

BOONE'S LICK

A Screenplay
by
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Based on a Novel by
Larry McMurtry

PLAYTONE
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1 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: PLAINS AND FOREST: DAY: SPRING, 1866:

TWO HORSEMEN trot along through country that is mainly forested, though with frequent patches of plain.

SETH CECIL, forty-ish, wears a mashed up Union cavalryman's cap, carries a sharpshooter's rifle in an oil cloth sheath. Keeps an eye on the ground, tracks in a hasty kind of way.

With him is his appealing sixteen-year-old nephew, SHAY (short for SHERMAN) CECIL. His old felt hat has a hole in it; he carries an ancient single-shot rifle.

SETH draws rein. Sniffs the air. Puts his horse into a gallop.

SHAY follows.

2 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: FOREST: DAY: A MINUTE LATER: 2

SETH draws rein once again, as does SHAY. Gestures to his nephew to keep quiet.

Cautious, they creep through the trees.

Stop just short of a clearing, while they are still hidden by the forest.

3 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: MILLER CAMP: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 3

WE and THEY SEE a poor camp: a few shacks; filthy, skinny people mill about, barefoot kids, shapeless women, a general air of extreme squalor.

WE SEE A MULE tethered to a bush.

On a long clothesline, many strips of meat smoke over several low fires.

A tall, gaunt man sits on a stump, sharpening a long knife. This is RONNIE MILLER.

4 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: MILLER CAMP: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 4

SETH and SHAY ride into the MILLER CAMP, and the kids, wild as quail, huddle around their mothers, all of whom look to be only skin and bones.

But the tall, gaunt RONNIE MILLER expresses no surprise.

SETH CECIL
(looks around)
Mornin', Ronnie.

RONNIE MILLER
 (laconic--doesn't look up)
 Nothing dulls a knife quicker than
 cutting up a tough mule....

SETH CECIL
 (cool--glances at the
 clothesline)
 I suspect that was our mule Henry
 Clay that you've been whittling
 on...he was elderly, I admit, but
 no tougher, I'd say, than your
 average quadruped.

RONNIE MILLER turns, looks at the clothesline. Looks back at
 SETH.

RONNIE MILLER
 That wasn't your mule, Seth.

SETH CECIL
 Yes, that's our mule, Ronnie, or
 what's left of him.

RONNIE MILLER
 I said, it wasn't your mule. That
 old boy keeled over late yesterday,
 out of the blue.

SETH CECIL
 (sigh)
 I suppose the point is moot, but
 that is our Little Nicky tethered
 to that bush. If he hadn't kicked
 the pen down last night, we
 wouldn't be interrupting your meal.

Suddenly, WE HEAR a shriek.

WE SEE HACKSAW MILLER, RONNIE'S younger brother, over by the
 tethered mule. Holds his bloody hand.

HACKSAW MILLER
 Dern, he's near bit my hand off!

SETH rides over to Little Nicky...dismounts. Takes his rifle
 from the sheath, holds it like a club. WE SEE SETH has a
 pronounced limp, a stiff left leg, and yet he moves steadily
 and rather smoothly. Little Nicky curls his lip, but doesn't
 bite, as SETH approaches.

SETH CECIL
 (untying the mule)
 It's unwise to approach Little
 Nicky unless you're carrying a
 stout club.

HACKSAW sucks at his bitten hand.

HACKSAW MILLER
(bitter)
I told you we should have
slaughtered 'em both.

SETH CECIL
Hacksaw's right: it ain't wise to
keep stolen mules around.

RONNIE MILLER sees that his lie is pointless.

RONNIE MILLER
We did mean to eat both mules,
Seth...as you can see, we've got
hungry mouths to feed.

SETH CECIL
Though I despise a biting mule I
need to take Little Nicky home.
There's been none too many vittles
at our house, either, since the
War.

SETH mounts. They ride off, watched by the MILLER brothers
and the silent women and children.

5

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: MISSOURI RIVER: RIVER TRAIL: 5
AFTERNOON: LATER:

Clouds float above the broad, brown Missouri River. WE SEE a
flatboat in the distance. SETH and SHAY ride along the
shore, below a bluff where WE CAN SEE a cabin with smoke
coming out of the chimney. The mule LITTLE NICKY follows
behind SHAY, who holds a lead rope.

In the other direction, perhaps a half mile, a few buildings
along the riverbank: this is the hamlet of BOONE'S LICK.

SETH CECIL
I despise cloudy weather.
(glances up at the cabin)
Women get cranky when it's cloudy.

SHAY CECIL
Ma don't need clouds to be cranky.

SETH CECIL
Your ma's particular, Shay, I
admit, and lack of healthful
sunshine don't help. It's best to
walk small around Mary Margaret.
Just walk a little smaller on
cloudy days.

Just then, WE HEAR a rifle shot from the bluff above them.

SETH looks startled...maneuvers his horse up the narrow trail, as SHAY follows.

6 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIVER: TRAIL: AFTERNOON: CONTINUOUS: 6

On the bluff, WE SEE a slim girl--this is NEVA, SHAY'S sister, just a year older than SHAY--race down the trail toward them. She is barefoot, fairly flies.

Doesn't slow until she reaches SETH and SHAY, who rein up, dismount.

7 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIVER: AFTERNOON: CONTINUOUS: 7

SETH CECIL
Easy, honey, easy....

NEVA is so out of breath she gulps air, not able to speak.

SHAY CECIL
She's outrun her own voice.

SETH CECIL
(pats her on the back)
What is it, Neva? Nobody shot your Ma, did they?

NEVA CECIL
It was Ma that shot. She killed a horse.

SETH CECIL
(obviously relieved)
The world can spare a horse, but none of us can spare your mother.

NEVA CECIL
It was the Sheriff's horse Ma shot.

SETH CECIL
She shot Baldy Stone's horse? Now that's irregular. Where was Baldy at the time?

NEVA CECIL
Sitting on it.

8

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIVER: AFTERNOON: CONTINUOUS: 8

NEVA, having caught her breath, starts toward the not-very-distant town of BOONE'S LICK, which WE CAN GLIMPSE down the riverbank.

SHAY CECIL
Where you going?

NEVA CECIL
(without apology)
To see Bill Hickok.

SETH CECIL
I admire your steady thinking, honey. Bill could be a big help if he was in the mood to be, but this cloudy weather might have put him off.

NEVA CECIL
You're the only one who minds clouds.

NEVA trots on down the path.

SETH CECIL
There's no shortage of hardheaded females in the Cecil family. If you hit one of them in the head with a rock, it would break the rock.

SHAY CECIL
Neva's sweet on Mr. Hickok. She means to marry him.

SETH CECIL
(laughs)
I doubt there's enough mules in Missouri to drag Bill Hickok to an altar if he was the groom.

SETH and SHAY mount, start up the path NEVA has just headed down.

9

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL HAULING YARD: AFTERNOON: 9

The CECIL enterprise consists of a few empty rail pens, a shed, and a sizeable cabin. Off to one side is SETH'S outdoor camp. SETH sleeps outside the main cabin, in this little setup.

As SETH and SHAY arrive, WE SEE a short, round, bald man sitting glumly on the rump of a large dead horse, fans himself with his hat. This is SHERIFF BALDY STONE.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE

(fans himself w/his hat)

Well, Seth...she shot my horse and here I sit. And to think I once courted Mary Margaret, before she married your brother Dick.

SETH CECIL

I suspect she still has a sweet spot for you, Baldy.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE

A sweet spot? I don't think so.

SETH CECIL

It would explain why she shot the horse and not you.

SHAY laughs, as his mother MARY MARGARET CECIL steps out the door of the cabin, with her youngest child, BABY MARCY (around a year old) in her arms.

MARY MARGARET is in her late thirties: direct, a little rawboned but very appealing; she is lively and, on occasion, flirtatious, while remaining quite formidable.

BALDY stands up.

MARY MARGARET immediately walks over to SETH and casually hands him BABY MARCY, who coos in delight.

SETH CECIL

Now Mary Margaret, you oughtn't to have burdened me with this infant, Baldy's out of sorts and there might be gunplay.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE

(shakes his head)

No sir, no gunplay! There's been violence enough for one day.

MARY MARGARET walks over and looks at the dead horse thoughtfully. Touches its rump.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

(faraway look in her eye)

Why, it is a horse. What a surprise!

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
Of course it's a horse, thoroughly
dead! You shot it out from under
me before I could tell you why I'm
here.

SHAY CECIL
(puzzled)
Ma, anybody can see it's a horse.
What did you think it was?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
An elk. I thought, no more mush,
we're going to be eating elk.

SHAY looks distressed: what's wrong with his mother?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(still with the faraway
look)
Maybe I was too hungry to see
straight. I just saw all that
meat...
(pause--her voice takes on
a flirtatious tone)
We've got buttermilk to spare,
Eddie, if you'd like some. Since I
shot your horse, it's the least I
can offer.

It works: BALDY, charmed, follows MARY MARGARET into the
house. SETH, carrying BABY MARCY, and SHAY follow, too.

10

INT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL CABIN: AFTERNOON:
CONTINUOUS:

10

A plain but roomy cabin with a sleeping loft. A big
fireplace is filled with cooking pots. A simple table and
chairs. A crock of buttermilk sits on the table.

GRANDPA HUBERT CRACKENTHORPE, an old, skinny, perpetually
complaining nag watches resentfully as MARY MARGARET ladles
the Sheriff a dipperful of buttermilk.

GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE
I'm the oldest, if anyone gets
buttermilk, it ought to be me.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Wait your turn, Daddy.
(to Baldy)
I'm hungry and my family's hungry.
When you rode up, all I could see
was steaks...big, sizzling elk
steaks.

(MORE)

MARY MARGARET CECIL (cont'd)

(pause)

Shay's a good worker, Eddie. Maybe he can help you out at the jail somehow to make up for your loss.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE

Maybe. The reason I come up here in the first place was to try and recruit Seth and the boy for a little posse work.

SETH CECIL

If there's cash money involved, consider us recruited.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Wait a minute, Seth! Don't be pledging my son for a posse until we know the reason.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE

Jake Miller and his gang's the reason. Ronnie Miller and Hacksaw are tolerable, but Jake and his bunch are ravin' killers and thieves. The War's been over nearly a year and a half, but Jake and his crew are robbing and murdering worse than ever. I need to get up a posse and finish them.

(pause)

A paid posse.

SETH CECIL

My nephew and I just visited the Millers. Jake and his ugly bunch wasn't home, else I'd have killed him then and there and saved the county the expense.

(pause)

We might hire on if the money's right.

MARY MARGARET looks doubtful.

SETH CECIL

Mary, you just admitted you're so hungry you mistook a horse for an elk. We're being offered cash money to help Baldy round up a few common hooligans.

SETH tries to hand MARY MARGARET the baby, but she thwarts the move--picks up a huge knife, sharpens it on a large whirring whetstone.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

(tense)

Shoo. I can't be holding the baby while I'm sharpening knives. We need to butcher that horse.

SETH and MARY glare at one another, which unnerves both GRANDPA and BALDY STONE. A tense silence follows, too tense for GRANDPA, who seizes a huge pistol and makes for the door.

GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE

There's a panther lurking around...I mean to get it before it gets me.

He leaves.

BALDY follows GRANDPA, stops at the door.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE

Thanks for the buttermilk, Mary.

She hardly notices. The whir of the grindstone fills the room. BALDY goes.

SHAY looks at SETH, who nods that SHAY should follow the SHERIFF out the door. SHAY obeys.

SETH CECIL

That knife's sharp enough to slice a brick. Would you just stop for a minute?

She stops. They lock eyes.

SETH CECIL

Shay's nearly a man, Mary. He needs to get a little experience out in the world. And we're nearly flat broke.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

I don't know that I trust Baldy Stone and a posse with my one and only boy.

SETH CECIL

Not Baldy Stone, Mary...me. It's me you'd be trusting him with. Don't you think Shay needs to grow up a little?

MARY MARGARET considers, silent.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (finally)
 Go find out how much cash money's
 involved.

11. EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL HAULING YARD: AFTERNOON: 11
 CONTINUOUS:

SETH with BABY MARCY walks over to SETH'S little camp, where
 SHAY and BALDY wait. SETH puts MARCY on a saddle which sits
 on the ground.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
 Didn't you get enough of sleeping
 outside with the military, Seth?

SETH CECIL
 I cannot tolerate the confinements
 of a roof. Fetid air is sure to
 accumulate under a roof. What's
 the pay for this posse work you're
 planning?

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
 Twenty-five dollars for you, and
 maybe ten for young Shay. I'd be
 tempted to offer Bill Hickok fifty,
 if he'd come.

SETH CECIL
 (stiffens)
 Are you saying it's twenty-five
 dollars to me and fifty to Bill
 Hickok, even though in the War I
 was the sharpshooter and Bill just
 a common spy? I cannot accept such
 shabby terms.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
 I might even up the pay if you'd
 recruit Hickok for me...seeing as
 you're old friends.

SHAY CECIL
 What about me, Uncle Seth?

SETH CECIL
 I'm working on it, Shay, I'm
 working on it. So it's fifty
 apiece for me and Billy, and ten
 for this gangly youth. Is that
 firm, Baldy?

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
That's a hundred and ten dollars,
Seth. We could build a new jail
for less than that.

SETH CECIL
You could, but it wouldn't have the
Millers in it.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
All right then. When will you ask
Hickok?

SETH CECIL
After supper, I suppose, once we've
butchered your horse.

MARY MARGARET appears at the door, sharpened knife in hand,
just in time to hear SETH'S remark about the dead horse.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(firm)
I thought it was an elk!
(looks around)
Where's Neva? I sent her to fetch
the two of you, and now she ain't
here when I need her.

BALDY senses a confrontation, grabs his saddle and skedaddles
towards BOONE'S LICK.

Looks exchanged between SETH and SHAY.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Shay, where is she?

SETH CECIL
She trotted on into Boone's Lick.
She's probably skipping rope with
one of her little friends...or else
rolling a hoop around the streets.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(snapping her fingers)
Go get her, Shay.
(to Seth)
You may not have noticed, since
you're not one to notice much, but
Neva's left the rope-skipping stage
behind.

GRANDPA wanders back, still carries his pistol.

SETH CECIL
I'll straggle along and chaperone
if it'll ease your mind, Mary...I
need to see Billy Hickok anyway.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(frowns)
Bill Hickok? Then that explains
where my lovesick daughter is!

Her tone of voice causes GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE to turn right
around and go back where he just came from.

GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE
Evening's the best time for hunting
panthers....

Hurries off.

SETH CECIL
If she should happen to be with
Bill Hickok, then she's as safe as
if she was in jail. Bill is a
perfect gentleman where young
ladies are concerned.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Shay, didn't I tell you to go?
(to Seth)
And don't you stay gone all night,
either, Seth.

SETH rolls his eyes at this despotism, but says nothing.

SETH and SHAY leave.

12 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: BOONE'S LICK: EVENING: 12

SETH and SHAY stroll along the trail just outside of BOONE'S
LICK.

SHAY CECIL
That was a horse. It wasn't an
elk.

SETH CECIL
It did seem to have the appearance
of a horse.

SHAY CECIL
Besides, a sheriff wouldn't ride an
elk.

SETH CECIL

It would be unlikely, yes. Females
make their own kind of sense, Shay,
as you'll one day discover.

Suddenly NEVA trots up the road from town.

SHAY CECIL

Neva, where you been? You got me
in trouble with Ma!

NEVA CECIL

(doesn't pause)
None of your business, you oaf!

...as she disappears up the trail.

SETH CECIL

Besides being hardheaded, the women
in this family are closemouthed.
The only way to figure out what
they're up to is to catch 'em at
it.

13

INT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: BOONE'S LICK: RUSTY NAIL SALOONS
NIGHT:

SETH and SHAY push through the doors and enter a hard-bitten
Missouri River saloon, filled with wharf rats and pugnacious
boatmen, some of whom have already passed out under the
tables. Snore like saws.

Alone at the back table, facing the door, elegant in a
fringed buckskin jacket, sits WILD BILL HICKOK, idly shuffles
a deck of cards. Lays out a game of solitaire.

Ignoring the general debris, SETH and SHAY walk back to
HICKOK'S table.

WILD BILL HICKOK

(stands)

Why, hello, Seth. Who's your
sturdy sidekick?

SETH CECIL

This is my nephew Sherman. To save
time we call him Shay.

WILD BILL HICKOK

(gestures)

Take a seat. You just missed your
fetching niece, Miss Geneva.

(MORE)

WILD BILL HICKOK (cont'd)
 She looked hungry, so I fed her a
 beefsteak, and she ate it so quick
 I fed her another. That young lady
 can eat.

A none-too-friendly bartender appears, sets two glasses on
 the table.

SETH CECIL
 You can just leave the bottle, sir.
 That way you won't have to traipse
 back and forth across the floor,
 stirring the dust.

The floor is filthy with cigar butts and a good pile of mud
 just inside the door where some of the muleskinners have
 scraped off their boots.

BARTENDER
 There's not a speck of dust on this
 floor. What do you think I do all
 day and all night? Sweep this
 floor, that's what I do.

SETH CECIL
 Just leave the bottle. There's no
 need for a dispute.

BARTENDER
 (sets down the bottle,
 then to Hickok)
 What does he think I do all day and
 all night?

Walks off.

SETH CECIL
 (pours two drinks)
 That fellow is overworked. A dead
 skunk would not be noticed on this
 floor.

Slides the second drink to HICKOK.

WILD BILL HICKOK
 (to Shay)
 Don't you drink, young man?

SHAY CECIL
 (looks at Uncle Seth)
 I would...if I was allowed.

SETH CECIL
 He's not drinking on my watch. His
 Ma's in a scalping mood as it is.
 (MORE)

SETH CECIL (cont'd)
 Besides, he's got to ride with me
 and Sheriff Stone on a posse in the
 morning. A hangover would not be
 welcome.

(drinks)
 The Sheriff was hoping I could coax
 you into joining us.

WILD BILL HICKOK
 Who's the target?

SETH CECIL
 Jake Miller's gang of murderous
 riffraff.

WILD BILL HICKOK
 I'm interested. That damn Little
 Billy Perkins runs with them, and
 he has done me several bad turns.

SETH CECIL
 Little Billy has few morals--few to
 none. It would be doing a favor to
 humanity to dispose of Little
 Billy.

WILD BILL HICKOK
 I'm in the mood to do the
 favor...if the pay is decent.

SETH CECIL
 Fifty dollars apiece for you and
 me, and a pittance for young
 Sherman here.

WILD BILL HICKOK
 (whistles)
 Fifty times two makes a hundred, if
 my arithmetic is sound.

WILD BILL, relaxed and in a good mood, surveys the saloon:
 The men in the front of the saloon don't seem relaxed at all.
 Several glare in the direction of SETH and WILD BILL, who
 ignore them.

WILD BILL HICKOK
 It's time I scared up a card game.
 I'll contribute my services if the
 town's got the money. I'm
 available anytime but Friday.

SETH CECIL
 What's wrong with Friday?

WILD BILL HICKOK
 (shuffling cards)
 I don't work Fridays.

14 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: BOONE'S LICK: STREET: NIGHT: 14

SETH and SHAY walk back up the street.

SETH CECIL
You see, Bill's superstitious about
Fridays. All these fine
gunfighters have their
superstitions.

ROSIE MCGEE
(husky voice)
Seth Cecil! Stand and account!

SETH, startled, looks up.

SETH CECIL
Oh my God....

WE SEE a little red glow at the top of the stairs behind the
saloon. Someone sits on the landing, smoking a thin cigar.

SETH looks uneasy.

SETH CECIL
(to Shay)
I'll be along directly, Shay. Go
on home and report to your Ma.

SHAY CECIL
Report? What am I to report?

SETH CECIL
That you met Bill Hickok and he
didn't shoot you.

WE HEAR SETH climb the stairs, as SHAY, disappointed, looks
on.

15 INT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: ROSIE'S ROOM: NIGHT: A MINUTE 15
LATER:

SETH and ROSIE are in her room above the saloon.

There is a velvet settee and a chair, and a small table with
a mirror on it. The bed has a lovely satin coverlet. A
player piano sits against one wall. The windows have
curtains. One looks down upon the meandering Missouri River.

ROSIE has poured them each a small glass of whiskey. She
raises her glass in a toast, as does SETH. They drink.

SETH CECIL
So...the prodigal daughter returns.

ROSIE MCGEE
I told Billy not to mention I was here. I wanted to announce my arrival myself.

SETH CECIL
Where in the world have you been all these years, Rosie?

ROSIE MCGEE
Lord, Seth, it's easier to say where I haven't been.
(pours another drink)
I've been up and down the Mississippi, mainly...Natchez, New Orleans. St. Louis.

SETH CECIL
What brought you home, then?

ROSIE MCGEE
Billy Hickok. You could say we're partners. I flirt with the cardplayers, and Billy relieves them of their money.
(pause)
Besides, I wanted to see my family.
(pause)
How is my big sister?

SETH CECIL
She's Mary...bossy as ever.
(pause)
Stubborn. And sassy.

ROSIE MCGEE
How do you think she'll take the news that her baby sister's back in Boone's Lick?

SETH CECIL
(shrugs)
Why, you're her sister, honey. I suppose she'll want to see you!

ROSIE'S not so certain.

They both drink.

16

INT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL CABIN: NIGHT:

16

SHAY comes in. NEVA churns butter. MARY MARGARET nurses the baby.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Where's Seth?

SHAY considers a moment. Looks uncomfortable.

SHAY CECIL
I think he wanted to play cards.

MARY MARGARET motions for SHAY to sit beside her. As soon as he sits down, MARY MARGARET gives him a sharp dig in his side with her elbow.

SHAY CECIL
Ouch! What'd I do?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Don't lie for your Uncle Seth. And don't lie for your Pa, either if he ever comes home again. Let grown men do their own lying. I mean it.

SHAY CECIL
Yes, ma'am.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Seth ain't playing cards.

SHAY CECIL
No, ma'am.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Then where is he?

SHAY CECIL
(very uncomfortable)
He's visiting a friend.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(frowns)
What friend?

SHAY CECIL
A lady friend. I don't know her name, but she lives above the saloon.

MARY MARGARET is not happy.

NEVA churns; she and SHAY exchange looks.

17 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL CABIN: NIGHT: LATER: 17

SETH comes in. SHAY and NEVA have gone to bed.

MARY MARGARET rocks MARCY.

SETH reaches for the baby, but MARY MARGARET snatches her away.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I'm not sure I want you handling my child. You may be tainted goods.

SETH CECIL
What the hell is that supposed to mean?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(glares)
You don't usually come in smelling of perfume. Who is she, Seth?

SETH, a bit smug, doesn't answer right away.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(more emphatic)
Who is she, Seth Cecil?

SETH CECIL
"She" is Rosie McGhee...your long lost baby sister.

MARY MARGARET is so surprised by his answer, she hands MARCY right to SETH. Doesn't know whether to believe him or not.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Rosie's in Boone's Lick?

SHAY and NEVA, bedded down in the loft, roll over and listen.

SETH CECIL
(nods)
Yep. She followed Billy Hickok here from St. Louis. Seems they've become a gambling team.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(smile)
My wild sister hasn't changed a bit, I see.

SETH CECIL
Well now, I wouldn't say that, Mary. She said she wanted to see the children...and you.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Then why ain't she here?

SETH CECIL
She's not quite sure how welcome she'd be.

MARY MARGARET is near tears...but too proud to let go.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
What foolishness is that? She's my
sister!

(pause)
Just because we had that tiff ten
years ago doesn't mean I won't want
to see her now. I don't hold
grudges forever...except maybe
against you.

SHAY and NEVA exchange looks.

SETH CECIL
Me? What could you possibly have a
grudge against me for?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
If you wasn't God's fool about
women, you'd know!

SETH CECIL
I can understand English, can't I/
I've got ears, haven't I?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
You may have ears, but all they let
in is air.

SHAY and NEVA lay back, as WE HEAR the bickering waft up to
the loft.

SETH CECIL
(from below)
If you're going to accuse me of
something I know nothing about,
accuse me in plain English....

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(from below)
To be any plainer, I'd have to hit
you with a club....

SHAY and NEVA roll over, go back to sleep.

18 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL HAULING YARD: DAY: DAWN: 18
WE SEE the posse, mounted, wear slickers, in the half light.

HICKOK smokes.

NEVA watches.

MARY MARGARET is outside with them, holds a large pistol. She starts to hand it up to SHAY.

SETH CECIL
No sidearms for Shay. Sidearms are only reliable in the hands of experts, and sometimes not then.

WILD BILL HICKOK
Shooting a pistol is just a matter of pointing straight. But the fact is, very few people can point straight.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
If anything happens to my boy, I'll show all three of you somebody who can point straight.

WILD BILL HICKOK
(tips his hat to Mary Margaret and Neva)
My regards to you ladies....

He smiles charmingly.

NEVA returns his smile.

MARY MARGARET, stern, watches them leave.

19 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: FOREST: DAY:

19

The posse rides through morning mist, moves along at a good pace through lightly forested country.

WE SEE SHAY, who looks nervous in the saddle.

SHAY hears somebody behind him--startles. Turns, and there is NEVA, who rides a mule and carries the shotgun from UNCLE SETH'S camp.

SHAY CECIL
Neva, what're you doing here?
Girls don't belong in a posse.

ALL pull up.

NEVA CECIL
I ain't part of your posse.
There's a big flock of turkeys over by Stumptown, and I mean to get one.

SETH CECIL
It's awkward timing, honey. Hot
lead will be flying over Stumptown.

NEVA CECIL
Mr. Hickok won't let nobody shoot
me...will you, Mr. Hickok?

She smiles directly at him, bold.

20

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: FOREST: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 20

Suddenly, TWO GRIM-LOOKING HORSEMEN approach around a turn in
the path up ahead.

SETH CECIL
(pulls rifle out of its
scabbard, lays it across
the saddle pommel)
Have we sighted the enemy, Sheriff?

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
No, but we've sighted the dang
Tebbits.
(calls out)
Hello, Newt....hello, Percy.

NEWT TEBBIT
(grizzled, stubbly)
We want to join the posse, Sheriff.

SETH CECIL
(pleasant)
No thanks, Newt. We're fully
staffed. Any extras would
constitute a crowd.

Both TEBBITS give ugly snorts.

PERCY TEBBIT
(contemptuous)
All I see's two Yankees, a slow
Sheriff, a green boy and a spavined
gal.

NEWT TEBBIT
Fact is, our sister Nancy's been
led astray by Jake Miller. You
wouldn't deny two brothers the
chance to rescue their sister from
a swamp of sin, now would you?

SHERIFF BALDY looks at SETH, HICKOK, who remain perfectly
cool and noncommittal. SHAY grips his rifle. NEVA glares at
PERCY for calling her spavined.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
I've got no money to pay you for
your time.

PERCY TEBBIT
You needn't be concerned about the
pay. We'll see what we can pick up
once we rout the Millers.

They fall in with the rest.

21 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: FOREST: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 21

SHAY CECIL
(indignant)
Neva oughtn't to come. She's a
girl.

SETH CECIL
In an orderly world, no.
(looks back at the
Tebbits)
But this ain't an orderly world.

22 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIDGE: POSSE: DAY: A MINUTE 22
LATER:

The posse rides up, stops on a little ridge just above
Stumptown: two burned out houses, a store with a porch, and
a church. A rooster walks around on the store porch.

SHERIFF BALDY, SETH and SHAY start to move down the ridge,
but the TEBBITS don't move.

NEWT TEBBIT
(points)
There's some brushy thickets. I say
we slip around that way.

SETH CECIL
Why? Brushy thickets are just
where ambushers would hide.

WILD BILL HICKOK
I second the opinion. Besides
which, this palaver is a waste of
time. I don't work on Fridays, and
Thursday is slipping by.

SETH and WILD BILL turn their horses. Begin to walk them
slowly, back towards the TEBBITS.

SETH CECIL
Ain't we missing a Tebbit? Where's
big brother Charlie?

NEWT TEBBIT
Charlie had a toothache. He's gone
to Boone's Lick to the dentist.

SHERIFF BALDY chews on an unlit cigar, as SETH and HICKOK
slowly converge on the TEBBITS.

Both TEBBITS bare their teeth, grin like ferrets.

SETH CECIL
Then he must have lured a dentist
into that thicket, which is where I
suspect we'll find Charlie.

PERCY TEBBIT
You're a damn brash Yankee, Seth
Cecil....

But before he can finish his speech, SETH swings his Sharps
rifle and knocks PERCY TEBBIT off his horse.

WILD BILL does exactly the same thing, at the same time, to
NEWT TEBBIT.

Both men writhe around, hold their heads.

SHERIFF BALDY jumps down, retrieves two pair of handcuffs
from his saddlebags.

SETH CECIL
Get down and help the Sheriff,
Shay. Hurry before they come to.

23 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: PLAIN: POSSE: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 23

SHAY'S eyes are wide, the quick transition to violence
disconcerting. He dismounts, takes a pair of handcuffs and
swallows hard, cuffs NEWT. BALDY does the same to PERCY.

24 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: PLAIN: THICKET: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 24

SEVEN RIDERS, led by CHARLIE TEBBIT, burst out of the thicket
and charge the ridge, which is a considerable distance away.
All ride bad mounts, skinny, ratty-looking horses.

25 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIDGE: POSSE: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 25

SETH and HICKOK watch matter-of-factly.

Suddenly both TEBBITS stagger to their feet and run down the ridge, yell as they go.

PERCY TEBBIT
Kill 'em, boys, they've hurt us
bad!

SHAY grabs his rifle, looks back and forth between the two men and the approaching riders. HICKOK and SETH are calm.

WILD BILL HICKOK
(as he dismounts)
Shoot a horse or two, Seth. Those
nags are so puny it'd be a mercy.

SETH dismounts, SHAY follows suit.

BALDY stays horseback.

SETH unsheathes his rifle, quickly sets up a little sharpshooter's tripod.

SETH CECIL
(squints)
These Reb outlaws do love a cavalry
charge.

SETH sights. Shoots.

26 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: PLAIN: DAY: THICKET: CONTINUOUS: 26

Down the hill, a horse falls.

Then another.

And another, throws his rider a long ways. The rider doesn't move.

The rest of the riders draw rein, mill around in confusion.

NEWT and PERCY TEBBIT are about halfway between the riders and our heroes, as they stumble along.

27 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIDGE: POSSE: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 27

Meanwhile, NEVA spots a flock of wild turkeys in the high grass along the ridge. Unobserved, she slips off her mule, cocks her shotgun and begins a cautious stalk, bends low.

28 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIDGE: POSSE: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 28

WILD BILL eases around his own horse. Gestures to SHAY to do the same.

WILD BILL HICKOK
That's not Jake's murdering bunch
down there...that's a decoy, the
Miller boys that can't shoot
straight.

SETH CECIL
Just my thinking, Bill.
(to Sheriff Baldy)
It's our play, Baldy, what do you
want to do?

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
I'm not sure.

WILD BILL HICKOK
Thursday's slipping away.

SETH CECIL
First thing I'd do is dismount.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
(considers)
I doubt they're behind....

A shot rings out, and SHERIFF BALDY STONE is knocked off his horse. SIX MORE AMBUSHERS, led by the wild JAKE MILLER, charge down the slope at them.

29 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: PLAIN: MILLER GANG: DAY: 29
CONTINUOUS:

WE ARE WITH THE CHARGING MILLER GANG, all fire wildly as they come.

30 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIDGE: NEVA'S POV: DAY: 30
CONTINUOUS:

NEVA is just in range of the turkeys, which are between her and the MILLERS.

Suddenly, the turkeys flush, and the air is filled with large, flapping, gobbling birds: the horses spook, break into wild bucking, throw riders left and right.

Even JAKE MILLER gets thrown, coming down on rocks.

He doesn't move.

NEVA shoots coolly, brings down a big gobbler.

31

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIDGE: POSSE: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 31

SETH CECIL
Look at her! She shot a turkey
when she could have shot Jake
Miller.

WILD BILL HICKOK
Well, the turkey's better eatin'.

WE SEE a LONE RIDER, the only one able to keep his seat,
break off from the MILLER GANG, gallop for the distant
forest.

WILD BILL HICKOK
There goes Little Billy Perkins,
the damn scoundrel. Good luck to
you boys.

WILD BILL mounts, races after the LONE RIDER.

SETH CECIL
Are you dead, Baldy?

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
No, but I'm wobbly.

SETH CECIL
We better get handcuffs on the
Millers while they're still groggy.
Cover me, Shay, Jake's already
getting squirmy.

32

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIDGE: DAY:

32

SETH and BALDY, covered by SHAY, have secured THREE OUTLAWS:
JAKE MILLER, fury in his eyes, CUTNOSE JONES, silent but
menacing, and LESTER MILLER, a boy about SHAY'S age. LESTER
is unnerved by the sudden defeat.

LESTER MILLER
Heck, my gun was just wired
together, it wouldn't even shoot.

JAKE MILLER
Shut up, you sniveling brat.

NEVA arrives, carries her turkey.

NEVA CECIL
I told you I'd get a turkey.

SETH CECIL
I'm sure it's tasty, but next time
try not to get between me and my
targets, honey.

SETH mounts his horse. Looks the situation over.

SHAY CECIL
Where you going?

SETH CECIL
To catch those skittish horses so
we won't have to walk these
desperados all the way to Boone's
Lick.

To SHAY'S dismay, SETH rides off.

JAKE MILLER looks at SHAY with his hot little eyes.

JAKE MILLER
You've made a big mistake, Yankee
boy.

SHERIFF BALDY STONE
Don't let him rattle you, son...

...his voice trails off as he slides to the ground.

JAKE MILLER
He's mortal hit. Good. Now get
these handcuffs off me, Yankee boy.
If you want to live.

SHAY CECIL
You stay put! Cover him with the
shotgun, Neva.

NEVA CECIL
I only had one shell, but I'll whop
him with the shotgun if he moves.

JAKE MILLER
(edging toward Shay)
Take 'em off, or I'll track you to
the ends of the earth and eat your
goddamn liver.

CUTNOSE JONES
And I'll eat what's left.

JAKE makes a wild lunge, grabs SHAY'S rifle barrel. When
JAKE tries to yank the rifle out of SHAY'S hand, the yank
causes SHAY to pull the trigger. The shot hits JAKE right in
the chest and knocks him back across SHERIFF BALDY'S body.

33 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: PLAIN: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 33

SETH, having caught the three MILLER horses, hears the shot. Turns, lopes back, leads the horses.

34 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIDGE: POSSE: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 34

JAKE MILLER, incredibly, is still alive.

SHAY tries to reload too hastily, manages to jam his old single shot.

JAKE MILLER'S eyes are wide open, tries to pull one of SHERIFF BALDY'S pistols out of his holster.

NEVA grabs it just in time. Aims it at him, but it is a double-action and won't fire.

SHAY CECIL
How come you ain't dead?

35 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: RIDGE: POSSE: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 35

SETH rides up.

SETH CECIL
(dismounting)
My goodness, can't nobody but me do anything right?

SETH promptly slams JAKE MILLER'S head into the ground, knocks him out.

SHAY CECIL
I shot him point-blank. Why didn't he die?

SETH CECIL
(opening Jake's shirt)
If you're going to be shooting at surly outlaws, you need to learn where their vitals are.

SHAY CECIL
What's a vital?

SETH CECIL
(quickly points)
Heart, lungs, stomach, gut.
(looks at the Sheriff)
What's wrong with Baldy?

NEVA CECIL
I guess he fainted.

SETH frowns. Takes a closer look.

SETH CECIL
He fainted right into the Great
Hereafter, is what he did. It'll
upset Mary Margaret. They courted
once.

WE SEE SHAY look down at BALDY STONE'S body.

36 INT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL CABIN: LOFT: NIGHT: 36
WE SEE SHAY, asleep, thrashing about, in the throes of a
nightmare.

37 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL CABIN: ROOF: DAY: 37
SHAY and NEVA sit atop the cabin, look towards BOONE'S LICK.
LONG SHOT of a gallows. JAKE MILLER stands, waiting,
belligerent as ever.

Crowd gathered around. Men and women in wagons fill the
street.

SHAY CECIL
I guess it was Jake's bad luck the
circuit judge happened to be in
town.

NEVA CECIL
He said he'd eat your liver.
You're lucky they're hanging him.

WE SEE the hangman put the noose around JAKE'S neck. When
the trap door opens, SHAY and NEVA flinch.

NEVA CECIL
I guess your liver's safe.

38 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CREEK: DAY: 38
MARY MARGARET, SHAY and NEVA wash clothes in the shallow
creek. MARY MARGARET, in the water, has her skirts tucked
up. She and NEVA rub vigorously, using lye soap and a
washboard.

SHAY squeezes wet clothes, piles them in a basket. He is
still in the shadow of his struggle with JAKE MILLER.

SHAY CECIL

I stood too close to Jake.
Otherwise, he could never have
grabbed my gun. I almost got
killed.

NEVA CECIL

By a handcuffed man with a broken
leg.

SHAY flings a wet shirt at her.

She ducks.

SHAY CECIL

(glares at Neva)
Almost, I said!

MARY MARGARET CECIL

(stops washing, looks at
him)

It don't do to study it too close.
It's over. Just be smarter next
time. Life's full of 'almosts',
Shay. Lots of things almost
happen, some good and some bad.

SHAY sees this as an opening.

SHAY CECIL

Ma...why didn't Aunt Rosie ever
come to see us all these years?

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Go see her and ask her. Maybe
she'll tell you why.

SHAY takes this literally. He immediately turns to leave.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

I didn't mean right this minute.
Finish squeezing the clothes.
Besides, your Auntie is not exactly
an early riser.

NEVA CECIL

What an oaf!

SHAY glares at her.

NEVA CECIL

A better question is why Pa don't
hardly come to see us. Grandpa
Hubert says you were mean to Pa.
He says you run him off, which is
why we don't hardly get to see him.

SHAY CECIL
Grandpa's cracked, Neva, you know that.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(smile)
Your Pa's a natural born rambler. He don't stay around long enough for me to pick on him.

NEVA CECIL
That ain't what Grandpa says.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(scratches her arm)
This lye soap's too strong.

NEVA CECIL
You're even mean to Uncle Seth. I don't know why he ain't left, too.

MARY MARGARET stops scrubbing, faces her daughter.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Seems like you think I'm mean to everybody.

NEVA CECIL
You ain't mean to Shay. He's your pet.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Maybe that's because Shay's dependable. You go sneaking off when I need you, just so you can flirt with a slick ladies' man like Bill Hickok.

NEVA whirls on her mother, nostrils flaring.

NEVA CECIL
He's a perfect gentleman!

She stalks off.

SHAY CECIL
What got into her?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
It's her age, mainly. And the fact that she's a girl.
(considers)
Do you think I'm mean to your Uncle Seth?

SHAY CECIL
 (a little uncomfortable)
 I don't know, Ma.
 (considers)
 Not mean, exactly....

MARY MARGARET laughs.

Drops her washing, goes to SHAY and ruffles his hair. Looks at him lovingly.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (sigh)
 Some nights, when there's nothing but mush to eat and not much of that, I worry about you. Around here, where it's so poor, it's easy to get hopeless.
 (pause)
 I don't want you nor Neva nor Marcy to get hopeless and hungry and die on me....

She suddenly looks as if she might cry. Hugs him tight.

SHAY, embarrassed, doesn't understand his mother's sudden concern.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 I couldn't bear to lose you, Shay.

She continues to hold him.

SHAY tolerates this emotional display, though he doesn't understand it.

SHAY CECIL
 It's okay, Ma...I ain't sick...why, I ain't even hungry.

39 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: ROAD: DAY:

39

UNCLE SETH and SHAY trot along the trail to town. SETH, merry, whistles ANNIE LAURIE.

Notices SHAY'S pensive mood.

SETH CECIL
 Well, Sherman...you look like a fellow with a lot on his mind.

They ride.

SHAY CECIL
Uncle Seth, why do women sniff bread?

SETH CECIL
(smile)
Oh, I see...a woman question.
(pause)
To determine if it's fresh, I guess.
(considers)
They do the same with men.

SHAY CECIL
(startled)
Well, I wouldn't want one sniffing me.

SETH CECIL
That's an opinion you may outgrow.
(pause)
I guess I don't smell fresh, which is why I'm a bachelor still.

SHAY CECIL
That's plain peculiar.

SETH CECIL
The fact is, women don't know why they choose who they choose. Maybe a good scent's the best thing they got to go on.

They ride. SHAY considers.

SHAY CECIL
You reckon Pa's likely to come home any time soon?

SETH CECIL
Hard to say. One reason Dick's a wagoner is because he has little tolerance for family life.

SHAY CECIL
I miss Pa.

SETH CECIL
I'd like to see Dick, too, Shay. I'm his business partner, after all...be nice to know if we're getting rich or going broke.

They ride.

40

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: BOONE'S LICK: GENERAL STORE: DAD:

SETH and SHAY have dismounted in front of the General Store and are hitching their horses.

They are about to go inside when ROSIE MCGEE steps out: ROSIE is pretty. She is just a few years younger than MARY MARGARET, but dresses more like a "town" lady. She carries a fan edged with pearls, although it's not hot.

ROSIE MCGEE

(smile)

Hello, Seth. Who's your handsome sidekick, may I ask?

SETH CECIL

This is your nephew, Sherman. We call him Shay, mostly.

(to Shay)

And this is your Aunt Rosie.

ROSIE MCGEE

Hello, Sherman.

She offers her hand to SHAY, who takes it.

SHAY CECIL

(blushes)

Hello.

ROSIE MCGEE

Seth, it's clear you've got whiskey and dominoes on your mind. Run along now. Me and my nephew need to make up for lost time.

She hooks her arm in SHAY'S. SETH looks discombobulated.

SETH CECIL

This boy's been sent on an errand. He'd best not be neglecting his chores.

SHAY CECIL

I'm supposed to buy Ma a new thimble.

ROSIE MCGEE

Shoot, I've got twenty thimbles right upstairs. I'll give your Ma one and save her four cents.

SETH CECIL

Now this is a might hasty arrangement....

ROSIE MCGEE
 (cuts him short)
 I want to visit with my nephew--
 what's wrong with that?

SETH CECIL
 Just remember you've got that
 harness to polish.

He stomps off toward the saloon.

41 INT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: ROSIE'S ROOM: DAY:

41

SHAY and ROSIE are in her room above the saloon. She has
 poured them each a whiskey.

SHAY CECIL
 We never polish the harness. I
 don't even know what I'm supposed
 to polish it with.

ROSIE MCGEE
 (laughs a hearty laugh)
 Seth's just jealous. He thinks all
 females were put on earth to
 entertain him. So he's having a
 little fit, as gentlemen will.
 (hands him a glass)
 Now sip this, nephew. Don't gulp
 it.

SHAY takes too big a swallow and nearly chokes. ROSIE has to
 pound him on the back.

ROSIE MCGEE
 That wasn't a sip, honey, but it
 was a start.

42 INT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: BOONE'S LICK: SALOON: DAY: A FEW
 MINUTES LATER:

SETH sits with WILD BILL, who appears moody.

A dead skunk lays in the middle of the floor, unnoticed.

WE CAN faintly hear the tinkle of ROSIE'S piano above.

WILD BILL HICKOK
 Folks think I'm such a sure shot
 that I don't ever miss. But I do
 miss.

SETH CECIL
 (takes a drink)
 Little Billy Perkins must have got
 away.

WILD BILL HICKOK
 He did, the swift little son-of-a-
 bitch.
 (looks up)
 Who do you suppose that is stomping
 around Rosie's?

SETH CECIL
 My nephew. She's in the process of
 turning his head.

43 INT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: ROSIE'S ROOM: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 43

AUNT and NEPHEW dance to the tune of ROSIE'S player piano.
 ROSIE is teaching him to dance. Though slightly drunk, SHAY
 is awkward still.

ROSIE is amused and happy.

ROSIE MCGEE
 It ain't often I get this full of
 family feeling.

SHAY CECIL
 Auntie, why don't you ever come
 visit us?

ROSIE looks wistful, almost sad.

ROSIE MCGEE
 I been meaning to. I been working
 up to it.

SHAY CECIL
 But it's simple. We don't live
 far.

ROSIE MCGEE
 You don't live far, but that don't
 make it simple. I guess I'm a
 little scared of your ma. I wasn't
 exactly the kind of aunt your ma
 would have wanted for you and
 Geneva.

SHAY CECIL
 But everybody's a little scared of
 Ma. You should come anyway.

ROSIE MCGEE
I will honey...I promise...but
right now, let's just dance.

They dance.

44 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL FAMILY GRAVEYARD: NIGHT: 44

SHAY, sobered somewhat by his walk home but still a little unsteady on his feet, sees his mother sitting on a low bench by the little family burial place. BABY MARCY plays in the dirt at her feet. WE SEE the crude crosses: one larger, four smaller.

SHAY hesitates--watches.

Then he goes and sits by his mother. Puts his arm around her. MARY MARGARET doesn't try to conceal her sadness.

Then, to SHAY'S horror, his mother puts her head in her hands and begins to sob.

MARY MARGARET cries. On the ground, BABY MARCY picks it up, begins to wail.

MARY MARGARET'S cries diminish.

MARCY stops crying. Gets up on her hands and knees. Tries to crawl, but merely rocks back and forth.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(dries her eyes with her
sleeve)
Come on, Marcy. You can do it.
Crawl.

45 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: WOODS NEAR CECIL HOMESTEAD: 45
NIGHT: CONTINUOUS:

SETH, having heard MARY MARGARET'S cries, is hurrying to reach home, but when he sees SHAY sitting next to her in the graveyard, he stops, leaves them be for a moment. Watches from the shadows.

46 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL FAMILY GRAVEYARD: NIGHT: 46
CONTINUOUS:

MARY MARGARET turns and looks fondly at her son, gives him a tight hug.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 I'm glad you didn't leave, Shay.
 The ability to stay put when a
 woman's crying is one most men
 don't have. Seth has it, but not
 your Pa. Cry around Dick Cecil,
 and next thing you know he's a
 thousand miles away.

She wipes her eyes.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (continued)
 I could have saved one or two of my
 boys if I'd had better vittles, but
 once the War started, there were
 few vittles to be had.
 (looks at Shay)
 Your sister's not exactly wrong to
 be a bit jealous of you, Shay. I
 got two girls, but you're my only
 boy now, seeing as I buried all
 four of your little brothers.

WE HEAR a whistling on the trail.

SHAY CECIL
 (relieved)
 There's Uncle Seth.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 I guess he's dominoed out. Watch
 him waltz in here and start bossing
 us around.

BABY MARCY has managed to wiggle some distance from her
 mother. SETH sees this, stops whistling, hustles over and
 grabs her.

SETH CECIL
 Can't the two of you watch Marcy
 any better than this? She could
 have got on a snake!

Grabs her up, heads for the cabin.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (smile)
 See? What'd I tell you?

47

INT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL CABIN: NIGHT:

47

SHAY and NEVA are both asleep, rolled up in quilts in the
 loft.

WE HEAR a quarrel from below. The voices get louder. SHAY wakens, then NEVA. Look over the edge.

SEE GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE scuttle out the door with his pistol, escaping for dear life. SETH appears to want to follow him, but MARY MARGARET has a tight grip on his arm.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
You can at least listen to me!

SETH CECIL
I did listen, and I'm telling you, this is crazy. You want to pile us all in a wagon and leave a place we've lived for sixteen years?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I've lived here sixteen years, too, with what children I could keep alive. You've been in and out.
(softens a little)
Not that I ain't grateful for the help you've been. Without you I'd have given up long ago.

SETH CECIL
(softens a bit, too)
I just don't see the sense of this sudden move, Mary.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Seth, I'm tired of sitting here in Missouri, going hungry. I've buried too many children...dug too many graves. Dick and I need to talk, and I need you to take me. If you won't, I swear, I'll go alone.

SETH CECIL
Is it really so important, Mary, that you see Dick in person?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
It's important.
(she drops his arm)
It's important, but I wouldn't expect you to see that...because you don't see much of anything where I'm concerned.

SETH CECIL
I didn't say I wouldn't do it...it just came as a surprise.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Well, God help us that a man as set
in his ways as you should ever have
to deal with a surprise!

SETH CECIL
(confused)
Dammit, I didn't say I wouldn't do
it! It just came up so sudden.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I've got a child crawling age who
ain't seen her father. Marcy loves
you, you know. She may not even
cotton to Dick, if we find him.

She takes SETH'S hand...holds it for a moment...then lets go.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I ain't a fortune teller, Seth. I
don't know what you want. One of
these days you're going to have to
figure it out.

She turns away.

SETH lingers for a moment, clearly confused. Then goes out
the door.

The children are wide-eyed. Look at one another: what does
it mean?

48

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL CABIN: DAY:

48

SHAY and NEVA are busy loading a large wagon: sacks and
boxes, blankets and quilts and foodstuffs. SETH is making
some minor repair to its side.

GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE
Nobody asked if I want to be drug
off into the wilderness. There's
plenty of scalping Indians between
here and Wyoming, you know.

SETH CECIL
I know, Hubert, but there's a
scalping woman right there in that
cabin. She nearly took mine off
two nights ago.

GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE
Mary needs to be taken down a peg,
if you ask me.

WE SEE a buggy coming up the road, driven by a black man, ABE. NEVA looks, as does SHAY.

SHAY CECIL
It's Aunt Rosie!

As the buggy nears, WE SEE that it is indeed ROSIE MCGEE.

SETH CECIL
Uh oh...Mary!

MARY MARGARET comes hurrying out the front door, just as ABE pulls up with ROSIE, who is stretched across the seat of the buggy in a bloody dress. She's beaten up. Her lip is split, and one eye is swollen shut.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(going to the buggy)
Shay, draw some water.

SHAY grabs a bucket and heads to the cistern.

SETH tries to ease ROSIE out of the buggy and she gives a sharp cry.

ROSIE MCGEE
(cries out)
Ow! Ribs....

SETH CECIL
I'll kill whoever done this.

ROSIE MCGEE
(weak)
No you won't. That new sheriff, Poke Henson, done it. The preacher got him all stirred up about "scarlet" women....

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Take it slow, honey, we'll get you inside. Put her on Daddy's pallet, Seth.

SETH gathers her up, and carries her inside.

SHAY comes back with the water.

49 INT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL CABIN: DAY: SOME MINUTES 49
LATER:

MARY MARGARET and NEVA have ROSIE almost cleaned up.

SETH CECIL
I'll go fetch the doctor.

ROSIE MCGEE
Don't let him go, Mary.

SETH CECIL
I suppose I'm free to go to town if
I want to.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
No. Not till you cool down.

SETH CECIL
I'd thought Billy Hickok would look
after you better than this.

ROSIE MCGEE
He crossed the river to get his
horse shod. Bill don't trust
Missouri blacksmiths.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Listen to me, Seth. We're leaving
this place tomorrow. We have a
long trip to make, and we need you.
I can't allow you to march off and
get in a gunfight.

SETH starts for the door.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(as stern as she's ever
sounded)
Seth! If you walk out that door
I'm through with you. I swear I'll
take these younguns and go find
Dick myself.

He stops.

ROSIE MCGEE
I ain't dying, you know. I'm just
a little bunged up.
(pause)
Let up, Seth...for once.

SETH CECIL
I ain't much of a hand for taking
orders from females.

MARY MARGARET and SETH stare at one another, over ROSIE.
There is an uncomfortable silence. Everyone is still, even
NEVA.

SETH CECIL
Billy oughtn't to be so finicky
about his horseshoes.

MARY MARGARET looks at her sister. Then back at SETH.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
And another thing: Rosie's coming
with us. I won't leave my sister
in a town with a bad sheriff.

EVERYONE--ROSIE and SETH especially--is surprised. And pleased. Then SETH turns from the door, as if he never meant to leave, the news that ROSIE is coming with them appearing to ease his mind.

NEVA CECIL
Oh Auntie, I'm glad.

GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE
One more female to get scalped....

50 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: BOONE'S LICK: STREET: NIGHT: 50

WE SEE SHERIFF POKE HENSON is making his rounds in Boone's Lick, rifle in hand.

Just as he's crossing in front of a darkened alley, a HORSEMAN, low in the saddle, bursts out from between the buildings.

Before POKE HENSON can even look up, the horse hits the SHERIFF and sends him winding and sprawling.

He is face down, but not out. Raises his head, shakes it a time or two. Scoots towards his rifle, which has landed close by. Grabs hold of it.

The HORSEMAN whirls on his mount.

POKE tries to stand.

But before he's full up, the HORSEMAN spurs his mount, grabs the rifle from the SHERIFF'S hand, whirls again and whacks him with it.

POKE pitches up against the hitching post outside the saloon, out cold.

As the HORSEMAN gallops away, WE SEE HIS FACE: it's SETH, a look of cool satisfaction on his face.

51 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL CORRAL: NIGHT: 51

SETH is quietly--very quietly--returning from his errand of vengeance, when he comes upon SHAY, who is outside, too, wide awake, wistful, sitting on the top rail of the corral. He's looking around at the home he's about to leave.

SETH CECIL
Sad about leaving, son?

SHAY CECIL
This here's been my home my whole
life. But tomorrow it won't be.
Just like that.

SETH CECIL
You need to learn about the stars,
Shay.
(looks up)
The reason I prefer to sleep out is
so I can look straight up at the
heavens. The same stars are there,
most nights. Makes me feel right
at home.
(laughs)
Of course your Ma says looking at
stars is about as close to heaven
as I'll ever get...me being such a
sinner and all.

SHAY CECIL
You don't seem like much of a
sinner to me.

SETH CECIL
That's my view. But your Ma
factors things different.

52 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL FAMILY GRAVEYARD: MORNING: 2

MARY MARGARET stands in the little graveyard, saying her
final goodbye to her mother and sons.

She turns, heads back towards the rest of her family.

53 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: CECIL HAULING YARD: DAY: MORNING: 3:
CONTINUOUS:

SHAY and NEVA are mounted on mules. SHAY leads SETH'S horse.

The wagon is loaded, GRANDPA inside. Mules are hitched to
the front.

SETH holds MARCY, he and ROSIE stand by the wagon.

MARY MARGARET walks up from the graveyard. ROSIE holds MARCY
while SETH climbs up into the driver's seat, followed by MARY
MARGARET.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (to Seth)
 Scoot over.

SETH CECIL
 Why?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Because I'm driving the mules.
 You've got the baby to look after.

SETH CECIL
 What the hell do you know about
 driving mules?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Enough. And watch your language.

GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE
 I didn't raise her to be that
 sassy.

SETH CECIL
 (relinquishes the reins)
 It must be a natural born talent,
 then.

GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE
 You ought to take a bed slat to
 her.

SETH CECIL
 I'm not sure we packed a bed slat,
 Hubert.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 That's enough out of you two.
 (to Seth)
 You sure the boat you hired is
 going to be there?

SETH CECIL
 Of course. It'll be there, sure as
 daylight.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Better be.

MARY pops the mules: the CECILS are off.

54

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: BOONE'S LICK: DAY:

54

The CECILS en masse rattle through Boone's Lick. Below them
 is the waterfront, and the broad, brown Missouri River.

WE SEE a horseman approach.

NEVA CECIL
(brightens)
Mr. Hickok's back.

WILD BILL comes loping up. For once, he seems in a hurry, flustered. Reins in his horse, startles when he sees ROSIE'S bruises.

WILD BILL HICKOK
What the hell happened to you?

SETH CECIL
While you was being finicky about horseshoes, the sheriff beat her up.

WILD BILL HICKOK
Well, Poke Henson had a bit of bad luck himself.
(pause)
Got run over by a runaway horse last night, as I understand it.

ROSIE MCGEE
He did?

WILD BILL HICKOK
Yep. Broke both hips and a collarbone.

SETH CECIL
I expect it'll be a while then before he beats up any more women.

MARY MARGARET and ROSIE look hard at SETH, who pretends bland innocence.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(announces to Bill)
We're leaving, and my sister's coming with us.

ROSIE MCGEE
Won't you come along, Billy?

WILD BILL HICKOK
I will if I'm welcome. I was on my way to look for you anyway. There's a bunch of bushwhacking Jayhawkers on their way to arrest me over that McCandless business that happened during the War.
(pause)

(MORE)

WILD BILL HICKOK (cont'd)
 Leaving before they arrive would
 appear to be the sensible thing.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 You can come if you're ready to
 leave. I ain't waiting.

With that, she pops the mules and sweeps on down toward the
 waterfront.

55 - EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: BOONE'S LICK: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 55

At the riverfront. Down the channel a ways, WE SEE a still-
 smoking hulk of a steamboat.

WE ALSO SEE an INDIAN with a canoe, idly untangles a fishing
 line. No other vessels on the river. He wears buckskin
 leggings and a thin shirt. An old hat sits atop his head.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Neva, go ask that Indian gentleman
 if he's seen our boat.

SETH CECIL
 How could he see something we can't
 see?

NEVA dismounts and hurries down to the riverbank. Speaks
 with the INDIAN. They both come walking back to the wagon.

WILD BILL HICKOK
 Why, I know that Indian. He's from
 up in Wyoming, and a mighty useful
 fellow. He led me across some thin
 ice once, during the War.
 Otherwise, the Rebs would have hung
 me for sure.

NEVA and the INDIAN arrive.

WILD BILL HICKOK
 (smile)
 Hello, Charlie. Folks, this is
 Charlie Seven Days, of the Lehmi
 Shoshoni.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (direct)
 Mr. Seven Days, have you seen any
 boats?

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
 (polite, rather formal)
 I was explaining to the young lady
 that the boat she was expecting
 burned up last night.

He turns and points.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Damn the luck!

SETH CECIL
Watch your language. I guess that means we'll have to go home and unpack.

MARY MARGARET ignores him.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
There is a steamboat tied up at Glasgow, which isn't far.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Sir, if you're going our way, maybe you'd be kind enough to guide us.

SETH CECIL
Now Mary, that's unnecessary. I can find Glasgow easy enough.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I wasn't talking about Glasgow. Mr. Hickok says this gentleman's from Wyoming, and Wyoming's where my husband is supposed to be. I was hoping he'd guide us to where Dick is.

SETH CECIL
What do you think I am, if not a guide?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
My brother-in-law.

SETH CECIL
But we just met this fellow, he may have plans of his own.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
I am traveling to South Pass. I could guide you that far. But I don't want to leave my canoe, we might need it up the river. Sometimes the big boats get stuck.

Turns back to his canoe.

NEVA sees an opportunity for an adventure.

NEVA CECIL
Ma, can I go with Mr. Seven Days?
I never been in a canoe.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Why, that's up to him, Geneva.

CHARLIE looks at NEVA. Looks at MARY MARGARET. Nods. They
both head back to the waterfront.

SETH is puffed up like an adder.

SETH CECIL
This is your doing, Bill. Now
we're saddled with an Indian we
know nothing about.

GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE
I expect he'll scalp us all.

ROSIE MCGEE
He seemed perfectly nice to me.

WILD BILL HICKOK
Seth, I done you a favor. There's
no better man for the job than
Charlie.

SETH CECIL
(disgusted)
Why not just ask the President
along, too? I'm sure he'd enjoy
riding up the Missouri River with a
passel of lunatics.

SETH hands MARCY to ROSIE. Gets down from the wagon seat.

Takes his horse from SHAY.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Where do you think you're going?

SETH CECIL
If I ain't trusted to drive the
team, there's no reason for me to
bounce along in such a rude
conveyance. I might as well lope
along with Billy and hire that
boat, if there is a boat.

WILD BILL HICKOK
(cordial)
You'll make it by sundown if you
don't stop to picnic.

SETH and BILL ride off.

GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE
Now she's done it. She's run Seth
off for good.

MARY MARGARET ignores this. Swings the big wagon around.

ROSIE MCGEE
You are a little rough on Seth,
Mary.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Think so? I don't.

MARY pops the mules, leaves BOONE'S LICK at a good clip.

56 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: ROAD: WAGON: LATE AFTERNOON: 56

SHAY, MARY MARGARET, ROSIE, BABY MARCY and GRANDPA. MARY
drives the mules on the road to Glasgow, a mere wagon track.
GRANDPA sleeps, as does BABY MARCY.

SHAY looks low. MARY MARGARET looks at him.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(pats the wagon seat next
to her)
Move closer, Sherman.

SHAY moves closer. His mother rubs his neck.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I'm getting the feeling you're
homesick, though we ain't been gone
one day.

SHAY CECIL
Missouri's the only place I ever
lived. I mean, I know everything
about Missouri. I don't know
nothing about Wyoming.
(pause)
I just didn't expect to be leaving
my home so soon.

ROSIE MCGEE
You're nearly a grown man, Shay.
Why, you seem a bunch more polished
just since I've got to know you.

SHAY is embarrassed, but pleased.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Life's full of surprises, honey.
Not too many things are permanent.
(MORE)

MARY MARGARET CECIL (cont'd)

I needed to make a change, so we're going to Wyoming. One thing permanent is that I love you.

(smile)

Besides, it's time you saw a bit of the world. Wyoming might be a fine place.

ROSIE MCGEE

You've outgrown Boone's Lick anyway, Sherman. If you get much more polished, I've no doubt some forward young lady will be trying to marry you.

SHAY, beet red, smiles.

SHAY CECIL

Aw, Aunt Rosie....

MARY MARGARET CECIL

(hugs him)

Just give it a chance, Shay. Think of it as an adventure.

They ride on, SHAY'S spirits lifted.

57

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: ROAD: GLASGOW, MISSOURI: DUSK: 57

The CECILS clip along a road just beneath GLASGOW, which is on a high bluff. The sun seems to be setting right into the river ahead. As they approach, WE HEAR FIDDLE MUSIC.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS is standing on shore, by a huge snapping turtle. He is talking to it.

WE SEE a flatboat at the wharf. Several jolly figures are dancing on it. (NOTE: SEE Caleb Bingham's famous picture, THE JOLLY BOATMEN, for this scene.) WE HEAR a harmonica. And a jug.

ROSIE MCGEE

(perking up)

There's Billy...and your dancing daughter.

WE SEE NEVA on the boat, kicking up her heels with a handsome young boatman.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

And there's Seth.

(smile)

I couldn't run him off if I tried.

SETH, dragging his gimpy leg, attempts to dance, lurches around awkwardly, trying to warm up his legs.

ROSIE MCGEE
Seth's drunk as an owl. He's
missing his steps.

Before the wagon is fully stopped, MARY puts the reins in the hands of SHAY, and jumps down. SHAY pulls up.

ROSIE MCGEE
Mary Margaret was never one to miss
a dance.
(pause)
And I ain't, either.

ROSIE hands BABY MARCY to SHAY and eases herself out of the wagon.

GRANDPA follows, waving an ancient fiddle.

SHAY now finds himself alone, with a startled baby and a team of mules.

58 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: GLASGOW: BOAT: NIGHT: CONTINUOUS:
MARY MARGARET arrives. GRANDPA begins to fiddle.

SETH CECIL
Hello!

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Hello yourself!

SETH and MARY dance, like old partners long interrupted.

Soon, the gimpy SETH is outdancing everyone except his graceful partner. Only NEVA, dancing with the young BOATMAN by the name of JOEL, rivals them.

59 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: GLASGOW: BOAT: NIGHT: CONTINUOUS:

ROSIE MCGEE drags HICKOK onto the floor, who is at best a stiff dancer. ROSIE looks enviously at her sister.

ROSIE MCGEE
Mary Margaret always has her way
with men...except maybe with Dick.

WILD BILL HICKOK
I doubt any woman would get her way
with Dick Cecil.

ROSIE MCGEE
(smile)
No, and you ain't no easy catch
yourself, Mr. Hickok.

60

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: GLASGOW: RIVERFRONT: NIGHT: 60
CONTINUOUS:

SHAY gets out of the wagon holding MARCY.

Approaches CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS.

SHAY CECIL
Was you talking to that big turtle?

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
Yes, I told him he had better get
back in the water before somebody
decides to eat him.

The turtle waddles into the river.

SHAY CECIL
(surprised)
Why, he heard you. There he goes.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
My people believe it was a great
turtle who brought human beings out
of the earth into the land of grass
and sky.

SHAY CECIL
Our preacher says the Lord made the
world in six days, and then rested
on the seventh.

CHARLIE considers this information.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
I think the turtle story makes more
sense.

ROSIE arrives, breathless.

ROSIE MCGEE
(takes Marcy from Shay)
Come dance with me, Shay. Bill
Hickok dances like he's got two
wooden legs.

Takes BABY MARCY from SHAY, hands her to CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS.

ROSIE MCGEE
Do you mind? I just want a dance
or two.

Both CHARLIE and BABY MARCY look a little startled, but
neither objects. Look at one another, grave.

61 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: GLASGOW BLUFFS: SHORE: NIGHT: 61

A big bright full moon shines over the Missouri River. WE HEAR the occasional slap of water against the sides of the flatboat docked nearby. SETH and MARY MARGARET talk quietly. SHAY and NEVA sleep.

A deep, mysterious lowing wakes them.

SHAY CECIL
Neva, wake up...is that a bear?

NEVA CECIL
Let me be, Shay....

Even half-asleep, she has an avid, bold, adventurous look.

SHAY CECIL
Maybe it's a bear. Uncle Seth said they're thick around here.

WE HEAR the lowing again.

NEVA CECIL
It's a bull, you oaf. Go back to sleep.

SHAY, skeptical, looks around...he sees the two silhouettes sitting by the fire, SETH and MARY, hears the faint murmur of their voices.

Lays back down on his pallet, gazes out at the bright moon.

62 EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: GLASGOW: BOAT: MORNING: 62

Mist over the great river.

WE HEAR a flock of wild geese honking overhead.

The CECILS and their wagon are loaded on the flatboat, which noses out onto the broad Missouri. The wagon is fastened by a chain around the axle and wood chocks against the wheels.

SHAY looks out and down the vast river, sees A STEAMBOAT up ahead.

SHAY looks back to shore, as they pull away. WE PAN the group, as the adventure begins.

63

EXT: NORTHWESTERN MISSOURI: BOAT DECK: DAY:

63

MARY MARGARET sits with her sister ROSIE, applies salve to some of her wounds.

Across the deck, SETH and BILL HICKOK are chatting, smoking.

Out on the river, WE SEE SHAY with CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS, in CHARLIE'S canoe.

ROSIE MCGEE

Seth's a good man, Mary. You're lucky you have him around to help you.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

I know that, and I am grateful... even if I don't show it.

ROSIE MCGEE

I've got Billy Hickok...up to a point, anyway. And Billy's not a bad man.

(pause)

Every now and then I feel like I ought to look around and see what I can find in the way of a decent fella.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

For all your skittering around, honey, I always thought you might make a good ma. I got nothing against Mr. Hickok, but I don't really see him as the fatherly type.

ROSIE MCGEE

(shrug)

I know. He ain't.

(pause)

But Sis, I didn't really know till I was gone how hard it was gonna be. It's been all I could do these past few years just getting from one day to the next. And Billy, he's been a loyal friend.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

There's something to be said for loyalty, Rosie, there's no doubt about that.

(firm)

(MORE)

MARY MARGARET CECIL (cont'd)
 But you're back home now, you've
 got me and Seth and the children,
 too. You won't have to worry so
 much about getting through the
 days. That ought to leave you some
 time to keep an eye out for a good
 man.

A beat.

ROSIE MCGEE
 I've missed my family, Mary. More
 than I ever knew....

ROSIE tears up.

MARY MARGARET smiles, holds her baby sister's face in her
 hands. Kisses her on the cheek.

64 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: CANOE: DAY:

64

SHAY and CHARLIE paddle CHARLIE'S canoe ahead of the
 flatboat, try to find a path through the shallows and
 sandbars.

SHAY CECIL
 How deep is the Missouri, do you
 think?

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
 It can be an inch...or it can be
 fifty feet. It's different on
 different days, in different
 places.

CHARLIE points at a patch of water just upstream.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
 See that ripple?

SHAY CECIL
 I see it.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
 That's made by a tree branch.
 There's a dead tree in the channel.

WE SEE, in the distance, some herons feeding on a sandbar.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
 Those heron are in the middle of
 the river, but their feet are
 barely wet. That means a sandbar.
 If we go that way, we will be
 stuck.

SHAY CECIL
Seems like you know this river
better than anybody.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
I know it today, but tomorrow it
will be a different river. A river
like the Missouri you must learn
again every day.

(pause)
Soon we'll be seeing wrecks. Boats
the river has taken. Like I told
you, nobody knows the Missouri.

They paddle on.

65

EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: BOAT: DAY:

65

Overcast.

SETH stands at the rail, a somber look on his face.

Nearby NEVA and JOEL, the young boatman, fish.

JOEL
I hope we catch something before it
rains. Fish don't bit when it's
raining.

SETH CECIL
Pshaw! Rain don't matter to a
fish. It's always wet where the
fish live.

JOEL
(indignant)
Go to hell, this ain't your boat.

SETH walks away. Joins MARY MARGARET.

SETH CECIL
(nods at Joel)
That hoot owl has few manners.
Neva better watch him.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
A man your age who's never been
married should refrain from
mouthing off about things he don't
understand.

SETH CECIL
(annoyed)
And what don't I understand?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Women, for one thing. And women,
 for another. Besides, being surly
 is no way to start a trip.

SETH CECIL
 I get surly when I'm worried, and
 right now I'm plenty worried.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Don't worry about Joel and Neva,
 I'm keeping my eye on them.

SETH CECIL
 It's not that. It's Rat Town.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Why would they call a place Rat
 Town?

SETH CECIL
 Because there used to be plentiful
 muskrats along that stretch of the
 river. The Osage did a brisk
 business in muskrat pelts for a
 while. That's all over with. Now
 it's a haven for renegade Rebs who
 won't stop fightin' the War.
 Horsethieves, mostly.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Can't we stay out in the middle of
 the river? Or else slip by at
 night?

SETH CECIL
 Even Charlie might not be able to
 find the channel at night. And the
 boatmen won't like it.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (softens)
 Seth?

He looks at her.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 I'm sorry I picked on you for being
 surly.

Surprised by her apology, he smiles.

66 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: BOAT: NIGHT:

66

The boat is at anchor, near land.

MARY MARGARET finishes nursing MARCY. Hands her to ROSIE.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Watch her a minute. I'm going to
check on our militia.

The militia--VARIOUS BOATMEN, SETH, HICKOK, SHAY, GRANDPA,
are spaced out along the deck, keeping watch. All have
rifles except GRANDPA, who has his pistol.

MARY picks up a small lantern, swinging it as she starts
across the deck. As she passes some bales and stacks of
goods, she hears a murmuring. Stops. Murmuring continues.

Swings the lantern in an area hidden by the bales of goods.

NEVA and JOEL sit rather primly, hold hands. Are on the
verge of kissing.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Geneva Mae! Get up from there this
instant and get back to where you
belong.

NEVA CECIL
(mortified)
Oh, Ma!

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Get up, I said! Go help your aunt
with the baby.
(to Joel)
If you know what's good for you,
young man, you'll find a chore to
do, and quick.

JOEL scampers off. NEVA looks at her mother, contemplates
defiance, but is quelled by the look her mother gives her.
Her lip begins to quiver. But instead of helping ROSIE, she
makes a beeline for SETH.

67 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: BOAT: NIGHT: CONTINUOUS:

67

NEVA runs into SETH'S arms.

He leads her down the deck where they can have more privacy.

NEVA CECIL
(wiping tears)
Ma is so mean. She's on me every
minute. No wonder Pa ain't hardly
ever home.

SETH CECIL

Your mother's watchful, I admit.
I'm allowed few liberties myself,
and I'm just the brother-in-law.

NEVA CECIL

How do you stand it, Uncle Seth?

SETH CECIL

(smile)
I suppose if I didn't have your Ma
to argue with, I'd be hard pressed
to know what to do with myself.

(hugs her)
Neva, your Ma's older. She's been
through a lot in her life. Burying
four children, for one. Trying to
keep you all alive during the War,
when I couldn't be around to help.
She knows there's a passel of
temptation in this world...and she
doesn't want you to get hurt.

NEVA CECIL

I wasn't getting hurt. We was just
holding hands...anyway, I wanted
Bill Hickok for my beau, but Aunt
Rosie saw him first.

SETH CECIL

I have no opinion of that, honey.
But I promise next time the wind's
blowing right, I'll put in a word
for you with your Ma.

BILL HICKOK gives a sharp whistle. Gestures with his gun
toward the shore.

SETH CECIL

Hurry over and get your Ma and
Rosie and the baby and hide in the
barrels. We've got unwanted
visitors. Tell your Ma I said not
to argue, just hide!

He hurries back toward HICKOK.

NEVA does as she's told.

68

EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: BOAT: NIGHT: MINUTES LATER:

68

MARY MARGARET, ROSIE, NEVA and MARCY all huddle amid the
barrels and bales.

The BOATMEN, nervous, watchful.

HICKOK, SHAY, GRANDPA and VARIOUS BOATMEN are spaced among the mules and horses, having built crude barricades.

SETH is nowhere to be seen.

SHAY CECIL
(nervous)
I don't see anything.

WILD BILL HICKOK
I don't either, but I feel 'em.

SHAY CECIL
How do you mean?

WILD BILL HICKOK
It's the feeling men get before a battle: you know war's coming, but you don't know exactly when...or how....

SHAY sees movement in the water. Starts.

It's CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS in his canoe, slipping up to the boat.

WILD BILL HICKOK
(whispers)
How many, Charlie?

CHARLIE holds up both hands and then two fingers.

Lightning flashes. Thunder rumbles. In one of the bright flashes, SHAY sees a mass of mounted men at the water's edge.

GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE
If there's one thing I hate, it's a damn nightrider. Bedtime ain't supposed to be fighting time.

The horses and mules are agitated, whinny.

NIGHTRIDER ONE
Seth Cecil!

SETH CECIL
Present! What do you gents want?

NIGHTRIDER ONE
Your mules to start, and your saddle horses while you're at it.

SETH CECIL
Why would you be wanting them?

A moment of silence: the question was unexpected.

NIGHTRIDER ONE
 (snicker)
 We're starting a farm. Can't farm
 without mules.

SETH is setting up his tripod, readying to fire at the voice
 on shore.

SETH CECIL
 Oh, our mules would be a
 disappointment to you, I'm afraid.

NIGHTRIDER TWO
 And why's that?

SETH CECIL
 (taking aim)
 They ain't farm mules. These here
 are town mules, useful if there's a
 wedding party or a church social or
 something.

NIGHTRIDER ONE
 Enough palaver, you Yankee
 sonofabitch! Cut 'em loose pronto
 or we'll come on board and kill
 every last one of....

SETH fires. The voice stops. Sounds from shore.

NIGHTRIDER TWO
 Hell, he's kilt Sam....

WE HEAR a thunder of hooves as the RAT TOWN RAIDERS charge,
 firing as they come.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS slips into his canoe, ready to guide the
 big boat out into the shifting channel.

The BOATMEN, frantic, ease the boat away from its anchorage.
 Too slow, THREE RENEGADES leap their horses from shore to
 deck.

SETH, hidden amid the barrels, shoots the LEAD RAIDER off his
 horse. SETH fires again, as HICKOK, SHAY and GRANDPA join
 the fray.

ONE of the THREE RENEGADES happens to be LITTLE BILLY
 PERKINS, the man HICKOK wants so badly. He tries to cut the
 lines and stampede the livestock.

HICKOK steps out from behind the horses.

WILD BILL HICKOK
 Why, Billy Perkins, how nice of you
 to visit.

Shoots him. LITTLE BILLY slumps, but he's only wounded: turns his horse, races off the boat. Gets away.

69

EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: BOAT: DAY: CONTINUOUS:

69

Little Nicky, the big mule, bucks, tries to break free.

SHAY grabs his halter, tries to control him, but then the THIRD RAIDER bursts into the midst of the horses/mules, all of which go overboard, dragging SHAY along with them.

MARY MARGARET sees this, hurries to the edge of the boat.

SHAY is in trouble, entangled in halters and ropes, dragged this way and that by Little Nicky.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Help him, somebody, that mule will
paw him under!

SHAY goes under. Pops up, gasps for air, goes under again.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS turns back, and manages to free SHAY from the lines. Pulls him to the side of the big boat, where a BOATMAN helps SHAY back on board.

The shooting melee continues, all firing.

70

EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: BOAT: DAY: MOMENTS LATER:

70

The few renegades who manage to come aboard turn, retreat. The firing from shore fades.

Stops.

WE HEAR a rustle of hooves on shore, as the RENEGADES leave.

SETH, HICKOK and SHAY, all wary, guns in hand.

The BOATMEN emerge from amid barrels, as do womenfolk.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS paddles his canoe up to the side of the boat. Climbs on board. Looks around.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
where is your old one....

MARY MARGARET looks around, as do ROSIE, NEVA and SHAY.

SETH CECIL
Hubert? Hubert! Let's hear from
you.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Oh God, have we lost Pa? Seth....

He puts his arm around her shoulder.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS, meanwhile, has gone to the other end of the boat, where the lines still lay in the water from the stock going overboard. He turns: looks at SETH, who hurries over. MARY MARGARET follows.

There, in the water, tangled in the lines that held the mules, is GRANDPA, hit by a stray bullet. Dead.

MARY MARGARET screams.

71 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: RIDGE: EVENING: 71

WE SEE a LONG SHOT of GRANDPA CRACKENTHORPE'S little funeral, the CECILS outlined against the sky.

The fiddler plays a mournful hymn.

MARY, ROSIE and NEVA all grieve; SHAY looks desolate, SETH and HICKOK solemn.

72 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: BOAT: DAY: 72

The boat moves along the broad river.

CHARLIE is in his canoe, ahead of the boat.

MARY MARGARET is desolate, sits alone at the far end of the boat. Stares at nothing.

SETH, SHAY, NEVA, ROSIE and HICKOK all sit or stand.

ROSE
Go to her, Seth. I think you're
the only one she might tolerate
when she's like this.

SETH walks across the deck. Stops. Sits down next to MARY MARGARET. Puts his arm around her. She shrugs it off.

He tries again. This time, she lets it stay.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I fault myself for Daddy's death.
I should have left the lot of you
in Boone's Lick and gone to find
Dick myself.

SETH CECIL
 (quiet)
 I wouldn't have permitted it, Mary.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 You think you could have stopped
 me?

SETH CECIL
 (again)
 I wouldn't have permitted it.

73 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: KANSAS PLAIN: DAY:

73

Cloudy, breezy morning on the Kansas plain.

The boat, moored overnight, is full of life.

MARY MARGARET is doing laundry, a clothesline strung. ROSIE helps.

SHAY and NEVA are on shore, both clutch their single shots, off to do some early morning hunting.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (yells)
 Don't you two be gone long. It's
 looking stormy.

SHAY CECIL
 (yells back)
 We won't.

NEVA CECIL
 I bet there's turkeys aplenty on
 this prairie.

SHAY CECIL
 A turkey won't go far with that
 crowd Ma has to feed.
 (pause)
 What I'd like is a buffalo.

NEVA CECIL
 I doubt you'll get one.

SHAY CECIL
 Why not? Pa and Uncle Seth used to
 talk about how you could stand at
 the edge of the herd and shoot as
 many as you wanted.

NEVA CECIL

Charlie says there used to be millions, but the settlers shot most of them and scared off the rest.

SHAY CECIL

If there was millions, you'd think there'd be at least one left.

They walk.

74 EXT: KANSAS PLAIN: DAY: LATER:

74

Scanning the waves of grass, SHAY sees a distant speck.

SHAY CECIL

See? What'd I tell you! It's a buffalo, It's gotta be. We'll be heroes if we kill it.

Hurries off.

NEVA glances back at the river; follows.

75 EXT: KANSAS PLAIN: DAY: LATER STILL:

75

SHAY and NEVA are far out on the vast prairie..and the wind has come up. They hardly seem any closer to the distant speck.

NEVA CECIL

What if it's not a buffalo? What if it's an Indian, itchin' to scalp us?

SHAY CECIL

Go back if you want. I'm gonna kill that buffalo.

Plunges on through the prairie grass.

NEVA follows.

76 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: KANSAS PLAIN: DAY:

76

MARY MARGARET takes the wash off the line.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Now where have those tykes got to? Seth, you better go find them. They're probably lost.

SETH CECIL
Doubtful, very doubtful. I trained
them both in woodcraft, thoroughly.

MARY frowns, not so certain.

77 EXT: KANSAS PLAIN: DAY: LATER STILL:

77

SHAY and NEVA are closer now to the speck...closer...and they suddenly realize SHAY'S buffalo isn't a buffalo after all.

NEVA CECIL
You oaf...it's just a milk cow.

SHAY CECIL
(hugely disappointed)
Let's shoot it anyway.

NEVA CECIL
Heroes don't shoot milk cows.
Let's go back before it gets dark.

Dejected, SHAY starts in one direction...NEVA opposite.

SHAY CECIL
Where you going? The river's this
way.

NEVA CECIL
No, it ain't, it's this way.

They stop...look...but the prairie offers not a single
feature that might help them. The sky is cloudy, no sun, and
the wind is still rising.

Lightning flashes. Large raindrops splatter down.

A prairie rainstorm begins.

78 EXT: KANSAS PLAIN: AFTERNOON: EVEN LATER:

78

NEVA and SHAY are running, frantic to get back to the boat.

79 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: KANSAS PLAIN: DAY:

79

ALL HUDDLE under slickers, tarps, except MARY MARGARET--she's
soaking wet, searches the horizon for her children.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
This is the prairie, not the woods.
Show me a woods! I say they're
lost!

(MORE)

MARY MARGARET CECIL (cont'd)
 Why did I ever leave Boone's Lick?
 I've lost Pa, and now Shay and
 Neva.

SETH CECIL
 (a little worried himself)
 Now that's exaggerating, this is
 just a prairie shower. Getting a
 little wet won't damage them.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 You should have gone and got them
 while it was still light, but no,
 you had to talk about woodcraft!

SETH CECIL
 I'll be gone at first light, if you
 don't split my skull before then.

ROSIE goes out and retrieves her sister.

MARY, reluctant, lets ROSIE take her to shelter.

80 EXT: KANSAS PLAIN: NIGHT: EVEN LATER STILL: 80

Raining torrents now.

Where they could run before, now they can barely move.

NEVA hangs onto SHAY'S shirttails, as they struggle through
 the prairie grass and the heavy rain.

81 EXT: KANSAS PLAIN: NIGHT: 81

The rainstorm has eased off to a shower.

NEVA and SHAY are worn to a frazzle, huddle under a little
 outcropping of rocks, the only shelter they can find.

SHAY CECIL
 The boat's probably a hundred miles
 away by now. We'll starve out
 here.

NEVA CECIL
 Some hero you turned out to be.

Hear a bird call. SHAY grabs his gun.

SHAY CECIL
 That could be an Indian.

NEVA CECIL
 Or it could just be a bird.

82 EXT: KANSAS PLAIN: NEXT MORNING:

82

SHAY and NEVA, sound asleep, huddled together. NEVA starts...sits up...listens.

She hears a faint ringing sound. It stops. Hears it again. Elbows SHAY awake.

NEVA CECIL
It's Ma's cowbell.
(jumps up)
The river's that way!

Brother and sister get up, head in the direction of the ringing.

Move faster, until they're running as fast as they can, as TWO FIGURES appear: SETH on horseback with the cowbell, CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS on foot, tracking.

83 EXT: KANSAS PLAIN: MORNING: CONTINUOUS:

83

SHAY and NEVA run right up to SETH and CHARLIE. Hug CHARLIE mightily.

SETH CECIL
You two are in a passel of trouble.

84 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: BOAT: MORNING: FEW MINUTES LATER:

84

MARY MARGARET, ROSIE, BILL HICKOK and CHARLIE wait on deck.

SHAY CECIL
(whispers to Neva)
Don't say nothing about the milk cow...

They all climb aboard. MARY gathers them to her, hugging them both, even as she reprimands them.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(tearing up)
Where have you two been? Don't you ever do that again, you hear me?

85 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: BOAT: DAY: DUSK:

85

MARY MARGARET mends one of SHAY'S shirts.

NEVA is with JOEL the fiery boatman, who plays the harmonica for her.

SETH smokes one of ROSIE'S cheroots.

BILL HICKOK and ROSIE stroll about.

CHARLIE is fishing.

ROSIE leaves BILL HICKOK and approaches her sister.

ROSIE MCGEE

We're due to be in Omaha day after tomorrow, the boatmen say. It's not far from Council Bluffs

No response from MARY MARGARET.

ROSIE MCGEE

Bill and me been thinking of trying our luck in Council Bluffs. I've heard Iowa's nice.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

I don't like that notion, Rose. I've gotten used to having my baby sister with me.

ROSIE MCGEE

I know, Mary. I've gotten real used to having you, too. I've even got used to Seth, and he's a lot to get used to.

(pause)

But I guess I just need a town. I like a saloon with a piano. And a few gentleman callers.

MARY MARGARET gives HICKOK a look.

ROSIE MCGEE

Bill's my pard. He'll look after me, and we'll fleece a few rich suckers. But he don't aspire to being my gentleman caller.

(laughs)

Anyway, I'd have to fight Neva for him, sooner or later.

SETH wanders over.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

What kind of town is Council Bluffs?

SETH CECIL

Hilly.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
That ain't what I meant. You do
irritate me sometimes.

ROSIE MCGEE
She means is there a bad sheriff
who's likely to beat me up?

SETH CECIL
I don't keep up with Iowa
constabularies....

A commotion breaks out.

JOEL
No! I can't live without you!

JOEL, the fiery boatman, has gone wild: he begins to butt
his head against the side of the boiler.

NEVA CECIL
Joel says he'll kill himself if I
won't be his girl!

SETH CECIL
Here now, son, you'll crack our
boiler.

SETH and BILL pull him away, but the moment they turn him
loose, he races right off the boat into the Missouri River.

JOEL
(yelling as he runs)
Then I'll drown myself!

NEVA CECIL
Ma, he's drowning himself, and he
was just getting to be my friend!

SETH CECIL
Calm down, honey. I doubt he's got
the determination to drown himself
in water this shallow.

JOEL
(from out in the water
somewhere)
I will! I will! I'm nearly drowned
already!

NEVA CECIL
(at the edge of the boat)
You are not! You're standing on a
sandbar. Come back here!

WILD BILL HICKOK
(amused)
That poor fellow's in the grip of a
fit.

SETH CECIL
It's just a love fit. It'll wear
off.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(irked suddenly)
You'd never have a love fit, would
you, Seth?

SETH CECIL
(taken by surprise)
Well...now I....

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(interrupts him)
What'd I tell you, Rose? He hasn't
got a love fit in him.

SETH looks startled: he is aware that he has been judged to
be wanting, somehow, but doesn't know what to do about it.

SETH CECIL
(mutters)
How would you know what kind of
fits I'm likely to have?

MARY MARGARET just looks at him.

86 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: BOAT: DAY:

86

It is a beautiful day on the river. EVERYONE is on deck.
Ahead, not far, is the thriving community of Omaha, Nebraska.
Amongst the beauty, however, they spot another burned-out
hulk of a large flatboat.

ALL STARE as they pass by.

87 EXT: MISSOURI RIVER: OMAHA, NEBRASKA: BOAT: DAY: LATER:

87

The boat is heading for the bustling docks of Omaha, many
vessels of all sizes.

SETH, paying little attention to the bustle, meticulously
cleans his rifle. MARY MARGARET watches with annoyance his
blithe way of ignoring an important landing.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
All right, Seth. You know where Dick is, or if you don't know exactly, you can get us in the neighborhood. Wyoming's west of Omaha, ain't it?

SETH CECIL
Well, yes...generally speaking; Wyoming's westerly from here.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I wasn't speaking generally. I was asking if Omaha is the place to get off and start looking for my husband.

When they hear the tone in her voice, EVERYONE moves back from the two of them.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
You better not play me false, Seth.

SETH CECIL
And what's that supposed to mean?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I don't know what it means! I just get the feeling that you don't really want me to find Dick, and I need to know where he is. I've already lost my own father because of this. Just don't you play me false.

SETH slips his rifle back in its sheath. Looks her in the eye.

CECIL
Mary...you surely don't think I'd endanger you and the children by leading you on some kind of wild goose chase, do you? Let's get this wagon off the boat. Shay, get the horses and mules.
(tries to appear casual)
It's a fine time of year to be traveling on the Platte. If we travel steady I believe we can make the new forts before Christmas.

88

EXT: OMAHA, NEBRASKA: DOCKS: DAY: MINUTES LATER:

88

Minutes later, they have unloaded the CECIL wagon and livestock.

MARY MARGARET, SHAY and NEVA are all around ROSIE.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS ignores the scene.

SETH and WILD BILL look embarrassed.

ROSIE MCGEE

I should have come home sooner,
Mary.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

No sense fretting about it now,
Rose, we all had our struggles
during that War. I can't blame you
anymore for leaving. We knew you
was always too lively for Boone's
Lick.

ROSIE MCGEE

Yes...but so were you.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Maybe so, sister...maybe so. But
once I started spilling out babies,
I couldn't seem to stop.

The sisters both laugh softly.

ROSIE

The only thing I knew back then was
I didn't want to be in a little
backwoods town all my life.

(looks fondly at her
niece)

...you might be another Cecil gal
who's too lively for country life,
honey.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

(wiping tears)

I wish you would change your mind
and go with us. You'd be welcome,
too, Mr. Hickok.

WILD BILL HICKOK

Thanks, but I doubt we'd flourish.
Too far between cardgames.

SETH CECIL

(formal)

Good luck in Iowa, Bill. I
understand it's tame. Maybe you'll
get that Little Billy Perkins yet.

WILD BILL HICKOK
I hope so. The gall of the man is
hard to tolerate.

ROSIE hugs NEVA; then SHAY.

MARY MARGARET and ROSIE hug the longest.

At the last moment, NEVA suddenly has a little fit. She
walks directly up to HICKOK, stands facing him, fighting back
tears.

NEVA CECIL
(insistent)
I don't want you to leave! I want
to go with you and Auntie!

WILD BILL, startled and uncomfortable with this display of
female emotion, looks around for help.

WILD BILL HICKOK
Now, Miss Geneva...I appreciate the
sentiment...but I doubt your folks
can spare you.

ROSIE puts her arm around her niece.

ROSIE MCGEE
Bill's right, honey. Maybe you and
me and Billy will meet up down the
road...when you're a little older.
(pause)
Besides, your Ma's gonna need you.
And your Pa's gonna want to see
what a fine girl he has.

NEVA begins to cry.

JOEL comes up and stands beside her.

89 EXT: OMAHA, NEBRASKA: DOCKS: DAY: CONTINUOUS:

89

Finally, the boat pulls away.

WILD BILL and ROSIE stand in the rear, wave.

MARY MARGARET, SHAY, NEVA and SETH all watch and wave.

NEVA and MARY MARGARET cry.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS watches, too.

SHAY CECIL
Omaha's a big town.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
 Yes. I'm going to sell my cance
 and buy a horse.

90

INT: OMAHA, NEBRASKA: GENERAL STORE: DAY:

90

The CECILS buy supplies.

SETH and SHAY test hatchets.

MARY MARGARET and a still-mopey NEVA try on bonnets.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 I hear the sun's bright, out west.
 We may need bonnets.

Wandering around, SETH comes upon a case containing ladies
 gloves and a fine lace shawl.

Sneaks a look over at MARY MARGARET.

Indicates to the saleswoman he wants to see the shawl.

She hands it to him.

He takes it and drapes it over MARY MARGARET'S shoulders.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 What are you doing, Seth?
 (she looks down at
 herself)
 Lace? You want to buy me lace when
 we're going into the wilderness? A
 suit of armor would be more useful.

NEVA CECIL
 Ma, it's so pretty on you!

SETH CECIL
 There'll be balls and such at the
 forts.
 (pause)
 Remember, Mary, how you used to
 shine at balls?

MARY MARGARET remembers, softening to him after he says it.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (looks in a mirror)
 I was just a girl then, Seth. It's
 been such a while since I was a
 girl.

SETH CECIL
It don't mean you can't still
shine.

(to the saleswoman)
We'll take this, ma'am.

The SALESWOMAN smiles, takes it away to wrap it.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(not very convincing)
You shouldn't be wasting your money
on fripperies like that....

But she can't suppress a flush of pleasure.

91 EXT: OMAHA, NEBRASKA: BLACKSMITH'S SHOP: DAY:

91

MARY MARGARET is at the blacksmith's shop.

The BLACKSMITH--an independent Yankee who refuses to be hurried--is hard at work on the CECIL wagon, but is not working fast enough to suit MARY MARGARET.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
What's the delay, sir? We need to
be on the move.

BLACKSMITH
I'll fix what I can fix as fast as
I can fix it.

A tall, irascible-looking officer rides up, his horse limping: this is COLONEL FETTERMAN. He dismounts. Slaps his quirt against his leg, the picture of impatience. Doesn't see MARY MARGARET in the shadow behind the wagon.

COLONEL FETTERMAN
Shoe my horse, sir, immediately.
I've a patrol to ride.

BLACKSMITH
(nails in his mouth)
Just let me finish this little bit
of work on the lady's wagon,
Colonel.

COLONEL FETTERMAN
Damn the wagon and damn the lady.
I cannot pursue wild savages on a
lame horse. You're to shoe my
horse now!

The BLACKSMITH tries to signal the COLONEL that MARY MARGARET is right there, but it's too late.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (steps into view)
 You can damn me till you're hoarse,
 Colonel, but I was here first and I
 insist on prompt service.

COLONEL FETTERMAN
 (his face dark)
 You've no business interfering with
 the needs of the army, whoever you
 are.

The BLACKSMITH has gone on with his efforts to fit a rim on
 the CECIL wagon wheel.

COLONEL FETTERMAN
 Damn you, man, if you won't take
 orders, I'll have you jailed!

SETH come wandering up.

SETH CECIL
 Say Colonel Fetterman...
 (winks at Mary)
 ...I'm anxious to know your opinion
 of Sioux horsemanship. There's
 some military men out here in the
 windies who claim they're the best
 light cavalry in the world. Is
 that your opinion?

COLONEL FETTERMAN
 Whoever said that is a goddamn
 fool. A bunch of naked savages on
 horseback don't amount to a
 cavalry.
 (snorts)
 I could take eighty men and whip
 the whole Sioux Nation. And I hope
 I get the chance.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 And I hope you don't, sir!

COLONEL FETTERMAN'S face turns nearly purple.

SETH CECIL
 Mary....

COLONEL FETTERMAN
 You goddamn settlers are a bigger
 nuisance to the United States Army
 than the sioux or all the rest of
 the tribes put together.

(MORE)

COLONEL FETTERMAN (cont'd)
 If I had my way, I'd stop ever damn
 one of you at the Mississippi River
 and send you back to Kentucky or
 wherever you came from.

MARY MARGARET walks right up to him. She looks like she
 might slap him, but she merely stares him down.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (to the blacksmith)
 Keep after that wheel, blacksmith.

She walks away, grabbing SETH by the arm as she goes.

FETTERMAN just stands there, black with rage.

92 EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: DAY:

92

SETH, MARY MARGARET, NEVA and SHAY are just pulling out of
 town. MARY MARGARET still drives the wagon.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS is catching up with them.

He rides a small horse. His feet almost touch the ground.

SETH is amused by the sight of CHARLIE'S feet nearly dragging
 the ground on the little sorrel.

SETH CECIL
 (on his own horse)
 My God, Charlie, that horse ain't
 big enough to fart.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Seth, watch your language.

93 EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: DAY:

93

Frosty weather. WE SEE a vast, vast distance ahead, the
 Great Plains.

MARY MARGARET cleans up from breakfast. NEVA helps.

SETH is rooting around in the wagon.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 I haven't seen a tree in a week. I
 never expected to be in a place
 where I wouldn't see a tree in a
 week.

NEVA CECIL
 It's spooking me, Ma.

SETH CECIL
There are trees farther west.
Plenty of them.

SHAY CECIL
How much farther west?

SETH CECIL
Fort Laramie. There's forests
aplenty from then on.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
You think Dick will be there?

SETH CECIL
Dick's restless as a flea. If he
ain't there, somebody will be able
to tell us where he is.

SETH pulls out a few sacks he bought in OMAHA. Gives one to
SHAY and one to NEVA.

SHAY CECIL
What're we supposed to do with
these?

SETH CECIL
Gather turds.

NEVA CECIL
Gather what?

SETH CECIL
Turds. Buffalo turds, horse turds,
deer turds, any turds. You two get
to be our turd gatherers.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
There's a wagon train ahead of us,
maybe a hundred wagons. There will
be plenty.

SHAY CECIL
You mean we're going to burn turds?
We never burned turds in Missouri.

NEVA CECIL
That's because we had wood, you
oaf.

ALL are gathered around the campfire with coats on: MARY, SETH, SHAY, NEVA, CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS. Only CHARLIE and SETH look warm. MARCY sleeps.

The chips the children have gathered burn brightly.

SETH CECIL
(looking up at the night sky)
The stars are brighter in Nebraska.
Some of those stars look big as rocks.

SHAY CECIL
I never thought I'd be burning turds to stay warm.

SETH CECIL
Be glad you have 'em, son. We'd freeze, otherwise.

WE HEAR dogs howling in the distance.

The horses prick their ears.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
(picks up a rifle)
Horses and dogs.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
What is it?

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
Pawnee.

SETH CECIL
I wondered when they'd be paying us a visit.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(indignant)
Can't they see it's bedtime? I just got this baby to sleep.

The mules are greatly upset. They are snorting and straining at their ropes. CHARLIE gets up to calm them down.

SETH CECIL
Indians don't worry much about the time. Time is all of a piece to them. They don't clock it like we do.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
You'd think anybody could see it's bedtime.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
We need to guard our goods.

SETH CECIL
Pawnee ain't hostile, but a quick
Pawnee could steal the socks off a
preacher.

95 EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: NIGHT: CONTINUOUS:

95

Then about twelve mounted PAWNEES emerge from the night. MEN
and WOMEN, dogs, a travois. They come right into camp.

The leader, NOSE TURNS DOWN, is a tall, skinny man. He wears
an old black hat and a string of yellow bear teeth around his
neck.

The rest crowd around, look in the wagon, inspect everything.

One comes up to SHAY and feels the buttons on his coat.

Another takes a comb from NEVA'S hair--examines it--gives it
back to her.

NOSE TURNS DOWN
(In Pawnee, he asks for the gift of
a mule)

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
The old one wants a mule.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
He won't get a mule, but he'll get
a piece of my mind if he wakes this
baby.

NOSE TURNS DOWN asks again.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
He still wants a mule.

SETH CECIL
We can't spare a mule. Give him
two plugs of tobacco and a decent
hatchet.

The leader chatters.

CHARLIE responds.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
They want bullets.

SETH CECIL
Then give them some coffee.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Who told you to start giving away
my coffee?

SETH CECIL
Mary, it's the custom. Neva, get
some coffee, but go light on it.
Your mother's a regular Comanche
without her coffee.

96

EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: NIGHT: A FEW MINUTES LATER:

96

Tobacco, hatchets, coffee and some beads are handed over.

The PAWNEES mount and begin to trot away into the night.
Soon all that can be heard is the crunch of horse hooves on
the frozen night grass.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Now we can get some sleep.

SETH CECIL
No, you and Marcy can get some
sleep. The rest of us have to
stand watch, and a close watch,
too.

NEVA CECIL
But the Indians left.

SHAY CECIL
You can hear them, they're heading
for the river.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
It's once the Pawnee leave that you
must be most watchful.

CHARLIE heads for the mules.

97

EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: DEEP NIGHT:

97

The six mules and two horses are hitched to the wagon, in a
line.

WE SEE SHAY, NEVA and CHARLIE standing between two mules.

WE HEAR coyotes in the distance.

SHAY CECIL
(to Neva)
Think how cold your head would be
if they pulled your scalp off in
weather like this.

NEVA gives him a black look.

SHAY CECIL
I wish I'd stayed in Missouri.
It's too cold out here.

NEVA CECIL
You're safer here with us.

SHAY CECIL
I won't be when the Indians come
and cut off my ears.

NEVA CECIL
Why would they want your dirty old
ears?

SHAY jabs her, she slaps his arms.

SETH, anything but jolly, comes over.

SETH CECIL
(grave)
If you know what's good for you,
you'll stop cutting up and pay
attention. We ain't out of this
yet.

SHAY CECIL
Yes, sir.

98

EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: VERY EARLY MORNING:

98

SHAY and NEVA thaw by the fire. MARY MARGARET drinks coffee,
rummages through some of their things in the wagon.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Why, they stole my cowbell.

SETH CECIL
(holding Marcy)
If all we lost was a cowbell, we
got off light. We don't have a cow
anyway.

Hands the baby to MARY.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I suppose the worst of the trip is
over, then.

SETH CECIL
(bends to pick up his
saddle)
Now that's a wild statement.
(MORE)

SETH CECIL (cont'd)
 (annoyed)
 The Pawnees didn't kill us, but the
 worst of the trip ain't even
 started, Mary. We got to stay
 vigilant!

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 There's no need to yell. I'm not
 deaf.

As he starts towards his horse with the saddle, his stiff leg
 gives way.

He falls heavily.

SETH CECIL
 Dern this chilly weather. My leg
 seizes up when it's cold.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (sets down her coffee)
 Come on now.
 (she stoops down to help
 him up)
 We'll walk it awake.

SETH CECIL
 (still annoyed)
 No, I can do it.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (relentless)
 You can't do everything, Seth,
 whether you like it or not.

MARY goes to him. He reluctantly puts his arm around her
 shoulders. They hobble around in the snow until he regains a
 little control over his leg.

99

EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: DAY:

99

WE SEE a little MONTAGE of their travels across the plains,
 as WE HEAR:

WE SEE a tiny band of INDIANS, searching the CECIL wagon, and
 touching MARY MARGARET'S hair, turning and looking at NEVA'S
 face.

Then WE SEE the little band riding off.

MARY MARGARET appears very annoyed.

SETH CECIL

Why wouldn't they ride right in?
There are no doors out here on the
baldies, Mary. Did you expect them
to knock?

MARY MARGARET CECIL

No, but I didn't expect them to be
so familiar, either.

SETH CECIL

(sharp)
It's their country. We're the
intruders, not them.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

(surprised at his tone)
I don't want their country. I just
want to pass through.

SETH CECIL

We are passing through. Us, and a
lot more like us....

WE SEE a few men walking, carrying no more than a rifle, a
spade, and a blanket or two.

WE SEE, in a long shot, a wagon train behind the CECIL party.

WE SEE a few single wagons, like the CECILS, filled to
overflowing with goods and children.

100

EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: DAY:

100

SETH, MARY MARGARET, CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS, SHAY, NEVA and BABY
MARCY are in rough country, dips, dry creeks, rocks, shallow
gullies and arroyos.

As MARY MARGARET is urging the team across a little gully,
suddenly the rear wagon wheel pops off and goes rolling down
the gully.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Now where does that wheel think
it's going?

The wagon drops so low that BABY MARCY slides out the back,
right onto a small cactus. She begins to wail.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS dismounts and grabs her up.

His horse goes wandering down to graze at a tiny growth of
bunchgrass on the side of the gully.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Dern the luck. Marcy looks like a
 pincushion!
 (yells)
 Shay, go fetch that wheel back.

SHAY starts down the shallow arroyo, behind CHARLIE'S little sorrel.

He is brought up short when what appears to be a large boulder turns abruptly into a huge, annoyed grizzly bear.

The bear roars...swats the little horse as if it were a fly.

101 EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 101

SETH has his rifle in his hand, quickly fires.

The bear stops...sits down.

SETH rapidly reloads.

Then the bear stands. Roars even louder.

SETH shoots.

The bear stops; paws at itself; then falls, dead.

Everyone freezes; even the baby forgets to cry.

A beat or two.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (impatient)
 What's everybody lolling around for? My baby's full of cactus, that wheel's probably still rolling, and you're all standing around looking at a dead bear. Shay, go get that wheel.

SETH CECIL
 Wait a minute, now. It won't do to take chances with a grizzly. It might still have some fight in it.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 The bear's dead, I can see that much from here.

SETH approaches it cautiously.

SHAY CECIL
 (still in shock)
 It kilt Charlie's horse.

SETH CECIL

It could have been worse. It could have laid waste to the mules.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Why make up notions about things that didn't happen? You shot the bear. That's one reason you're along on this trip. So you can shoot things that need to be shot.

(to Neva)

Neva, go get that wheel!

NEVA, ever fearless, goes down and rolls the wheel back up the gully.

SETH CECIL

(annoyed)

I wish I was as practical as you are, Mary.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Well, you ain't. And that's that.

102 EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: MORNING:

102

It is very cold.

MARY MARGARET is patiently massaging SETH'S stiff leg.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

How much farther to a house? I've about forgotten what a house looks like.

SETH CECIL

You could call Fort Laramie a house, of sorts. We'll be there in a day or two. But I doubt you'll approve of it, either. Life at Fort Laramie is disorderly. There's no shortage of cowards, drunkards and whores.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS, who has been afoot since his horse was killed, is looking off into the distance.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Don't you talk of harlots around the children.

SETH puts up his hand to shush her, which annoys MARY MARGARET.

SETH CECIL
We're about to have visitors....

WE SEE tiny moving dots on the horizon.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
It's the Bad Faces. I see that
paint horse Red Cloud rides.

SHAY CECIL
The Bad Faces....

SETH CECIL
Yes, Shay.
(impressed)
That would be the Sioux.

103 EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 103

The SIOUX put on a brilliant display of horsemanship, racing
at top speed and yelling as they come.

NEVA CECIL
They're charging.

SETH, though, is relaxed.

SETH CECIL
No, honey, they're just showing
off. Look at 'em fly. You're
looking at the finest light cavalry
in the world.

WE SEE the SIOUX PARTY soaring over a gully like birds, one
after the other, their horses kicking up dust on the other
side.

SETH CECIL
I've heard the Comanches can
outride the Sioux but I don't trust
the report. The Sioux ain't been
cowed yet, you see. They still
think they have the right to run
their horses. Look at them come!

Then, when they are no more than fifteen or twenty wagon
lengths from our little party, they stop. A few of the
horses are so caught up in the run that they paw the air,
anxious to keep going.

104 EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 104

WE SEE a lone SIOUX on a paint horse, bringing up the rear in
a slow, easy lope.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
Red Cloud is behind.

NEVA CECIL
Who is Red Cloud?

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
He's their leader. He's even met
the President of the United States.
(pause)
He likes to talk.

SETH CECIL
So I've heard.

RED CLOUD eases to the front of the crowd.

105 EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: DAY: CONTINUOUS:

105

Then RED CLOUD begins to talk.

He has a narrow face and carries a repeater rifle. He is in
full eagle feather and bear claw regalia, very formal.

He gives an oration, in Sioux.

ALL LISTEN.

The oration continues.

SHAY CECIL
(whispers to Seth)
I wish I could understand him.

SETH CECIL
You'll nearly have time to learn
the language before he shuts up.
That old man could bore a rock....

And continues.

Eyes glaze over, including those of the young warriors,
who've heard more than enough from this old bore. One or two
fall asleep on their horses; ONE YOUNG WARRIOR falls so sound
asleep, he slips off his horse onto the ground, embarrassing
himself.

And then it is over.

The SIOUX WARRIORS come pouring into the CECIL CAMP, crowding
around the wagon just as the Pawnees had.

SETH gives them tobacco and plenty of coffee, too. MARY
MARGARET doesn't say a word about it.

SETH gives RED CLOUD a nice hunting knife.

106

EXT: NEBRASKA PLAIN: DAY: LATER:

106

The SIOUX PARTY mounts.

They leave.

NEVA CECIL

Why do they call them Bad Faces?

MARY MARGARET CECIL

I'd like to know that, too. They were the best looking Indians I've seen.

(pause)

Except for Charlie.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS

It's the name of Red Cloud's band.

SETH CECIL

(looking grim)

I hope Dick's at Fort Laramie. That would be the lucky thing.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Well, that cost us nearly half a day. What was that old man going on about?

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS

He said the army should not have built those three forts along the Bozeman Trail. He says there will be a war, unless the whites leave.

SETH CECIL

It's foolish...foolish.

SHAY CECIL

If it's so foolish, why are they putting them up?

SETH CECIL

There's been a gold strike in Montana, which means miners will be hurrying up the Bozeman Trail. Only it ain't their trail. You've heard of the Holy Land, in the Bible?

NEVA CECIL

It's where Cain slew Abel.

SETH CECIL

That's right, honey. The army's built these new forts in the Sioux Holy Land. What Red Cloud said was that the Sioux won't stand for it...or the Cheyenne, either.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS

A white man with gold fever will always try to go by the quickest way, even when the quickest way means going through the Sioux.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

(worried)

I suppose that's where we'll find Dick, then. Trust Dick Cecil to find the most dangerous place in the world and stay there.

107 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: DAY: LONG SHOT: 107

WE SEE our little group, in a LONG SHOT: tiny dots on the vast, beautiful, lonesome prairie, the mountains towering behind them.

108 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: CREEK: DAY: 108

SETH, MARY MARGARET, MARCY, NEVA, SHAY and CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS all move along.

The wagon has two mules pulling it, with MARY MARGARET and NEVA inside. NEVA holds MARCY. SHAY and CHARLIE ride horses.

SETH is on his horse.

FORT LARAMIE is in sight. A stockade, and gun towers in the corners.

There are a good many INDIANS camped outside the gates.

Between the CECIL PARTY and the fort is a wide creek, and it's in flood.

SETH CECIL

We could all sleep warm and dry in Fort Laramie tonight if this creek wasn't up.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

(sigh)

What now, Seth?

SETH CECIL
We do the thing you hate most:
wait.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
When will it go down, Charlie?

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
Tomorrow. Unless it rains more.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(relentless)
I can't wait that long. This is
not deep water.

SETH CECIL
It ain't how deep it is, it's how
fast it's flowing, Mary.

SHAY CECIL
Ma, I see a washtub...and a bucket.

NEVA CECIL
(points)
There's a rolling pin.

WE SEE various household goods floating down: a washtub,
washboard, rolling pin, clothes, pans, a pitchfork.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Why, this creek's a regular store!

SETH is about at the end of his patience rope with her.

SETH CECIL
The reason for the store is that
some fool with a wagon tried to
cross and now everything they own
is floating downstream...like our
stuff will be, if you don't cease
and desist.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I can't say that I care for your
tone, today, Seth.

She immediately pops the mules and puts the wagon in the
water.

SETH CECIL
Let's go, there's no stopping her!

SHAY, CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS and SETH follow.

MARY MARGARET struggles up the far bank.

They struggle through the waters, getting soaking wet, but ALL eventually make it safely ashore.

109 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: CREEK: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 109

SHAY and NEVA begin to change into dry clothing.

SETH CECIL

Dammit, that wasn't smart. You could have drowned yourself and the mule team, too.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

(smile)

Which would you have missed most, Seth?

He doesn't answer.

110 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: OUTSIDE FORT LARAMIE: DAY: 110

The CECIL PARTY approaches FORT LARAMIE.

WE SEE many INDIANS camped willy-nilly outside the gates, along with a few hairy MOUNTAIN MEN, gathered around small fires. Dogs run around loose.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

I thought forts were for soldiers.

SETH CECIL

The Indians are outside, drunk. The soldiers are inside, drunker.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

If Dick Cecil is here, he'll soon be wishing he was drunk.

CHARLIE wanders over to an INDIAN tending four or five horses, looking to replace the one killed by the bear.

111 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: INSIDE FORT LARAMIE: DAY: 111

The CECIL PARTY comes into the large parade ground.

WE SEE rows of barracks along the inside of the stockade.

A large, burly soldier comes slowly over to have a look at the newcomers, carbine in hand.

SETH CECIL

Hello, Ned. Have you come to arrest us?

Hearing his name seems to startle the large soldier.

NED
(sways a bit)
Seth Cecil, is that you?

Then he notices MARY MARGARET and NEVA in the wagon. Stops and takes off his cap, which he promptly drops in the mud.

When he opens his mouth to speak, all that comes out is a big rumbling belch.

NED
Pardon me, ma'am. I believe I've
et too much.

When he reaches down to pick up his cap, he falls flat on his face in the mud. Doesn't move.

SETH CECIL
Dead drunk, I fear.

He dismounts.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Go find someone sober. I want to
inquire about Dick.

Just then, a brisk young captain comes over.

SETH CECIL
Johnny Molesworth...I see you've
been made captain.

JOHNNY MOLESWORTH
Hello, Seth.
(tips his cap to the
women)
Ladies, welcome to our muddy old
fort.

NEVA CECIL
(likes him)
Is there much dancing here?

JOHNNY MOLESWORTH
(charming)
Why, Miss, I think we can scare up
a fiddler or two, just for you.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I'm Mary Margaret Cecil, Dick
Cecil's wife. Is he here?

JOHNNY MOLESWORTH
 (a little startled)
 No, Ma'am. Dick's not here. He's
 wood hauling up at Fort Phil
 Kearny. It's one of our fine new
 forts, just finished.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Drat that man, he's never where I
 want him! How far is that?

JOHNNY MOLESWORTH
 Oh, it isn't far. The distance
 wouldn't be the problem.

SETH CECIL
 Red Cloud's the problem, Mary.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Red Cloud? You mean that old man
 who bored us to death with his
 jabber?

JOHNNY MOLESWORTH
 The Sioux are testy with us over
 these forts. The Cheyenne are
 fractious, too. It's a dilemma.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 I didn't build these forts. They
 got no reason to interfere with my
 travel.

SETH CECIL
 Is there a room we can bunk in for
 the night?

JOHNNY MOLESWORTH
 We can arrange a room, I'm sure.
 Let me get someone to see to your
 livestock.

He tips his hat once more, smiles at NEVA, and leaves.

SETH CECIL
 Now listen, Mary Margaret....

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Listen to what? You better not try
 to talk me out of going to find
 Dick.

SETH CECIL
 Let's tend to the livestock and get
 bunked down for the night.
 (MORE)

SETH CECIL (cont'd)
I'm tired of sleeping with a mule
breathing on me.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
All right. We could all use a
bath, you included.

112 INT: FORT LARAMIE, WYOMING: CABIN: DAY:

112

The CECIL PARTY is inside their cabin.

It is a rough room with a sleeping loft, with a large,
roaring fireplace.

Piles of gear everywhere. SETH sits atop a pile smoking a
pipe.

WE HEAR a knock at the door. NEVA opens the door: it is
CAPTAIN MOLESWORTH, all spruced up.

JOHNNY MOLESWORTH
Does the room suit you, Ma'am?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(grateful)
Why, it's a palace.

JOHNNY MOLESWORTH
Just vacant two days. A sad case,
I fear.
(pause)
Suicide.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(looks around)
Was it a woman?

JOHNNY MOLESWORTH
Why, yes. A young woman. Married
less than a year. How did you
know?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(sighs)
It was just a feeling I had.

JOHNNY MOLESWORTH
(hat in hand)
We seldom get company, Ma'am. I've
been instructed to invite you to
take mess with the officers.
(looks at Neva)
And there'll be a bit of dancing
afterwards.

NEVA CECIL
Ma? Can we go?

MARY MARGARET is tired, but her daughter's spirit makes her smile.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
We wouldn't miss it, Captain....

113 INT: FORT LARAMIE, WYOMING: DINING HALL: NIGHT: 113

There is indeed a dance in progress, a lively orchestra, more men present than women.

MARY MARGARET wears the lace shawl SETH bought her. Lively, radiant, lovely. Dances with an elderly man: this is GENERAL SLADE, the Commandant of Fort Laramie.

SETH dances with the GENERAL'S PLUMP WIFE.

NEVA dances with CAPTAIN MOLESWORTH: a long line of officers wait their turns.

SHAY, bored, tired, wanders out the door.

114 EXT: FORT LARAMIE, WYOMING: OUTSIDE DINING HALL: NIGHT: 114
CONTINUOUS:

SHAY wanders outside. It is snowing, just flurries.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS works over some saddlebags, readying for departure.

SHAY goes over and stands next to him.

SHAY CECIL
I sure wish you weren't leaving us.
You know your way around out here
even better than Uncle Seth.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
I must go west now, to join my
family. I've been away a year. My
wives will be impatient.

SHAY CECIL
I didn't know you had wives.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
I have four, and they are always
quarreling. That is one reason I
travel.

115 INT: FORT LARAMIE, WYOMING: DINING HALL: NIGHT:

115

MARY MARGARET and SETH are now dancing together. Despite SETH'S bad leg, they once again outshine the others on the floor.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Take me home, Seth. I'm plumb danced out.

(looks at him, smiles)

Remember when we used to dance half the night?

SETH CECIL

I do remember. That was before I got gimpy.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

You're still a better dancer than any of these young fellows.

116 EXT: FORT LARAMIE, WYOMING: PARADE GROUND: DAY: MORNING: 116

The parade ground is blanketed with a thick layer of snow.

ALL are outside. SETH holds MARCY.

NEVA has tears in her eyes.

SHAY is silent.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS holds the reins of a small horse, ready to leave. His gun and a blanket are attached to the horse. He has presents for the children. Seeing him about to go is almost as hard on them as watching AUNT ROSIE sail off in Omaha.

NEVA CECIL

I hate to see you go. Who will teach us Indian songs, when you leave?

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS

You have many young fellows here to teach you songs after I go.

(hands her a dozen weasel tails tied together)

Keep these and you will have many children.

She hugs him.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
 (smiles; puts a giant,
 yellow bear tooth on a
 buckskin loop around
 Shay's neck)
 Wear this, and the bear people will
 leave you alone.

SHAY CECIL
 I'd still feel better if you could
 go with us, Charlie.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
 The fort where your father is will
 not be hard to find. Keep your
 eyes open for the Sioux.

SHAY CECIL
 You bet I will.

He gives MARCY a gourd rattle.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (shakes his hand)
 We're grateful for your help in
 getting this far, Charlie. I don't
 know what we would have done
 without you.

Releases his hand; then hugs him, overcome.

CHARLIE SEVEN DAYS
 Don't stay long in the north.
 There will be trouble in the north.

SETH CECIL
 I second that opinion.

CHARLIE mounts another horse, almost smaller than his last.
 Rides out the gate. Looks back.

ALL WAVE.

SETH CECIL
 (doesn't know what to say)
 People will come and go.

117 EXT: FORT LARAMIE, WYOMING: PARADE GROUND: DAY: LATER: 117

SHAY comes out of the cabin barracks, looking around. The
 sun is shining brightly, reflecting off the snow. He has to
 shade his eyes to see.

He sees SETH over by the BLACKSMITH, where one of the horses
 is being re-shod.

He sees NEVA talking to CAPTAIN MOLESWORTH, who has taken quite a shine to her, as had most of the other young officers. It is clear they like one another.

He sees MARY MARGARET over in a corner of the stockade, standing and visiting with a YOUNG INDIAN WOMAN who has set up a lodge of skins built against the poles there. MARCY toddles around with a little girl, maybe a few months older than she is.

When MARY MARGARET spots SHAY, she waves him over.

118 EXT: FORT LARAMIE, WYOMING: CORNER OF STOCKADE: DAY: 118
CONTINUOUS:

When SHAY walks up, the TWO LITTLE GIRLS are staring at one another solemnly. Now and then one of them stoops and feels the snow.

The INDIAN WOMAN is friendly, about MARY MARGARET'S age--smiles.

MARY MARGARET stoops, looks at the little girls closely.

SHAY CECIL
They're just the right age to be playmates.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I think they're a little more than playmates, Shay. Take a closer look....

SHAY, puzzled, stoops. Looks closely at the girls.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
See the dimple in their chins?
That's Dick's dimple--the same as Marcy, and you, and Neva. These little girls are half sisters, like me and your Aunt Rosie.

(pause)
This is your father's other family, that I've come all this way to find out about....

Then TWO INDIAN BOYS close to SHAY'S age come out from inside the little skin lodge. Both have dimples in their chins, too.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
It's no small family...and it ain't recent....

MARY MARGARET stands. Shakes her head...she's angry; then she bursts into tears. As she is about to walk past SHAY, she stops, grabs him and shakes him in her hurt:

MARY MARGARET CECIL

If you ever marry, don't treat your wife like your father treats wives-- giving them children, then going off and leaving them to fend for themselves! If you ever do that and I hear about it, I'll come and give you the shaking of your life, even if I'm ninety years old!

She lets him go. Hurries away, leaving SHAY to ponder what just happened.

119 INT: FORT LARAMIE, WYOMING: CABIN: NIGHT:

119

SHAY and NEVA'S sioux half-brothers, HE SLEEPS and BLUE CROW, are visiting. They are playing a Find-The-Mouse game with three cups and a tiny mouse. BLUE CROW shuffles the cups quickly. Stops. NEVA at once taps the cup the mouse is under.

BLUE CROW frowns. HE SLEEPS laughs.

SHAY CECIL

You can't beat her. Nobody can beat her.

120 INT: FORT LARAMIE, WYOMING: CABIN: NIGHT:

120

The INDIAN BOYS are gone. SHAY and NEVA are up in the sleeping loft.

UNCLE SETH and MARY MARGARET are sitting near the fireplace. SETH has a jug of whiskey. He whittles between swigs.

Suddenly, MARY MARGARET grabs the whiskey bottle, takes a long swig.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

It's a bitter sore spot with me, Seth, that you knew about Dick's Indian family all these years and didn't tell me.

SETH CECIL

I'm a rattler, not a tattler. It is not my place to go blabbing about something that's none of my business.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Does that mean I'm none of your
business?

The CHILDREN sit up: listen intently.

SETH doesn't respond.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I guess that means you think it's
right for a man to have two wives.
Is that your view?

SETH CECIL
(uncomfortable)
Well, it's the custom out here in
the baldies.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Oh, I see. Like handing out
tobacco and coffee when Indians
come to visit. I suppose you think
handing out a woman is no
different.

SETH CECIL
I said nothing of the sort...though
in patriarch times a man was
allowed several wives, I believe.
It's in the Bible.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
What if I don't want to go by the
Bible?

SHAY CECIL
(startled, blurts)
Ma, everybody's supposed to go by
the Bible.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Don't preach to your mother, Shay.
(looks at Seth)
I trusted you, Seth. I trusted you
to look after me and my children.
I never trusted Dick for much of
anything.

NEVA CECIL
(offended)
Ma!

SETH CECIL
 There goes that fool Fetterman.
 Guess he thinks there's going to be
 trouble up north in the forts, too.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 There sure is, and I intend to make
 some of it myself.

The entire troop passes at a gallop. Not a single soldier
 waves or looks their way.

124 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: CAMP: MORNING:

124

It is bitter cold.

NEVA and SHAY are packing up.

MARY MARGARET is massaging SETH'S bad leg.

SETH CECIL
 This leg was just fine before the
 War. If it weren't for that damn
 War, I'd be able to walk to Fort
 Phil Kearny.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Seth, you can complain all the way
 back to Adam and it won't make you
 young again. Think you can walk on
 it now?

She helps him up, as BABY MARCY comes waddling up to the fire
 carrying an arrow.

SETH CECIL
 (takes it from her)
 Indians aren't careless with
 arrows, it takes too long to make
 one.
 (to Marcy)
 Where'd you get it, honey?

MARCY, who has developed a stubborn streak, doesn't answer.

SETH CECIL
 Have we got anything to bribe her
 with?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 I am not fool enough to bribe a
 child.

SHAY CECIL
 (points)
 She was over by that tree.

125 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: CAMP: DAY: CONTINUOUS:

125

MARCY'S find is a DEAD MINER.

SETH and SHAY make it to the body first.

He is barely recognizable as human. He has been mutilated. He is naked; his eyes are missing; he has been disemboweled. A patch of hair is missing off the front of his head. A bloody spade is on the ground next to him.

ALL LOOK. Silent.

SETH CECIL
 You and Neva don't need to see this, Mary. I expect the children will have nightmares.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (ignores this)
 What was he doing way out here by himself?

SETH CECIL
 Hoping to get rich, I suppose. Here's his spade, and there's his pick.

SHAY CECIL
 (taking it all in)
 Some people must want to get rich awful bad.

SETH CECIL
 Yes, they do.

NEVA CECIL
 Not me.

SETH CECIL
 Let's get him buried before the ground freezes.

126 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: CAMP: DAY: LATER:

126

ALL STAND around the fresh grave.

SETH CECIL
 Do you want to say a scripture, Mary?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 ...'The grass withereth, the flower
 fadeth...that's all I know.

SETH CECIL
 (looks around)
 Weather's coming. We better go.

127 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: DAY:

127

The CECILS move along on their way to Fort Phil Kearny.

SETH and MARY MARGARET, who holds MARCY, in the wagon.

NEVA and SHAY on their ponies, ahead. Suddenly they stop,
 turn and race back.

SETH CECIL
 (pulls up)
 What is it?

SHAY CECIL
 A wagon...it's been burnt.

SETH puts his gun across his lap.

ALL make their way to the smouldering wagon.

128 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: BURNED WAGON: DAY: CONTINUOUS:

128

Silent, the CECILS have a look: it is a wagon not unlike
 their own, out on the bald prairie, still warm and
 smouldering.

A little family--father, mother, four children--all dead,
 stripped, mutilated, eyes wide open, staring up at the sky.
 An arrow, like a signpost, sticks in the ground next to them.

SETH CECIL
 This is getting repetitious.

Jumps down, pulls up the arrow.

SETH CECIL
 It's a Sioux arrow, same as the one
 Marcy found.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 This could have been us...couldn't
 it? This is the danger I've put us
 in.

NEVA CECIL
 Do you think they're watching us?

SETH CECIL
It's likely, yes. This is their
country.

SHAY CECIL
If they're watching us, would you
know it?

SETH CECIL
Not until they're ready for us to
know it.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Maybe we should turn back.

SETH CECIL
Be no safer going back. We need to
bury these folks, and get a move
on.

129 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: DAY: CONTINUOUS:

129

SETH drives, MARY and the baby beside him. ALL ARE SOMBER,
still in the aura of the little family and their tragic end.

NEVA suddenly perks up.

NEVA CECIL
(excited)
Is that it? Is that the fort?

SETH CECIL
I can't see a thing. Neva's got
better eyes than old Kit Carson.

NEVA and SHAY, excited, lope off ahead.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Well, if it's the fort, I hope
Dick's handy, so I can settle my
business with him.

SETH CECIL
You realize Dick Cecil does not
like to be criticized, by women or
by anybody else.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Too bad for him. I didn't come all
this way to kiss his feet.
(look)
Are you getting ready to take his
side against me?

SETH CECIL
Well, you've been mad at Dick
before this, and got over it. I
speculate that it's just the Indian
family of his you don't like.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
(sighs)
In some ways you have less sense
than anybody I know.

SETH CECIL
That's a wild opinion if I ever
heard one.

MARY MARGARET looks at him. Checks to make sure the children
are not watching: then suddenly she grabs SETH...gives him a
long, hard, passionate kiss. He's too startled to return the
kiss, of course, and his eyes betray a riot of emotion--
shock, delight, caution, confusion.

When MARY finally breaks the kiss, SETH looks punch-drunk.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I've wanted to do that for a long,
long time, Seth...and now that
we're out here where we could be
massacred any minute, I thought I
better not pass up the chance.

SETH is taking this in.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Aren't you going to say anything?

SETH CECIL
My goodness...uh, goodness me...uh
for goodness' sake....

MARY MARGARET, smug, snaps the reins, and they proceed to the
fort, SETH struggling to recover his composure.

130 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: DAY: LATE AFTERNOON:

130

The CECILS approach FORT PHIL KEARNY.

WE SEE a familiar straggle of teepees around the outside of
the stockade.

131 EXT: FORT PHIL KEARNY, WYOMING: LATE AFTERNOON: CONTINUOUS

DICK CECIL is a tall, handsome raffish fellow, standing by a
wagon with an axe over his shoulder.

Standing next to him is a YOUNG INDIAN WOMAN, obviously heavy with child.

He and the other woodcutters have been watching the slow arrival of the wagon with only casual interest. But when he spots his son and daughter racing toward them on Indian ponies, his jaw drops. His face darkens.

The YOUNG INDIAN WOMAN sees the change in him, immediately goes scurrying like a doe through the gates of the fort.

DICK can hardly believe his eyes, as his two children arrive.

NEVA jumps down from her horse. He gives her a hug. SHAY does the same; he shakes his hand.

MARY MARGARET and SETH pull up in the wagon. SETH has recovered mostly from the surprise kiss, though he looks a bit flustered when he sees DICK.

When DICK walks up to the wagon, Little Nicky tries to bite him: he slaps him with a glove.

MARY MARGARET is perfectly cool.

DICK CECIL
What in the hell is this, Mary Margaret?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Why, can't you see, Dick? It's your family. Your Missouri family, that is. I realize you've acquired a few others.

DICK CECIL
(shifts to Seth)
Seth, Goddammit, what is this? Who said you could bring this bunch out here? You oughtn't to have allowed it.

SETH CECIL
I didn't allow it. It happened despite me. I've argued against it mile after mile, all the way from Boone's Lick, Missouri.
(throws up his hands)
But here we are.
(pause)
It's my opinion that shooting Mary would have been the only way to stop her, and I wasn't up to shooting her.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
That's right. He would have had to shoot me to stop me, and he wasn't up to shooting me. Would you have been up to shooting me, Dick?

DICK looks at SETH again, but this time he doesn't sound so fierce.

DICK CECIL
There must be some way to stop a woman, rather than let her drag a wagon and a bunch of kids all this way. You could have hog-tied her and left her in the cellar.

NEVA CECIL
We don't have a cellar, Pa.

DICK seems confused.

MARY MARGARET gets down from the wagon seat and marches over to DICK, looking him up and down from a short distance away.

SETH looks nervous.

SETH CECIL
The children and I better go on into the fort and see if we can scare up some fodder for the livestock.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Seth, shut up. Don't talk and don't move. This will just take a minute.

SETH CECIL
A minute? After traveling all these months?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Some things take months. And other things just take a minute.

MARY MARGARET approaches DICK, who watches her warily.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
You're not making me feel welcome, Dick--although I am your wife. Am I welcome?

DICK CECIL
Did I ask you to come? No! So you're not welcome.

(MORE)

DICK CECIL (cont'd)
I expect you knew that before you
left home, you independent hussy.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I did know it, but I wanted to hear
it from you straight.

DICK CECIL
Why?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Because I'm not the sort of woman
to quit a man through the mails. I
can only quit a man face to face,
and right here and now I'm quitting
you.

NEVA and SHAY are riveted. MARCY awakens from her nap and
raises a wail.

DICK CECIL
Good Lord, you even brought the
baby?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Yes, that's Marcy--the child you've
never seen. You understand me,
don't you, Dick? We're quits.

Annoyed as he is, this is not what DICK expected.

DICK CECIL
We're quits? Quits for good? Now
that seems hasty, Mary Margaret.

That is clearly the wrong thing to say, because MARY MARGARET
colors up and gives him a roundhouse punch right in the
jaw...he staggers back a few steps, holding his face.

SETH winces.

SHAY winces.

The WOODCHOPPERS all wince.

ALL hold their jaws.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Not hasty, Dick, tardy! Tardy by
sixteen years!

Then she gets back on the wagon seat, takes the reins from
SETH, and drives the wagon into Fort Phil Kearny, leaving
DICK standing by himself and rubbing his sore jaw.

NEVA and SHAY mount and follow.

132 . EXT: FORT PHIL KEARNY, WYOMING: PARADE GROUND: LATE AFTERNOON: CONTINUOUS: 132

The wagon comes clipping in to Fort Phil Kearny.

A SOLDIER directs MARY MARGARET where to park; she complies.

MARY MARGARET and SETH get down from the wagon.

SETH CECIL

Did you really come all this way just to tell Dick you were quitting him? If that was all you had to tell him you could have sent me with the news.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

(exasperated)

No, Seth. I didn't send you because I'm keeping you! Or would you rather just live out here and run wild like your brother?

SETH CECIL

(at once)

Not me. I'm so used to you now I wouldn't know what to do without you.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

That's right, you wouldn't.

SETH CECIL

I would like to go visit with Dick for a minute, though. I'd like to find out if the business is prospering, or if I'm a pauper.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Go. Sherman and Geneva can help me feed the stock.

SETH goes.

133 EXT: FORT PHIL KEARNY, WYOMING: PARADE GROUND: EVENING: 133

MARY MARGARET, SHAY and NEVA stand with the Quartermaster, a young, appealing man, attempting to bargain for some fodder, when COLONEL FETTERMAN spots MARY MARGARET.

He comes over at once.

COLONEL FETTERMAN
 Get out! Get out!
 (gestures to the
 quartermaster)
 Get this damn woman out of the
 fort, now!

YOUNG QUARTERMASTER
 Colonel Fetterman, what is the
 problem?

COLONEL FETTERMAN
 (points at Mary Margaret)
 I will not have a treasonous woman
 in this fort!

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Stop that, sir! Don't you know
 it's rude to point?

COLONEL FETTERMAN
 Get 'em out! Now!

He stomps off.

The YOUNG QUARTERMASTER looks deeply embarrassed.

YOUNG QUARTERMASTER
 I don't know what to say, ma'am. I
 fear you'd better bunk outside the
 fort.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 That's all right, young man. I'd
 feel cramped in here anyway, just
 from knowing Colonel Fetterman is
 around.

134 EXT: FORT PHIL KEARNY, WYOMING: EVENING: CONTINUOUS: 134

MARY MARGARET drives the team back outside the stockade.

SETH and DICK are sitting together on the back of the wood
 wagon, talking amiably.

DICK CECIL
 Hell, you just went in and now
 you're coming out. Didn't you like
 our nice little fort?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Yes, but it's too small for Colonel
 Fetterman and me both.

DICK CECIL
Oh, that damn whippersnapper. He
is a pest.

MARY gets MARCY out of her bed in the wagon, hands her to
DICK, who is taken aback.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
You two can get acquainted while me
and Seth make camp.

135 EXT: FORT PHIL KEARNY, WYOMING: OUTSIDE THE FORT: NIGHT: 135

NEVA is inside the fort.

WE HEAR faint sounds of fiddle music coming from inside.

SHAY is standing and looking vaguely discontent.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Shay, there's no reason you can't
go to the dance, too. You might
make a good dancer if you'd just
loosen up a bit.

SHAY CECIL
All right, Ma.

He shuffles toward the fort. Looks back over his shoulder.

136 EXT: FORT PHIL KEARNY, WYOMING: NIGHT: CONTINUOUS: 136

SETH CECIL
Well, I guess you had your say with
Dick. Are you satisfied now?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Where Dick is concerned, I am.

SETH CECIL
So what's next?

She looks at him. Scoots a little closer to him.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Why do I have to decide everything?
Why don't you decide something for
a change?

SETH CECIL
(puts his arm around her)
I've been told what to do for so
long, I guess I'm out of practice.

She gives him a little dig in the ribs.

Then puts her head on his shoulder.

137 EXT: FORT PHIL KEARNY, WYOMING: OUTSIDE FORT: DAY: MORNINGS7

MARY stokes the fire. SETH drinks coffee. SHAY and NEVA have just finished breakfast. MARCY fusses for SETH to pick her up, but he refuses.

DICK CECIL comes walking up to the camp.

DICK CECIL
'Morning, travelers, what's your plans?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Why would you need to know?

DICK CECIL
I want to borrow our whelps for the day. Let 'em help me haul wood. Seth can come, too, if he's a mind.

SETH CECIL
Though I normally try to avoid the axe and the saw, I might just take you up on the invite. Beats staying here and getting fussed at.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
Who's fussing at you?

SETH CECIL
Marcy, for one....

MARY MARGARET CECIL
That's because you've spoiled her. Go on, get out of here, all of you. Me and Marcy will have us a day to ourselves.

138 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: DAY:

138

It is a glorious day. SHAY and NEVA are happy to be on an adventure with their Pa.

DICK, SETH on the seat next to him, is driving a wood wagon over to the nearby forest, where SEVERAL WOODCHOPPERS are already at work.

SETH spots someone he knows.

SETH CECIL
Is that Lonesome Sam? Why, I
figured some Sioux would have
lifted his hair long ago.

DICK CECIL
Old Sam'll still be out wandering
the West when all of us are just
worm food.

139 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: WOODCHOPPING CAMP: DAY: 139

Logs are being sawed into usable lengths, then chopped for
the fireplace. NEVA loads the cut wood into a wagon. SHAY
is swinging an axe, rather awkwardly.

WE SEE SETH and SAM off a ways, reminisce with one another.

DICK CECIL
You're way off in your skills with
the axe, son. Seth ought to have
taught you better.

SHAY CECIL
(embarrassed)
I'm out of practice. We don't chop
near this much wood in Missouri.

NEVA CECIL
Pa, if we lived out here, would we
have to go to school? I'm plumb
tired of school.

DICK CECIL
(surprised)
Well, now, there's a notion. Far
as I know, there ain't a school
within five hundred miles.

WE SUDDENLY HEAR a high ti-yiing. SETH and SAM hurry over to
DICK'S wagon, as TWENTY INDIANS race out of the trees,
charging at them.

DICK CECIL
Turn these wagons, boys, and hurry!

140 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: WOODCHOPPING CAMP: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 140

The WOODCHOPPERS, about ten in number, move at lightning
speed to form four wagons into a square; the TWO WAGONS left
form a bulwark on two sides of the square.

141 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: WOODCHOPPING CAMP: WAGON: DAY: 141
CONTINUOUS:

DICK and SETH sit on the wagon seat; SAM is in the wagon bed.

DICK CECIL
(to Shay and Neva)
Get under the wagon and keep still.

They immediately obey.

SETH
(to Sam)
Think we could make it to the fort,
Sam?

The INDIANS begin to circle the wagons in a very wide circle,
still out of firing range.

SAM
No. How many shells you got, Dick?

DICK CECIL
Six.

SAM
I've got four.

SETH CECIL
The army's too damn stingy with its
ammunition.

A few WOODCUTTERS begin to fire.

DICK CECIL
(yells)
Don't shoot, dammit, they're out of
range!

But just as he says it, DICK is hit in the shoulder by a
bullet--he falls backwards off the wagon seat into the wagon
bed. SETH makes it over the seat into the wagon; he and SAM
hunker down.

SETH CECIL
(turns to Dick)
Where you hit?

DICK CECIL
(his shirt bloody)
In my pride, mostly.

SAM
 (examines him)
 Grazed his shoulder. He's bloody,
 but he'll live.

SAM props DICK up against the side of the wagon. Stanches the wound with his handkerchief.

About this time, the shooting from the WOODCUTTERS slows, then stops. They've used all their ammunition, sit holding their useless rifles.

ALL WOODCUTTERS look scared.

142 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: WOODCHOPPING CAMP: UNDER THE WAGON: DAY 2
 CONTINUOUS:

SHAY sees about six more INDIANS loping into the valley from the north.

SHAY CECIL
 More's coming, Pa.

SETH lowers his gun...studies this development.

They ti-yi a little, but don't join the party around the woodcutters. They are nearly naked and all painted, but seem in an idle mood.

One gets off and examines his horse's hoof.

143 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: WOODCUTTERS CAMP: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 143

The TWENTY INDIANS circling the woodcutters' camp break off their circling of the wagons and join the INDIANS who have just loped into the valley.

The WARRIOR by himself is still checking his horse.

Just then, WE HEAR a bugle call.

SAM
 That'd be that damn Fetterman. I recognize his bugler.

SETH CECIL
 I never greatly cared for bugle music myself, since it usually means a fight's coming.

144 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: LODGEPOLE RIDGE: LONG SHOT: CONTINUOUS 144

Slowly, from the ridge between the woodcutters' camp and the fort, WE SEE a troop of about eighty cavalry appear, their banner flying. COLONEL FETTERMAN leads the troops, still in his white gloves.

145 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: CENTER OF VALLEY: INDIANS: CONTINUOUS 145

The FIVE INDIANS now joined by the TWENTY who were circling the wagons take fright when they see the cavalry--they light out across the valley for the nearest trees.

Only the LONE INDIAN with the sore-footed horse seems unconcerned. He hops onto his horse, watching the soldiers for a moment, before trotting off.

146 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: WOODCHOPPING CAMP: WAGON: DAY: 146
CONTINUOUS:

SETH, however, is far from unconcerned. He stands up in the wagon and begins to wave his arms, as if to tell the cavalry to turn back.

SETH CECIL

Hell, these young bucks are just the decoys.

SAM

It's the oldest trick....the wounded bird....

147 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: LODGEPOLE RIDGE: CAVALRY: CONTINUOUS: 147

FETTERMAN, having spotted the INDIANS heading for the woods, raises his sabre.

The bugler blows the charge.

The cavalry races down the ridge, and into the valley, hoping to cut off the INDIANS before they reach the woods.

They make it deep into the valley, but they aren't catching the INDIANS, who are on fine, quick horses.

148 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: WOODCHOPPING CAMP POV: DAY: CONTINUOUS 148

SETH looks off toward the forest.

SETH CECIL

(uneasy)

What do you think about making a run for it, brother? I'm feeling worse and worse about leaving that baby....

DICK CECIL

(trying to look over the side)

You kids crawl up into this wagon, now!

NEVA and SHAY scramble up into the wagon.

NEVA CECIL

(shocked)

Pa, you're hit!

She kneels down next to him.

Just then, THEY and WE SEE HEAR a loud rustling:

SAM

Oh, Lord....

The woods on every side boil with movement. So much snow kicked into the air that it looks like some kind of avalanche, at first. Then, a dramatic sight, as all are transfixed:

WE SEE almost a thousand INDIANS close around the cavalrymen. The few cavalrymen who try to retreat are quickly cut down.

SHAY CECIL

Uncle Seth, what'll we do?

SETH CECIL

They don't want us, Shay...they want Fetterman.

There are so many arrows in the air that they make a cloud.

Arrows and lances skewer men on the run, while others are hacked down with hatchets.

Pockets with FIVE OR SIX CAVALRYMEN each are surrounded by INDIANS, the CAVALRYMEN fight for their lives and lose. Fall.

149

EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: WOODCHOPPING CAMP: UNDER THE WAGON: DAMN FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER:

The WOODCUTTERS, meanwhile, are frozen by the spectacle. Even SAM, the experienced frontiersman, is amazed.

SETH CECIL
 We better go while they're busy.
 The killing frenzy's on them, they
 might not be able to stop.
 (to the woodcutters)
 Come on, boys, whip up! Now's our
 chance, if we've got a chance.

The WOODCUTTERS come unfrozen, load up, and WE WATCH, in a
 LONG WIDE SHOT, their wild race for the fort which is to the
 ridge the cavalry has just come over.

150 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: CENTER OF VALLEY: MASSACRE: CONTINUOUS 150
 WE SEE COLONEL FETTERMAN, surrounded.

The Sioux close in on him.

He takes out his pistol. Fires, shoots one Indian.

Then turns the pistol, shoots himself in the head.

151 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: LODGEPOLE RIDGE: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 151

Just as SETH (driving the wagon), DICK, SAM, SHAY, NEVA and
 the others in the wood wagons reach the crest of LODGEPOLE
 RIDGE, they meet MARY MARGARET, in her wagon. The rest of
 the WOODCUTTERS sweep past them to the fort.

SETH CECIL
 (yells)
 Stop, it's a massacre!

SETH stops his wagon, too.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Massacre or not, I've come for my
 children that you ought never to
 have taken off.

She sees DICK'S bloody shirt.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (startled)
 What happened to you?

DICK CECIL
 Nothing much...and by the way,
 they're my children, too. You're
 too bossy by half, always was.

SETH CECIL
 Quiet down, both of you, this is no
 time for a family quarrel.
 (MORE)

SETH CECIL (cont'd)
 (pause)
 It looks like the massacre's over.

152 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: CENTER OF VALLEY: MASSACRE: CONTINUOUS 152

SETH is right: below them, across the valley, WE SEE the INDIANS going around picking up rifles and pistols, pulling cartridge belts off soldiers, picking up arrows and hatchets, and collecting their own dead.

But then in only a minute or two, every single INDIAN is gone, melting back into the woods they had just come racing out of.

153 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: LODGEPOLE RIDGE: DAY: CONTINUOUS: 153

SAM
 There may be some wounded. It would be unusual for every last man to be killed stone dead, in a fracas like this.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Let's go.

SETH CECIL
 Go where?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Go pick up the wounded. If we wait, some of them might die.

DICK CECIL
 Where's Marcy?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 (look)
 Left with wife number three--is that the right number, Dick?

DICK CECIL
 Close enough.

SETH CECIL
 Why don't you take the youngsters back to the fort? Me and Dick can gather up the wounded.

DICK CECIL
 It's going to be a bad sight, Mary Margaret.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I'm a woman who's buried four sons--
by myself--remember? Bad sights
don't affect me.

DICK turns his wagon. Doesn't answer.

154 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: RIDGE: MASSACRE: DAY: 154

FROM A DISTANCE, WE SEE the two wagons moving among the
dead....

155 EXT: WYOMING PLAIN: CENTER OF VALLEY: MASSACRE: DAY: 155

DICK, SETH, SAM and MARY MARGARET, along with SHAY and NEVA,
move slowly around the massacre sight.

SHAY CECIL V.O.
...My name is Sherman Cecil...but
my family calls me Shay.

(pause)
...I was a mere boy during the
Civil War. I'd heard stories of
the hundreds and thousands that
died at Gettysburg, Vicksburg and
the other great battles. But I saw
these eighty dead men in the full
glory of their lives, racing down
on their foes like cavalrymen are
supposed to--and now they were all
dead. I felt like I was seeing all
the dead of all the wars, spread
out over that plain...and I was no
longer a boy....

WE SEE COLONEL FETTERMAN'S BODY, leaning against one of the
rocks. Eyes wide. Dead of suicide.

SETH CECIL
Fetterman done for himself. He got
off easy.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
And he cost eighty mothers their
sons.

SAM
(shakes his head)
I have never seen that many Indians
in one force.

DICK CECIL
That many Indians could take the
fort...low on ammunition as we are.
(MORE)

DICK CECIL (cont'd)
A victory like this will surely
pump them up.

SETH CECIL
We better bunk in the fort tonight,
then, in case they come. The
Colonel won't be there to throw
Mary out.

They all take one last look.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
I'd hate to have eighty deaths on
my conscience.

And leave.

156 EXT: FORT PHIL KEARNY, WYOMING: NIGHT:

156

WE ARE INSIDE THE FORT.

WE PAN ALONG THE PARAPETS, as WE HEAR:

SHAY CECIL V.O.
...When it began to get dark we all
loaded our guns...and we waited.

(pause)
Ma and Pa and Uncle Seth stood
together, waiting for the Indians
to come. But what came instead was
the moon...the biggest, brightest
moon any of us had ever seen in our
lives floated up into the sky that
night and lit the plain like a
giant golden lamp....

WE SEE a YOUNG OFFICER look at an almanac...shows NEVA what
he finds.

SHAY CECIL V.O.
...Young Lieutenant Wiley, who had
taken such a shine to Neva, looked
in his almanac and found the
reason: the moon was closer to the
earth that night than it had been
for one hundred and fifty years--
and closer than it would be until
1999, when even Baby Marcy would be
lucky to have a grandchild still
alive.

(pause)
None of us who saw that big power
moon would ever forget it....

157

EXT: FORT PHIL KEARNY, WYOMING: NIGHT: CLOSE TO MORNING: 157
LATER:

The great moon is still up, still huge, though it's moved to the other side of the sky.

MARY MARGARET, SETH and DICK all stand with rifles in their hands, DICK'S arm in a sling.

DICK CECIL

I have never been no hand to wait.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

Don't I know it.

SETH CECIL

If the Sioux and Cheyenne are coming, I wish they'd come.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

They won't come.

DICK CECIL

(mild)

When did you come to know so much about Indians?

MARY MARGARET CECIL

They won't come. They gave Colonel Fetterman his comeuppance...and I expect that satisfied them.

MARY MARGARET shivers. SETH stomps his feet once or twice, tries to warm himself.

SETH CECIL

I wish we'd brought in more of the dead. Now we'll have to wait for a thaw.

MARY MARGARET looks at the huge moon.

MARY MARGARET CECIL

It's all right, Seth. There's this fine moon to shine on them. They're like my boys--gone to their peace.

Below, NEVA, unworried, is dancing wildly to an old man's fiddle and harmonica.

Several soldiers watch. Then join in.

DICK looks down upon his lively daughter.

DICK CECIL

She dances like you, Mary. Like you danced when you were young and frisky.

SETH CECIL

You better watch it, Dick. The fact is, Mary's still young and frisky.

WE SEE THE THREE FIGURES: SETH, DICK and MARY MARGARET, rifles in hand, silhouetted against the great yellow moon, whose radiance lights the whole prairie....

AS WE DISSOLVE INTO A CODA, or EPILOGUE, narrated by SHAY.

MONTAGE of quick images, LIVE SCENES and OLD PHOTOGRAPHS, historical or family album in turn.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...Neva fought Ma to a standstill and stayed in the west with Pa. In no time, she mastered the Sioux language and was ever in demand as an interpreter. At the big peace conference in 1868, when the Army had to finally knuckle under to Chief Red Cloud and agree to close those three forts they had foolishly built in Wyoming, Neva translated for General Sherman...

WE SEE NEVA in a photograph between RED CLOUD and GENERAL SHERMAN at a big peace pow wow.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...Then, before you could blink, Red Cloud stole Neva from General Sherman and took her to New York City...

WE SEE NEVA at Cooper Union, as Red Cloud delivers his stately oration.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...And next thing we knew, Buffalo Bill stole her from Red Cloud, and hired her to keep Sitting Bull happy between acts at the Wild West Show...

WE SEE NEVA playing ping-pong with SITTING BULL, in full regalia, at BUFFALO BILL CODY'S WILD WEST SHOW.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...To her credit, Neva devoted a lot of her time to Pa's Indian wives and children...

WE SEE a group photo of DICK with his three wives and seventeen children.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...But that ended pronto after Pa bought a sawmill up in Oregon and happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. A big saw blade snapped, just at the wrong moment, and took Pa's head clean off...

WE SEE DICK at the sawmill, just before he's killed.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...A maiden aunt in Ohio left Uncle Seth a big patch of oily swamp...

WE SEE MARY MARGARET and SETH inspecting this dismal swamp...SETH cussing because he has stepped in an oil puddle and ruined his shoes.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...Uncle Seth was for selling the oily mess, but Ma fought him like a tigress. She thought there was a future in oil, and she was right...

WE MARY MARGARET and SETH standing in a thicket of DERRICKS.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...When Uncle Seth got rich, he and Ma bought themselves a big mansion on Lindell Boulevard in St. Louis. They argued their way through fifty years and were never parted, except at night, when Uncle Seth insisted on sleeping outdoors. He never tired of looking up and seeing the stars...

WE SEE SETH in the backyard, stargazing.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...Ma put up with it for a few years and then she got enough of putting up with it...

WE SEE MARY MARGARET outside at night, pummeling SETH hard.

UNCLE SETH finally fights her off.

SETH CECIL
What the hell did I do now?

MARY MARGARET CECIL
The main reason to put up with a man is so you'll have someone to scratch your back in the middle of the night if your back happens to be itchy, which the man can't do if he's bunking outside.

They look at one another.

SETH sees it's not exactly back-scratching she's talking about. He gets up, collects his pallet.

SETH CECIL
An itchy back is a damned aggravation. You should have spoke up sooner.

Together they go inside.

SHAY CECIL V.O.
...From time to time, Neva would marry...

WE SEE WEDDING PICTURES of NEVA, each with a different man:
A COWBOY; AN INDIAN; A GUNFIGHTER; ANOTHER INDIAN; A TRICK ROPER; ANOTHER INDIAN; A COWBOY.

SHAY CECIL V.O.
...Being a famous interpreter didn't keep Neva from outrunning Pa in the marrying race. Every year or so, the stationmaster in St. Louis would get ahold of Ma and inform her that another toddler had arrived with a note from Neva pinned to its shirt...

WE SEE MARY MARGARET and SETH with these toddlers at the station: BEN, LITTLE BAT, JOSIE, ARMSTRONG, WILLY, TICKNOR.

SHAY CECIL V.O.
...Neva's children made quite a swarm in the big mansion on Lindell Avenue in St. Louis...

WE SEE THEM ALL one Christmas at their big mansion in St. Louis.

SHAY CECIL V.O.
...Marcy turned out to have a fine, lilting soprano voice.
(MORE)

SHAY CECIL V.O. (cont'd)
 Ma sent her to Europe to train it
 thoroughly, which she did, and the
 next thing we knew she was a famous
 opera singer...

WE SEE MARY MARGARET and SETH, in an opulent box at the St.
 Louis opera, listening to MARCY belt out Verdi.

SETH CECIL
 (at a break in the
 singing)
 Reminds me too much of a Cheyenne
 scalping party.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 Shut up and clap when you're told
 to clap.

SHAY CECIL V.O.
 ...On our way back from Wyoming
 coming across Kansas, with Ma
 pregnant and fussy and Uncle Seth
 doing the driving, I happened to
 spot an old tattered law book that
 had dropped out of some settler's
 wagon...

WE SEE SHAY find the law book.

SHAY CECIL V.O.
 ...I read that battered old book
 the rest of the way home. I guess
 you could say I got seduced by the
 law. Then and there I determined
 to be a lawyer, maybe even a judge,
 which pleased Ma but didn't please
 Uncle Seth...

SETH CECIL
 Does a chicken have loyalty? Does
 a lawyer? If Shay makes a judge,
 the next thing you know he'll find
 against us in court.

MARY MARGARET CECIL
 I wish the day would come when you
 agree with me about something,
 Seth. Just once.

WE SEE SETH and MARY MARGARET in rocking chairs on their big
 porch on Lindell...arguing...now and then holding hands.

WE SEE SHAY now, in Judge's robes, resignedly watching a wild
 melee in his courtroom, a family dispute having gotten out of
 hand, people punching and biting one another.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...You don't have to be on the bench long to realize that family cases are the hardest to settle. Give me robbers and killers any day. It's deuced hard to know where a family story starts, and no cinch to figure out where one stops, either....

AND NOW WE BEGIN a brief reprise of scenes he is talking about...First MARY MARGARET looking at the dead horse.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...Look at our story, the Cecils: did our story begin the day Ma shot Baldy Stone's horse because she thought it was an elk? Did Ma always prefer Uncle Seth to Pa...

WE SEE them by the fire in Fort Laramie.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...Did Pa wander the West for years, hoping his brother would relieve him of his outspoken wife....

WE SEE DICK with his axe and his PREGNANT INDIAN WIFE.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...Did Uncle Seth mean from the first to steal his brother's wife? Did they all know what they were doing, or half know, or just blunder on....

WE SEE SETH dancing with MARY MARGARET on the riverboat.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...I've pondered these matters for many years, but I confess I still can't phrase it out tidily, like we try to do in the courts of law....

WE GO BACK TO FORT PHIL KEARNY, to the parapets, and to the big, golden moon...

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...I guess what life finally taught me is that not all questions have answers. Now and then, I dream we're back at Fort Phil Kearny, in the time when we were all together. And Neva was dancing for the soldiers....

WE SEE NEVA dancing.

SHAY CECIL V.O.

...And Ma and Pa and Uncle Seth stood there together, with their rifles, waiting for the Indians that never came...they had just melted back into their holy hills....

WE SEE the THREE SILHOUETTES.

SHAY CECIL V.O. (CONTINUED)

...I remember them all as they were that last night, standing on the parapets, while that great power moon lit up all the prairie and the woods as clear as daylight...a moon like a white sun, that shone so brightly, that shone upon the living and the dead....

Then FADE TO BLACK.

THE END
