his horse towards the Driver, the smile present as ever.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Just a moment of your time. May be
that we're seeking one of your
patrons.

Joseph reaches into his pocket and pulls out a sepia wedding photograph of Cassandra and Hosea.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Recognize her?

EXT. ARCADIA FARM OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Among a small marshy plain, a humble wooden house, barn, and paddock containing a HERD of cattle greet Cassandra as she steps over the brow of a hill.

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - DAY

A wind vein creaks atop the barn. Cattle chew the cud. BENNY, a Labrador, dozes on the front porch. Cassandra approaches him, scratching his ears.

Benny's tail wags, but he's too tired to open his eyes.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - DAY

Creaking floorboards. Used pewter cups and bowl across the kitchen table. Above the stone-cold mantelpiece, a series of sepia DAGUERREOTYPES. Cassandra examines them.

The first: A young farmer, NATHANIEL, before his homestead.

The second: Nathaniel with his infant daughter, Cassandra, and a Native American teenager, WICASA.

The third: The same photo Joseph showed the Driver.

NATHANIEL
Cassie?

Nathaniel stands in the front door. He's aged far more than the 11 years since we've seen him last. He's dirty. An undershirt and overalls. Stick thin. Wiry white hair and leather-like skin.

Cassandra PACES towards him--

And gives him the tightest hug she can muster.

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - DAY

They sit on the porch, legs dangling above the mud.

CLINK CLINK--

An empty bottle of OLD JIM GORE BOURBON rolls across the yard. Cassandra watches it, eyebrows furrowed...

NATHANIEL

Cassandra?

Nathaniel looks concerned. Cassandra snaps out of her reverie. The bottle disappears. *A day-dream?*

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm boring you.

CASSANDRA

No, I'm just tired.

She motions to the barn where, in a paddock attached to the back, the herd of cattle mull around aimlessly.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Herd's grown.

NATHANIEL

The Morgans up and died of dysentery. Used some of the money your mother left to scrounge up the rest o' their cattle cheap.

CASSANDRA

I thought you was windin' things down?

NATHANIEL

Wicasa not write?

CASSANDRA

No.

NATHANIEL

He's grabbed a plot in California. Last I heard the poor fool decided to build a ranch.

(beat)

Thought I could help him along some.

CASSANDRA
They're your cattle.

NATHANIEL
It's the only thing of value I have left to give. I was gonna give some to you too, but I didn't think you'd have much use for 'em in New York.

Cassandra doesn't retort, staying silent.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)
How is Hosea?

He motions to her hands.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)
I note an absent ring.

Shit. She's been caught out.

CASSANDRA
He was shot.

She's matter-of-fact. No apparent emotion.

NATHANIEL
Jesus. I'm sorry Cassie.

He takes one of her hands and squeezes tight.

CASSANDRA
Nothing left for me in New York anymore so... I dunno. I thought I'd come home for a spell.

NATHANIEL
You can stay as long as you like.

He thinks for a long moment.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)
Though, it'd be a good idea to get the herd to Wicasa before Winter rolls in so... I need to leave soon.

(beat)
You could come with me. Cattle's worth more out there, given a few years I'm sure we could make enough to make you comfortable. I could use an extra set of hands anyways.

Cassandra considers.

CASSANDRA
I'll think about it pops.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

They sit in front of the fire. Cassandra reads *The Poetry of Sir Walter Raleigh*. Nathaniel's hands are clasped together, staring into the fire, mulling something over in his head.

NATHANIEL
(quoting)
Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,
/ My staff of faith to walk upon, /
My scrip of joy, immortal diet / My
bottle of salvation, / My gown of
glory, hope's true gage; / And thus
I'll take my pilgrimage. Bl--

CASSANDRA
I know how it goes pop.

He smiles.

NATHANIEL
Y'know, 'bout a year back a writer
fella came lookin' for us.

CASSANDRA
Why?

NATHANIEL
He'd heard through the grape-vine
'bout what happened back in the
plains.

CASSANDRA
Pops...

NATHANIEL
I didn't tell him nuthin', I swear.
It's just, well, time's are tough
Cassie. He offered a hell of a lot
of money to hear *Arachne's* side of
the story.

CASSANDRA
That ain't who I am.

NATHANIEL

A hero? You fought those bastards
off for two straight days without a
drop of water or a morsel--

CASSANDRA

I know what happened.

He leans forward, avoiding eye contact.

NATHANIEL

Look, if you don't want nobody
knowin' it was us out there, that's
fine, but... I need help otherwise.
I know you and Hosea were doin'
well up in New York.

That was painful for him.

CASSANDRA

Help how?

NATHANIEL

I mean... financially. I know Hosea
was doing well so I just thought...

He fades to silence. A long long beat of silence.

CASSANDRA

Of course I'll help.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra lights a candle by her bed-side. A small wooden
room, simple wardrobe, bed frame, an open window letting in a
cool refreshing breeze.

Cassandra takes it in, sighing. She puts down her bag--

Which falls open. It's empty. No possessions, no spare
clothes, no cash, no wallet... **nothing.**

She sits and takes off her poncho. Early third trimester. She
carresses her belly, looking up--

And seeing flowing ghostly GRAY DRAPES over her window--

She bows her head, tears of RAGE, frustration, and despair--

She tightens her fist, summoning the strength to stomach the
emotions to deal with later--

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Nathaniel stands outside her door with a glass of milk in hand. He listens to her quietly crying, conflicted.

He turns to leave, stops, thinks, then turns back again, knocking Cassandra's door.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Her head snaps to the door. She rubs her nose, wipes her eyes, scrambles for her poncho--

CASSANDRA

One second--

Nathaniel opens the door anyways, milk in hand. He sees her pregnant belly. The empty bag. The tears. No gray drapes.

He nods his head, putting it together in his head.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

I was gonna tell you.

NATHANIEL

It's ok.

He puts the milk by the candle and pauses. Takes a few breaths. Runs his hands through his hair, thinking hard.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

Shit!

Cassandra flinches. An uncommon outburst.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

CASSANDRA

I would help you if I could it's just-- Hosea got wrapped up folks he shouldn't have. *Bad* folk. Folk he hid from me for too long. He started gamblin'. Tried to make it what he'd lost back again. Only made it worse. We weren't just broke, we were indebted to everyone. All the while I'm with child. He--

The words can't quite come out...

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
 He killed himself. God, I'm just so
 fucking.... *angry*.

Nathaniel's turns fearful.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
 So the first opportunity I got, I
 ran.

NATHANIEL
 Would they chase you?

CASSANDRA
 I--

The thought hadn't crossed her mind.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
 I don't know.

Nathaniel PACES out of the room and enters another, searching
 for something. Cassandra wipes away tears, cradling her head.
It's just a bad dream.

Nathaniel re-enters with a double-barelled SHOTGUN slung over
 his shoulder and a revolver holstered to his hip.

NATHANIEL
 We're leaving in the morning, break
 of dawn, underst--

THUMP THUMP THUMP.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Someone's knocking the front door. Nathaniel treads towards
 it, Cassandra staying behind.

He motions for her to stay out of view--

THUMP THUMP THUMP.

Harder this time.

Nathaniel lays the shotgun to the side of the door, puts his
 hand on his revolver, jams his foot against the base of the
 door, unbolts, and opens it an inch to see who's outside.

Joseph awaits on the other side.

JOSEPH

Good evenin' sir, apologies for
disturbing you at this hour.

He motions behind him where, on the perimeter of the farm,
MASKED MEN hold TORCHES in one hand and GUNS in the other.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

But I really must stress the
importance of my inquiry.

Nathaniel doesn't say a thing.

Joseph extends a hand.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Name's Joseph Dalton.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOI./E. WOODEN SHACK - DAY - FLASHBACK - 1880

An abandoned shack. They stop the horses by the front door.

CASSANDRA
It'll have to do.

NATHANIEL
What do you mean?

CASSANDRA
We can't run forever pops. We gotta
make our stand.

She dismounts and opens the front door to the shack--
One bare living room with several adjoining bedrooms.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Get Wicasa in here.

Nathaniel dismounts and hauls Wicasa onto his shoulder--
Wicasa WAILS in pain--

WICASA
GODDAMIT--

NATHANIEL
Almost there son--

He brings him inside.

Cassandra grabs the packs off the horses, a RIFLE on one, a
SHOTGUN on the other--

About a mile off, the Dark Riders bear down upon them--

Cassandra SLAPS the hinds off the horses--

They WHINNY and GALLOP away.

Shotgun in one hand, rifle in the other, Cassandra considers
her limited options.

She puts the shotgun by the front door.

Aims with the rifle at the far-off riders--

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - NIGHT - PRESENT - 1891

Joseph pads around the perimeter of the room, examining photos, cleaning surfaces, enjoying the creaking wood as he pushes his heel into the floor.

His hands rest on his holstered revolvers.

Nathaniel watches from the door, silent...

CASSANDRA'S ROOM

Cassandra presses her ear to the door, listening.

MAIN ROOM

Nathaniel peeks into the darkness outside. The TORCH-BEARERS are a little closer, staying perfectly still, waiting.

Joseph approaches Benny who lies in a bed in the corner, gets on his haunches, and scratches him behind the ears, smiling.

JOSEPH

Aren't you a handsome boy?

Benny adores the attention.

Nathaniel edges towards the shotgun he laid by the door.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Far be it from me Mr. Lane to prevent a man from bearing arms in his home. I ain't gonna do nothin'.

His eyes don't leave Benny.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I just wanna talk.

Nathaniel grabs the shotgun.

NATHANIEL

Then talk.

Joseph gives Benny an affectionate kiss and stands.

JOSEPH

Where's Cassandra, Mr. Lane?

NATHANIEL

New York, far as I know.

JOSEPH
I doubt that.

NATHANIEL
Is that a fact?

JOSEPH
Sure. 'Lest you think I'd deign to harbor ulterior motives? I'm sure a genial gentleman such as yourself wouldn't entertain such reservations.

NATHANIEL
I'll entertain whatever reservations I damn well please.

JOSEPH
Is it my men that's got you frazzled? I assure you they're just a precaution.

His tone turned deathly serious for a moment, the pleasantries slipping, the sinister man emerging.

CASSANDRA'S ROOM

Cassandra's clenching her fists, white-knuckled, her nails scratching the skin, drawing blood.

MAIN ROOM

Joseph paces into the hallway, stopping, listening.

At the end, Cassandra's room, door shut.

JOSEPH
Mr. Lane, I must impress upon you the importance I place upon honesty. Men call me many nasty words, but one thing they cannot call me is a liar. When God gave us tongues, he asks us to make a choice whenever we speak. Truth, or lie. Fact or fiction. Therefore, our divine construction asks us to consecrate or desecrate the Lord our God.

He pauses outside Cassandra's door.

CASSANDRA'S ROOM

Cassandra holds her breath, eyes-wide.

MAIN ROOM

Joseph listens for a few moments.

JOSEPH

Folk seem to think that you can lie all day long provided the motive is good. But Mr. Lane, you must know that a motive *cannot* excuse an action. Motives are atemporal, amorphous...

He smiles.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Aloof. But an action. We can see an action, hear it, feel it, smell it, taste it. Actions, Mr. Lane, are how we praise God. So I'll ask you again...

He produces Cassandra's WEDDING RING.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Is your daughter behind this door?

Nathaniel's nerve's slipping. He grips the shotgun.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

No.

Joseph cocks his head to the side--

And BOOTS the door open--

CASSANDRA'S ROOM

The door crashes inwards--

Joseph steps in--

To find an empty room. No Cassandra.

He steps in...

Wood floor creaking.

POV: Cassandra, under the bed, holds her breath, watching Joseph's boots.

Nathaniel follows, irritable--

NATHANIEL

I don't care who the hell you are,
you can't go wreckin' my home like
that--

JOSEPH

Hush.

He walks towards the bedside table.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Mr. Lane, your daughter has reneged
upon the debts that, by law, she
has taken upon her name. These
debts, now past their due
repayment, must be recouped in
whatever manner possible but--

He taps his revolver.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I'd prefer to resolve things quick
like.

NATHANIEL

You ain't a lawman.

Joseph examines the lit candle by the bedside.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

Mister, I am not a rich man but at
the very least I've got to know how
much debt Hosea incurred.

JOSEPH

His current debt stands near \$5000.

A stunned silence. Nathaniel's never seen that much money.

NATHANIEL

I'm real sorry Mister, but I can't
do anything about that. It's too
much.

Joseph incredulously examines the glass of milk.

His boot mere inches from Cassandra's face.

JOSEPH

I know, don't worry. I'm not unreasonable. It can be paid off in time with alternative compensation.

NATHANIEL

Such as?

JOSEPH

Well, I appreciate you built this homestead yourself, but this land ain't worth much. Nor is the property.

He turns to face Nathaniel.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

But that herd out there is.

NATHANIEL

(too quick)

No.

JOSEPH

No?

Cassandra WINCES, looks down to her belly--

The baby's KICKING--

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Why ever not?

NATHANIEL

It's not for sale.

JOSEPH

I'm trying to help you Mr. Lane--

NATHANIEL

I said no.

JOSEPH

There's more cattle in gold or frontier land than a herd.

NATHANIEL

It ain't yours to have.

Cassandra tries to stop herself from GASPING in pain--

JOSEPH

Well, you've left me in a bit of pickle 'cus...

(MORE)

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Well, I told my boys out there I ain't leaving this here house without coming to some sort of arrangement.

(beat)

And I ain't a liar.

He lets the implication sink in for a moment.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

So, if you ain't gonna pay with your only *relatively* valuable asset--

NATHANIEL

Why the hell are you here mister? You couldn't have known 'bout the cattle 'till you intruded on my land. Even if Cassandra were here, you said she's destitute. Why come half-way across the country to accost an old man in his home?

JOSEPH

Mrs. Lane owes me more than money.

He walks around to the otherside of the bed.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Supposing that Mrs. Lane did come here. And supposing that Mrs. Lane is hiding at this very moment. Supposing she's trying to stay real quiet right now.

Silent tears stream down Cassandra's face in delirious pain.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Well, she'd have to know the only way to repay the debt is to work our whorehouses.

(beat)

But, of course, I'm just *supposing*.

Nathaniel curls his finger around the shotgun's trigger.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

No. Didn't much think you'd take to that. A shame. But can you imagine how much a man would pay to fuck *Arachne of Lydia*? I should know.

Nathaniel's hands are shaking.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 Speak up *Arachne*.

Joseph DRAWS a revolver and AIMS it at the bed--

Nathaniel POINTS his shotgun at JOSEPH'S HEAD--

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 Now, one more supposition.
 Cassandra is under this bed right
 now. Is she not?

Silence.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 And if I pull the trigger, I'll hit
 her... ain't that right?

Joseph starts to crouch down--

NATHANIEL
 STOP!

He doesn't--

And makes eye contact with Cassandra under the bed.

JOSEPH
 Well. You could have saved us a lot
 of trouble Mrs. Lane. How nice to
 see you again.

CASSANDRA
 (through gritted teeth)
 Fuck you.

He motions with his revolver to her belly.

JOSEPH
 (whispered)
 Just because it's mine don't mean I
 won't kill you on the spot.

Cassandra's eyes flare in anger--

And SPITS at him--

Joseph GRABS HER BY THE HAIR and DRAGS her out--

Nathaniel COCKS the shotgun, placing it right to Joseph's
 head--

NATHANIEL
 Get the hell off my property.

JOSEPH
Mr. Lane--

NATHANIEL
NOW!

Joseph meets his eyes, reading him like a book.

JOSEPH
If you're certain.
He lets go of Cassandra's hair.

NATHANIEL
Hands up.
He obeys.

Nathaniel pokes the back of his head with the double barrel.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)
Move.

MAIN ROOM

Joseph walks to the front door. Nathaniel and Cassandra tread behind. Cassandra grabs a KNIFE from the kitchen.

JOSEPH
I really think we can--

CASSANDRA
Shut up.

JOSEPH
Your home's surrounded. Do you
think we'll just leave?

The dread sets in. *What can they do?*

NATHANIEL
One more word and I'll blast your
head to kingdom fucking come.

Joseph sighs.

He walks towards the door.

The barrel of the shotgun rests against the back of his head.

He reaches the door.

Pauses.

Turns.

JOSEPH

I tried.

Nathaniel furrows his eyebrows--

Joseph SLAPS the shotgun to the side--

Nathaniel PULLS the trigger--

BANG--

Too slow, his aim already off from Joseph's head--

Benny BARKS--

Joseph TACKLES Nathaniel to the ground--

Cassandra SLASHES at him with the knife--

Joseph easily CATCHES her arm, SLAMS it against a wall, and PUNCHES her SQUARE across the jaw--

Joseph perches on top of Nathaniel and LAYS into him, PUNCHING him over and over--

Blood SPLATTERS over the ground--

Benny BARKS, BOUNDING towards Joseph--

Joseph DRAWS his revolver and SHOOTS BENNY THREE TIMES.

Benny CLATTERS to the ground with a whimper--

Cassandra STRUGGLES to her feet--

Joseph grabs the shotgun with one hand and the scruff of Nathaniel's neck with the other, DRAGGING out--

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Into the muddy farm--

Nathaniel's REVOLVER FALLS to the mud behind him.

The TORCH-BEARERS come closer. Each armed to the teeth.

TORCH-BEARER

You called it.

Joseph stands over Nathaniel who struggles to breathe. He cracks open the shotgun. One shell remaining.

Cassandra stumbles onto the front porch--

TORCH-BEARER (CONT'D)
What about her?

Joseph shakes his head.

The Torch-Bearer aims his rifle at her--

Joseph puts a hand on it, lowering it down.

JOSEPH
Hold on.

CASSANDRA
Leave him alone!

JOSEPH
I'm sorry Mrs. Lane, but I told my
boys I'd figure this out.

He AIMS the shotgun at Nathaniel's head.

CASSANDRA
NO!

JOSEPH
Well don't just scream! Help me
find another way!

CASSANDRA
I'll go back with you to New York!

JOSEPH
With me?

Cassandra freezes for a split-second--

Joseph nods, a hint of sadness.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Still disgusted by a good man.

CASSANDRA
I'm not!

JOSEPH
Now that was a lie.

Cassandra's foot hits Nathaniel's revolver in the mud--

She GRABS it and AIMS at Joseph.

He's unfazed.

CASSANDRA

Leave him be.

JOSEPH

You see my men don't you? Kill me
and you and our unborn child will
be dead before I hit the ground.
Your father'll die soon after.

CASSANDRA

It's not yours Joseph!

He looks at her for a long while, trying to read her.

JOSEPH

I cannot tolerate lies.

Joseph nods, turning to his torch-bearers. He gives them a
MEANINGFUL LOOK. After a beat--

They undo their belts, pistols holstered, and throw them to
the ground.

Joseph locks eyes with Cassandra--

And SHOOTS NATHANIEL IN THE HEAD--

Blood SPLATTERS across the ground, his death wordless.

Joseph's eyes never leave Cassandra's.

Total silence.

The air is PUNCHED out of Cassandra's lungs. Her eyes widen.
The world spins. Her hand shakes, tears gather in her eyes,
aiming the revolver at Joseph--

Her shaking pale finger curls around the trigger.

Josephs doesn't move, staring her down.

Her grip tightens.

INSERT IMAGE: Dead eyes of a *charred man*.

She falls to her knees, UNABLE TO PULL THE TRIGGER.

Josephs nods and walks towards her.

He gets down on his haunches beside her, lays her father's
shotgun on the ground, and speaks quiet.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

The difference between us *Arachne* is that I weave the threads of fate, where you merely watch them pass. You let others speak for you, decide for you, think for you. You are no more the hero of your story than the shit on my heel.

It's unclear whether she's really listening.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

This wasn't cruelty. It was a lesson.

He stands again.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I'll bring along my legal associate tomorrow morning to arrange the legal repossession of your herd to the Dalton family. In the meantime, few of my men'll stay behind to make sure you're nice and safe like.

(beat)

Have a good night Mrs. Lane.

He throws her wedding ring to the mud in front of her and recedes back into the darkness.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEINT. SPARTA SALOON - DAY - EARLIER

A run-down saloon. Only five tables. A BOUNTY HUNTER sits at one. 50s, gray mane, bowler hat, immaculate gray wool overcoat shielding a white suit. Silver eyes. Blank, vacuous eyes, a voice like white wallpaper. Bland, but boundless.

He watches--

Dante at the bar, downing a shot of something brown. He coughs violently into a handkerchief, wiping away a speck of blood on the side of his mouth.

The Bounty Hunter unrolls a piece of paper underneath the table. On it, a sketch of "Dante Cervantes", wanted for grave-robbing. \$100 dead. \$150 alive. The Bounty Hunter looks back to Dante to confirm--

But he's disappeared.

The Bounty Hunter rises to search outside--

But is stopped at the door by--

JOSEPH. His cronies sit nearby.

BOUNTY HUNTER

Let me by.

JOSEPH

Just a moment of your time.

Joseph shows him a daguerrotype of Cassandra and Hosea.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Have you seen this woman? Goes by "Cassandra Lane"?

BOUNTY HUNTER

No.

JOSEPH

Perhaps you know her as Arachne of Lydia?

BOUNTY HUNTER

You deaf?

Joseph gives him the daguerrotype.

JOSEPH
Just in case. \$500 alive.

The Bounty Hunter takes it, shuffling by. Joseph consults the other patrons in the bar, eventually coming across the gunsmith.

EXT. SPARTA MAIN STREET - DAY

Dante stumbles through the mud, wiping his cheek. He leans on a building and coughs violently, hacking up his lungs. He sighs heavily, catching his breath.

DANTE
Mierda.

He composes himself, walks back out on main street, and towards the local church. Behind it, the graveyard. His eyes lock on.

He takes two steps forward--

As the Bounty Hunter PULLS him into a side alley--

EXT. SPARTA ALLEY - DAY

And PUNCHES Dante square across the jaw--

A tooth flies into the mud.

He reaches in his satchel as Dante tries to crawl away.

DANTE
Fucking pendejo.

BOUNTY HUNTER
Stay still.

DANTE
Death don't scare me.

The Bounty Hunter grabs Dante's legs and ties them--

Dante reaches into the mud for--

A ROCK--

He grabs it--

And SMASHES it against the Bounty Hunter's skull.

The Bounty Hunter goes limp. Dante grabs the Bounty Hunter's knife, cuts his legs loose then searches the Hunter's pockets. He tears up the wanted poster and steals his pocket flask and wallet.

He stands, wiping the blood from his face. Pauses...

And takes the Bounty Hunter's overcoat. He puts it over the wolf pelt around his shoulders, keeping his arms free underneath.

A few folk from mainstreet watch the commotion. Dante glances to the graveyard and back to the attention he's gathering.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Shit.

He walks in the opposite direction.

EXT. SPARTA MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Back onto the opposite side of mainstreet. He spots his horse by a hitching post. He moves towards it--

But not before a sheriff and his deputies get there first. Dante ducks behind cover. The lawmen chat, take a look at another poster bearing Dante's face, untie the horse, and take it away, loaded saddlebags included.

Dante clenches his fists in frustration.

EXT. MARSH ROAD - NIGHT

Dante walks along a marshy road in near pitch-black darkness. He clings his new coat tight to his body. Despite the sweltering humid heat, he shivers.

He keeps his eyes set on the ground. Not that there's anyone else on this road to meet eyes with. That is, except--

On a hill through a few trees, a faint light.

Dante looks around. He's alone.

He breaks from the path towards the light.

EXT. HILL - NIGHT

Dante stays in the underbrush. Atop the hill, a small lantern illuminates a pile of dirt beside a shovel. It's a grave.

Dante smiles.

He creeps up the hill.

Once at the top, he peeks inside. The body of an old man. Shot in the head. Features completely obliterated. But we can tell by the clothes and the wiry hair...

It's NATHANIEL.

But Dante doesn't know that. It's just another body. He peers down the other side of the hill. A vast sea of darkness leading to Arcadia farm. No activity as far as he can see.

He leans into the grave to examine the body closer.

TORCH-BEARER #1
Who the hell are you?!?

Dante jolts back. Two Torch-Bearers aim rifles at his head. Cassandra stands between them, carrying Benny's corpse, hair draped over her face.

Dante considers his play--

Torch-Bearer #2 COCKS his rifle--

TORCH-BEARER #2
We ain't askin' again mister.

Dante stands, slow.

DANTE
No harm done, right?

TORCH-BEARER #1
You've seen us.

TORCH-BEARER #2
That we can't abide.

Covered by the Bounty Hunter's overcoat, Dante's hands slowly lower towards his holstered six-shooters.

DANTE
I didn't see anything.

Torch-Bearer #1's eyes light up, lowering his rifle...

TORCH-BEARER #1
(to Torch-Bearer #2)
Hol' on, I recognise this mexican
from somewher--

Dante DRAWS--

The Torch-Bearer's try to aim--

BANG BANG--

Both of them go down like a bag of rocks--

Dante waits--

Cassandra DROPS Benny and GRABS one of the dropped weapons--

Aims it at Dante--

He aims right back--

They lock eyes--

A beat of recognition.

DANTE

You're that lady from the
stagecoach.

CASSANDRA

You're the bandit.

Cassandra's hand quivers--

INSERT IMAGE: Dead eyes of a *charred man*.

Dante holsters his pistol.

DANTE

I take it you ain't friendly with
those folk?

She nods. She drops the pistol and picks up Benny.

She lugs him over to a pre-dug hole and places him in.

She breathes long and slow, pressing it all down deep.

CASSANDRA

Go.

Dante nods. He turns and stumbles back into the underbrush--

But his pace slows until he eventually comes to a stop.

He looks back to the woman by the graves.

A long dormant empathy rears its ugly head.

He walks back towards her, picking up the shovel.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Leave bandit.

Dante shovels dirt into Benny's grave, wordless.

Cassandra watches.

EXT. HILL - NIGHT - LATER

Two graves. Two crosses.

Cassandra stands before Nathaniel's. Both she and Dante are sweaty and covered in dirt. Dante plants the shovel into the earth and stands near her.

DANTE
Do you want to say something?

Cassandra considers.

CASSANDRA
No.

She turns to go back to the farmhouse.

DANTE
What happened here?

She doesn't reply. He motions to the homestead.

DANTE (CONT'D)
Are you alone?

CASSANDRA
Why? Are you going to rob me,
bandit?

Dante shrugs. That empathy's burned away.

DANTE
I don't know yet.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Cassandra sits by the dead fire, dead eyes, totally despondent. Dante makes coffee. He's hung his coat on a hook by the door. His gun on the table.

He coughs violently, covering his mouth with a handkerchief. Cassandra watches, spotting the blood hitting the tissue.

CASSANDRA
You're a lunger.

DANTE
I'm aware.

He pours the coffee and gives a cup to Cassandra.

CASSANDRA
You know what that means?

DANTE
That I ain't got long left. I know.

He sips the coffee, the topic as uneventful as the weather.

CASSANDRA
You don't seem concerned.

DANTE
I'm not.

CASSANDRA
Why?

DANTE
Can't change it, can I?

CASSANDRA
I-- I don't know--

DANTE
Then what's the point in worrying?
We all die Miss. No sense on
dwelling on what could have been.
The past is written.

CASSANDRA
Don't you wanna prolong what time
remains?

Dante shrugs.

DANTE
When I go, I go. Don't mean I'm
gonna lay down and die, but I'm
still capable of accepting the
inevitable. If anything, it makes
life more interesting. I only have
so many hours left to do so many
things. I gotta make them worth it.

CASSANDRA
And you helped me dig a grave.

Silence.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
You're not like any Jack Boot Boy I know.

DANTE
That's a point of pride.

CASSANDRA
But you still rob graves.

DANTE
I do. I need money like anyone else. All I know how to do is rob and kill. The dead aren't immune to being robbed.

CASSANDRA
What about an orphaned widow?

Dante sighs deep, looking at the shotgun on the floor.

DANTE
I don't know yet. But I don't think you're gonna stop me.

CASSANDRA
Why?

DANTE
Most people wouldn't hesitate shooting a Mexican robbing their father's grave. I don't think I'm alive because you're forgiving. I think it's because you're scared.

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - NIGHT

Dante smokes on the front porch. Cassandra sits beside him. Sweat pours down Dante's brow despite the mild night air.

Cattle rustle by the barn. It catches Dante's ear.

DANTE
How many're in the herd?

CASSANDRA
Why would I tell you that?

DANTE
It'd save me the walk over.

He lets the snide threat linger.

CASSANDRA
Around 100.

DANTE
Worth a lot.

Cassandra doesn't respond.

DANTE (CONT'D)
If your father's dead, that means
it's yours now.

She hadn't thought about that.

CASSANDRA
No, my brother's older.

DANTE
Where's he?

CASSANDRA
California.

Dante chuckles.

DANTE
Long way from home.
(mockingly)
Finding his fortune?

CASSANDRA
I suppose so.

Dante motions to the herd.

DANTE
What're you gonna do with them?

CASSANDRA
Provided you don't take 'em.

DANTE
Sure.

CASSANDRA
Nothing. My husband's gone. My
creditors killed my father and are
about to take the result of my
mother's inheritance.

(MORE)

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

My brother's miles away, probably dead in a ditch somewhere, and I can't shoot a grave-robber who's going to steal it anyways. I'm dead no matter what, bandit. Whether it be by your hand, my creditors, the road or my own gun, I am dead. I've accepted the inevitable, just like you.

Dante nods, taking a final few drags on his cigarette.

INT. ARCADIA BARN - NIGHT

Alone, Dante examines the herd in their pens. A few horses are tucked away near the back.

He walks down the central thoroughfare examining the cattle.

He examines a black horse near the back.

INT. ARCADIA BARN - NIGHT - LATER

He's saddled the horse and led it into the thoroughfare.

Dante moves to the first pen and grabs the sliding bolt--

But stops.

He pats his sides. He's forgotten his coat.

DANTE

Shit.

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - NIGHT

He paces across the yard. Stops. Looks around. Listens to the dark silence.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

And closes the door behind him.

Cassandra's in the armchair by the fire, sleeping. But her poncho's come askew to the side, leaving her pregnant belly visible.

Dante stops in his tracks. He deflates. Scratches his head.

Shit.

He takes his time deciding what to do.

Without another look, he exits, adorning himself in the coat.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOURI./E. WOODEN SHACK - NIGHT - FLASHBACK - 1880

It's pitch black outside, but there's movement. Men in dark clothing mill around the house, peering in the windows--

Where Cassandra stands in the darkness, back to the wall, waiting with baited breath, a shotgun in one hand, revolver in the other. She's wearing a BLACK BANDANA, covering everything but her eyes.

Wicasa's in one of the beds, quietly whimpering. The sheets are drenched in blood. Nathaniel's crouched nearby, six-shooter primed.

Outside, A DARK RIDER, a proto-typical cowboy type with blue eyes and chiselled features stands before the shack, considering it...

DARK RIDER

Just hand over the goddamn prairie
nigger and no-one gets hurt!

The moonlight catches Cassandra's eyes.

From the darkness, she aims a revolver at him--

And FIRES--

SMASHING the window--

His head SPLATTERS across the grass--

The Riders OPEN FIRE--

Cassandra DIVES to the floor--

Wooden CHIPS flying--

A bullet CATCHES Nathaniel in the shoulder--

He falls to the floor, HISSING in pain--

PRELAP: THUMP THUMP THUMP--

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - NIGHT - PRESENT - 1891

Cassandra JOLTS awake--

Someone's knocking at the door. She peeks out the window. Still night. Her eyes search for Dante who's long gone.

THUMP THUMP--

CASSANDRA
I'm comin'!

She gets to her feet--

But takes a beat. Breathing in and out. The baby's kicking.

She tucks the shotgun behind the door, and opens it an inch.

Outside, a silver haired man in a white suit. Dried blood drips down his face, colouring his silver hair crimson.

The Bounty Hunter.

He holds his hat in his hand.

BOUNTY HUNTER
Ma'am.

CASSANDRA
Can I help you?

BOUNTY HUNTER
Seeking a grave-robber. Dante Cervantes.

He lets the implicit question fester.

She thinks. Is she about to lie--

CASSANDRA
I don't who that is.

Oh.

The Bounty Hunter wears a thin smile. He motions behind him.

BOUNTY HUNTER
I found his tracks up on the hill
by two graves and two bodies.

He follows the tracks with his finger until they lead to--
Cassandra's feet.

BOUNTY HUNTER (CONT'D)
Where is Dante Cervantes?

Cassandra says nothing.

BOUNTY HUNTER (CONT'D)

(slow)

Ma'am, I don't make the rules, I follow them, because it means I live another day. Dante doesn't, which is why he dies. I'm little more than order's executioner.

CASSANDRA

Did he take the cattle?

BOUNTY HUNTER

Yes.

CASSANDRA

Then...

She sighs. That information should have hurt more, but it doesn't. Just emptiness.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Then just follow the tracks.

BOUNTY HUNTER

I can cut him off if you tell me where he's going.

CASSANDRA

I don't know where he's going. He stole the herd.

BOUNTY HUNTER

Without a fight?

CASSANDRA

Yes.

The Bounty Hunter's face hardens. He puts his hat on.

BOUNTY HUNTER

I don't believe you.

He finally gets a good look at Cassandra's face. He stops dead, thinking for a moment. Recognition. *Hold on...*

BOUNTY HUNTER (CONT'D)

You're *Arachne*.

He smiles.

EXT. LOW ROADS - NIGHT

Dante guides the herd down a canyon path. A trickling river runs by them. Moonlight piercing the thick trees above.

He holds the lantern aloft. The cattle walk with heads hung low. His horse splutters in the rain. Dante's face is rigid. No emotion whatsoever. The less he has to think about what he's doing, the better.

He clears his throat.

Which soon turns into a cough. His eyebrows furrow. He coughs louder, HARDER--

This is different to what he's used to--

He HACKS and SPLUTTERS, barely getting a chance to breathe--

He FALLS off the horse and into the river--

HACKING up blood into the clean water.

It stops for a moment. He catches his breath. Looks up.

No cattle. No horse. No sound. Except--

A BLACK WOLF that pads out from the underbrush. It's amber eyes meet Dante's. It's the same wolf that Dante wears around his neck. It turns and pads back into the foliage.

Dante follows.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Cassandra SLAMS the door shut, SLIDES the bolt across--

Silence.

BOUNTY HUNTER (O.S.)

Last chance.

Cassandra grabs her revolver from the holster--

And aims at the door. Her hands shake, her grip limp. She breathes fast--

BANG--

The Bounty Hunter THROWS his weight into the door--

BANG--

The hinges CREAK, the bolt STRAINS--

CRASH--

The bolt BREAKS--

The Bounty Hunter BURSTS into her home.

He clocks her holding the revolver at his head.

Paces towards her--

Cassandra's finger curls around the trigger--

INSERT IMAGE: Dead eyes of a *charred man*.

But she can't pull it.

The Bounty Hunter SLAPS the revolver out of her hand--

And PUNCHES her in the face--

She CRASHES to the floor--

She SCRAMBLES away--

The Bounty Hunter KICKS her--

Hitting her WOMB--

EXT. MARSH - NIGHT

Dante follows the back of the wolf through the brush. His feet squelch in the mud below. He looks at his feet to see BLOOD, not water.

He looks up--

To a clearing with a wooden Native American hut. A MAN holds a gun in one hand and a torch in the other, watching for movement in the hut.

The wolf watches the scene, Dante beside it.

The Man THROWS the torch at the hut--

DANTE

NO!

But he doesn't move and the man doesn't hear him. The wooden hut becomes a blazing pyre. SCREAMING from inside. The front door opens.

A BURNING BOY collapses to the mud before the man, screaming. The Man watches for a moment then turns, revealing his face. It's a younger Dante. The bandit CERVANTES.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra lies on the bed, her arms tied behind her back, her ankles tied together. Her mouth's gagged. She looks down at her womb, looking for any activity. Desperate eyes. Her breathing growing faster and faster.

The door creaks open. The Bounty Hunter steps in. Cassandra doesn't look at him. He watches her, waiting for a reaction.

BOUNTY HUNTER
Was that your father in the grave?

She stays silent.

BOUNTY HUNTER (CONT'D)
Dalton?

She nods.

BOUNTY HUNTER (CONT'D)
Death is a hawk. You run, it kills.
But if you lie down. Close your
eyes. Stay still. It might pass you
by. Sounds like you ran.

He leans over and removes her gag.

BOUNTY HUNTER (CONT'D)
How much are you worth to the
Daltons?

Silence. He aims his revolver at her ankle. She recoils as the cold steel touches her skin.

CASSANDRA
You might have killed my baby.

The Bounty Hunter moves the barrel to her belly.

BOUNTY HUNTER
We can confirm?

Cassandra stares at him. If looks could kill he'd be splayed across the floor.

BOUNTY HUNTER (CONT'D)
 What do the Daltons want?

Cassandra looks down at her belly again. Still no activity.

CASSANDRA
 The herd.

BOUNTY HUNTER
 Well that's going to be
 problematic.

He holsters his weapon. Thinks.

BOUNTY HUNTER (CONT'D)
 Though, I got the impression he
 really wants you more than the
 herd.

EXT. MARSH - NIGHT

Cervantes approaches his older self and looks him in the eye.
 Dante, fearful, can barely maintain the eye contact.

CERVANTES
Cobarde.

Cervantes turns his attention to the wolf. He kneels down and
 pets it behind the ears then puts his head against its,
 closing their eyes, a primal bond.

They release, enjoy the silence, and walk to the darkness.

The burning boy WHIMPERS. He's somehow still alive. Cervantes
 and the wolf keep walking.

DANTE
 Help him!

Nothing.

DANTE (CONT'D)
 PUT HIM OUT OF HIS FUCKING MISERY!

Dante looks to his past self to the burning boy--

Draws his revolver--

Aims at the boy's head--

And FIRES--

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

The Bounty Hunter paces the room with a stack of Cassandra's books. He flicks through them, one-by-one, throwing them to the ground, including *The Poetry of Sir Walter Raleigh*.

Cassandra SQUIRMS, trying to get out of her bindings--

BOUNTY HUNTER
Why resist?

She doesn't stop--

CASSANDRA
Fuck you.

The Bounty Hunter kneels down in front of her.

BOUNTY HUNTER
Stop.

Cassandra fiddles with the bindings on her wrists. They're too tight. He's done this many times before.

He SLAPS her across the face and HOLDS her jaw in his hand.

BOUNTY HUNTER (CONT'D)
Lie down. Death will miss you.

He reaches into his pocket--

And pulls out the daguerrotype he was given earlier. He props it on the bedside table beside the lukewarm glass of milk.

EXT. MARSH - NIGHT

The boy's crying mercifully stops. Cervantes turns. The wolf paces on.

DANTE
No more!

CERVANTES
Cobarde!

DANTE
Never again.

Cervantes paces back to him. His speed increases until he's SPRINTING straight at Dante--

He tackles Dante to the ground--

Scuffle--

Dante grabs a fistful of mud and rubs it in Cervantes face--

Cervantes PUNCHES Dante again and again in the chest--

Dante TAKES it--

CERVANTES

DIE!

Dante's BATTERED from all directions--

But he smiles.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra lies catatonic, alone.

Her eyes drift down to the pile of books. There, amongst them all, she spots *The Poetry of Sir Walter Raleigh*.

NATHANIEL (V.O.)

(quoting)

*Blood must be my body's balmer; /
No other balm will there be given:
/ Whilst my soul, like quiet
palmer, / Travelleth towards the
land of heaven*

EXT. MARSH - NIGHT

Cervantes drags Dante to the river and PUSHES his head under the water--

NATHANIEL (V.O.)

*Over the silver mountains, / Where
spring the nectar fountains;*

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra's eyes drift to the daguerrotype of her and Hosea.

NATHANIEL (V.O.)

*There will I kiss / The bowl of
bliss*

EXT. MARSH - NIGHT

Dante SCREAMS under the water--

And rises above it. He's alone. His horse and the herd remain by the river. No burning hut. No Cervantes. He coughs up more blood.

NATHANIEL (V.O.)
*And drink mine everlasting fill /
 Upon ever milken hill.*

He looks back the way he come. Back to Arcadia.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra closes her eyes.

NATHANIEL (V.O.)
My soul will be a-dry before;

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A YOUNG CASSANDRA, 8, lies in the same bed listening to Nathaniel who reads *The Poetry of Sir Walter Raleigh* beside her.

NATHANIEL
But after, it will thirst no more.

He considers that for a moment...

Closes over the book, looks at Cassandra--

And smiles. Warm.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT - PRESENT

Cassandra CLENCHES her FISTS behind her back.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVEINT. WOODEN SHACK - NIGHT - FLASHBACK - 1880

Cassandra's near emaciated. Sunken jaw. Dry crackled lips. Pale skin. Weak breath. Hands covered in blood and soot. Face cut-up. But she's alive.

Nathaniel and Wicasa aren't doing much better, eyes closed, breathing softly, trying to conserve as much energy as possible.

She grabs her nearby rifle, cleans the barrel for any blockages, checks the ammunition supply--

A BLOOM OF CRIMSON LIGHT--

She freezes. Stands--

Looks outside--

Where a group of Riders 30 feet away lie in the mud, lighting MOLOTOV COCKTAILS, one by one--

A YOUNG RIDER bends his arm to throw his--

Cassandra AIMS her rifle--

The Young Rider THROWS--

It's barely inches from his face--

When Cassandra FIRES--

And HITS it first--

BOOM--

The bottle EXPLODES, SETTING THE RIDERS ALIGHT, triggering a chain reaction of riders dropping their bottles, and lighting the grass, and themselves, on fire.

Cassandra's eyes widen as she watches their ranks burn.

The flames flickering in her eyes.

EXT. WOODEN SHACK - DAY - FLASHBACK - LATER - 1880

Cassandra stands amongst the carnage. The Riders are long gone. A couple of LAWMEN help Wicasa and Nathaniel. One wears a badge reading: LYDIA COUNTY SHERIFF.

SHERIFF
Let's go Miss.

She can't tear her eyes from the burnt up body of the Young Rider, his eyelids peeled off, skin charred black.

Dead eyes of a charred man.

CASSANDRA
(to herself)
Never again.

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - NIGHT - PRESENT - 1891

The Bounty Hunter walks to the middle of the yard. He unbuckles his breeches and takes a piss.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra takes a few deep breaths. Examines her surroundings. Listens for the Bounty Hunter.

She edges herself off the bed, kicking her tied legs.

With one final KICK--

She falls off the bed to the floor.

Ok, progress. How do I get the rope off?

She looks around her--

And her eyes land on the lukewarm glass of milk Nataniel put on her bedside table.

Bingo.

She turns herself around on the floor, lines up her feet with the bedside table and KICKS--

It wobbles to the side--

KICK--

On the edge--

KICK--

It falls to the floor, SMASHING--

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - NIGHT

A quiet crashing.

The Bounty Hunter, still gripping his member, looks around to the house. It appears normal.

But his eyebrows stay furrowed.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Milk seeps between the wooden boards and glass shards.

Cassandra squirms over to one, keeping her back straight, she grabs a shard behind her back...

Carefully manouvres it into the correct position...

And starts cutting the rope.

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - NIGHT

The Bounty Hunter buckles his breeches, eyebrows furrowed.

He spits on the mud and walks back to the house.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Her hands bleed everywhere but eventually--

SNAP--

The ropes binding her hands come loose--

She gasps in relief--

She puts the shard to the side and removes the knot at her feet. She stands, taking in a deep breath--

And moves--

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - NIGHT

He's close now, almost at the front porch.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Cassandra steps into the main hall. Looks to her left, down the hall, to the front door where--

But a smile seeps across Cassandra's face too.

CASSANDRA
You can't kill me.

BOUNTY HUNTER
Can't I?

He pulls back the hammer on his revolver.

CASSANDRA
Joseph Dalton doesn't want the land. He doesn't want any of our possessions, save the herd which is long gone. Which means all he has left to take is *me*. So I 'spose you'll have a hell of a time explaining to him why there's a bullet lodged in my head.

The Bounty Hunter's expression freezes. He thinks for a moment, takes a step forward--

Cassandra FIRES--

The shell SHREDS the wall inches beside the Bounty Hunter.

Cassandra raises an eyebrow.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Same song and dance.

The Bounty Hunter breathes through his nose, thinking for a way out...

He holsters his gun.

BOUNTY HUNTER
What do you want?

Cassandra thinks, then motions to the yard.

CASSANDRA
Walk.

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - NIGHT

The Bounty Hunter walks slow to the middle of the yard.

Cassandra follows, shotgun to the back of his head. Her bleeding hands cover the underside of the shotgun in crimson.

CASSANDRA

Stop.

He does.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Kneel.

He tries to think of something else--

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

KNEEL!

BOUNTY HUNTER

(under his breath)

Goddamit.

He kneels as slow as he possibly can.

CASSANDRA

Throw your belt and pistol to the side.

He unbuckles his holster and throws it to the side.

Cassandra circles him, putting the shotgun inches from his forehead. The Bounty Hunter shivers, cold steel on skin.

BOUNTY HUNTER

I'm just keeping order ma'am.

CASSANDRA

My name's Cassandra.

The Bounty Hunter nods.

BOUNTY HUNTER

You can just run, I won't follow.

CASSANDRA

I don't believe you.

BOUNTY HUNTER

I won't tell them where you went, I'll say the place was empty when I got here.

CASSANDRA

I don't believe you.

BOUNTY HUNTER

I'll personally make sure you get away safe. I have a daughter too Cassandra. Please.

Cassandra stares him dead in the eyes.

CASSANDRA
I don't believe you.

Something SNAPS inside the Bounty Hunter.

BOUNTY HUNTER
(spittle flying)
Fuck you! FUCK YOU! I won! I am
BETTER. I am STRONGER. I could have
FUCKED YOU and you couldn't have
done a GODDAMN THING!

He laughs, half-mad.

BOUNTY HUNTER (CONT'D)
Little fucking pregnant WHORE
thinks she's a killer? Well go on
then! KILL ME.

He smirks.

BOUNTY HUNTER (CONT'D)
I **know** you don't have it in you.

Cassandra nods.

She takes two steps back.

Aims.

And pulls the trigger--

BANG--

The bullet EVISCERATES the Bounty Hunter's face, blood and skull flying into the mud, nothing but a bloody mess remaining.

His corpse falls to the ground.

Cassandra lowers her weapon.

A long contemplative beat.

CASSANDRA
(quiet)
Never again.

She cracks the shotgun open, dispenses of two used shells.

Sniffs in the smoke.

She finds the Bounty Hunter's revolver in the mud. She picks it up and turns it over. A small SPIDER is engraved on the grip.

She breathes in the night air, neither satisfied nor complete, angry nor mournful, elated nor depressed, but something altogether new.

Free.

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - NIGHT - LATER

Dante guides the herd back into the paddock atop his horse.

He looks around for Cassandra to no avail.

DANTE

Miss?

Once the cattle are back where they belong, he dismounts the horse and paces around the yard.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

He walks inside. Blood across the wood. A broken door bolt.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - CASSANDRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Broken rope. Shattered glass. Dried milk.

Dante's hand drifts to his holster.

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - NIGHT

He walks across the yard, searching the darkness--

SQUELCH--

He looks down.

He stepped in a piece of flesh pooling blood.

He gets down on one knee and examines it.

Looks to the hill where--

A faint light flickers on the top.

EXT. HILL - NIGHT

Dante walks up the hill--

To find Cassandra dragging the Bounty Hunter's body into a new grave. A trail of blood leading from Dante's feet to the Bounty Hunter's pulverized head. But Dante recognizes the suit.

DANTE

He came looking for me.

Cassandra doesn't look at him, not yet.

With a final HEAVE she drags the body into the grave.

It crumples in.

She nods her head.

CASSANDRA

He did.

She motions to Dante.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

And you came back.

DANTE

I did.

CASSANDRA

With the herd?

Dante nods.

DANTE

I'm gonna die soon, but I need money before I go. I... I guess I just I wasn't as ready to die as I thought I was.

CASSANDRA

Why not sell the herd?

DANTE

You said your father was going to bring the herd to your brother in California. Do it.

The suggestion takes Cassandra by surprise.

DANTE (CONT'D)

It'll be worth more there. The herd legally belongs to your brother meaning the mart'll pay double. But I want to go with you. I'll help keep the herd safe. I don't care how tough you are, that is not a journey to be made by one person. When we get the herd to your brother, I want a cut of all profits made.

CASSANDRA

You're assuming that's what I want to do.

DANTE

But you will.

CASSANDRA

Why?

DANTE

Because you *can*.

CASSANDRA

I don't know that I trust you.

DANTE

I'm not going to defend what I did, but I'm not gonna apologize either. If you don't want my help I'll leave. For good. But if you think that I can be a good man, let me come with you.

Cassandra thinks about it.

CASSANDRA

The Daltons will be after us.

DANTE

I know.

CASSANDRA

Joseph Dalton will be after us.

DANTE

I know Miss.

She picks up the shovel beside the grave.

CASSANDRA

Call me Cassandra.

EXT. HILL - NIGHT - LATER

Cassandra stands before the graves.

A quiet moment to herself.

She DOUBLES OVER--

As her baby KICKS--

She pants in delirious relief.

INT. ARCADIA BARN - NIGHT

Dante saddles up two horses, sweating, shivering.

EXT. ARCADIA FARM - MORNING

Joseph Dalton rides towards the center of the yard.

He hops off his horse and searches for any life.

INT. ARCADIA HOMESTEAD - MORNING

He peeks his head in the main room. A small envelope is on the main table. It's addressed to "Mr. Dalton".

Joseph opens it up. Inside, a single piece of folded paper. He unfolds it, reads, and smiles. Two words.

Never again.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Cassandra and Dante guide the herd down a road. Dante watches the back, Cassandra leads the way. On her hip, the Bounty Hunter's revolver.

EXT. TRADING POST - DAY

Cassandra watches the herd atop her horse about 100 meters from an isolated wooden shack named:

BARNIE'S GENERAL GOODS

Dante rides back to her from the store with several tarps, wooden poles, and iron cookware attached to the hind of his horse. He trots up beside her.

DANTE

Should do to make camp for a few nights.

CASSANDRA

Cost much?

DANTE

We may have to forgo some luxuries for a time.

Cassandra looks at the setting sun, then to a verdant green hill a couple miles away. She points to it.

CASSANDRA

How does that look for tonight?

DANTE

Sure.

Dante turns his horse to return to the rear of the herd--
But stops for a moment, thinks.

DANTE (CONT'D)

We may have to consider allowing others into the caravan. It's more cost efficient.

CASSANDRA

We'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

Dante nods.

DANTE

I'm with you Cassandra.

He returns to the rear. Cassandra enjoys the brief peace.
She takes her wedding ring from her pocket.
And THROWS it to the side of the track.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK:

END