

JONAH HEX

by

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based on the comic book characters
appearing in DC Comics "Jonah Hex"

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"He was a hero to some... a villain to others, and wherever he rode, people spoke his name in whispers..."

JOHN ALBANO, 1972

FADE IN:

EXT. CAROLINA FLATLANDS - LATE DAY

Heavy raindrops slam into thick, gray mud... we hear thunder and the CLOP CLOP CLOP of hooves...

Stiff, pale FINGERS, grimy nails, slightly curled into an aborted clutch, leaving knuckle-wide trenches in the mud...

A DEAD FACE drags through the muck, sideways, cheek down, staring AT the CAMERA with blank eyes, forehead half-collapsed by a bullet impact... A BLACK CROW lands on the head and helps himself to some TARTAR...

ANOTHER DEAD MAN, this one FACE-DOWN in the mud, dragging... just blue ears and a mop of wet, matted hair...

A LAST DEAD FACE -- this one staring STRAIGHT UP into the rain, dragging... one eye open, another just a gaping hole of goodness...

HIGH, WIDE ANGLE - STRAIGHT DOWN

A MAN ON HORSEBACK moves with purpose down the muddy road... dragging the THREE DEAD MEN behind him... each man with one foot roped to the saddle...

The CAMERA BOOMS DOWN/TILTS UP to reveal a sprawling desert valley -- and at the end of the muddy road a TOWN, crushed and beaten down by the rain, wood buildings soaked black. OUR DESTINATION:

EXT. STUNK CRICK - SAME TIME

VOICE (V.O.)

Stunk Crick.

The MAN RIDES INTO TOWN; a motley, bedraggled CITIZENRY begin to appear, furtive... grungy, barefoot kids eyeballing the carcasses... hookers and drunks... bearded men...

The RIDER freezes them all with passing eye contact -- we see only HALF HIS FACE, and this OBSCURED by the shadow of his hat... but it's a face as grim and cold as the black clouds overhead. No one says shit.

The HAT is unusual for these parts -- a gray CONFEDERATE ARMY slouch-style cowboy lid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Looks like it's been to hell and back with the dude wearing it. A heavy coat holds off the rain, ribbons of dripping water folding off the edges.

FIVE crude COFFINS lean up on an adjacent building -- we notice a knothole in one of the wooden lids...

REVERSE POV

looking out the hole from inside the coffin as the GRIM RIDER...

... drags his BOUNTY up to what passes for CITY HALL.

A GROUP OF MEN come out to meet him:

The MAYOR -- 50s, short, squat, slimy.

The SHERIFF -- 40s, tall, thin, sleazy.

Three hangdog-looking DEPUTIES.

MAYOR

Jonah Hex.

SHERIFF

(an echo)

Jonah Hex.

JONAH acknowledges them with the sparest of nods.

JONAH

These the boys you wanted.

JONAH steps his HORSE sideways to reveal said BOYS. The rain has temporarily abated -- FLIES light and buzz on the three CARCASSES.

MAYOR

The Clayton boys.

JONAH

That's right.

The MAYOR looks them over, licking his lips.

MAYOR

One... two... three... appear we have a little problem, Mr. Hex.

HEX'S eyes narrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAYOR

They's four Clayton boys. Four of 'em. This only three boys. I don't see my way that we could possibly recompense you the agreed upon recomseption, given that the terms of our, ah, agreement...

*

As he rambles, JONAH unhooks a BURLAP SACK, black with dried blood, reaches in, pulls out a HUMAN HEAD...

... and tosses it through the air to land -- PLOP -- in the mud in front of the MAYOR, looking up at him with dumb eyes. The GROUP OF MEN JUMP BACK.

JONAH

Motherfucker was too fat for my horse.

The MAYOR swallows thickly.

SHERIFF

That's Portis Clayton okay.

The MAYOR gives him a disgusted sidelong look.

MAYOR

(to JONAH,
ingratiating)

Well now, Mr. Hex, these boys were no end of trouble to us simple folk; you surely have done us quite a favor.

JONAH

Transaction's all it was. I'll collect the one hundred dollar bounty on 'em and be on my way.

A SHARPSHOOTER peeks out from behind the church BELL TOWER steadying his weighty benchrest-rifle... We watch JONAH and the MEN from his POV.

The DEPUTIES rub their palms along the grips of their weapons...

MAYOR

That there, Mr. Hex, was really more of a, er, limited time offer, truth be told... hundred dollars is quite a sum in these parts...

JONAH

But you'll pay it all the same.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The MAYOR chuckles, nervous.

MAYOR
Aw, hell, Mr. Hex...
(eyes go dark)
There's an unscrupulous man or
two'd pay double that for your
stinking hide...

JONAH nods -- somehow weary... he's walked this road
before. His eyes shift to the row of COFFINS.

JONAH
Five coffins.

The MAYOR grins, motions to the men...

JONAH
Well...

LIGHTNING FLASHES, with the heavy THUNDER rolling in
behind it... as JONAH lifts his gaze...

In the flash of lightning we see his FACE fully for the
first time:

The right side of his mug is HORRIBLY SCARRED... a rope
of dermis -- it could only have been melted and healed --
connects the top lip to the chin, stretched taut over
snarling teeth like a leather strap...

JONAH
That's a start anyhoo.

MAYOR
Cut 'im down.

A shot booms out from the roof of the church, whistles
past JONAH'S head and plunks into the mud.

The SHERIFF and DEPUTIES go for their guns. They never
intended to pay him; it was a cold-blooded ambush.

With a KICK, his HORSE REARS UP on its hind legs...

... from under the heavy blanket draping down from under
the saddle --

TWO GATLING GUNS DROP DOWN, pointed straight ahead!

JONAH has the PULLING END of a BELT OF SHELLS in each
fist -- he DRAWS THEM UP and the GUNS BEGIN TO TALK...

The shells cut the MAYOR, the SHERIFF, and the DEPUTIES
IN HALF!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH rolls off the side of the HORSE, onto the muddy ground, drawing his two SIX-GUNS. The MAN on the ROOF is drawing a bead on him... he's positioned between the CHURCH BELL and the wood frame it's mounted on -- JONAH doesn't have much of a shot...

JONAH squeezes off a few rounds -- THE SLUGS RICOCHET off the BIG BELL, making for a better angle -- CLANG! CLANG! -- into the SNIPER'S FACE... the first blows off an ear, the second his jaw. The SNIPER skitters off the back of the roof...

As the knot-holed COFFIN swings open, with a shotgun pointed directly at HEX, taking shaky aim...

JONAH throws himself back to avoid the BLAST -- which misses HEX and cuts an OLD MAN down by his bony SHINS...

JONAH RETURNS FIRE, knocking the SHOOTER back into the coffin... the lid SWINGS back closed... JONAH puts another shot an inch from the knothole, to the right -- where the SHOOTER'S left eye would be... and the other eyeball POPS OUT to fill the knothole. (We understand that the shot has connected with the SHOOTER'S face and knocked the eye right out of his head.)

The RAIN begins to fall again, slow at first. JONAH looks around -- the whole TOWN is watching; no one else seems to have any fight in them.

JONAH spots a youngish, obviously RETARDED GUY in overalls standing barefoot and shirtless in the MUD.

JONAH kneels beside what's left of the SHERIFF and snaps the tin BADGE from his shirt. He walks over to the RETARDED GUY and pins it to the strap of his overalls.

JONAH
Congratulations.

He FREEZES THE REST OF THEM with a bladder-loosening GLARE and SPITS a hock of black chaw at their feet... ROLLS his eyes...

... and BLASTS OUT OF TOWN on his HORSE, headed for the horizon.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

OPENING TITLES:

A crudely printed WANTED POSTER is slapped up on a post:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WANTED
DEAD OR ALIVE
JONAH HEX

Other POSTERS tacked up on doors, walls, banks, the sides of carriages... nailed up, slopped over with watered-down starch...

The ILLUSTRATION is amateurish but effective -- JONAH is pictured as HALF HERO, HALF DEMON.

for the cold-blooded murdre of the good
MAYOR of stunk crick, SC
and it's elected SHERIFF
and of his DEPUTIES, seven men in all

And finally:

\$500 dollars

END MONTAGE.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - DAY

A WANTED POSTER blows across desolate TRAIN TRACKS, and STEEL WHEELS swallow it up. A BIG LOCOMOTIVE blows by, belching black smoke.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

In the front cars of the train RICH PASSENGERS sip tea, smoke cigars and play cards.

The middle cars are crowded with GOVERNMENT SOLDIERS, mostly in their blue uniforms, sleeping in cramped seats.

Bringing up the rear are the CARGO CARS, rows of wooded crates marked US ARMY lining the walls. More bored soldiers stand guard.

In the FRONT CAR a LITTLE BOY is leaning his forehead against the window glass, looking out over the prairie. He narrows his eyes, noticing...

SIX MEN on horseback, riding in from the distance, throwing up clouds.

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - SERIES OF SHOTS

In a series of JUMP BACK CUTS we PULL AWAY, to reveal: miles ahead of the oncoming train, under the tracks...

Efficiently packed rows of DYNAMITE... LOTS OF IT.

We JUMP BACK even FARTHER -- a grimy hand rests on a DETONATOR plunger. The train is now just a tiny plume of smoke in the distance.

We TRACK UP TO the MAN'S FACE, in profile -- early 30s, stocky, hard-bitten; with mutton chop sideburns and intricate black tattoos snaking up his neck. This is BURKE. He spits a GLOB into the dirt...

EXTREME CLOSEUP: 10,1000 frames per second -- the GLOB hits the ground in ultra SLOW MOTION, FILLING the SCREEN; detonating massively on a micro scale...

The SIX RIDERS gallop closer to the train, fifty feet away and keeping pace. SOLDIERS gather at the windows, rubbing their eyes... are these fuckers crazy enough to rob a train full of troops?

The STEEL WHEELS slam the tracks, eating up the distance to the DYNAMITE...

The RIDERS pace the TRAIN, making eye contact with the LITTLE BOY... they hold rifles over their shoulders...

The ENGINE reaches the DYNAMITE -- Jesus, there's a SHITLOAD of it.

The HAND waits... tenses... then shoves the plunger down.

CUT TO:

EXTREME HIGH ANGLE

SOARING OVER the scorched terrain. The train is tiny, a child's toy... a soundless explosion ignites the tracks... the front cars SEPARATE AND LIFT OFF... the train buckles, tilts...

We SMASH DOWN TO INSIDE THE ACTION -- metal screams, twists... glass explodes... bodies are whipped and thrown like ragdolls...

The TRAIN uncouples... cars flip and corkscrew... it's BEYOND VIOLENT... the RIDERS keep pace along side the chaos...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bodies are CRUSHED, TWISTED APART, DISMEMBERED... the ENGINE CAR explodes into flame...

... and then it's over.

The RIDERS canter up to the smoking, bloody wreck. They dismount and rip open the broken doors of a CARGO CAR... CRATES spill out and bust open... inside: RIFLES, BULLETS, CANNON SHOT.

A SURVIVING SOLDIER struggles out of the wreckage, points a pistol at the men with a burned, shaking hand.

BANG.

A shot puts a silver dollar hole in his skull. We REVERSE to the SHOOTER:

QUENTIN TURNBULL -- 50s, bearded, as hard-bitten a MADMAN as the West has seen, brings down a long revolver.

His eyes burn like hell; he stands over the grim scene, a leader, a black hole, absorbing the white hot sun.

TURNBULL

No one lives.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT HILLS - NIGHT

OPEN FLAME, crackling...

A CHAINSAW FART RIPS the night silence: BRRRRRAAAAAAPPP!

The orange flame ripples, flares blue.

JONAH

Damn.

His HORSE snorts, shifts against the rope. JONAH is sitting by the fire... he takes a big ass Bowie knife from a hidden holster behind his neck and uses it to cut open a can of beans.

He thunks the knife into the dirt, lifts his butt from the rock it sits on and fans the fumes.

JONAH

The fuck's your problem? Oughta be used to my ass by now, you've been carrying it around for six months.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The HORSE whinnies.

JONAH
Equestrian hell is the place for
you.

He finishes cutting open the can and scoops the contents into two aluminum plates... then goes into his pack and pulls out a beat-up box of SALT... pours a fucking MOUND into each plate and stirs it up. *

He sets his plate over the fire to heat, then sets the other in the dirt in front of the HORSE, who gets right into it. JONAH hits a bottle of WHISKEY.

JONAH
Need a God damn woman I tell you.
Reckon git me down to Cactus Hole.
(beat)
Been out here so long you're
starting to look good to me.

The HORSE turns and points his ass at JONAH...

JONAH
No thanks, I was joking.

... and BREAKS HORSE WIND, tail blowing -- a blast for the ages. The fire flutters and GOES OUT.

They are IN THE DARK; the moon is full, the sky a canopy of stars.

JONAH
HOLY SHITFIRE OF CHRIST!!!

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. CACTUS HOLE - NIGHT

A sleepy western town... lanterns hang along the main dirt street.

VOICE (V.O.)
Cactus Hole.

Music drifts from the ground floor of a SALOON/ROOMING HOUSE/CATHOUSE. Flickering light burns in the upstairs windows.

INT. CATHOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A door slams open and a DRUNK GUY stumbles out into the hall in his underwear... his BOOTS hit him in the back of his head.

DRUNK GUY

Thank you kindly, ma'am.

He gathers his boots, shuffles down the hall -- and runs right into someone we don't see. He looks up at the face, goes pale... and gets the hell out of there.

INT. LEILA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

LEILA -- early 30s, dark hair falling over dark eyes; a damaged beauty -- counts off a wad of wrinkled dollars. She's wearing lace panties, nothing else.

A THUMP on the door; she crushes a bill in her fist... turns and pushes open the door, ready to beat some ass.

LEILA

Look, motherfucker...

JONAH is standing there, hat down over his eyes.

LEILA

Jonah Hex.

JONAH

(quiet)

Leila.

He takes a leather bag of coins from his coat and tosses it past her; it lands on her dresser top with a heavy sound.

LEILA

Got that money from killin' some
sum bitch I expect.

(beat)

Well it's no good here.

He looks up, forcing himself to meet her eyes. LEILA lets her hand drop to her side; she is naked, vulnerable ... she takes his hand and touches it to her belly. He runs his fingers up to her breast.

LEILA

Get inside, will you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She pulls him in.

CUT TO:

INT. LEILA'S ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

LEILA moves her hand tenderly along JONAH'S skin; a blasted terrain of scars.

LEILA

They say you been shot forty times, Hex. Is it true?

JONAH

Lost count.

(beat)

Guess they ain't shot me near enough.

LEILA

Let me see.

She puts a finger on a bullet wound scar.

LEILA

One.

For each scar she counts, we FLASH CUT TO the moment he got it. Muzzle flashes, bodies blasted and doubled over ... JONAH taking bullets and giving them back...

LEILA

Five... six... seven eight nine...

FLASH TO: JONAH -- a series of shots punch holes along his arm as he falls back and spills the shooter's guts with a shotgun blast.

LEILA

Twenty-one... twenty-two...

The flashes of violence begin to merge with images of sexual ecstasy... LEILA arching her back, JONAH thrusting ... LEILA ripping new wounds in his flesh with her nails ... at first we don't even notice the transition... ejaculation and hot lead become one...

JONAH snarls, roars; killing, climaxing... LEILA moans, winces; shot, dying, bleeding... shuddering with the power of her orgasm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEILA
Forty... forty... forty...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. LEILA'S ROOM - MORNING

They lie together, awake. Her eyes are wet with tears; LEILA and JONAH are slick with sweat... JONAH'S head collapses to the nape of her neck; he is drowned in her licorice hair. All is quiet.

LEILA
They'll be coming for you, Jonah.

JONAH
They always do.

LEILA
It's different this time. I saw them posters. You killed them lawmen in Carolina.

JONAH
They may been wearin' stars... but they wudn't lawmen.

LEILA
Don't matter what you think they was. They say you'll hang for it if the army don't gun you down first.

JONAH just grunts. They sit in silence a while.

JONAH
I'll be movin' on.

LEILA just stares into the ceiling; sad, resigned to it.

LEILA
'Course you will. Ain't never stopped since the day it happened.

JONAH
The hell you on about, woman?

LEILA
They're dead and they ain't comin' back and ain't nothin' you can do to change it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEILA (CONT'D)

(beat)
But I ain't dead.

She gets out of bed and leaves him there. The sound of HORSES trickles in from outside the window. JONAH turns his eyes toward a sliver of white daylight banging off broken window glass...

EXT. CACTUS HOLE - CONTINUOUS ACTION - DAY

A troop of GOVERNMENT MILITIA is riding into town. We only see them from a distance, or in details -- boots, guns, swords -- no faces. The LEADER dismounts, calls out; a DRUNKARD, slinking away -- he'd been sleeping it off in the dirt -- freezes in his tracks.

LIEUTENANT GRASS (LEADER)

You there.

The DRUNKARD turns. We see that it's the same dude who stumbled out of LEILA'S room the night before.

LIEUTENANT GRASS holds up the "WANTED" poster with JONAH'S likeness.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

You seen this motherfucker?

The DRUNKARD looks up toward LEILA'S second floor window, hesitantly.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - SIMULTANEOUS ACTION

JONAH, on horseback, is blasting across the terrain like a bat out of hell.

A series of VOICES plays over the visual... old men, women, little kids, black slaves:

VOICE #1 (V.O.)

I heard Jonah Hex killed his own mother the day he was born.

VOICE #2 (V.O.)

I heard his daddy was a mean old drunk... traded Jonah to the 'Pache Injuns for a pile o' beaver pelt when he was a little 'un...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE #3 (V.O.)

Killed Stonewall Jackson all by
hissself.

VOICE #4 (V.O.)

Kin talk to dead people and they
talk back at him.

VOICE #5 (V.O.)

He lived with the Injuns for four
years... learned how to talk like
'em, track and throw a tomahawk...

VOICE #6 (V.O.)

It was the Apaches burned his
face.

VOICE #7 (V.O.)

Naw, his daddy did it, with a
stove iron, jus' to show how tough
he was.

VOICE #8 (V.O.)

Misser Hex'n be killin' men fasser
'an God kin make 'em.

VOICE #9 (V.O.)

Ah heard Jonah killed a man once
for fartin'.

VOICE #10 (V.O.)

Had an Injun wife and killed her
too.

JONAH rides hard, pushing his horse to the limit...
running from more than just the MILITIA -- from DEMONS,
too.

CUT TO:

EXT. RED HILLS - DAY

JONAH staggers his horse through stony hills cut from red
rock... it's treacherous terrain -- one wrong step could
break its leg -- and they are running on fumes.

JONAH follows along a crick to a pool of fresh water and
almost falls from the saddle to plunge his head into it.
His horse, exhausted and lathered, drinks ravenously.

JONAH brings his face up, breathing hard on his hands and
knees. He notices something reflected in the rippling
surface and looks up to find it:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Across the pool, still and unmoving, like a chameleon against the red rock, is a crouching INDIAN. The INDIAN'S hand is rested on his TOMAHAWK. The two men lock eyes across the water.

JONAH raises an open hand.

JONAH

How.

The INDIAN says nothing; he's like a coiled rattlesnake. The INDIAN brings his own hand up, slowly, in response to JONAH'S -- and flips him the middle finger.

JONAH lets his raised hand drift back, over his right shoulder... the leather handled KNIFE is holstered between his shoulder blades, just visible from under his heavy coat.

JONAH

I ain't looking for a fight,
Tonto.

Now the Indian speaks -- in his native Apache tongue.

APACHE

(subtitled)

<I know who you are, Jonah Hex.>

JONAH answers in respectable Apache.

JONAH

(subtitled)

<Then you know the Apache is no
enemy of mine.>

The APACHE moves his hand from his TOMAHAWK to the water; he takes a drink. When he speaks again, it is in English.

APACHE

The white men that hunt you are
very close now.

JONAH

No shit.

APACHE

I will show you the paths of my
ancestors through these hills.
The white men cannot follow.

JONAH

Thanks, boss, but this white man
ain't much fer followin' neither.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The APACHE just shrugs, shoulders his pack and walks off. JONAH'S HORSE snorts.

JONAH narrows his eyes, glances back the way he came, thinking it over.

JONAH

Fuck it.

He pushes on his hat, grabs the horse's lead and follows the APACHE along the water.

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE - DAY

BLACK. A flint flares, a torch blooms and smokes... JONAH and the APACHE are in an underground cave. JONAH'S horse rears back from the flame in a panic; JONAH wraps a cloth around its head, covering its eyes... after this he is able to lead it by the rope.

JONAH follows the APACHE through the winding tunnel. The firelight dances across APACHE cave paintings... crude, childlike renderings of sex, torture and mass murder.

JONAH

Nice ancestors you got in here.

FADE TO:

INT. CAVE - DAY (LATER)

A shaft of white daylight bounces off the dripping walls. JONAH sees the mouth of the cave ahead -- but no APACHE.

JONAH

Where'd that damned Injun get to?

He leads the horse toward the daylight. The horse is skittish; jerks its head against the rope and stomps.

JONAH

Nah, I don't got a good feelin' neither.

Then -- from behind, a HISSING SOUND. JONAH spins...

The APACHE has doubled back behind them. He's got a LIT STICK OF DYNAMITE in his hand.

JONAH

Well Ah'll be dipped in shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The APACHE tosses the dynamite JONAH'S way and vanishes into the shadows.

JONAH pulls the cloth from his horse's eyes, JAMS THE TORCH INTO ITS BALLS and grabs onto its tail. The horse BLASTS OFF down the cave like a cannon shot with JONAH dragging behind...

CUT TO:

EXT. RED HILLS - CLIFF - DAY

They break daylight as the dynamite blows, lifting them both off their feet and depositing them in the dirt. The mouth of the cave collapses behind them in a heap of dust and rubble.

JONAH tries to get to his feet but his HORSE, pissed off, kicks him in the ass and slams his face back into the dirt.

JONAH

Son of a --

He looks up:

They are surrounded by GOVERNMENT MILITIA, guns primed and leveled. The cave opens to a flat area at the edge of a cliff... there's only one other path out, and it's blocked by SOLDIERS. JONAH is fucked.

JONAH

Guess I get what I deserve,
trustin' that red-skinned bastard.

CUT TO:

EXT. RED HILLS - DAY

The APACHE sits on a rock in the sun, peeling off dollar bills from a roll, whistling "Dixie."

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. RED HILLS - CLIFF - DAY

LIEUTENANT GRASS steps forward.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Jonah Hex.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

Never heard of 'im.

GRASS smirks. He pulls out the WANTED POSTER and compares it to the man in front of him.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

You know, I'd say they did you a favor with this likeness. You're about as ugly a son of a bitch as I ever thought I'd see.

GRASS tilts his head to get a better look.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Where'd you get that scar, anyhow?

JONAH

Goin' down on your sweet old granny.

(beat)

You boys intend to shoot me dead
I'd appreciate you gettin' on with it.

GRASS narrows his eyes, hot with contempt. He turns toward a young, laid back, lanky SOLDIER next to him -- SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN. EVEN shrugs.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Dumb bastard don't even know why we run 'im down.

(turns to JONAH)

Quentin Turnbull.

The name sends a chill down JONAH'S spine; pales him.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

I expect you know the name, given it was your yellow act of treachery that killed his only son.

JONAH

Quentin Turnbull is dead. He put a bullet in his own ear.

CUT TO: *

FLASHBACK - EXT. TURNBULL MANSION - DAY *

A stately Southern plantation mansion. Inside, a single shot is heard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIEUTENANT GRASS (V.O.)

A lot of folks thought so. He wanted 'em to.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. RED HILLS - CLIFF - DAY (PRESENT) *

JONAH'S eyes drift away; he tries to work his head around it: Turnbull is alive??

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Turnbull was a very rich man before the war of the states. Plantation man. Kind of money that kin make a man disappear if he's got a mind to --

JONAH

What the hell is it to me?

LIEUTENANT GRASS

He's back.

JONAH says nothing, just stares him down.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

A man we believe to be Quentin Turnbull surfaced about a month ago with a gang of insurgents, robbed a government armory in Tennessee...

JONAH

Horseshit.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

... then two weeks later blew a locomotive full of munitions off the tracks in Georgia and killed everyone aboard. Made off with a cavalry's worth of weapons. He's up to somethin', no tellin' what...

JONAH

(ice cold)
Sounds like you got a diddle of a problem on yer hands.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

The way we figger, it's your problem, Hex.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH is starting to figure it out.

JONAH

You don't aim to hang me.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

We aim -- in point of fact -- to retain your services, bounty hunter.

JONAH

My puckered cornhole...

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Turnbull has become a genuine threat to the Republic. We want him dead; given your well-told abilities at huntin' and killin' men... not to mention the -- shall we say -- *history* shared by Mr. Turnbull and yourself... the U.S. Government believes that you're the one to do it.

JONAH looks around at the SOLDIERS, guns bearing down on him from all sides, assessing the situation.

JONAH

You want me to kill Quentin Turnbull...

A QUICK FLASH of hellish violence echoes through HEX'S brain -- fire, screaming... and TURNBULL'S face, eyes full of madness, slick with sweat, half obscured in shadow...

TURNBULL

(voice warped,
echoing)

*...you're going to watch me take
something from you...*

★
★

JONAH snaps back.

JONAH

(looks GRASS hard in
the eye)

Well fuck-me-runnin', boys, why the hell didn't you say that to begin with?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Guess we owed you a proper chance
to consider the alternative.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN - OUTSKIRTS - DAY

A long row of dead, fly-ridden bodies, all hanged by
stretched necks, swing in the wind from a line of posts.

Two HILLBILLIES -- ENOS and CLETUS -- are attempting to
rob the bodies; ENOS is on CLETUS' shoulders, trying to
dig into one of the corpse's pockets... but for some
reason they've got themselves turned around: ENOS'
crotch is in CLETUS' face.

ENOS

Hold steady, dog gonnit!

CLETUS

Cain't breathe... get yer damn
wiener out of mu damn pah hole,
Enos!

*

ENOS

Stop squirmin' about so, Cletus!
Yer gonna make me get a bone on!

CLETUS

Do it an ah'll kill yin, ah swear
to shit!!!

CLETUS stumbles back and falls on his ass -- ENOS grabs
on to the CORPSE'S pants to hold himself up. The pants
come down around the dead man's knees, ENOS is hanging
there, legs bicycling.

ENOS

Git up, Cletus!

CLETUS

Ah be God damned.

ENOS

What is it??

CLETUS

Dead man's got a bone on.

ENOS looks up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ENOS

Well a course he do,
y'automatically get one on when
you get hung! Now get me down
off'a here!

CLETUS gets up to help but at that moment the DEAD MAN'S neck stretches and disconnects from his body -- head remaining with the noose. The TWO MEN plus one half naked HEADLESS CORPSE collapse in the mud in a tangled heap.

JONAH

Well ain't that a picture.

CLICK-FLASH: a BLACK AND WHITE DAGUERREOTYPE of the scene.

*

JONAH has come up on them unawares, on horseback. He looks down on them from the saddle.

ENOS

This ain't what it look like,
mister.

JONAH

'Course it ain't.
(spits)
I'm lookin' fer a man called Sugg,
Frederick Sugg. Heard he takes up
in these parts nowadays.

CLETUS points shakily off in the distance. JONAH follows with his eyes -- a distant ESTATE past the edge of town, at the base of wooded hills.

JONAH

Hm.

He starts his horse in that direction.

JONAH

You boys can get on with what you
was doin'.

EXT. SUGG ESTATE - DAY

JONAH rides up to the modest estate. A black man comes out to take his horse, nodding subserviently. JONAH dismounts and hands him the reins.

He walks up to the front porch; a maid lets him in.

INT. SUGG ESTATE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

He is met in the vestibule by PHOEBE SUGG -- 50s. She is what you'd call a handsome woman; something in her manner speaks to breeding and refinement, but life has done her a bad turn.

She walks right up to JONAH with red, ravaged eyes -- she's been crying. JONAH turns his face to hide his scar.

PHOEBE SUGG
The balls you got to show your
face in this house, you
treacherous bastard.

She takes a swing at him; he makes no move to stop her -- doesn't even flinch. She slaps his face hard, turning it to reveal JONAH'S disfigurement.

PHOEBE SUGG gasps, shrinks back, her eyes still on fire with contempt.

PHOEBE SUGG
Shit-smelling devil...

JONAH
Yes, ma'am.

*
*

FREDERICK SUGG (O.S.)
Let him pass, dear.

HEX and the woman both turn -- FREDERICK SUGG is sitting in his parlor, staring out the window.

PHOEBE SUGG
It's Jonah Hex come around...

FREDERICK SUGG
I know who it is. I'd like to
speak to him.

She shoots a last icy look and retreats upstairs; her maid follows.

JONAH enters the parlor, hat off, and takes a seat opposite FREDERICK SUGG. SUGG just continues to gaze out the window at nothing with hollow eyes.

Flies buzz around JONAH'S head.

JONAH
(explaining)
Ain't had a bath with soap in a
spell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FREDERICK SUGG

Can't keep them out this time of
year -- Please, don't apologize.

JONAH

I ain't.

SUGG finally turns to look him over.

FREDERICK SUGG

The years have pissed on you,
Jonah.

JONAH

I come to ask you about Turnbull.

FREDERICK SUGG

Quentin?

JONAH

You was his friend.

FREDERICK SUGG

And his son Jeb was yours.

There is something in JONAH'S eyes that speaks to deep
regret, but he fights it off. He will not show weakness
to this man.

*
*
*

JONAH

Y'kin think what you want about
what happened.

FREDERICK SUGG

We all answer to our own hearts in
the end. I believe in leaving the
past where it lies.

JONAH

Well Turnbull ain't lyin' so good.
Son of a bitch is still alive.

FREDERICK SUGG

Is that so?

JONAH

Thought you might be a some use
illuminatin' on the subject.

SUGG considers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FREDERICK SUGG

The war was a bitter pill to swallow for us old Southern boys... it didn't just take Turnbull's son from him, Hex -- it took everything. His land, his money, his slaves... his power and influence... his place in society.

JONAH

Boo fuckin' hoo.

FREDERICK SUGG

I had my wife, my daughter -- Quentin had nothing. It's easy to see how a man in that position could slip into madness...

JONAH

I just need to know where the hell I kin find him.

SUGG nods, looks him over; he leans forward -- there is something desperate in the old man's eyes.

FREDERICK SUGG

(quietly)

I can point you in the right direction. But there's a bit of business I'd like to discuss with you first.

JONAH swats a fly, squishing its guts.

JONAH

I'm listenin'.

FREDERICK SUGG

The women and girls of this town have been...

(swallows)

... disappearing. Started seven months back. At first it was just coloreds, saloon trash, girls of no importance... but it didn't stop... and then, just three days ago...

SUGG has to stop to compose himself.

JONAH

Ain't you got a sheriff?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FREDERICK SUGG

Bacon. He's no use... keeps
hanging men, but the girls keep
vanishing.

He hands him a picture of a lovely young girl, pale and
refined, with a happy sparkle to her eyes -- ANNALISE.

JONAH

Pretty little piece.

FREDERICK SUGG

She's my daughter.
(choking back
emotion)
Please find her and bring her back
to me, Hex. I'll help you with
what you want.

JONAH thinks it over, studies the picture -- and shoves
it in a pocket.

JONAH

Where's your sheriff stay at when
he ain't sherrifin'?

INT. SHERIFF BACON'S RANCH - CLOSEUP ON SHERIFF'S STAR -
NIGHT

Someone picks a SHERIFF'S STAR up off a wood table.

SHERIFF BACON

*

30s; beard, mutton chops -- is sitting in front of a
large mirror, buck naked. He takes the star and opens
the clasp -- a sharp pin glints gold in the greasy light.

He pokes the pin into the skin above his left nipple and
slides it through till it pops back out; then turns the
clasp, locking the badge in place. A drop of dark blood
makes its way down to his belly.

He turns quickly, sensing eyes on him -- but the window
is empty.

EXT. SHERIFF BACON'S RANCH - NIGHT

JONAH leans back against the wall outside the window, the
light from inside catching the edge of his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

(under his breath)

They don't make lawmen these days
like they used ta.

He backs off the porch and has a look over the place.

The main house is a two-story Victorian that looks like the war tore it a new asshole -- run down, the back porch burned up. A big hay barn sits out back, sloped copper roof white in the moonlight.

There's a light on upstairs in the house; a female silhouette moves past the window curtains. A flickering light from behind the barn door, too. JONAH lights up a rolled smoke, considering his next move...

... as a heavy hand drops on his shoulder.

JONAH spins to face what appears to be one big motherfucker of a ZOMBIE.

The thing is 6'4" and thick; eyes blank, empty, skin a pale shade of green. His forehead is bandaged... half his face is covered in dried black blood and starting to rot. He's wearing overalls, drooling; holding a SHOVEL.

JONAH slams a kick to the ZOMBIE'S balls -- no reaction... except to swing the shovel and connect with the side of JONAH'S head -- KLANG!

JONAH

Damn it!

JONAH pulls out his Bowie knife and buries it in the ZOMBIE'S ribs. The ZOMBIE lets out a long, somehow expressive groan -- not of pain, but as though he's attempting to communicate something. He looks down at the knife handle, then up at JONAH... and swings the shovel again.

JONAH ducks it this time and stumbles backward, toward the barn. The ZOMBIE trudges after him.

JONAH draws his six shooter -- then glances over at the house and thinks better of firing.

No sense making too much noise yet; it doesn't seem like the thing is quick enough to catch him.

Instead, he trots over to the barn, lets himself in...

INT. BACON'S BARN - NIGHT

... and latches the door behind him as the THUD of the ZOMBIE'S weight hits it. He has a look around.

The contents of the barn speak to all manner of unpleasantness. It's part workshop, part torture chamber, part vivisectionist's lab... a table of bloody, rusty tools -- hand drills, hammers, augers; and the kicker: an old spinning wheel with foot treadles to pull flesh, intestines, and muscles into a HUMAN YARN. Quite nifty in fact... a rickety wooden chair with rope to tie the hands and feet and an IRON VICE where the head would be... all lit by flickery oil lamp.

JONAH

Yeah.

He digs into his pocket for the photo of ANNALISE and hunkers down to compare the face to the upside down carcasses on the hooks. The ZOMBIE beats on the door, groaning.

JONAH lights a match to illuminate a CARCASS' face... failing to notice movement in the shadows behind him...

A steel bucket half full of dried cement comes down hard on top of his skull; he collapses to the dirt like a sack of spuds, letting the wrinkled photo drop... we see the girl's smiling face in black and white -- then travel up to the face of JONAH'S assailant: *

They are the same. But ANNALISE is a bit worse for wear -- there's an OOZING HOLE in her forehead and her skin matches the greenish cast of the ZOMBIE'S. She shuffles off toward the door holding the bucket by its handle.

FADE TO BLACK. *

FADE IN:

INT. BACON'S BARN - NIGHT (LATER)

When JONAH comes to he is tied to the operating chair. His head is held in place by the vice; it digs into his temples.

The two ZOMBIES -- ANNALISE and the BIG MAN -- wander around the room aimlessly.

BACON sits down on a stool in front of JONAH. The star is still pinned to his bare chest, but now he has added a pair of wool gloves and black, thigh-high Civil War boots.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACON

Hi, fucker.

JONAH

Howdy.

BACON looks over JONAH'S face, licking his lips.

BACON

Nice scar... where'd you get it?

JONAH

Farted shaving, threw off my aim.
(strains against the
vice)
Appreciate the hospitality,
friend, but this ain't the most
comfortable furniture.

BACON

Oh, don't fret... it won't bother
you long...

BACON runs his hand over the table, selecting a nasty-
looking hand drill. He dips it in oil and wipes it
"clean" with a cloth.

JONAH

Seems like you got quite a
deliberate way of doin' things
around here.

BACON seems to appreciate this.

BACON

I've always believed that trial
and error brings us closer to the
Lord's pre-fection.

BACON dips his thumb in a dish of black ash and draws an
X on JONAH'S forehead.

BACON

Drill too deep, or in the wrong
places, and they'll up and die on
you. But get it just right and
I'll be damned if folks don't do
pretty well whatever you tell 'em
to and don't put on much of a fuss
about it neither.

ZOMBIE runs smack into a wall -- THUMP -- changes
direction and keeps shuffling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

Don't know why I never thunk of it. Say, brother -- you think I might prevail upon you for a slight favor?

BACON

Don't see why not.

JONAH

I'd about kill a man for a lump of chew tobacco right now -- and seein' as how it'll likely be my last...

BACON

My pleasure.

JONAH

Mighty Christian of you. Hip pocket.

BACON reaches in JONAH'S hip pocket and pulls out a tin of tobacco... pinches a wad.

BACON

Hope you wasn't plannin' on bitin' off a finger or two...

He picks up a medieval speculum-type instrument from the table -- rusty pig iron. He uses it to pry open JONAH'S mouth and hold it that way while he stuffs his cheek full of the chaw... then yanks it out.

BACON

Alrighty.

JONAH chews it up.

BACON

Now I ain't gonna lie, fucker...

BACON presses the point of a hand drill into the X on JONAH'S forehead and takes the handle in his fist.

BACON

... this is gonna smart some.

JONAH

Hrrmmm.

BACON lifts the drill away from JONAH'S forehead for a second...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACON

Beg pardon?

... and JONAH spits a glob of the chaw right in BACON'S eyeball. BACON slaps his hand over his eye and collapses on the floor, screaming.

BACON

It burrrrrns!!!! It brrrrrrnnnns!!!

JONAH

That's what the ladies tell me.

The ZOMBIES start to wail and moan at the sound of BACON'S caterwauling.

JONAH gathers his strength and lurches backward, using his weight to tip the chair.

It hits the ground and collapses into pieces. JONAH has the two splintered arms of the chair tied to his wrists with rope -- one piece has a bent, rusty nail sticking out. He scrambles to his feet, shaking his legs free of rope and wood.

JONAH gets to his feet just in time to duck -- the big ZOMBIE swings the shovel, missing the top of JONAH'S head by a spare inch... the SHOVEL smacks ANNALISE in the face, sending her stumbling across the dirt like a top.

BACON wipes JONAH'S tar-black looch from his eye, picks up a meat cleaver, spins around in a rage... and comes face-to-face with JONAH...

... who swings his hand around and punches the splintered end of the chair arm through BACON'S temple! The sharp tip pops out his opposite ear.

JONAH pulls his hand free of the rope, leaving the broken wood in BACON'S head. He turns on the big ZOMBIE.

JONAH swings his other hand; the bent nail lodges in the ZOMBIE'S eye. JONAH pulls his hand free -- the chair arm is lodged in the ZOMBIE'S face, blocking both eyes... The ZOMBIE thrashes around in a dumb, blind rage.

JONAH finds a big burlap sack and pulls it over ANNALISE'S head; cinches up the bottom and slings her over his shoulder like a bag of feed. He grabs an oil lamp off the table, kicks open the barn door...

EXT. BACON'S LOT - DAWN

The sun has broken the red horizon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH comes around the side of the house to the sound of banging on the front door.

ENOS and CLETUS are standing on the front porch; CLETUS has a burlap sack like JONAH'S slung over his shoulder -- it obviously contains a live, gagged human who is wriggling, trying to get out.

ENOS

Got another one for you, Sheriff!
Good one, too...!

CLETUS notices JONAH first; taps ENOS on the shoulder. ENOS turns to face JONAH -- he goes pale. JONAH'S face is pure murder.

ENOS

This ain't what it look like,
mister.

JONAH

'Course it ain't.

CLETUS drops the sack and takes off running. ENOS is right behind him.

JONAH opens the sack. Inside is a young BLACK GIRL, 15, eyes wide with fear.

JONAH

Off you go, girl.

BLACK GIRL

Thanksya, Satan.

She takes off toward the road like a rabbit.

JONAH hears noises from inside the house, looks to the windows... the place is rotten with ZOMBIE GIRLS. Maybe two dozen of them are shambling around inside, trying to get out; scratching at the door and window panes.

JONAH

Yeah.

JONAH slams the oil lamp into the wooden porch. The oil spreads, flaring up...

JONAH drops his head, steps off the deck, then turns back and fires into the windows... HEAD-SHOOTING every last one of them, ending their misery.

*
*
*

JONAH walks away from the house with ANNALISE over his shoulder as the sun rises.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Behind him, the porch is engulfed in flames, which begin to spread up the walls and lick at the roof beams...

EXT. SUGG ESTATE - DAY

JONAH rides up to the estate with the human cargo slung over the back of his horse. The whole family and servants run out to meet him.

JONAH hands the wriggling gunny sack down to the servants, who begin to untie it. MRS. SUGG rushes to the sack and pushes the others back in a panic to see her daughter.

FREDERICK SUGG

You found her.

JONAH

Yup.

FREDERICK SUGG

I didn't dare hope...

The sack opens -- ANNALISE bursts out: green, hands clawing the air, forehead oozing; a ragged, inhuman hiss escaping her lungs, almost a shriek. It's horrible.

MRS. SUGG is hysterical; the servants back away in horror, shock... one of them, a BIG MAN, tries to grab a hold of the girl.

MR. SUGG just stares at his daughter, numb with shock.

JONAH

I'll be shovin' on. Thanks for the assistance, Sugg.

FREDERICK SUGG

Just get out... get out... find Slocum, you'll find Turnbull...

PHOEBE SUGG hears this, goes even more ballistic.

PHOEBE SUGG

I hope you do find Turnbull, Jonah Hex! And when you do...

JONAH half turns.

PHOEBE SUGG

I pray he kills you dead, you bastard!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNALISE breaks free and tries to get at JONAH, hissing and clawing. A VOICE OVER, like the ones earlier -- each with their own take on JONAH'S legend -- plays over ANNALISE'S blood-crazed, zombified madness:

VOICE #1 (V.O.)

Jonah Hex never had much luck with wimmen.

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - DAY

JONAH rides north, following the outline of the sun as it secrets behind dark clouds. The voices continue...

VOICE #2 (V.O.)

Not that they didn't cotton to him. Even with a face like that, it seemed like he had something them ladies needed...

VOICE #3 (V.O.)

It's jus' that anyone that took up with the bastard wuz destined for a bitter end.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARNYARD - DUSK

JONAH is posed in a twisted recreation of the famous *American Gothic* painting, holding a bloody pitchfork. A young, plump BLACK GIRL is standing by his side.

VOICE #4 (V.O.)

He was married once, to a freed negro after the war...

The picture changes: now he is standing in the same pose by a sturdy, peasant-stock CHINESE WOMAN.

VOICE #5 (V.O.)

Naw, it was a slanty, come over to work the railroads...

The picture changes: now it's an INDIAN SQUAW.

VOICE #6 (V.O.)

It was an Arapaho squaw. Everyone knows Jonah Hex kin speak Injun.

EXT. ARAPAHO VILLAGE - DAY

A small Indian settlement in the Rocky Mountains; the pines are laden with snow. Teepees and wood fires are scattered along a mountain stream; skins hung to dry and women working. JONAH, dressed in calfskin but still wearing his worn Confederate lid, is chopping and gathering wood.

VOICE #7 (V.O.)

They lived with her people in the Colorado mountains, never bothered nobody; seemed like Jonah had finally found himself some peace.

He gives a wink toward the INDIAN SQUAW, who smiles modestly; she is simple and pretty.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOWN - DAY

JONAH rides into a small mountain town.

VOICE #7 (V.O.)

One day he rode on down to the nearest civilized town, stock up on supplies for the long winter...

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

JONAH stands at the front counter. Several tables are set up in the room; a half dozen or so local REDNECKS are smoking cheap cigars and knocking back whiskey. JONAH can't help but overhear them.

REDNECK #1

Swear to mah blue, fuzzy balls -- who walks right into my feed lot but Kit Carson hisself, n' with a whole troop a Injun fighters...

REDNECK #2

(in awe)
Shitfire... you tell him 'bout them Arapaho up on Crow Ridge?

REDNECK #1

'Course ah did! Think I want any them red skins come and scalp me in mah sleep?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REDNECK #2

Well, them Arapaho ne'er worried
me none... but all the same I'd
feel a might better knowin' they
was dead.

The whole group shares a hearty laugh... JONAH'S eyes are
wide with rage and realization.

REDNECK #1

Ol' Kit and his boys head on up to
Crow Ridge this mornin', gettin'
set to open a can o' whup ass...

EXT. ROCKY MOUNTAINS - DAY

JONAH rides like hell, his hands, face and calfskin slick
with fresh blood...

VOICE #7 (V.O.)

It didn't go too well for them
fellas. Jonah rode like the Devil
to make it back to the Injuns...
knowin' all the while...

EXT. ARAPAHO VILLAGE - DUSK

The village is a smoking, death-strewn ruin. JONAH holds
the limp body of his SQUAW bride in his arms, shattered.

VOICE #7 (V.O.)

... he was likely too late.

JONAH rears his head back and lets out a bellowing roar;
it's inhuman, like the summoning of an ancient beast...
the sound echoes and reverberates through the snow-packed
mountains...

... which start to rumble. Tiny bits of snow break free
and roll... it's only the beginning:

Massive mountain walls of packed snow begin to shift and
slide loose -- AVALANCHE.

White death thunders down from on high, ripping trees
from their roots... the MOUNTAIN TOWN and every bug-eyed
REDNECK in it is disintegrated, buried...

VOICE #6 (V.O.)

What a load a steamin' horseshit.
None o' that ever happened.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE #6 (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Everyone know it wudn't Kit Carson
 what killed Jonah's Injun wife...
 it was Quentin Turnbull.

JONAH'S head is reared back, facing the heavens, tears streaming, snowflakes melting on his lips...

CUT TO:

INT. UNION OUTPOST BARRACKS - NIGHT

CLOSEUP: a fierce-eyed EAGLE forged of PURE SILVER gleams in the firelight.

WIDEN. It is the ornamental handle of a heavy, dark hickory cane -- the owner: QUENTIN TURNBULL.

TURNBULL stands over a badly burnt UNION SOLDIER -- he has the pointed end of the cane pressed into the SOLDIER'S stomach...

... the SOLDIER gasps and chokes, blood and spittle oozing from black lips.

Behind them, the base is in flames. TURNBULL'S MEN move through the dynamited wreckage, picking off stragglers and sifting through crates.

TURNBULL looks the SOLDIER in the eyes; his face is a mask of pure, sadistic rage. He begins to push the cane into the SOLDIER'S gut -- slowly... it punctures skin and keeps going... it's pure agony -- TURNBULL seems to relish each moment as he impales him.

BURKE -- the DYNAMITE MAN from the train robbery -- and a half dozen more of TURNBULL'S THUGS -- approach TURNBULL; they are dragging a UNION OFFICER through the dirt, hands tied.

BURKE smirks at the freshly dead man at TURNBULL'S feet and spits on him as TURNBULL wipes his cane clean.

TURNBULL
 (ignoring the
 OFFICER)
 Casualties?

BURKE
 We lost one -- the Mongrel...
 never liked him anyway.

TURNBULL nods; finally looks down to acknowledge the OFFICER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL

What's this?

BURKE

Found one with chicken guts on his coat.

He rips the gold embroidered "scrambled eggs" patch off the shoulder of the officer and tosses it.

BURKE

The soldiers' families are quartered on base; three score of 'em. We've got 'em penned up in the powder magazine.

The OFFICER struggles to his feet.

OFFICER

Please... kill me if you must... but let the innocents go.

TURNBULL pulls out his revolver, puts it to the OFFICER'S eye and shoots him dead.

TURNBULL

There are no innocents.

(to BURKE)

Paint a picture for the ones that will find this.

*
*

BURKE grins; he will obviously enjoy this work. TURNBULL looks over the ruined base.

*
*

TURNBULL

Show them what kind of mercy they can expect from Quentin Turnbull.

*
*

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - NIGHT

JONAH rides beneath the full moon. The horse is lathered, breathing heavy; slowed to a walk after the desperate charge of the day.

JONAH lights a smoke and scans the valley below -- the edge of a small city is awash with carny lights... a big canvas tent glows from within, shadows playing.

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

JONAH ties up his horse and approaches the big tent. Rusty barbed wire surrounds the perimeter; he is stopped by a pair of stinking ROUGHNECKS with shotguns.

From inside the tent comes the sound of a motley crowd in full froth.

ROUGHNECK #1

Dollar to git in.

ROUGHNECK #2

And we'll need to check your six-guns, Misser.

JONAH takes it with a snarl. He flips the boy a gold dollar coin, loosens his gun belt and hands it over. ROUGHNECK #2 takes it and strolls over to a pre-fab shack to stow it. An OLD CHINESE GUY inside takes the belt and shoves it onto a shelf with a bunch of others.

ROUGHNECK #1 steps aside to let JONAH pass.

JONAH takes a flight of rickety stairs up the side of the big tent, pulls aside door flaps and enters...

INT. TENT - NIGHT

... what looks to be a makeshift GLADIATOR RING.

The house is packed with the grungiest assortment of bloodthirsty gamblers imaginable, waving money and raising holy hell. The bench seating overlooks a round fighting area, dirt ground covered in blood-caked sawdust... the whole structure seems to groan, sag and tilt with the weight of the leaning spectators -- the rickety piece of shit could collapse any minute by the looks of it.

Inside the ring two COCKS are going at it, ripping out bloody clumps of feathers.

JONAH scans the crowd, finds who he's looking for:

Across the way, an un-miss-able obese man -- 42 but looks 15 years older; beard, thick mustache, mutton chops -- leans back, holding court... he wears the hat of a Confederate officer and a sabre at his side -- COLONEL ROYAL SLOCUM.

SLOCUM is missing his right leg from the knees down; he wears a wood peg.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLOCUM makes eye contact with JONAH from across the tent -- narrows his eyes... can it really be? He freezes, swallows heavily. *

JONAH shoves his way through the crowd, making no friends, and sits his ass down next to SLOCUM.

COLONEL SLOCUM

(smoldering)

Well barbeque mah ass if it ain't
Jonah Hex showin' his pretty face.

JONAH

Slocum. Been a long time.

COLONEL SLOCUM

Not long enuff for fergettin'.

JONAH

I ain't here to raise the dead.

The cock fight concludes -- wranglers chase the blood-soaked winner around the sawdust while a ringleader holds up the dead carcass of the loser. A cacophony of cheers and catcalls as money changes hands.

The next contest begins, upping the ante: a muzzled GREY WOLF is led out, chained to the end of a pole.

Then, from the other side of the ring -- what has to be the ugliest DOG in history. Its mongrel breed is indeterminate -- some sort of mangy, flea-bitten, protean pit bull before there was such a thing... its face is scarred from a hundred bloody battles. It immediately lifts its haunch and takes a steaming piss in the sawdust.

The GREY WOLF starts to go crazy with blood lust, straining to break free of the wrangler. UGLY DOG just plays it cool, snarling with a sort of canine contempt -- it clearly doesn't give a fuck.

SLOCUM throws down his bet on the dog fight, refusing to look at JONAH straight on.

COLONEL SLOCUM

I surmise you come to pull a
bounty on me, Jonah.

(with contempt)

That's your line of work now,
ain't it? Huntin' down men the so-
called law can't reach?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

I reckon there's some fellas up north that would pay to see you hung, Colonel. But they ain't paid me fer it. And I ain't never had no quarrel with you.

Now SLOCUM turns to look JONAH in the eye.

COLONEL SLOCUM

Damn it, Hex.

His eyes brim with emotion buried in bitterness.

COLONEL SLOCUM

With ten like you we could've turned the tide... brought Grant to his knees.

JONAH just grunts; now it's his turn to avoid eye contact.

JONAH

Ain't much for coulda beens.

SLOCUM shakes his head, lets it go... he turns his attention back to the ring, where the DOG is ripping the WOLF a new asshole.

JONAH

I'm lookin' for Turnbull.

SLOCUM freezes.

COLONEL SLOCUM

Turnbull? Turnbull's dead.

JONAH

We both know he never put no bullet in 'is ear.

SLOCUM considers lying, but a sidelong glance at JONAH lets him know he means business.

COLONEL SLOCUM

Maybe not... but I ain't seen the bastard in a holy spell.

JONAH

Seems to me the two of yuh disappeared round the same time.

COLONEL SLOCUM

Way the war ended up didn't sit well with some folks.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL SLOCUM (CONT'D)

Turnbull more so than most. He was able to keep a good bit of his money out of the hands of them Union sumbitches that would'a looted it. He took it and laid low.

JONAH

Where at?

COLONEL SLOCUM

No place for long. Went on what you might call a recruitin' mission... roundin' up fellas -- like myself -- with a bad taste in us, still loyal to the Republic... New Orleans, Kentucky... Texas, Tennessee... wherever men held a grudge, Turnbull was there to help it along. We had us some grand designs, Jonah. I don't deny it.

*

The "ringleader" of the event is a bizarre character -- "DOC" CROSS WILLIAMS -- short, squat; white hair, pointy ears, round glasses; face partially obscured by a scarf crudely embroidered with moons and stars. He holds up the limp carcass of the GREY WOLF; the UGLY DOG backs up against the wall, snarling and snapping -- WRANGLERS closing in.

JONAH

Why'd you part ways?

COLONEL SLOCUM

Bitterness can do things to a man, Jonah... rend his soul surely as a bullet rends his flesh. Turn a man of honor into a Godless devil.

(smirks)

Guess you'd know something about that.

The WRANGLERS clear away bloody sawdust and dogshit... enough under card; it's time for the headliner.

"DOC" WILLIAMS steps out and addresses the rabid crowd.

DOC CROSS WILLIAMS

This is what you been waitin' for, you degenerate bastards!

The door to the ring slides open. The crowd lets out a collective gasp:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A CREATURE is led into the ring... hands and feet manacled, with a leather collar around its neck. It is clearly a young, emaciated human; the victim of bizarre birth defects and perhaps human intervention: feral, bald, in fact hairless from head to toe... the skull a spiderweb of blue veins... the eyes are blood red... teeth and nails filed razor sharp.

The thing knuckle-shambles around the ring, shrieking like a berserk chimpanzee.

DOC CROSS WILLIAMS

What is it? Man? Demon from the
netherworld? Or some cursed
offspring from the blas-feemus
union of human and beast?

JONAH grimaces; disgust masking a stab of pity. SLOCUM continues his recounting as both men watch the spectacle in the ring unfold.

COLONEL SLOCUM

Got to where Turnbull couldn't
sort between the guilty and the
innocent... he talked us all into
a lather 'bout refightin' the
war... but I could see there
wudn't nothin' behind it but a
lust to murder... to make the
world pay for the pain inside him.
I couldn't be a party to it.

*
*

JONAH

'Spouse we all got a line we won't
cross.

COLONEL SLOCUM

Maybe you got a line and maybe you
ain't. I drew mine in
Resurrection City better part of
six months back. That's the last
time I seen Quentin Turnbull.

JONAH

Resurrection City... reckon that's
my next stop.

COLONEL SLOCUM

I reckon it ain't.

JONAH

Beg yer pardon, Colonel?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL SLOCUM

Turnbull might not know the guilty
from the innocent -- but I do.

(turns to look him in
the eye)

You as guilty as Beezlebub
hissself, Jonah Hex. And I shore
as shit mean to see you pay for
it.

With that SLOCUM nods to one of his GUARDS and they
immediately grab JONAH by the lapel and -- before he can
react -- THROW HIM OVER THE SIDE RAIL, INTO THE RING.
JONAH does a complete ass-over and lands hard on his back
in the sawdust, wind knocked clean out of him.

The CROWD goes nuts, hanging over the rails. The
WRANGLERS retreat from the side door in the ring's
plywood walls, wrenching it shut behind them; the walls
groan, creak, warp with the weight of the spectators,
making a tight seal impossible.

JONAH shakes the sawdust out of his ears and scrambles to
his knees. The CREATURE is circling him, hissing through
razor teeth and flicking its oily tongue. JONAH reaches
for his guns -- then remembers he checked them at the
gate.

JONAH

Lovely.

The CREATURE springs at him.

JONAH whips the Bowie knife out from behind his neck and
throws it; the blade whistles through the air. His aim
is true but the thing is too fast: it zigs to the side,
dodging the blade -- which plants two inches deep into
the plywood wall.

The CREATURE keeps coming... it slams into JONAH,
knocking him off his feet, and comes down on top of him;
all claws and teeth, ripping into him in search of a
vein.

JONAH catches the thing with a boot to the scrawny chest
and kicks it across the ring. The CROWD erupts... more
money changes hands. SLOCUM is on his feet, glowering
down at JONAH like the judge and jury.

The CREATURE is on JONAH again in a heartbeat. JONAH
claps a hand over its throat, holding back the snapping
piranha teeth. The CREATURE is stronger than it looks
and incredibly fast -- it's all JONAH can do to keep it
from eating part of his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The CROWD is screaming for blood.

COLONEL SLOCUM

So long, Hex! We can settle this
score in hell someday!

JONAH

That'll suit me fine.

He somehow gets two hands on the wriggling thing, lifts it into the air, and -- with an adrenaline charged surge of strength -- throws it straight at SLOCUM and out of the ring!

The last sight SLOCUM sees is the horrible, slippery teeth of the CREATURE as it flies toward him.

The CREATURE lands on SLOCUM and goes berserk -- he tears out SLOCUM'S jugular with his teeth before anyone can react.

The CROWD collapses into chaos; it's like someone dropped a rabid wolverine into a puppy kennel. People are running everywhere in total panic.

JONAH gives the loose side door a kick and knocks it in, off its hinges... pulls his knife out of the wall and ducks through the doorway.

The walls groan; splinter... and finally collapse, spilling the CROWD out onto the sawdust.

EXT. TENT - OUT BACK - NIGHT (LATER)

JONAH exits out a tunnel to the back. CARNIE wagons, carts and cages are staged and scattered.

The three WRANGLERS from the ring have got the UGLY DOG backed up against a wood fence, keeping it at bay with long sticks, trying to force it into an iron cage. The dog is snapping and growling, back arched, ready to die.

At the sound of the commotion inside the WRANGLERS turn to look, shifting their attention away from the dog -- and see JONAH HEX striding their direction, holding the big Bowie knife. They drop their guard and instinctively brandish their prodding sticks toward JONAH, threatening him.

JONAH SNAPS one of the WRANGLER'S sticks in half and foot-sweeps him to the dirt. The DOG watches JONAH.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

(to dog)

They're jus' jealous of yer good looks, boy.

The two other WRANGLERS come at JONAH... big mistake. The DOG takes the opportunity to leap up and bite into the side of one of the WRANGLER'S face, latching on. The man collapses to the ground, writhing, as the dog rips into him.

JONAH walks off.

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

JONAH walks up to the GUN CHECK shack, holstering the Bowie knife behind his neck.

JONAH

I'll have my six guns back, chop chop.

The OLD CHINESE GUY eyes him with suspicion as he lays JONAH'S gunbelt on the counter.

OLD CHINESE GUY

You leavin' early, man.

JONAH gestures to the tent entrance, which is spilling over with blood-splattered people climbing over one another to get out.

JONAH

Beatin' the rush.

He takes his guns and straps them on.

From behind him two voices come shouting -- it's the ROUGHNECKS that took his admission. They are running at him with drawn RIFLES.

ROUGHNECK #2

Venilate that sumbitch!

*

The Roughnecks cock their rifles and take a bead on JONAH.

*

*

JONAH draws both guns and fires them simultaneously; both shots connect: the two ROUGHNECKS now have matching silver dollar-sized holes in their chests. They are blown out of their boots and land face-up in the mud.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH spins around toward the GUN CHECK shack -- the OLD CHINESE GUY is holding up a Winchester rifle with trembling fingers. He drops it and puts up his hands, terrified.

JONAH

Knew you Chinamen was smart.

OLD CHINESE GUY'S POV

We see that SUPERIMPOSED OVER JONAH'S face, like a ghostly alter ego... a red, sweating Chinese DEMON.

VOICE #1 (V.O.)

He ain't human, I tell ya.

VOICE #2 (V.O.)

Like hell. He's flesh and blood
as you and me.

MONTAGE - EXT. APACHE BURIAL GROUNDS - NIGHT

Of obscure, dreamlike imagery: JONAH is tied to a flaming stake, writhing as he burns... a white-hot tomahawk moves through the dark... presses into flesh -- smoking, searing...

VOICE #1 (V.O.)

After the Injuns scorched his face
they buried 'im on cursed ground
... buried 'im alive...

The APACHES ride off across scorched, God-forsaken terrain as the sun sets blood-red over a crude dirt mound... the CAMERA SINKS BELOW the earth crust...

... THROUGH cold dirt, white roots and crawling insects: JONAH'S eyes, burning with malice...

VOICE #1 (V.O.)

For forty days and forty nights he
laid in the earth, food for the
bugs and the squiggles. Then one
day a prospector come along...

An old PROSPECTOR, scraggly white beard, wearing long johns with a half closed poop chute, ambles along -- pack slung over his shoulder, poking into the earth with a dinged-up, rusty spade -- silhouetted in the moonlight.

EXT. OPEN RANGE - CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

THREE OUTLAWS -- the STORYTELLER, a SKEPTIC and a DUMBASS -- are sitting around a campfire at night. The STORYTELLER is shirtless, sweating and shivering.

SKEPTIC OUTLAW

How you said you know 'bout all this?

STORYTELLER

Cuz the old fucker told me with his own mouth what he seen...

EXT. APACHE BURIAL GROUNDS - NIGHT

We SWITCH TO the PROSPECTOR'S narration when the CAMERA is ON him.

PROSPECTOR (V.O.)

Make me a good penny in them spots
... the Injuns don't go there much
to bother y'ns on account a
superstition. But I ain' seen
none super 'bout it, so I dig up
what they bury.

The PROSPECTOR rubs his scabby jaw, grimacing. A high-pitched whistle bounces around inside his skull. He sinks the spade into the dirt.

PROSPECTOR (V.O.)

Gotta trick tooth, tell me when
gold is near... I started diggin'
... n' that's when I found Jonah
Hex.

The PROSPECTOR is on his hands and knees, greedily clawing at the dirt with his hands; he brushes away a layer of earth to reveal JONAH'S dead face -- blue, putrid... roots are growing into his ears and nostrils and bugs crawl in and out, excavating.

PROSPECTOR (V.O.)

Knew there was gold in thar
somewhere... M'trick tooth ain't
never wrong.

The PROSPECTOR is digging a gold tooth out of the back of JONAH'S mouth with a pair of pliers... putting his back into it, twisting with all his might -- when JONAH'S eyes SNAP OPEN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH rises up out of the ground, ripping the roots out of his skull, spitting out dirt and bugs.

The PROSPECTOR is literally scared shitless... he stumbles away, tripping and scrambling, SHIT NUGGETS falling out the back of his poop chute.

PROSPECTOR (V.O.)

Scared the crabapples right out'er
muh bunghole.

EXT. OPEN RANGE - CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

The firelight flickers eerily.

STORYTELLER

Ever since that day Jonah Hex walk
with one foot in this here world,
one in the next.

DUMBASS OUTLAW

That how he musta got his
preternatural powers...

SKEPTIC OUTLAW

Ain't no one got preternatural
powers.

STORYTELLER

He can see in the dark. And he
can track any man, matter how cold
the trail, by conferrin' with the
ghosts of dead men.

DUMBASS OUTLAW

(voice shaking)
K... kin he really do that?

Just then: JONAH strides in from out of the pitch dark night and into the light of the OUTLAWS' fire, leading his horse by a length of rope.

JONAH

Shore I can. You boys sharin'
that whiskey?

The three OUTLAWS' eyes nearly pop out of their heads. They get the hell out of there, leaving their earthly possessions behind.

JONAH shrugs, has a seat by the fire; rights the whiskey jug that had half-tipped into the mud.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

More fer me.

He sniffs the mouth of the fly-molested jug... puts his head back and takes a long, deep hit...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LUSK MANSION - NIGHT

... an empty crystal tumbler comes down onto a deep mahogany tabletop -- clink.

CLOSEUP - THE DRINKER

wets his lips, savoring the nuance of flavor...

BACK TO SCENE

Opposite, ADLEMAN LUSK -- late 40s, immaculately groomed, early metrosexual -- swallows nervously and attempts an eager-to-please smile.

LUSK

Over two hundred year-old single malt... scarce as hen's teeth.

QUENTIN TURNBULL sits across from LUSK in a lavishly appointed study. He's like a dead planet; staring right through LUSK'S eyeballs to his squirming soul.

LUSK

You... seem a man who appreciates the, er... finer things...

TURNBULL

Do I?

(beat)

I wonder if you understand what kind of a man I am, Mr. Lusk.

LUSK says nothing. He looks like he'd be happy to crawl out of his skin.

TURNBULL has a look around the room.

TURNBULL

Quite an agreeable lifestyle you've earned for yourself since the great conflict.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUSK

I've been... quite fortunate with
my investments --

TURNBULL

No doubt. The war has been very
kind to men like you, Lusk.
Greedy little carrion birds...

LUSK

(shaking his head)
I don't...

TURNBULL

I wonder how they taste -- those
sweet putrescent morsels from the
corpus delecti of our fallen
brothers in arms...

LUSK is sweating, flustered.

LUSK

I'm merely a businessman, Mr.
Turnbull... not unlike yourself...

TURNBULL cuts him short.

TURNBULL

(conversational)
You're very much unlike me, little
carrion bird. Ever again compare
the two... I might be inclined to
take offense.

LUSK

(quietly)
I apologize.

TURNBULL

Of course you do.
(beat)
Alright, *businessman*... let's talk
business, shall we?

LUSK nods quickly.

TURNBULL

There are men of principle and
high ideals in Washington, D.C...
uncorruptible men... men who stand
for something other than their own
white asses.

*

TURNBULL pours another shot from the crystal decanter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL

You represent the *other kind*,
Lusk. The ones that hand out
lucrative weapons contracts in
back rooms over a fine cigar and a
discreet transfer of funds...
playing both sides of the game
while good men die and scream in
the mud.

(beat)

I have a message for them -- those
fine, fatted paragons of
democracy:

(leans back)

They work for *me* now.

LUSK swallows thickly, his face is like spoiled cheese.

TURNBULL

The war isn't over, Lusk. It
never ended. Our side is getting
stronger every day. And when I
come to call at last there will
only be those who were with me,
and those who stood against.

TURNBULL'S rage is palpable; LUSK squirms.

LUSK

I'm afraid I...

Without warning TURNBULL takes the edge of the heavy
mahogany table and flips it onto its side as if it were
light as a chessboard -- glass shatters; everything that
was on the table slides onto the hard floor. LUSK jumps
back in his chair, terrified.

TURNBULL comes forward, bringing up the head of his
cane... he jams the sharp point of the silver eagle top --
the curved beak -- into the soft flesh of LUSK'S neck,
pressing hard enough to choke without breaking the skin.

TURNBULL

The hour is approaching, little
carrion bird. The streets will
run like rivers. Make no mistake:
this accounting will be settled in
blood... Not just theirs -- but
their women, their children. It's
a horrible thing to watch the ones
closest to you pulled limb from
limb.

TURNBULL twists the cane. LUSK struggles for breath in
agony, his legs like rubber.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL

I will expect nothing less than
absolute capitulation.

(beat)

You'll deliver the message.

*
*
*
*

LUSK nods: begins to piss his pants... the trickle hits
the floor and puddles...

*

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN RANGE - MORNING

A light, dirty rain begins to patter on JONAH'S back, his
lifeless hand...

JONAH is face-down in the mud, the jug of whiskey empty
at the tip of his fingers, snoring like a chainsaw.
Flies buzz and light off his pitiful carcass as the drops
hit.

The three OUTLAWS, having snuck back by the pale light of
morning, are gathered around him. DUMBASS OUTLAW has a
long-nosed revolver pointed at the back of JONAH'S head;
the others hang a few steps back, cautious.

STORYTELLER

Do it. We got the jump on 'im.

SKEPTIC OUTLAW

Five hundred dollars, split three
ways.

STORYTELLER

That's *two hundred dollars each*.

SKEPTIC OUTLAW

A diff'ernt whore every day for a
month.

STORYTELLER

Two months if they ain't got all
their parts.

DUMBASS OUTLAW

(sorely tempted)

Don't seem right, though, shootin'
a man in his back like this...
when he ain't even awake...

SKEPTIC OUTLAW

You want him to wake up?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUMBASS OUTLAW

(eyes wide)

No, I surely don't want that.

He levels the gun.

STORYTELLER

(prodding him))

Go on.

Then -- from behind the three men: growling.

The OUTLAWS turn. The UGLY DOG from the GLADIATOR RING is advancing on them, half-covered in rain mud, baring sharp teeth.

SKEPTIC OUTLAW

What in the hell?

The DOG springs on them. DUMBASS is nowhere close to reacting in time -- the DOG goes straight for his balls like a bottle rocket and LATCHES ON.

DUMBASS screams; the gun goes off randomly, hitting SKEPTIC OUTLAW in his balls. Blood explodes.

JONAH'S head comes up from the mud, one eye open, all the commotion having woke him up.

He looks over and quickly sizes up the situation: two guys with blood crotch -- one has a DOG clamped on his privates in a vice grip, ripping into him; a third man, the STORYTELLER, seems to detect a pattern in all this -- he claps his hands over his package and starts to run away.

JONAH

Fuck me.

JONAH pulls out his gun, still slurred and groggy from the whiskey, takes a double-visioned bead on the fleeing man and shoots him in the ass. The slug passes through and out the front... ouch.

JONAH pulls himself to his feet, shaking out the cobwebs.

The UGLY DOG rips a hunk of meat free from DUMBASS and backs away, chewing the shit out of it... all three men are writhing, crawling, screaming in the mud, each holding on to their dripping, mangled genitals.

JONAH narrows his eyes to get a better look at the dog.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

Be pig stuck if it ain't that old
carny dog.

(to the DOG)

Come 'ere, dog.

The DOG trots over amiably, snout smeared with gore; it
sniffs JONAH'S leg, then rubs its head against him.

JONAH

God damn dog's prettier than I am.

He reaches down and scratches the beast's bristly back,
ignoring the wailing men; the DOG drool-growls
appreciatively.

JONAH

Looks like you done me a good
turn, dog. I'd give you somethin'
to chew
on -- but it seems ya already got
yerself a mouthful.

*

The torn-up hunk of flesh in front of the DOG is
unrecognizable to look at -- but not much doubt as to
what it is/was.

JONAH slings a pack of gear over his HORSE'S hind
quarters, pulls the saddle tight and climbs on.

JONAH

Thanks for sharin', boys.

He rides away. The DOG looks towards the groaning men,
farts; lifts his leg and pisses... then picks up the hunk
of meat with his teeth and trots after JONAH'S HORSE, six
feet back.

CUT TO:

INT. LEILA'S ROOM - DAY

An OLD MAN leaves money on LEILA'S bed, then
apologetically exits the room, leaving the door slightly
ajar. She ignores him.

Sitting on a parlor stool, she looks hard into the
mirror, fixing her corset... catches herself leaking a
stray tear and stubbornly wipes it away.

Her hand rests on the desk drawer's handle. She slowly
opens the drawer and we see a pistol... she touches it,
running her finger along the trigger... then opens the
drawer more and we see rolls of cash.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEILA looks past her face into the mirror -- behind her, in the corner of the room -- a suitcase.

OLEAN (O.S.)
(whispering)
Leila?

LEILA turns; OLEAN, a chubby whore, peeks into the room.

OLEAN
You wanted to know when ol' Jack
Straw was gone to town... well, he
done gone.

LEILA
Thank you, sweetheart.

OLEAN
(scared of her own
sizable shadow)
Why you wanna know when ol' Jack
Straw gone to town, Leila? Y'ain'
goin' nowhere's is ya? Ol' Jack
Straw be awful sore if he knew you
was planning on goin' nowhere.

She peeks around the door, sees the suitcase.

OLEAN
I *knew* you was set to git
somewhere. Ol' Jack Straw be
awful sore...

LEILA gets up and meets her at the door; she places a
finger gently over OLEAN'S lips.

LEILA
Shhh.

OLEAN calms down.

LEILA
Ain't nothin' holdin' us to this
place, Olean.

OLEAN
But, Leila -- ain't nothin' for us
in the city, that's what Jack
Straw say, nothin' but trouble...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEILA

Well, mebbe not.

(beat)

All the same... might be nice,
just -- you know, to be the new
girl for a change.

(beat)

You be a good little thing and git
on now.

OLEAN nods obediently and tip-toes down the hall.

LEILA goes to the window. The pale sun is warm on her
face.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESURRECTION CITY - DAY

A remote mining town.

VOICE (V.O.)

Resurrection City.

CLOSEUP - FINGERS

pinch a wad of tobacco from a tin -- we FOLLOW the wad UP
TO sun-cracked lips...

Sideburns, tattoos... it's BURKE. He shoves the tobacco
wad under his lip and scans his surroundings:

WIDER

RESURRECTION CITY has seen better days -- the COPPER MINE
that was the town's reason for being has been quiet for
years; an air of desperation hangs over the overcast,
sparsely populated main street. *

BURKE sneers and walks.

A pair of scarred-up WHORES are taking a break on a
veranda, smoking hand-rolled cigarettes -- at the sight
of BURKE they go pale and hurry back inside. He tips his
hat to them sarcastically...

... and almost trips over a KID who didn't see him
coming.

The BOY is maybe 13 with a scraggly mullet, dirty face
and one arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BURKE

The fuck out of my way, runt.

He kicks the BOY in the ass, sending him stumbling, then follows up by spitting a hawk of chew at him... the yellow/brown glob smacks the BOY'S ear.

The BOY turns, eyes slits of murder, but does nothing... BURKE'S fingers tickle the handle of his six gun; he smirks without humor.

A trickling sound distracts him. He turns to see JONAH'S DOG looking straight at him from across the dirt road... the DOG has his leg up, as usual -- he is pissing on a horse's leg.

The DOG growls at BURKE, instinctively.

BURKE gives the filthy thing a sneer of disgust, wipes his lips with a sleeve and proceeds on his way. He never notices JONAH, who is tying his horse up to a post outside the local SALOON just a few feet away.

JONAH watches BURKE go, taking his measure...

The DOG does the same; JONAH and the DOG are like twins. But something in the DOG'S peripheral distracts him -- he looks over to see a mud-covered PIG tied to a water trough.

JONAH walks into the saloon.

INT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS ACTION - DAY

JONAH has a look around. An assortment of dark, shifty characters populate the place... a few spent, butt-ugly HOOKERS eyeing him without much hope... a five-handed poker game going bad.

He walks up to the bar, keeping his face turned and the brim of his hat pulled down to keep attention off his scar. The BARTENDER only spares him a brief scan.

JONAH

Whiskey.

It comes in a yellowed shotglass.

JONAH

Hair a th'dog.

He knocks it back slow -- like a dying man, letting the rotgut burn his tongue and throat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARKEEP

Been ridin' all day, mister?

JONAH ignores the question.

JONAH

Gimme another.

The BARKEEP takes the glass and pours, avoiding eye contact, JONAH looks him over.

JONAH

Colonel Royal Slocum said I might find what I'm looking for in this town.

The BARKEEP'S hand freezes; he spills whiskey on the bar. JONAH takes notice.

JONAH

Looks like he was right.

The BARKEEP steals a glance at JONAH -- notices the other half of JONAH's face -- then averts his eyes.

BARKEEP

(quietly)

That's a hell of a scar, mister.

JONAH

Too much sweets make my face break out.

The BARKEEP glances up and behind JONAH, then hurries away. JONAH, suddenly aware the room has gotten silent, slowly turns.

Everyone in the place is looking at him.

The tension is palpable; JONAH seems at ease killing the lot of them, should it come to it. Finally one of the HOOKERS breaks the silence.

HOOKER

You come to the wrong town, Jim Dandy.

A fly-bitten MOTHERFUCKER standing to her left backhands her in the mouth, sending her to the ground with a busted lip. He glares at her, then back at JONAH.

MOTHERFUCKER

It's like she said.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH
(getting the picture)
Yeah.

He drops a few coins on the bar, takes a last cynical look around the room -- and walks out.

EXT. RESURRECTION CITY - CONTINUOUS ACTION - DAY

JONAH hits daylight and heads for his horse... the DOG, meanwhile, has taken up humping the PIG; an old FARMER is trying to beat him off the pig with his hat.

Across the road JONAH notices the ONE-ARMED BOY that BURKE spit on; the boy is standing in a space between two structures, partially hidden, staring at him.

The boy gestures for him to come over with one hand. JONAH glances around for anyone watching; decides to walk over and see what he wants.

The boy backs into the alley; JONAH follows.

ONE-ARMED BOY
You Jonah Hex, ain't you?

JONAH
What's left of 'im.

ONE-ARMED BOY
Mah momma's a whore.

JONAH
(getting it)
Shore she provides for you best
she can... but I ain't inner'sted
in any ass today, boy.

JONAH starts to leave.

ONE-ARMED BOY
They say you done killed about as
many men as there are days in a
year.
(beat; as JONAH
ignores this)
Wul ah need you to kill *some more*.

JONAH stops, turns. This is interesting.

ONE-ARMED BOY
I kin pay you.

He holds out a crumpled wad of bills and coins.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ONE-ARMED BOY

Four dollars and seven seven
cents.

JONAH hunkers down in front of the boy, searching his face. He gently pushes the boy's fist full of dollars back down to his side.

JONAH

Someone been beatin' on yer mama,
boy?

ONE-ARMED BOY

(nods)

Bunch a fuckers come to town a
spell ago. Do bad stuff to all
the girls. Burn 'em with lye
where you cain't see it, in their
delicates.

JONAH

You know why they come here?

ONE-ARMED BOY

Nobody know. They up workin' that
old copper mine, but that mine
ain't had no copper innit since ah
was six.

The boy points it out -- from where they are the entrance to the abandoned mine is just visible, cut into the sandy rock hills a ways out from the edge of town. JONAH narrows his eyes.

FADE TO:

EXT. RESURRECTION COPPER MINE - NIGHT

A small shack is built up outside the entrance to the mine, which is barricaded and barbed wired. An oil lamp lights the interior of the shack; the mine shaft is dark.

Coffee cooks in an iron pot over an open flame out front. TAR BILLY, a big black dude -- 6'6", 250, chiseled -- comes out the front of the shack with a nasty-looking rifle over one shoulder. The firelight dances on his arms -- dude is cut.

(NOTE: We may recognize him as one of TURNBULL'S men from the train robbery.)

He tries to pick up the coffee pot, burns his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAR BILLY

Smelly cunt...!

He unzips, whips out Billy Jr. and relieves himself on the side of the pot and fire; smoke and steam hisses. He's got a big grin on his grill.

From inside the shack:

WADE (O.S.)

That coffee up yet?

TAR BILLY

Is up, man.

TAR BILLY shakes it off, puts it away, and takes the pot up the rickety steps to the shack. He stops in the doorway.

WADE is sitting on a chair, unmoving... he is staring straight at TAR BILLY -- but there's nothing in the eyes.

The handle of JONAH HEX'S Bowie knife is sticking out the top of WADE'S cowboy hat.

TAR BILLY

Woah...

JONAH rips the rifle off of TAR BILLY'S shoulder from behind, brings it down around his throat with both fists and yanks him off the stairs. He uses the gun to drag TAR BILLY across the dirt by the neck, near strangling him.

JONAH

(quietly)

Where's Turnbull?

TAR BILLY isn't having it. He backhands the rifle out of JONAH'S hands and kicks JONAH in the nuts, doubling him over... TAR BILLY struggles to his hands and knees.

JONAH picks up the iron coffee pot and dashes the boiling contents into TAR BILLY'S face, blinding him... then uses it as a club to beat the man's head into the ground -- CRUNCH! CRUNCH! CRUNCH!

JONAH drops to his knees next to TAR BILLY, tossing the pot aside.

JONAH

I said -- !

But TAR BILLY isn't moving. JONAH tests dude's head with a finger poke -- squishy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

Oops.

He looks over to the mine entrance.

CUT TO:

INT. RESURRECTION COPPER MINE - NIGHT

JONAH makes his way down the mine shaft, the oil lamp from the shack in his hand. Up ahead he sees a dim, flickering light.

The shaft opens into a blown open, excavated staging area. Abandoned wood scaffolding gathers dust along the walls, and more oil lamps are hung up on nails here and there, casting twisted shadows...

The mine has been converted to a massive WEAPONS STOCKPILE... Rifles, pistols, mounds of cannon shot.. pine crates piled high, stamped for various military departments -- some broken open to reveal freshly manufactured guns, ammo, packs of red dynamite...

JONAH

Yeah.

JONAH makes his way down into the thick of it. He puts down the oil lamp, slides the lid of a crate aside and picks a shiny silver Winchester repeater off the top. He slides his fingers over the barrel, admiring it; reaches to cock back the hammer...

CH-CLICK.

It's the sound of a rifle being cocked alright, echoing down the mine tunnels... only JONAH never cocked the rifle.

JONAH

Fuck me.

He spins, too late: BURKE is about fifteen feet away with a shotgun pointed at JONAH'S chest.

BOOM!

JONAH is blown off his feet and into a stack of crates, sending it crashing down. He scrambles for cover as BURKE tosses aside the shotgun and grabs another.

BURKE

Bloody Jonah Hex. I'd know that pie hole anywhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH'S chest is sopping with blood -- THIS IS SERIOUS.

Two more GUARDS pop out from a shaft in the mine.

BURKE

We got ourselves some target
practice, gents.

JONAH is dizzy with blood loss, legs like rubber. He takes a shot at BURKE. It's off, but hits a crate of Gatling shells... one shell ignites, starting a chain reaction...

Bands of shells writhe around like crazy snakes, exploding in all directions. One GUARD aims for JONAH...

BURKE

Come on then, shoot 'im!!!

BOOOSSHHH!! A BIG HOLE is blown clear through the GUARD's stomach. He flops dead on his back, bloody hole still smoking.

JONAH

(to Burke)
Doesn't look like he got much of a
stomach fer it.

BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, TATATATAT TAT TAT... BURKE leaps for cover. JONAH lines up the other GUARD, but before he shoots, the GUARD'S NECK EXPLODES from a shell.

BURKE spots JONAH stumbling toward the shaft entrance and levels the shotgun at him.

BOOM -- a crate next to JONAH'S head disintegrates.

JONAH spins, pops off a wild shot... it ricochets off the rock wall and hits a dynamite crate -- BURKE'S eyes go wide...

Nothing. Whew.

JONAH stumbles up rickety steps and toward the mouth of the mine. BURKE climbs up behind him, loading his shotgun, patient. He has him.

BURKE

I'm going to bring Turnbull your
balls in a snuff box.

JONAH turns to shoot, but he has no legs -- and no bullets. He collapses, pulling the trigger on an empty chamber... CLICK-THUNK. JONAH looks desperately at the cases of ammo a few yards away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BURKE

Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink.

He levels the shotgun at JONAH'S face... JONAH spits blood, flips him the middle finger...

Sssssss.

The stray bullet hole in the dynamite crate has started to hiss and seep a tendril of smoke.

BURKE

Shite.

BURKE is all business. He shoulders the shotgun and stalks straight back over toward the smoking crate.

JONAH takes the opportunity to stumble out the shaft entrance and into the night, leaving a trail of blood. *

BURKE kicks open the crate, pissed off... smoke billows out.

He reaches in and yanks out a tangled cluster of smoking dynamite sticks. He holds it out, away from his face, and walks with purpose back toward the entrance, following JONAH'S trail of blood. It's like he's taking a bag of shit to the garbage.

EXT. RESURRECTION COPPER MINE - NIGHT

BURKE walks out the entrance into the night, still holding the dynamite -- it has started to spark and flare. There is no sign of JONAH, unless you count the stinking carcass of TAR BILLY. BURKE shakes his head in disgust.

BURKE gives the dynamite one hell of a heave -- up and over the hill; it spins off into the night sky like a firework...

... and DETONATES in the air.

The explosions turn night to blue daylight for a series of quick flashes, lighting up the plains for miles...

And in the frozen flash: JONAH HEX, on horseback, riding hard across the terrain -- face white, soaked with blood...

BURKE gazes into the inky night after him, eyes burning.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HILLS - MORNING

The cold, stinking rays of the sun creep across the hills, filtering through the trees at the edge of the deep woods like dirty water through drain slats.

JONAH'S horse has slowed to a walk, lathered and panting; JONAH is slumped over, undead; dark blood caked to molasses from chest to knee... his face is so pale it's almost blue... he shivers uncontrollably.

The DOG is trotting along fifteen feet behind JONAH'S horse; the horse drops periodic road apples in its path like green land mines.

JONAH'S hand loosens on the rein; his eyelids flutter... and HE FALLS OFF, landing like a bag of cement on the hard-packed dirt.

The DOG comes up, sniffs JONAH'S ass; slobbers all over his face.

JONAH comes to -- shoves the dog away, half delirious.

JONAH

Least wait 'til I'm dead to eat me!

He struggles to his feet. The dog just stands there, watching his very move.

JONAH

Listen here, dog -- fuck off.

The dog regards him blankly, slobbering.

JONAH

Anyone rides with me's bound to end up dead sooner or later... understand?

JONAH pulls his gun and pokes it toward the dog's skull.

JONAH

I said skedaddle, you stupid beast!

JONAH advances on the dog with rubber legs; summons the strength to plant a kick in its ribs. The dog growls and snaps at him, baring its teeth.

JONAH

Get outta here... find y'ns a bitch and multiply!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH bares his teeth back at the dog. The dog backs up a few paces... he fires a shot into the dirt in front of it; the dog turns and trots a few yards away.

JONAH

Go on, GIT!

He fires again. The dog takes a last look back, unsure, and then bails.

JONAH

(to himself)

Don't need nothin' watchin' me
die...

He watches the dog until it disappears around the base of the hills, holding the gun out shakily...

... then falls flat on his back in the dirt.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. HILLS - MORNING (LATER) *

Brown hands take hold of JONAH'S unconscious body and drag him through the dirt...

... into the woods, under the shadows of trees...

Still dragging: JONAH'S eyelids flutter, attempt to focus; he sees shafts of white light moving, filtering down through the branches like beams from heaven... *

... and the silhouettes of long-haired, feathered heads, like strange bird-men, peering down...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. INDIAN SWEAT HUT - TIME INDETERMINATE

By obscure, flickering fire-light JONAH'S clothes are stripped... his bloody wounds cleaned and rinsed... the water makes steam when it hits his flesh -- it's like a damned oven in here... he is slick with sweat...

Old Indians begin to chant rhythmically -- in a shadow thrown on the sloping mud wall by the dancing flame we see one of the Indians whip out his hog and piss into a clay pot... clouds of steam billow...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mud, herbs; crushed, petrified bat crumbled to flakes... are added in and mashed into a paste... then caked thick over JONAH'S shredded chest...

JONAH'S eyes fly open -- all white, no pupils... an unholy gasp escapes his lips...

... and in the shadows on the wall we see snaking, demonic, wraithlike shapes... like wisps of smoke... flying out of JONAH'S mouth and evaporating...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. INDIAN SWEAT HUT - TIME INDETERMINATE (LATER)

JONAH sleeps... his breath is deep, raspy... he is soaked in sweat... a black snake slithers across his throat, his face...

OLD INDIAN

(subtitled)

<His brain is rotten...
vengeance... violence... loss too
deep for one man to bear...>

JONAH writhes, as if beset by nightmares, or demons.

OLD INDIAN

(subtitled)

<But his soul is strong... his
work on this earth is not
finished.>

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

JONAH stumbles through the cold woods -- lost, alone, haunted. He is ghostly pale, but his eyes have fire. The blood-soaked clothes he was shot in are dried black as tar.

He leans against a tree to steady himself, checks his guns -- they're both loaded.

Broken sunlight makes him look up -- a swarm of BLACK CROWS tracks across the sky, heading somewhere... the sky is full of them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH holsters his guns and follows their direction.

The sound of gunfire, cannons, screaming and dying echoes through the woods... JONAH runs through the trees, toward the white daylight, finally reaching the edge of the woods...

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

JONAH stands at the treeline, on a hilltop... he is overlooking a BATTLEFIELD.

Hundreds of UNION and CONFEDERATE soldiers are squared off against one another in the heat of combat -- it's a scene right out of the Civil War.

Crude trenches, fortified with wood planks and barbed wire, run along the perimeter... the grassy meadow is strewn with bodies...

... cannon and gunfire pins down the enemy at opposite ends, while soldiers caught in the crossfire fight hand-to-hand in the middle with rifle stock and bayonet.

JONAH advances down the hill towards the Confederate trench -- with his hat and jacket he fits right in.

As he moves down toward the battle he becomes aware of vague, shadowy figures trudging past him towards the woods... at a closer look: they appear to be the GHOSTS of fallen soldiers. Their expressions are shocked, ashen... one makes curious eye contact with JONAH as he passes.

JONAH shakes the cobwebs out of his head, rubs his eyes -- the ghosts are not quite there anymore... was it just smoke?

A deafening explosion knocks JONAH into a crouch; dirt rains on him. He jumps down into a trench for cover.

A BLACK SOLDIER spins, points his gun in JONAH'S face; almost pulls the trigger -- then sees JONAH'S hat and exhales.

JONAH

What the hell's going on here,
boy?

BLACK SOLDIER

Got dem Yanks penned in and we
lettin' it rip.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

That's all hunky dorey, friend.
There's just one problem.

BLACK SOLDIER

What's that?

JONAH

The God damn war's been over for
six years.

The SOLDIER starts to chuckle, then looks in JONAH'S eyes and sees something that seems to chill him to the bone.

Another cannon hit rocks the trench and breaks the moment -- the SOLDIER scurries away with a paranoid backward glance.

JONAH grabs the nearest shoulder and spins it around; a YOUNG BLACK, 22; not a soldier -- overalls, no shirt, no shoes.

JONAH

Who's in charge here?

The YOUNG BLACK looks JONAH up and down with wild eyes, clearly terrified; turns and goes running off.

JONAH continues down the trench. He passes dying men, holding in their guts in agony; bullets zing and whistle past his head.

A half-dozen YANKEES pile over the trench wall twenty feet ahead and get into it like wild dogs with a group of GREYBACKS, shoving bayonets into each other and firing rifles point blank -- by the time JONAH gets to them they are all dead or dying. JONAH steps past the tangled, groaning bodies and keeps going.

He spots a SOLDIER up on a crate, peering over the ridge of the trench, barks at him.

JONAH

You in charge?

SOLDIER

Ain't you?

Past the SOLDIER'S head, up on the smoke-obscured battlefield, JONAH picks out the commanding officer by his uniform. He is holed up behind a barricade with several infantrymen, shouting out orders... all the men are black. JONAH climbs up over the ridge and trots over to him, keeping his head low.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The officer -- CAPTAIN GEORGE AUGUST HIBBERT -- looks to be in his early forties, a caramel-skinned black man with piercing green eyes and a touch of premature grey in his beard and mutton-chop sideburns. His intensity is scary.

JONAH

You the captain of these men?

HIBBERT looks JONAH up and down.

HIBBERT

Captain George August Hibbert,
Fort Hill Confederate Negro
Infantry Brigade.

(cold, with dignity)

I expect you've come to relieve me
of my command.

JONAH

I ain't got authority to relieve
you of jack shit, boss.

HIBBERT'S eyes are like glass -- he stares into the distance, at nothing; it's as if he expected as much.

JONAH

Don't mind my askin', though --
what the hell kind of command is
this?

HIBBERT

I received my commission from
Stonewall Jackson himself. He
promised freedom for me and my
men, should we prevail.

JONAH

Stonewall's dead, brother.

This gets HIBBERT'S attention.

HIBBERT

(suspicious)

Who you said sent you?

JONAH

I ain't sent from nowhere, God
damn it. I'm tryin' to tell you
that Old Stonewall been toes up
since 1863, shot in the dark by
his own men. Fucker's six feet
under Virginia dirt -- 'ceptin'
his left arm, which got cut off n'
buried up Spotsylvania.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIBBERT is looking him up and down, studying him like you might check a turd for corn.

HIBBERT

And maybe that's true...

HIBBERT pulls out his pistol and levels it at JONAH'S forehead.

HIBBERT

*... and maybe you just a Yankee
spy sent to demoralize and
undermine my command.*

HIBBERT'S voice is quiet amidst the cannon and chaos, but his eyes burn with solar intensity and he is practically shaking with bottled rage.

JONAH throws up his hands in exasperation.

JONAH

Aw, fer fuck's sake.

He takes hold of HIBBERT'S gun hand and presses it to the scar side of his face.

JONAH

Do me a favor, friend: don't miss. I done waited long enough ta get out of this shit circus.

A small group of SOLDIERS are gathered close, attention glued to HIBBERT and HEX despite the battle all around. HIBBERT cocks the hammer back. JONAH stares him down; HIBBERT'S finger tightens on the trigger -- JONAH doesn't flinch...

All at once the rage seems to drain out of HIBBERT; his body relaxes, eyes glaze over -- he stares out across the battlefield.

HIBBERT

We *all* done waited.

The battle sounds take on an eerie quality, like the whisper of clouds -- the screams of the dying and concussion of distant gunfire echo and fade.

HIBBERT

I've waited too. Sometimes I think we've been out on this field forever... killin' the same Yanks over and over... but they won't stay dead... Nothin' stays dead...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

Yeah, well -- they're likely
sayin' the same about you fellas.

HIBBERT gathers himself; the fire and brimstone is back in his eyes. He looks around at the exhausted, bedraggled SOLDIERS gathered all around.

HIBBERT

*IT ENDS NOW, MY BULLY BOYS! AFTER
TODAY WE GONNA BE FREE BROTHAS...
OR WE GONNA BE DEAD BROTHAS! THEM
YANKEE MUTHAFUCKERS BE DAMNED --
WE'LL SHOW 'EM WHAT'S FOR...! AND
FLOOD THIS BARREN SOIL WITH THE
HOT, RED BLOOD OF THEIR CHESTS!*

The men let out a whoop and hollar. As HIBBERT speaks, the sounds of battle creep back in, CANNON-FIRE punctuating his words.

HIBBERT

*DON'T Y'ALL WANNA BE FREE?
(a ROAR of
affirmation)
THEN STUFF YOUR SOUL IN ONE
POCKET... YOUR BLACK BALLS IN THE
OTHER... PICK UP YOUR RIFLE -- AND
CHARGE, NIGGAS! CHARGE!!!*

HIBBERT has worked the men into a frenzy. They grab up their weapons and go bailing up over the trenches, charging with bayonets... HIBBERT draws his sword and takes off full barrel towards the unseen enemy.

They are immediately met by a hail of Yankee ordnance -- one out of three are cut down in gruesome fashion, knocked to bits and pieces by bullets and cannon balls. HIBBERT sprints forward, undaunted -- nothing touches him.

JONAH shrugs; good a day as any to die.

JONAH

Fuck it.

He draws both revolvers and charges into the fray, unloading blazing hell.

HIBBERT and the surviving BRIGADE reach the foremost Yankee positions and go plowing through... HIBBERT is chopping Yanks up with his sword left and right... JONAH is right behind him, blasting UNION SOLDIERS in the face at close range and contributing much chaos...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

the two madmen share a moment of crazed eye contact in the middle of everything, delirious with blood...

... as a CANNONBALL comes swooping down from the distance -- coming up fast on JONAH from his blind side -- puncturing the white sky. HIBBERT spots it; but it's too late for anything but a split second of realization --

BOOM!

A massive blast; JONAH is blown off his feet and showered with debris... A cloud of smoke consumes him as chunks of dirt and human appendages rain from the sky. And then:

Black. Dead silence.

JONAH blinks slowly, letting his tear ducts wash the dust from his eyeballs. He shakes scorched dirt off his face and struggles to his hands and knees: looks around. *

The field is EMPTY... there are only the long decayed bones of a battle years before, remains half-buried in the mud, grown over with grass and weed. The swarm of BLACK CROWS are now feasting in the mire. The sound of the crows' calls is all that breaks the perfect silence.

JONAH scans the horizon for any sign of human life. He finds nothing -- except...

Thirty yards away, the YOUNG BLACK dude that ran from him earlier is wandering through the long dormant battlefield, looking dazed and disoriented. He spots JONAH and FREEZES.

They are the only two living humans for what must be miles.

The YOUNG BLACK -- ALVIN -- shuts his eyes tight, rubs them, then opens them wide -- checking to make sure JONAH is really there.

Then: from off in the direction of the hillside, a familiar SNORT. JONAH looks -- his HORSE is standing at the base of the hill.

JONAH
I'll be buggered.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

A passenger locomotive heads North to South ACROSS the SCREEN, billowing black smoke.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

LEILA sits in a cramped, stinking, overcrowded train car -- suitcase pressed against her knees -- travelling cheap. She watches the world pass by out the window.

"DOC" CROSS WILLIAMS -- head bandaged... brown, caked on blood staining the cloth; arm in a sling -- sits next to her, shoulder to shoulder. She tries to ignore him but it ain't easy. "DOC" repeatedly swats at flies who won't leave his wounded scalp alone.

DOC CROSS WILLIAMS
Afternoon, ma'am.

LEILA
Not much in the mood for
conversation, if y'don't mind.

DOC CROSS WILLIAMS
Nope, don't mind at all.

He smears fly guts on his suspenders.

DOC CROSS WILLIAMS
Headed all the way to N'awlins,
are you?

LEILA turns to look him in the face; he's disgusting.
All the same, she's seen worse.

LEILA
That's right.

DOC CROSS WILLIAMS
As am I, sweetheart. As am I.
Make a new start for myself in the
jewel of the South.

She turns away, blowing him off. He reaches down into his pants up to his elbow for no particular reason.

DOC CROSS WILLIAMS
Ran into a little trouble up there
Alabammy... business went belly
up, it did. But I'll be back.

He pulls out his hand, produces a dirty, unmarked bottle of greenish brown liquid... uncaps it and proceeds to pour it on his head bandages.

LEILA wrinkles her nose, presses herself against the window -- the shit stinks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOC CROSS WILLIAMS
My own invention... Doc Cross'
'Sweet Brown' Tonic. Cure
anything that molests the soul.

He grins strangely, sliding a snakelike tongue over
jagged yellow teeth.

DOC CROSS WILLIAMS
(holds it out to her)
Female problems too... rejuvenate
the old beaver creek...

She turns to him.

LEILA
(ice cold)
Shitface. Go to hell.

"DOC" sneers, snuffles, takes a hit from the bottle and
almost gags.

LEILA turns back toward the window.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

JONAH and ALVIN ride together -- ALVIN clops along on a
skinny, fly-bitten nag a half-length behind, shoulders
slumped; he rubs his back, tries to straighten up and
winces.

ALVIN
Got a sting in mah back. Sho wish
we could stop and rest a'fo
nightfall.

JONAH
I don't aim to stop ridin' 'til up
through to Gutterstern.

ALVIN
I can 'bout make it dere.
(beat)
Can't member what you said yo name
was, missuh.

JONAH
I didn't.

ALVIN
When I fus saw y'ns ah thought sho
y'ns was one o dem ghosts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH just grunts.

ALVIN

'Specially wid dem grayback
clothes you got. That was devil
magic back there, twas.

ALVIN studies JONAH a spell.

ALVIN

Can ah ax y'na somethin', missuh?

JONAH gives him a sidelong glance.

ALVIN

Why you wear dem grayback clothes?

JONAH turns away. They ride in silence. JONAH sets his eyes hard on the dirt ahead; finally, right about when ALVIN has given up on getting an answer, JONAH speaks.

JONAH

I wasn't pushed into war like most men. I wanted to be there. Find it hard to go agin' your country in times like those. Problem was we was two countries, neither one really better than the other -- no matter who tells you.

FLASHBACK - EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY (1862)

A young, unscarred JONAH HEX, on horseback, charges along with a group of Confederate cavalry on a balls-out attack.

In the lead: a younger, only slightly thinner COLONEL ROYAL SLOCUM, sword drawn, with both legs attached and blood-lust in his eyes.

JONAH (V.O.)

I could ride and shoot so they
stuck me in the cavalry. Guess I
took to it pretty good...

JONAH jumps off his horse, runs right up to a UNION GUNNER, shoves the bayonet at the end of his rifle to the hilt into the man's gut -- and pulls the trigger. JONAH'S face is splattered with crimson.

JONAH (V.O.)

Even made me a friend or two along
the way... best was ol' Jeb
Turnbull.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEB TURNBULL -- 20s, handsome -- comes up alongside him, shaking his head and grinning at the bloody mess that is JONAH.

JONAH (V.O.)

He was a pretty thing, that
sumbitch -- seemed like bullets
couldn't touch him... but when he
pulled the trigger it always
seemed to touch somethin'.

JEB TURNBULL squeezes off three shots, hitting three targets. Bones splinter, skulls pop.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY (PRESENT)

JONAH

Me... well, bullets took to me
like flies to horse shit...

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. CONFEDERATE CAMP - DAY (1862)

YOUNG JONAH sits around a campfire with a few CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS... their heads turn at the sound of distant gunfire.

JONAH (V.O.)

... even ones that were ready to
give up, on account of they'd been
fired from so far off...

... a MINIE' BALL-BULLET whistles through the air from way off, runs outta gas; drops into JONAH'S lap, still smoking...

JONAH (V.O.)

... 'd come and find me just to
say 'hello, I made it.'

EXT. DIRT ROAD (PRESENT)

JONAH searches the grim horizon.

JONAH

Us boys never thought much 'bout
the right and wrong of the thing --
least of all Jeb. After all, he
was the son of a plantation man.

QUICK-FLASH - DAGUERREOTYPE OF QUENTIN TURNBULL

posing for a portrait with his arm around JEB.
TURNBULL'S expression is stern, dignified -- but his eyes
beam with pride.

A cattle brand burns into the photo, incinerating it --
two initials, ornately described:

QT

BACK TO SCENE

JONAH

Quentin Turnbull's brand was what
you might call a Southern
Institution. It meant pride,
money, power... tradition,
family -- everything a man might
rightly want. It was the only
world Jeb ever knew. Hell, I
couldn't think less of 'im for it.

FLASHBACK - EXT. CONFEDERATE HIDEOUT - NIGHT

*

COLONEL SLOCUM beats the hell out of a slave who dropped
a coffee pot while JONAH looks on, steaming.

JONAH (V.O.)

Myself, I come from nothin'. And
the longer we fought the more I
started to learn me a different
point of view. Got to where I
just couldn't fight no more for
what we was fightin' for. But
wudn't no way I'd ever turn to
fire on these men that were like
my own brothers.

JONAH steals away from the camp by moonlight. JEB
TURNBULL wakes up and watches him go... he says nothing.

JONAH (V.O.)

So I took me a French Leave one
night. Figgered I'd march myself
to the nearest Union post and sit
out the war in a prison cell.
Fort Jackson, Louisiana, it was,
not a day's ride from New Orleans.

EXT. FORT JACKSON - DAY (1862) *

JONAH is immediately grabbed by the BLUES as he crosses into FORT JACKSON holding his hands over his head, and carrying a white flag in his teeth.

JONAH (V.O.)

Them Mudsills had other ideas.
Seems like our unit were a
particular thorn in the side of
them boys... no less than Ulysses
Grant himself ordered that they
was to find where we was hidin'
out, no matter what it took.

JONAH is being beaten and whipped. He sucks it up, but the pain gets the best of him and he starts to fade...

JONAH (V.O.)

I didn't tell 'em a fuckin'
thing... they coulda killed me for
all I cared. But my damned boots
told 'em something.

"CSI"-STYLE SHOT OF JONAH'S MUD-STAINED BOOTS

in the form of a B&W DAGUERREOTYPE that starts to bleed RED.

JONAH (V.O.)

It was the red clay...

CUT TO:

EXT. RED VALLEY - CONFEDERATE HIDEOUT - DAWN

Black union boots step into the RED CLAY MUD, matching the clay on JONAH'S boots.

JONAH (V.O.)

Only one valley in a hundred miles
had mud that color, and my boys
was in it... I'd led the blue
bastards right to 'em.

The UNION SOLDIERS swarm the Confederate hideout, catching them half asleep. They violently drag the GRAYBACKS from their tents and sleeping rolls, beating down and pig-sticking any who resist.

JEB TURNBULL gets a hold of a BLUE and snaps his neck before taking the butt of a rifle to the face and dropping like a stone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH (V.O.)

They never had no chance at all.

The CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS are dragged into a red, muddy field and lined up, chained together by the wrists. They are on their knees -- bloody, bedraggled; some still in their long johns.

The UNION SOLDIERS surround them, outnumbering the GRAYS three to one. JONAH HEX is shoved forward to face his former brothers-in-arms.

JONAH (V.O.)

The Yankee C.O. did me the favor
of thanking me for my assistance,
right in front of all of 'em.

SLOCUM glowers at HEX with murder in his eyes. JEB TURNBULL is right beside him; we see in JEB'S eyes that he refuses to accept it.

COLONEL SLOCUM

(spittle flying)

DAMN YOUR SOUL, TRAITOR!!!

The UNION COMMANDING OFFICER grins easily, amused; speaks quietly into the ear of one of his men:

UNION C.O.

*Let the one with the stripes
live -- we can trade 'im fer 10 of
our boys.*

JONAH (V.O.)

They wouldn't even waste the
bullets on us Rebs.

The UNION SOLDIERS lead a dozen BLACK SLAVES up to the chained GRAYBACKS; each one is holding a heavy rock with both hands -- they look terrified.

JONAH (V.O.)

They made them poor colored folks
do their killin' for 'em.

The UNION SOLDIERS hold RIFLES to the SLAVES' heads. Against their will, the SLAVES are forced to SMASH IN THE SKULLS of the GRAY PRISONERS.

The GRAYS don't even resist; JEB TURNBULL looks JONAH straight in the eyes as the rock comes down to brain him... SLOCUM spits curses, his eyes streaming. The SLAVES cry too as they do the bloody work. It's beyond horrible.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH watches it all, eyes like moon craters. There's nothing he can do to stop it.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY (PRESENT)

The two men ride in silence; JONAH'S words hang there. Finally:

JONAH

Never told no one my side of it before.

ALVIN doesn't answer.

JONAH turns; ALVIN is slumped over, dead on his horse. No telling how long.

JONAH slows to let the old nag catch up... as it passes, we see that the man's back is a bloom of soaking crimson; a not-so-imaginary wound from the imaginary battle. And JONAH sees something else...

He grabs hold of ALVIN'S shoulder and pulls his limp torso closer. On his back, a brand is burned into the boy's skin -- the scar seems years old:

QT

JONAH

Ah'll be dipped in shit.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. MILITARY OUTPOST (GUTTERSTERN OUTSKIRTS) - DUSK

A canvas banner flaps in the wind: GUTTERSTERN.

JONAH rides toward town; ALVIN rides beside him -- dead -- his horse tied up to JONAH'S.

A GOVERNMENT MILITIA troop -- dozen men -- rides in from the north, heading straight for them. JONAH continues into town; they cut him off.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN -- GRASS' right hand from earlier -- separates from the pack and announces himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN

Mr. Hex, I'm Second Lieutenant
Even.

(indicates ALVIN)

Ain't we give you enough work to
keep you busy?

JONAH

Ain't no bounty on this boy.

EVEN was just making conversation.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN

Okee doke.

(nods to indicate his
men)

We're sent here to escort you to
Lieutenant Grass.

JONAH

That kin wait. I been ridin' all
day and I aim to put some food and
beer in my gullet.

JONAH nods his head to a ramshackle structure on the edge
of town; the handpainted sign: KILLUMS 'n EATUMS.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN

(smiles)

Don't reckon it *can* wait, Mr. Hex.
My orders are to reroute you the
minute we done laid eyes on y'n.

JONAH slow-burns. He fingers his weapon; the SOLDIERS do
the same. Finally, he shakes his head.

JONAH

Guess it ain't worth killin' the
whole sorry lot of you.

The SOLDIERS collectively exhale. JONAH gestures toward
ALVIN.

JONAH

First get the kid a box.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN shrugs; nods to a couple of
soldiers; they take the reins of ALVIN'S horse.

JONAH

Spend the nickel on the minister
too.

EVEN pulls a flask out from his inside pocket and tosses
it to JONAH, who takes a sniff: whiskey. He hits it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN
'Twer up to me I'd join you for a
sit down, Mr. Hex.

JONAH
Forget it.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN
Thing of it is: I guarantee it
ol' Quentin Turnbull ain't
restin'.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESURRECTION CITY - DUSK

What looks to be the gnarled shoulder bone of a bull hits
dirt.

The UGLY DOG trots over and picks it up with slobbery
teeth; then runs it back to the ONE-ARMED BOY that threw
it.

ONE-ARMED BOY
Give it here, dog.

The BOY takes a hold of the bone; the DOG pulls back,
growling viciously and offering some playful resistance
before letting go.

ONE-ARMED BOY
Alright, now git it.

The BOY lets it fly. The DOG skedaddles after it,
chasing the dust... the bone skitters to a stop in front
of a pair of boots. As the DOG trots up a black shadow
falls on him... he looks up.

QUENTIN TURNBULL, a towering silhouette in the late day
sun, looks down on the dog with contempt. He has BURKE
and another ROUGHNECK backing him up.

The DOG snarls, shows teeth; then turns his haunch toward
TURNBULL, lifts a leg and pisses on his boots.

TURNBULL kicks the DOG away; it spins, growls, crouches
to spring.

ONE-ARMED BOY
Dog, NO!

TURNBULL gets a grip on his eagle-top cane and brings it
down hard on the DOG'S skull. THOK!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The DOG shakes his head, clearing out the little birdies, grabs the end of the cane in his teeth and rips it from TURNBULL'S grip. He CRUNCHES down on it.

The BOY runs toward them as TURNBULL pulls a long pistol from an ornate holster at his side.

ONE-ARMED BOY

Give it back, Dog!

TURNBULL aims and fires two slugs into the DOG'S ribs, knocking it back in the dirt. BURKE finds this hilarious.

ONE-ARMED BOY

Stop it!

The DOG clearly hasn't figured out it's dead yet. It drops the cane and advances on TURNBULL with unsteady legs.

TURNBULL puts a boot to the DOG'S neck and forces it down; he pushes the DOG'S snout into the dirt... inserts the business end of the pistol into the DOG'S ear and pulls the trigger.

BOOM.

TURNBULL brushes off his pant leg as the ONE-ARMED BOY collapses in tears next to the dead DOG, wrapping his arm around it and pressing his face into the flea-bitten fur.

TURNBULL

Gentlemen.

They walk on.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESURRECTION COPPER MINE - SUNDOWN

Flies swarm and light off the dead face of TAR BILLY, framed by packing straw.

The wood crate he's resting in is one among many; he is stacked with the rifles and cannon shot. TURNBULL holds open the lid with BURKE at his side. A half dozen other men are at work, stacking and dragging.

TURNBULL

Explain it to me again, Burke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BURKE

There is no bloody explanation for it. I gave the cocksucker two barrels straight in his chest. By all rights he should be dead as Tar Billy here.

TURNBULL

(steaming)

Hex doesn't know how to die. He will have to be educated.

TURNBULL lets the lid of the long crate drop, closing up the makeshift coffin.

BURKE

I'll be happy to continue his lessons should he show his beautiful face again -- but I must say I find it highly unlikely. Ask me, he's rotting in some trench somewhere, white as a stuck pig.

TURNBULL

He's alive.

TURNBULL instinctively rubs a patch of shiny burnt tissue on the knuckles of his right hand.

TURNBULL

And somehow... the son of a whore knows I am too. He'll be coming.

BURKE

Peachy. Let him.

TURNBULL gives BURKE a look, sizing him up -- be careful what you ask for.

TURNBULL

This location is compromised. Have the cream of it loaded onto the trains and dynamite the rest.

BURKE

Right.

TURNBULL moves to the next long crate, shoves aside the lid -- it's WADE, the other man JONAH dispatched. WADE'S mouth is a frozen O -- he's turquoise green.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL
We're headed south.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOVERNMENT WEAPONS TESTING FACILITY - DAY

A giant warehouse-sized TIN BARN sitting in the middle of nowhere close. SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN, JONAH, and the rest of the MILITIA ride up to the broadside, dismount and tie their horses up to a row of white posts.

A GUARD rolls open the big sliding doors to reveal what can only be described as a HILLBILLY WEAPONS TESTING FACILITY:

Men with big WHITE COWBOY HATS, glasses and coats loiter around with clipboards as SOLDIERS test FLAME-THROWERS, OVER-UNDER CANNONS, GATLING GUNS, MULTITURRETED DERRINGERS... a gun blows up in a SOLDIER'S hand, leaving him screaming at a stump... toothless women sew metal plates into jackets in an early stab at body armor...

... and LIEUTENANT GRASS presides over what looks to be an extremely sketchy FLAME-THROWER test. He notices HEX, EVEN and the others.

LIEUTENANT GRASS
Hex! You'll love this, you damned deviant.

An INBRED-LOOKING SOLDIER clicks a burning O-ring onto the nozzle of a crude hose attached to a tall barrel of oil. Another SOLDIER hand-pumps pressure into the barrel.

INBRED pulls the lever on the hose -- improbably, the piece of shit works: a thirty-foot jet of flame shoots out from the nozzle, knocking INBRED back and curling his eyebrows.

He struggles for a two-handed grip and aims it at a STUFFED DUMMY with a DEER'S HEAD. In seconds the DUMMY is toasted black and the deer head falls to the ground, burnt to the bone.

JONAH
I kin see why you'd invent such a thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIEUTENANT GRASS

A new era of modern weaponry, Hex.
Soon enough gunslingers like
yourself'll be out to pasture...
obsolete. Replaced by the latest
technology.

JONAH

Somethin' to look ferward to...

Just then the test hose ignites; INBRED turns into a
fireball and goes running off, screaming. He is body-
tackled by men with horse blankets and buckets of water.

JONAH

Guess the new era kin wait.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

(shaking his head)

Sixth engineer we've lost this
week... well, it ain't much of a
price to pay for progress.
Speakin' of which...

(turns to HEX and
refocuses)

What's our progress on bringing in
Turnbull?

JONAH

Resurrection City wouldn't be a
bad place to start.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

The old copper town?

JONAH

Ain't no copper in those mines --
just a whole lotta lead and a
whole lotta steel. Turnbull's
been using 'em to store what he's
been stealin'.

GRASS makes eye contact with EVEN.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Interesting. Interesting indeed.
Even, send some men to check out
the bounty hunter's story.

They walk over to the GATLING GUNS. A YOUNG SOLDIER
spins the gun and locks it into place. He aims at a
NAKED LADY who is PAINTED on a wooden board, backed by a
dozen haystacks... and FIRES:

TATATATATATATATATATATATATATATATAT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He stops and looks at the board. Nothing. Just a shitload of holes through the tin wall of the barn, white daylight poking through. JONAH spits in the dirt, unimpressed.

JONAH

Better send more'n a few.

GRASS kicks over the Gatling Gun, which practically falls apart.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Goddamn second rate cowshit.

JONAH

By the looks of it, wudn't none of what Turnbull got second rate.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN

Sumbitch Turnbull's got the whole U.S. Army about half crippled already...

GRASS shoots EVEN a nasty look, cutting him off.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

(sharply)

Second Lieutenant.

(turns his attention
back to JONAH)

Now listen here, bounty hunter. We got us quality intelligence that Turnbull and his band of bastards are headed north -- to Springfield, Virginia. Their intention is to raid the U.S. Armory -- but they'll be walkin' straight into an ambush.

JONAH

Springfield.

JONAH considers this, giving it the gut test.

JONAH

How'd you come by that?

GRASS smirks at JONAH, then nods to a couple of soldiers; they walk over to the target board with the NAKED LADY painted on.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

The purty girl told us... flip her around, men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They flip the board around on a wooden axle. Strapped to the other side is a SCRAGGLY-HAIRED DUDE (the MONGREL) -- part Asian, part Indian, part Caucasian, part whatnot -- we remember him from the train robbery. Face sweaty, beaten and bruised; a rag stuffed in his mouth. *

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Turnbull's boys paid a visit to one of our outposts a few days back... eighty-eight men, women and chil'n killed on our side -- (nods toward MR.

MONGREL)

All we got is this one. They left him for dead.

JONAH studies the SCRAGGLY-HAIRED DUDE.

JONAH

Mind if I have a little talk with 'im?

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Believe me, Hex, he already told us all he knows. We can be very persuasive, as you oughta rightly know.

JONAH

Sure he did. But if it's all the same to you...

LIEUTENANT GRASS

(with bile)

Be my guest.

JONAH takes a walk over to the target board, passing the SOLDIERS on the way. When he gets there he is out of earshot of GRASS, EVEN and the others. JONAH greets MR. MONGREL with a grin...

JONAH

(friendly)

Howdy.

... then flips the board back around, making sure they'll be out of sight as well.

A few moments pass; GRASS and EVEN glance at one another uncomfortably. EVEN shrugs.

A couple more INBRED types wheel a funky-looking OVER/UNDER CANNON up to take the place of the Gatling Gun. One of the men kneels behind it, attempting to line up a shot at the naked lady.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Finally JONAH appears from behind the target. He walks back toward GRASS and EVEN.

JONAH

Yup, Springfield it is. Nice bit of interrogatin', boys.

GRASS' eyes narrow.

JONAH

Guess you don't owe me nothin' on account of it was you fellas that worked it out.

JONAH starts to leave; glances at the OVER/UNDER CANNON ... then at the target it's pointed at... then back at the cannon, cock-eyed. He gives the barrel a kick, re-aiming a few inches to the right; then another, a few inches up... satisfied, dips his hat to EVEN and the others...

JONAH

Reckon we're all square.

... and walks off toward the big sliding doors.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

(calling after him)

Don't you disappear, bounty hunter. We ain't done with you yet.

The CANNON INBRED checks JONAH'S aim; shrugs and lights the fuse.

B-BOOM! Two cannon balls go sizzling across the barn... both make contact: the NAKED LADY'S HEAD and CROTCH are now smoking cannon holes.

GRASS takes this in, then turns to watch JONAH leave, suspicious. He nods toward EVEN.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Get the word out -- anywhere Hex shows his face I want to know about it.

(beat)

Wherever that fucker is -- that's where we'll find Turnbull.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN

Yessir.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - DAY

A DRUNK stumbles through the street, rambling incoherently in deep Creole patois. He leans against a post.

White bird-shit hits his head and drips down his face. He slurs a mouthful of Creole, which we are courteous enough to subtitle:

DRUNK

<Shit.>

Several floors up, seagulls perch on an ornate French Creole-style balcony; in the b.g., clipper ships tool along Lake Pontchartrain... the ports are clogged with chaos and industry.

VOICE (V.O.)

N'aw-luns.

EXT. REBEL TAVERN - LATER

A well-worn Confederate flag hangs over the entrance to a seedy establishment at the end of a claustrophobic cul-de-sac. A hand-carved sign reads just:

"WHISKEY"

JONAH ties his horse up to a post nearby and takes in the place with dark eyes. His horse kicks at the one next to it, ornery.

JONAH

Settle down, damn you.

A PLUMP RED-HEADED WOMAN, 20s, runs out the front door, in tears, followed by a red-faced, barrel-chested FELLA in a stained white undershirt; he stops in the doorway.

FELLA

Gitchyer fire-crotch back in here!

JONAH pushes the FELLA aside.

FELLA

You lookin' to get bled,
motherfucker...

(sees Jonah's scar)

T'hell happened ta yer mug?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

The hell happened to yers?

JONAH pulls his hat down low and shoves past him into the bar.

INT. REBEL TAVERN - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Simple dive bar with old wooden chairs and tables... a burnt-up Union Blue uniform nailed up to the wall... Confederate swords, flags, etc. -- a painted portrait of ROBERT E. LEE holds a place of honor above the liquor bottles. Yes, these are the bitter fuckers that lost the war.

A few dozen patrons sit in little bunches, mumbling and yacking at one another and slamming rotgut.

JONAH, with his grey coat and slouch, seems to fit right in; he bellies up to the bar. The YOUNG EYE-PATCHED BARTENDER wipes the bar down in front of JONAH.

JONAH

Got me a thirst that won't quit, brother.

EYE-PATCH BARTENDER

(looks him over)

Look like you come to the right place.

EYE-PATCH fills a shot glass and sets it in front of JONAH, who slams it back. EYE-PATCH quickly pours another, JONAH quickly drains it. This continues for 5 more shots.

JONAH shakes out the spiderwebs, lets the whiskey rock him back.

JONAH

God damn.

EYE-PATCH BARTENDER

Kin ya see straight?

JONAH

Not too bad, son.

EYE-PATCH BARTENDER

Yer good people by me. Anyone who turns down a shot mecks me s'picious. Anyone who kint hindle their liquor mecks me s'picious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

Good policy.

EYE-PATCH BARTENDER

Where you say you's from?

*

JONAH

Didn't.

A couple of YOUNG RUFFIANS come up behind JONAH, one on each side.

EYE-PATCH BARTENDER

He's alright.

JONAH

I'll be better affer you pour me another of them whiskeez.

The BARTENDER obliges.

RUFFIAN #1

You here for the same reason we is, Reb?

JONAH

I got the word, Reb.

RUFFIAN #2

You know where to go?

JONAH

Got my ass this far, figger thas a start.

JONAH raises his shot to the RUFFIANS.

JONAH

Jefferson Davis an the ol' Republic.

The whole BAR joins in on the toast. CHEERS all around. JONAH knocks back his 8th shot. The RUFFIANS seem satisfied.

RUFFIAN #2

Fort Jackson. Tonight.

JONAH

Fort Jackson.

(face hardens as it
washes over him)

Guess I oughtta figgered that one out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUFFIAN #1

Yanks don't bother with it no more. Too fer South for 'em.

RUFFIAN #2

So we took it back.

JONAH

I surely did come to the right place.

JONAH pulls out a handful of gold coins and slaps them on the bar.

JONAH

You get my boys here good n' drunk.

CUT TO:

EXT. REBEL TAVERN - DAY (LATER)

JONAH pushes out the front; he still has his legs under him but he's seeing double --

A double flash of black tattoo through the street traffic in his peripheral vision sobers him up quick; he ducks away from the entrance and around a brick corner, peering back stealthily in time to see:

BURKE crossing the road and making his way to the tavern entrance; a second earlier and they would've come face to face.

BURKE looks around, feeling eyes on him; then sneers and walks in.

JONAH rubs his chest, the spot where BURKE blasted him; crouches down... and waits.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. REBEL TAVERN - AFTERNOON

Hours have passed. JONAH holds his fingers up to the sun to measure the time... just then the tavern door swings open and BURKE shuffles out onto the street. His legs are wobbly; face a mask of bad intent. BURKE is wallpapered and looking to take shit out on someone.

JONAH pulls his hat down and follows him.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS - AFTERNOON

JONAH shadows BURKE down back streets and alleys... at one point he has the jump on him and is about to make a move, but a GAP-TOOTHED HOOKER comes out of nowhere and cuts him off.

GAP-TOOTHED HOOKER
Lookin' for a bit of this, Reb?

*

She lifts her skirt to reveal a white, meaty expanse of haunch.

JONAH
Not likely.

GAP-TOOTHED HOOKER
Homo.

It takes him a moment to relocate BURKE, who is ducking into a below-street-level doorway. JONAH follows BURKE into...

INT. BROTHEL - CONTINUOUS ACTION - AFTERNOON

... a dark, smoky BROTHEL. The lower level lobby of the building suggests it was once a decent hotel that fell on hard times some years past... HOOKERS in worn-out lingerie and JOHNS loiter around, bored and medicated... no sign of BURKE.

A UNION OFFICER, pants unbuttoned and shirt open, leans back in a wicker chaise lounge with a couple of caramel-skinned Creole whores -- he spots JONAH and ducks down, hiding his face.

JONAH puts a hand around the waist of a passing WHORE. She stops, looks him in the face; barely flinches.

WHORE
Alright.

JONAH
Sweetheart, I'm looking for a friend o' mine. Limey... tattoo... you know 'im?

Her demeanor darkens.

WHORE
That sick fuck's a friend of yours then to hell with you too.
(studies him)
Didn't figger you for a sick fuck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She nods past her shoulder, to the stairway.

WHORE

He's here.

JONAH nods, obliged; moves past her towards the stairs.

WHORE

Heard we got a new girl, I
'spose...

INT. BROTHEL - UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS ACTION - DAY

JONAH moves down the corridor, going room to room, keeping it quiet. He pokes his head in on a variety of unsavory scenes, but no sign of BURKE...

Then, from the next level up: muffled screams, crying...
a loud thud on floorboards, a struggle; breaking glass. *

JONAH

Yeah.

He rushes up a flight of stairs and down the hall to the source... draws both revolvers -- and KICKS IN THE DOOR.

INT. BROTHEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION - DAY

A threadbare room, hardly furnished... a suitcase by the bed opened up, not even unpacked -- window broken, leading out to the balcony... no BURKE.

The WOMAN is crumpled in the corner in a fetal position, face hidden behind crossed arms... her cries are horrible, ragged.

JONAH rushes to the window and looks out in time to see BURKE drop to the stone-paved alley on drunken legs -- almost completely eating shit -- and stumble away. He is about to follow; but...

He turns slowly toward the WOMAN on the ground; a gradual shock flows into his face -- the licorice hair, the pitch of the voice...

JONAH falls to his knees and takes a hold of her, turning her face gently toward his...

It's LEILA.

Her face is burned, boiling; blood seeps from her ears. Her voice is barely a whisper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEILA

Jonah Hex...

JONAH

Leila... how...?

She turns her face away from him.

LEILA

*My face... fuckin' bastard...
poured acid on me...*

She turns back to him, eyes streaming tears and glazing over... her face is literally melting before his eyes.

LEILA

... is it bad, Jonah?

JONAH

*(choking up, fighting
it)*

*You're as beautiful a thing as I
ever saw.*

She begins to hyperventilate; body shaking. He holds her tight.

LEILA

*Glad it was you... found me...
Hex...*

JONAH

Leila...

LEILA

*... evn though there's someone
else you love... n'always will
be...*

Her breathing speeds up uncontrollably; she coughs blood... JONAH buries his face in her black curls as her whole body tenses... and then goes limp. He gently lays her head down.

JONAH is paralyzed with emotion. Until: slowly, his left hand forms a fist... with sudden rage he slams it down into the floorboards --

CRACKKK. THE FLOOR SPLINTERS ALL THE WAY ACROSS TO THE WALL AND UP THE CEILING.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROTHEL - DAY

The UNION OFFICER from the BROTHEL LOBBY hurries out into the cold daylight, glancing behind him -- paranoid.

He ducks around a corner and pulls a crumpled sheet from his coat pocket; flattens it out:

It's JONAH HEX'S WANTED POSTER.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN (V.O.)

Just got word in from one a our
boys down south, sir...

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTHERN TRAIL - DAY

GRASS is leading a long line of troops, horses and equipment down a wide dirt road. EVEN pulls up beside him.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN

... Hex is in N-awllins.

GRASS looks at EVEN, blank -- slow burning; then up ahead, down the road. A sign reads:

"Y'all are now leaving LOUISIANA."

GRASS shakes his head, gestures toward the line of troops.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Turn 'em the hell around.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY (NEW ORLEANS) - SUNDOWN

JONAH'S fingers move across BURKE'S muddy boot print... he is crouched in the alley beneath LEILA'S window, where BURKE made his escape -- he looks up two levels of wrought iron balconies to the broken window.

JONAH gazes down the alley to the street beyond, as if testing the wind... he moves forward, on a mission -- following in BURKE'S tracks.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS - SUNDOWN

JONAH moves through a serpentine maze of backstreets and alleyways, shoving past street traffic... letting his instincts guide him.

He stumbles onto a CREOLE FUNERAL PROCESSION...

NEGROES in worn-out black suits with skeletal white zombie makeup shuffle along, blowing on horns and beating tambourines... and the WOMEN -- in ghostly wedding gowns, stained with chicken blood, eyes rolled back in their skulls, almost sleepwalking... they seem to float above the street, turning and swaying... magic hour throws long shadows along the paving stones... it's eerie and beautiful...

JONAH falls in with them, a ghost among ghosts...

The heavy oak casket is borne on the shoulders of eight men, open to the sky. JONAH glances toward it --

THE PASSENGER -- A DEAD BLACK BOY no more than 15 -- sits up and stares straight at him. His eyes are filmed-over, no pupils; he is dressed in a fine suit and tie.

The BOY looks down a passing side street and POINTS... then lies back down, as if in reverse motion.

JONAH follows the BOY'S directions; he falls out of the parade and down the dark street.

EXT. NECROPOLIS - SUNDOWN

The backstreet takes him to the outskirts of the city, and opens onto a sprawling above-ground CEMETERY... a city of the dead, with square blocks and elaborate marble monuments...

... only now there is a new population: beggars, whores, opium addicts... they haunt the shadows and sleep in the shelter of the crypts... torches and flaming oil barrels light the gathering gloom...

JONAH kneels amidst the monuments, studies the gravel... boot tracks... somewhere a baby is crying...

He notices something dark glistening on the face of a marble angel -- has a closer look: runs his fingers through a slippery wad of brown scum; holds it to the light --

A "CSI"-STYLE FLASHBACK

BURKE, in this very spot, spits a glob of chew... SMACK!

BACK TO SCENE (PRESENT)

JONAH'S eyes narrow; he's close.

He rounds a corner -- a large CRYPT; a brick stairway leading down... oil lamplight flickers below...

GUARD

The hell are you lookin' at,
cowboy?

JONAH'S eyes dart toward the sound; his face is hit by lamp light -- a burly GUARD, one of TURNBULL'S men, with a long rifle is coming toward him.

GUARD

(squinting his eyes
to get a better
look)

Hey, what's wrong with your --

JONAH'S Bowie knife, thrown true, punches into the GUARD'S throat to the hilt; the tip pops out the other side and the man collapses, hissing and gurgling.

JONAH pulls his knife out of the twitching carcass and wipes it clean on his pant leg.

JONAH

I'm about outta wise-ass answers,
friend.

He enters the crypt and heads down the stairs...

INT. CRYPT - NIGHT

A lamp-lit tunnel, built up with planks like the inside of a mine shaft, extends beyond the interior of the crypt, leading into...

INT. UNDERGROUND RAILROAD - NIGHT

A hollowed-out staging area, train platform, and tracks leading into an ink-black tunnel headed south.

JONAH ducks behind a wall of crates.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Men are leading munitions onto flat cargo cars and sending them rattling off down the line. BURKE is there, spitting out orders.

JONAH works his way around to the platform, sticking to the flickering shadows.

Finally, BURKE grabs an oil lantern and hops onto one of the flat cars.

BURKE

Come on, den -- we ain't got all day.

Another man jumps on with BURKE and starts to crank the lever-bars, setting the thing moving; they are towing another flat carrying weapon crates... it passes near enough to JONAH for him to sneak on.

They roll into the dark.

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

The car gets up to speed and starts cooking along, rattling on the steel tracks. It's dead black in the tunnel -- only BURKE'S oil lantern lights the immediate area as they travel.

Behind BURKE, the driver puts his back into the bars. They hit a bump on the tracks -- BURKE'S lamp punks out.

Total darkness; just the sound of knocking rails.

BURKE

Motherfuck.

He strikes a flint, relights the lamp --

Only now the DRIVER is gone... and JONAH HEX is right behind him.

JONAH

Howdy.

BURKE goes for his gun but JONAH is on him in a heartbeat... the two men go to the ground, grappling... *

The oil lantern hits the wood floor of the car and shatters; oil spills and flames up...

JONAH'S knife is out -- BURKE has a grip on his wrist and is forcing the knife back at him... their faces are inches from one another -- it's a brutal death struggle...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BURKE shifts his weight and rolls on top of HEX, putting all his leverage into the knife... JONAH's back lands on the burning oil... extinguishing the flames...

SMASH TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. FORT JACKSON - UNDERGROUND RAILROAD - NIGHT

The tunnel opens into a large brick loading platform busy with men; this is clearly the final destination for the moving arsenal.

BURKE'S flat car comes rolling up to the platform, finally running out of steam and slowing to a rusty stop.

One of the men elbows another; nods toward the car.

MAN

No driver.

The other man shrugs; they go to work unloading the car. The crates are stacked onto a rolling cart and pushed down subterranean corridors, into...

INT. FORT JACKSON - THE ARMORY - NIGHT

... a massive, high-ceiling brick ARMORY. This spread makes the stockpile at Resurrection City look like a corner gun shop. Truly, enough weaponry to outfit an army.

Dynamite crates and big wooden barrels of dynamite are stacked to the ceiling -- it's a powder keg, alright.

The men unload the cart and head back for more; they don't notice as one of the crates creaks and opens up behind them...

JONAH climbs out, looks around. His arms are soaked with blood up to the elbows.

JONAH

Hell.

He hears more men coming; pulls a long, silver rifle from a crate and vanishes into the shadows.

*

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT JACKSON - BATTLEMENT WALLS - NIGHT

JONAH emerges into the night air from a narrow stairwell at the top of the fort's outer battlements. He is at a perfect vantage point to take in one hell of a scene:

On one side, the brick wall bristles with casements, iron noses of Rodman cannons pointing out over the Mississippi River.

The other side overlooks the open common area and brick citadel at the interior of the Fort...

... where a VAST, UNRULY MOB has gathered by torchlight -- PERHAPS CLOSE TO A THOUSAND MEN.

There is nothing uniform about this group, a couple of REBEL GRAY and CONFEDERATE FLAGS, but one or two UNION UNIFORMS TOO!! -- it's a fucking makeshift army.

*
*
*

And they are chanting; ragged at first, then growing in strength and unity:

Turnbull... Turnbull... TURNBULL... TURNBULL!

JONAH

Yeah.

There's no sign of TURNBULL.

*

CUT TO:

*

INT. FORT JACKSON - CITADEL - NIGHT

*

TURNBULL sits quietly at a lamp-lit table, gazing into the dark. Several of his men stand by around the perimeter of the room, in shadow.

*
*
*

ADLEMAN LUSK sits across from him, looking like a white mouse in a snake pit.

*
*

The chants from outside reverberate through the thick stone walls of the citadel. For LUSK, it's like a ringing phone that no one will answer.

*
*
*

LUSK

They're calling for you.

*
*

TURNBULL'S eyes turn toward LUSK -- they are dark, distant... yet somehow amused.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL

The Union's worst nightmare, Lusk.
A risen South... Armed, mobilized,
drunk with rage. Listen...

The chanting builds and echoes.

TURNBULL

There are a hundred thousand just
like them, from the corn fields of
Nebraska to the shores of the
Atlantic.

LUSK

An Army. You'll be President,
Turnbull.

TURNBULL just smirks.

TURNBULL

President...

(shakes his head)

What would you say if I told you I
had no intention of ever marching
into Washington D.C.?

LUSK

(confused)

But... I...

TURNBULL

I've seen the future, Lusk. Power
no longer lies in the hands of
Presidents, or armies. It lies in
the shadows. Terror is its
greatest weapon.

TURNBULL rises, dusts off his coat, adjusts the sword at
his side.

TURNBULL

You delivered my message well,
little bird. The scoundrels in
our Capital have already fallen
into my pocket. They'll vote as
they're told, make war when it
suits me...

(turns to regard

LUSK)

Mine will be a government *within*
the government. On the surface
nothing changes -- the people
still believe they live in a
democracy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL (CONT'D)

But the real strings of power are
something they will never see.

LUSK is flabbergasted. He gestures to indicate the MOB
outside.

LUSK

What about *them*?

TURNBULL

That rabble? I'll treat them as I
would dogs for fighting. Nurture
their rage, keep them starved for
revenge -- and make sure the
cowards in Washington know that
only I can control them... that
it's only Turnbull standing
between order and revolution.

(to his ROUGHNECKS)

Where the hell is Burke?

The men shrug.

TURNBULL

Having his tea I expect, the
whoremongering bastard...

(shrugs it off)

Alright then.

(to his men)

It's time.

EXT. FORT JACKSON - THE CITADEL - NIGHT

Across the common JONAH zeroes in on TURNBULL with laser
precision as he makes his entrance... he emerges at the
base of the citadel, where a makeshift wooden stage
awaits him. Two ROUGHNECKS bookend him like Secret
Service, holding back the throng.

TURNBULL climbs up onto the wood platform like a king
ascending the throne.

The mob erupts in cheers...

LONG LIVE JEFFERSON DAVIS!

And then, rising like a hell's chorus of flaming
banshees: the legendary REBEL YELL... high-pitched and
eerie -- KEE-YIII, KEE-YIII... YIP! YIP! YIP! -- an ear-
piercing roar that had struck terror into the hearts of
many a Mudsill in the early days of the great conflict.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL holds up a CONFEDERATE FLAG in his left hand, letting the cacophony swell to a crescendo... then drops his left hand and raises his right -- palm open: enough.

The MOB gradually silences.

*

TURNBULL

I'm looking upon the face of a nation.

Murmurs of approval ripple through the men.

TURNBULL

A nation bowed, and bruised, and driven underground -- but never defeated.

They like this. PAN ACROSS the faces in the crowd, glistening with perspiration in the firelight:

TURNBULL

I see amongst you rich and poor... old and young... educated, and common. What do we share? A dream? A vision?

(beat)

No. Dreams, my friends -- they're for dreamers. The work that lies ahead for us will be done in the cold light of day -- not by dreamers: by ploughmen, by soldiers... by butchers. It is the work of vengeance and restitution, and it requires a different fuel.

The mob stirs and rumbles...

TURNBULL

Anger.

(beat)

Anger is what we share. All of us. A terrible anger, growing within our hearts like a flower taken to seed in blood-soaked soil, come to bloom in its due time. Anger: it carries us... feeds us... provides us solace and succor. You can feel it, can't you?

Yes they can.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL turns toward LUSK, who cowers behind the platform -- Turnbull's eyes flash malice, amusement, triumph... LUSK is the only one who can truly appreciate the manipulative brilliance of TURNBULL'S performance. *

TURNBULL

Inside you -- that beating, that great pounding, like the drums of war; hot and quick in your veins -- Anger! Cherish it.. nurture it... let it boil and rise.

(gestures toward the battlements where JONAH watches)

These walls, once a fine feather in the cap of the Union -- now abandoned, left for us to reclaim. Our enemies have fled north, grown fat and sallow... inattentive.

(beat)

They have forgotten us for dead.
But NOTHING STAYS DEAD, my friends... every precious thing lost, may be one day redeemed.

TURNBULL seems on the verge of being overcome by emotion. Is he talking about the Confederacy? Or JEB? He holds up a clutching, trembling fist.

TURNBULL

As long as a man holds a thing in his heart: it can be buried --
but in its due hour... IT... WILL... RISE... *

The MOB is ready to rock and roll.

TURNBULL

IT WILL RISE!!!

They erupt in a deafening REBEL YELL. JONAH watches it all from his position on the battlement.

JONAH

Had about enough 'er this nonsense.

He cocks the long rifle.

Just then: a whistling in the sky... three GLOWING PROJECTILES arc over the scene, launched from outside the fort, throwing off sparks and smoke -- one rosy-colored, one white, one blue...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The ROSY-COLORED ROCKET lands right in the middle of the MOB and explodes into a phosphorescent pink smoke cloud... the men back off, forming a circle.

The WHITE ROCKET comes down right behind TURNBULL, showering him with sparks. TURNBULL barely flinches; his ROUGHNECKS stumble in the dirt, waving away the thick smoke and coughing.

TURNBULL

(ice cold)

What the blazes...

The BLUE ROCKET overshoots the common, hits the far battlement where JONAH is hiding; bounces and skitters along the stone walkway, straight at JONAH.

JONAH

My puckered cornhole!

The thing explodes in a flash of blue fire; JONAH has to duck down to avoid being illuminated.

From the battlement opposite JONAH'S perch a LOOKOUT is waving and yelling.

LOOKOUT

Yankees! A whole mess 'er 'em!

Men flock to the casements to see, crowding over one another.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT JACKSON - NIGHT

GRASS and a hundred or so troops are gathered outside, spreading out for position -- several dozen cavalry, including SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN; the rest common infantry.

One thing's for sure: they don't look like near enough to take on what's inside TURNBULL'S FORT.

GRASS hollers into a brass BULLHORN.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

You are surrounded by the milit'ry of the United States of America! You will all be arrested for treason... and some of you for murder, armed robbery, and destruction of property.

INT. FORT JACKSON - CONTINUOUS ACTION - NIGHT

The gathered REBS look to one another.

REB

Aw, hell, there don't look to be
more'n a few score a them fellers.

The others murmur acknowledgement.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

*Leave all your weapons inside and
come out in an orderly fashion.
Quentin Turnbull, you kin show
your face first, and then everyone
else kin folla'. There ain't no
need for no one to get shot dead
tonight, provided you damned dirty
Rebs see fit to cooperate.*

TURNBULL has made his way to a vantage point atop the
battlement wall. He looks down on GRASS' men with cold
malice...

TURNBULL

And so it begins.

He turns to his ROUGHNECKS.

TURNBULL

Throw open the armory.

And then, calling down to the REBEL MOB:

TURNBULL

*ARM YOURSELVES, FRIENDS! THIS WAR
BEGINS ANEW TONIGHT!*

The MOB lets up a frenzied whoop and holler; they begin
to stampede across the common toward the ARSENAL.

JONAH

(quietly)

Damn it, Grass. You really done
it now.

He looks over at the smoldering BLUE ROCKET...
phosphorous smoke and sparks still flare from it. He
wraps a cloth around his hand, grabs the thing up and
bails back down over the battlement wall.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT JACKSON - NIGHT

GRASS lowers the BULLHORN, satisfied.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

(to EVEN)

That outta set the fear of God in
them bastards.

He takes a look at his gold pocket watch.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Give 'em till five clicks past the
hour to comply -- then we're goin'
in.

EVEN doesn't answer, just glances at GRASS sidelong. He
looks a good bit less than confident.

CUT TO:

INT. FORT JACKSON - CONTINUOUS ACTION - NIGHT

TURNBULL'S ROUGHNECKS throw open the doors to the
arsenal; the REBEL MOB swarms in...

... and then swarms back out, falling all over themselves
and trampling one another in a panic:

BLUE SMOKE AND SPARKS HAVE STARTED TO BILLOW AND CRACKLE
FROM THE ENTRANCE TO THE ARSENAL!

REDNECK

She's gonna blow!!!

TURNBULL takes notice of this new commotion.

TURNBULL

Now what?

The ROUGHNECKS peek around the corner to the source of
the BLUE SMOKE -- then bail off running...

BOOM!BOOM!BOOM!BOOM! -- A SERIES OF MASSIVE EXPLOSIONS
RIP OPEN THE STONE BATTLEMENT BEHIND THE FLEEING MEN...
TURNBULL'S ROUGHNECKS are lifted off their feet and
thrown like ragdolls.

Rubble, fire, and exploding, ricocheting ordnance fly
everywhere as the munitions ignite in a deafening chain
reaction... it's total pandemonium...

EXT. FORT JACKSON - NIGHT

The flashing light and explosions light up the night over the battlement walls. GRASS and EVEN look at one another.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

That about does it.

(into the BULLHORN)

WE'RE GOIN' IN!

The INFANTRY part to let through more SOLDIERS pushing the OVER/UNDER CANNONS we saw at the testing facility.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Let 'er rip, boys!

INT. FORT JACKSON - CONTINUOUS ACTION - NIGHT

B-BOOM! B-BOOM! Twin sets of cannonballs blow the big wooden gates of the fort to splinters. GRASS' boys come charging in...

... armed with motherfucking FLAME THROWERS -- with big red oil barrels wheeling in on carts. INFANTRY ignites the O-rings and the INBREDS from the testing facility climb up and start pumping.

WOOOOOOOOOSH!!! IT'S A REDNECK COOK-OFF.

Any REBS that ain't on fire are stampeding toward the exits, running right past GRASS' SOLDIERS and into the night.

TURNBULL looks on in shock, speechless. He scans the chaos for answers -- and finds one:

JONAH HEX is standing dead still across the common, staring him straight in the eye. Dying men -- on fire -- run back and forth between them. TURNBULL freezes. Time stands still. His eyes narrow, burning with rage. *

JONAH slowly reaches into a canvas bag and pulls something out; holds it up for TURNBULL to see... it looks like loose fabric at first, but on closer analysis... *

It could be a rubber mask of BURKE, if such a thing were yet invented -- JONAH makes sure to turn it so that TURNBULL can see the tattoos...

TURNBULL'S eyes widen: it's BURKE'S face, skinned from his very head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL
DAMN YOU TO HELL, JONAH HEX!!!

JONAH
WE AIN'T NEAR SETTLED OUR SCORE,
TURNBULL!

TURNBULL pulls two long pistols from his belt.

TURNBULL
THEN BY GOD WE'LL SETTLE IT NOW!

JONAH just shakes his head.

JONAH
Not tonight. 'N not here.

*

TURNBULL narrows his eyes, burning.

JONAH
You know where.

JONAH tosses BURKE'S face to the dirt.

TURNBULL loses his shit, roars and charges -- but a group of FLAMING REBS go stumbling in the way, blocking TURNBULL'S view of HEX... by the time they pass, JONAH has disappeared.

TURNBULL looks around in a fury; no sight of him.

TURNBULL
HEXXXX!!!

TURNBULL'S one surviving ROUGHNECK comes up behind him, claps a hand on his shoulder. TURNBULL spins, points a pistol between the man's eyes -- sees who it is, and -- in a rage -- almost pulls the trigger anyway. Instead, he sucks it in and lowers the weapon.

ROUGHNECK
Mr. Turnbull, we best go.

GRASS, EVEN and the mounted CAVALRY have made their entrance; they are mopping up the stragglers.

TURNBULL gathers his senses. A CAVALRY SOLDIER rides up; TURNBULL gives him both barrels in the chest, knocking him right off his horse.

*

TURNBULL
The trains.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He makes his way to the tunnels followed close by his last ROUGHNECK, shoving aside the REBS in his way, leaving his busted army behind to burn and die.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. RED VALLEY, LOUISIANA - MORNING

RED CLAY. A lonesome raindrop hits, then another... the valley is punctured by a thousand drops.

We are in the valley where JEB TURNBULL and the rest of SLOCUM'S BOYS died. It's empty now, but we'd know that red mud anywhere.

Dead set in the middle, with nothing near it: a pine box coffin.

A single BLACK CROW flutters down from the pale sky and rests on it, gives the wood a peck.

TURNBULL and his ROUGHNECK stand at the edge of the valley, looking on.

ROUGHNECK

Mr. Turnbull...

TURNBULL

(ice cold)

I see it.

He calls out.

TURNBULL

HEX! SHOW YOURSELF, YOU YELLOW BASTARD!

TURNBULL'S voice echoes across the valley -- nothing.

TURNBULL

Damn it.

He starts to stomp through the mud, toward the coffin.

ROUGHNECK

Sir, it's shore a trap.

TURNBULL

Fuck off.

The ROUGHNECK follows him, gun drawn, not liking it. They reach the coffin. TURNBULL looks around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL
(calling out)
WELL?

Nothing.

TURNBULL
(to the ROUGHNECK,
nodding toward the
coffin)
Open it.

ROUGHNECK
But --

TURNBULL pokes his long pistol at him.

TURNBULL
I said open it.

The ROUGHNECK glowers at him, then turns to the coffin.
The wet CROW hasn't moved.

The ROUGHNECK backhands it; the CROW flutters off,
squawking. He swallows heavily and lifts the lid of the
pine box... it's empty.

More black crows descend around the perimeter of the
valley. The ROUGHNECK LOOKS back at TURNBULL and
shrugs...

BANG! A shot comes from nowhere... the ROUGHNECK, his
head spouting dark blood, falls forward into the coffin;
the lid falls shut over him.

TURNBULL spins, attempting to follow the source of the
shot -- he sees movement, FIRES -- crows flutter away...

TURNBULL
*Show your face, Hex... or what's
left of it...!*

He spins again -- BANG! BANG! BANG! -- shooting at
nothing, at phantoms... until --

Click! Click! Click!

His pistols are empty; he throws them into the mud, wild-
eyed -- then, from behind him:

SOMETHING BURIED IS RISING UP OUT OF THE EARTH. TURNBULL
feels the eyes on his back; he slowly turns...

JONAH HEX stands up before him, covered in RED CLAY from
head to toe... a monster, a devil.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL

Hex...

JONAH

Time we settled our score.

LIGHTNING flashes over the valley; it burns us, white hot, back in time --

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. ARAPAHO VILLAGE - NIGHT

An OIL LANTERN swings and explodes into the face of the young, unscarred JONAH; he grits his teeth and shakes it off.

HEX is tied to a stake with heavy rope, soaked from head to toe... the modest Indian settlement smokes and smolders in the b.g.

A dozen or so men move around him, vaguely defined in the firelight; one spits on him... others laugh.

TURNBULL -- six years younger -- has a young ARAPAHO GIRL by the arm, twisting it behind her back; with her other arm she holds a crying, BUNDLED BABY. She is delirious with tears and shock.

(NOTE: We may recognize her from the legendary/apocryphal story related earlier, ending with the avalanche in the mountains -- JONAH'S INJUN WIFE.)

JONAH

Turnbull... by God...

TURNBULL

You have something to say to me, traitor?

JONAH

I swear it, I never gave those men up... I was framed...

TURNBULL nods, considering -- then strides right up to JONAH'S face, dragging the ARAPAHO GIRL through the dirt by her hair -- the crying baby clutched to her chest.

TURNBULL

I want you to answer me a question, Jonah Hex. And think very carefully about the answer you give.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL (CONT'D)

Did you -- or did you not -- walk
out and desert your brigade?

JONAH says nothing; just glares into TURNBULL'S eyes.

TURNBULL

I said: *did you or did you not
steal away like a rat in the night
and desert your brigade, sir?*

JONAH

Turnbull...

TURNBULL

Yes, you shorely did, Jonah Hex.
So you see, it doesn't really
matter one lick if what you say is
true, or what you say is false,
now does it?

JONAH strains against the ropes with everything he has.

TURNBULL

You took everything from me,
traitor. And now you're going to
watch me take something from you.

JONAH

NO!!!

TURNBULL grins, but there's no humor in it; he throws the
GIRL to the ground, the BABY crashes hard to the dirt...
raises up his eagle-top cane...

... and brings it down... again... and again... as the
men jeer... as JONAH screams... again and again... until
there is the stillness and complete quiet of two lifeless
bodies...

JONAH slumps forward, half conscious... his body
drained...

JONAH

Kill me...

TURNBULL

Not tonight. And not here.

One of TURNBULL'S MEN hands him a glowing brand --
TURNBULL shows HEX the molten, white-hot letters:

QT

He pushes the brand into JONAH'S cheek, searing the
letters into his flesh -- then tears it away...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL'S smoking initials are clearly inscribed on HEX'S face.

TURNBULL

No, sir -- That's a mercy I will most surely not extend. You're going to go free, Jonah Hex. Free to walk this land with a mark upon your flesh... something like Cain, in the old Holy Books... and that mark's going to remind you -- every single day -- of the man that took everything you had. You understand me, Jonah Hex?

JONAH just stares into TURNBULL'S eyes, and beyond...

Another FLASH of LIGHTNING --

CUT TO:

EXT. APACHE BURIAL GROUNDS - SUNDOWN

JONAH stumbles across the barren terrain, willing his body forward... racked by tears and madness...

... finally collapsing before a pool of still water.

He crawls up on his hands and knees -- and stares into the black water at his own reflection, eyes wild with fury. TURNBULL'S brand stares back at him.

MONTAGE

He strikes a flint, drawing sparks...

Fire catches the brush and blooms...

He holds a tomahawk to the licking flames...

The iron blade glows red...

Then orange...

Then white...

With each image the sun has dropped farther over the horizon -- night has fallen -- the moon is unimaginably huge, hanging low...

With steel in his eyes, JONAH holds the hot blade up to his face, illuminating it... and presses it hard to his cheek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A primal scream escapes from his lungs, or from the underworld, as his flesh burns and melts...

One last time, LIGHTNING FLASHES --

CUT TO:

EXT. RED VALLEY, LOUISIANA - MORNING (PRESENT)

Answering thunder echoes through the valley -- we are back in PRESENT DAY.

The rain has continued to fall, washing the red clay from JONAH'S face -- we see clearly what he did to himself with the burning blade untold years ago.

JONAH

Guess there ain't much left to say
between us.

TURNBULL snarls, pure animal. He lifts his cane and swings it down on JONAH'S head...

JONAH catches it, rips it from TURNBULL'S hand; corrects his grip on the hickory handle -- and swings it down, two handed.

B-BOOM.

JONAH doubles over, stung -- shocked. Blood seeps from his ribs and left shoulder... he puts his fingers to the wet crimson -- what the hell just happened? He looks up at TURNBULL...

... who is holding two smoking Derringers at hip level. TURNBULL plants a boot in JONAH'S midsection and pushes him away... JONAH stumbles backwards, left arm limp and numb at his side; still holding the EAGLE-TOPPED CANE in his right...

TURNBULL strides up to him without fear. He's won. He places the barrels of both guns against JONAH'S skull...

But with a surge of strength, JONAH swings up with the CANE, smashing it into TURNBULL'S face.

TURNBULL'S head snaps back; JONAH presses his advantage... he swings the cane down hard with his good hand...

The cane hits the crown of TURNBULL'S dome and shatters into splinters with the impact -- blood pours down his forehead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURNBULL brings up his right arm, pointing the gun at JONAH; JONAH smacks it away with the cane -- BOOM! Crows flutter and fly.

He brings up the other hand; the cane swings -- smack -- BOOM!

TURNBULL ROARS -- a beast, a Tyrannosaurus sinking into the tar -- defiant...

JONAH swings again with what's left of the cane, again and again...

TURNBULL crumples to the mud; JONAH falls on him -- the cane has disintegrated so he uses his fists... CRUNCH... CRUNCH...! It could be TURNBULL'S head breaking; it could be JONAH'S hands... He just keeps bringing his blood-soaked fists down 'til there's no resistance... he's pounding mush into the mud.

When the thing is finally done JONAH rises unsteadily to his feet; stands over him. It's quiet, just the sound of the rain on the red clay. He looks around, disoriented... sits down on the edge of the pine box.

A crow lands on TURNBULL'S body. The rain falls.

He just sits a spell.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. REBEL CEMETERY - SUNDOWN

A rundown military cemetery, long rows of simple graves stretching all along a hillside -- not as fancy and impressive as what they got at Arlington, but honorable nonetheless. The graves are mostly unmarked, but some are decorated here and again with faded flowers, Rebel flags and whatnot.

JONAH stands by an unmarked stone. His shattered hands are wrapped with dark stained cloth.

JONAH

(quietly)

Sorry about it, Jeb. I know he
was your daddy.

He kneels; gingerly places the SILVER EAGLE in the dirt by the stone. It catches the sun something pretty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He walks to the base of the hill. The old iron gate leans crooked; JONAH unties his HORSE and climbs on.

LIEUTENANT GRASS (O.S.)

You hold on just a damn minute,
Hex.

GRASS, EVEN and a dozen MILITIA canter up on horseback, moving to block the road.

JONAH

I had about enough'er you fuckers.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

The feelin's mutual, bounty hunter
-- don't you doubt that. 'Twer up
to me you'd be swingin' by a rope
for all you done. But apparently
some see it different.

EVEN hands GRASS a piss-stained, folded square of parchment.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

I'm here to extend to you a full
pardon for your perfidious,
murderin' acts, effective
immediate, courtesy the U.S.
Government.

EVEN hands him another stack of paper, tied up with string.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

Furthermore, the sum of five
hundred dollars, payable in these
here U.S. Government certificates.

He holds out the papers.

LIEUTENANT GRASS

(smirking)

Y'kin redeem these in any federal
government assistance center. Got
a real nice one up in D.C.

HEX looks at the little stack of paper; then gives GRASS a long look... then spits in the dirt.

JONAH

Thanks all the same.

He steers his horse past the SOLDIERS and down the road. GRASS calls after him, red faced, still holding the paper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIEUTENANT GRASS

You're nothing but a ghost, Hex!
A thing of the past! The world
has moved on -- got civilized...
there's no more room in it for men
like you!

EVEN looks GRASS up and down, not much impressed.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS ACTION - SUNDOWN

JONAH ambles his horse toward the horizon. EVEN rides up next to him and slows to match his pace.

JONAH gives him a sidelong look, says nothing.

EVEN pulls out his flask of whiskey and tosses it to him. JONAH catches it.

JONAH

That I will take.

JONAH unscrews the cap; hits it.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN

Shore do wish we could have us
that sit down sometime, Mr. Hex.

*

It's a long moment before JONAH speaks.

JONAH

Someday mebbe. Believe I'll ride
on my own a spell.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN

Where you headed?

JONAH considers.

JONAH

The mountains first, I expect...
after that...

(shrugs)

Who gives a damn?

He takes a last hit... turns the flask over and shakes it
-- not a drop left; tosses it back to the SOLDIER.

JONAH

Don't fergit to git yer dick wet,
soldier.

SECOND LIEUTENANT EVEN

No, sir, I won't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH dips his hat to EVEN and rides on. EVEN slows up and watches him go.

The sun is red and low in the west, and JONAH heads toward it.

EVEN smiles, starts whistling... a familiar tune...

... once a poem called "Defence of Fort McHenry," but we know it by a different name: "The Star Spangled Banner."

FADE OUT.

THE END

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