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SFX: Dock-side ambiance.

EASTERN MAN 1

It's in the newspaper . . . here, it says: 'Gold Mine Found . . . In the newly made raceway of the saw mill recently erected by Captain Sutter, on the American Fork, of the Sacramento river, gold has been found in considerable quantities. One person brought thirty dollars worth to New Helvetica, gathered there in a short time. California, no doubt, is rich in mineral wealth; there are great chances here for scientific capitalists.

Thinka that. Gold just layin' to be picked up.

EASTERN MAN 2

They said it was in the water.

EASTERN MAN 1

Chances for Scientific Capitalists.

EASTERN MAN 2

Yeah, what's that mean?

EASTERN MAN 1

I don't know exactly but it's someone smart who's enough to find gold.

SFX: A door opens nearby.

EASTERN BOSS

Hey! Come on, you two, back for another load.

EASTERN MAN 2

Yes sir.

EASTERN MAN 1

Scientific Capitalists . . .

**NARRATOR:** Random House Audio Publishing and louislamour.com present: Louis L'Amour's "Son of a Wanted Man"

In the summer following the conclusion of the war with Mexico news of a fantastically rich discovery of gold reached the east coast of the United States.

(CONTINUED)

It arrived in the form of an almost unknown western newspaper, printed in San Francisco, a city in the newly acquired territory of California.

Within months, tens of thousands of would-be miners were headed for the Sierra Nevada. It was as if the nation, perhaps even the whole world, had been awaiting this very event.

They were called the forty-niners and they came across the northern plains in covered wagons and around Cape Horn by ship. Some braved the deserts and Indians of the South West. Others packed their equipment from the Atlantic to the Pacific through the disease-ridden swamps and jungles of Panama and Nicaragua.

Those who survived; men from Philadelphia, New Orleans, New York and Boston; Santiago, Sydney and Hong Kong; found themselves on their knees in the icy water of mountain creeks panning and praying for gold.

Many died but many became rich. Those that perished were buried with little ceremony and their tools taken up by others. In a single year over eighty million dollars was washed from the creeks, and this in a day when thirty dollars a month was considered a substantial wage.

It was not only the miners who became prosperous in the gold fields. Merchants and freighters, assayers and saloon keepers; all charged phenomenal prices for their goods and services. Many a fortune was made without ever washing a pan or running a sluice.

But not all who came to the gold fields were honest men. Banditry and murder were common occurrences. The alleys and wharves of San Francisco were ruled by the Sydney Ducks, a gang of murderous Australians. In the hinterlands, Joaquin Murieta, a mythical outlaw whose exploits reached such proportions that it was believed he was actually five different men, became a folk hero to California's Mexican population.

And in the gold fields themselves, a mysterious bandit named Ben Curry prowled the mid-night trails ... and for a brief time was credited with many a robbery.

2

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2

SFX: A stage coach approaches along a dirt road.

STAGE DRIVER

Whoa!

BEN

Hold! Hold up there.

STAGE DRIVER

What is this, man? Get those logs out of the road!

SFX: Ben cocks his pistols.

BEN

Throw down the Express Box, my friend. Throw it down and have your passengers step out where I can see them.

STAGE DRIVER

There ...

SFX: A box of money is thrown down.

Don't hurt anyone and I'll do what I'm told.

PASSENGER 1

(off)

I say! What's happening?

PASSENGER 2

(off)

It's a robbery. Just get out.

BEN

That's right folks, stand down and deliver!

WOMAN PASSENGER

My heavens, a Highwayman!

BEN

I prefer Gentleman of Opportunity, Ma'am. I shant steal from a lady but your man there should hand over his watch as well.

PASSENGER 1

Take good care of it, when the authorities get you I'll want it back.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

Authorities? (laughs) I don't think so.  
No, I don't think so at all.

**NARRATOR:** For a time he was the most notorious bandit in California and when silver boomed in the Comstock he was a wanted man in Nevada as well.

Ben Curry and his gang came and went like ghosts, robbing stage coaches, banks and later, trains. But in all their years of thievery they never killed a man during the commission of a crime. Ben and his men would fight like demons when pursued. But during a robbery they had never killed, until one foggy morning in the spring of 1872, at a town called Brant's Crossing ...

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SFX: River ambiance.

PEEPLS

I say we go in. How do we know he'll be here?

DOC

He'll be here, keep your shirt on. Ben's having a last look around.

PEEPLS

How do you know? We ain't seen him in a week.

COLLEY

We know. All right? Doc an' me, we been doin' this a long time.

SFX: Hoof beats in a covered bridge.

**NARRATOR:** Doc Sawyer, a tough outlaw named Colley, and Dan Peeples were camped in the damp hollow under the south side of Brant's Bridge.

DOC

That will be him now.

PEEPLS

Let's hope so. It could be anyone. It could be the Sheriff.

COLLEY

Dan, you simmer down, and put away that hog-leg.

DOC

If need be we're just travelers, resting  
our horses. Nobody is going to be after  
us until we've committed a crime.

SFX: Peeples uncocks his gun. The horse turns and comes  
down the bank alongside the river.

**NARRATOR:** Ben Curry appeared out of the mist. A large, dark  
haired block of a man in a gray hat and a mackinaw with a  
sheepskin collar.

BEN

Gentlemen, we've five minutes ... Mount  
up.

**NARRATOR:** In the dim light under the bridge he locked eyes  
with each momentarily. Doc and Colley, good men both. Dan  
Peeples ... young, high-strung. Ben didn't yet know how he'd  
fair but soon they were going to find out.

It was just light enough to see the shapes of the buildings  
through the mist when Juan Santos and his seven year old son  
Miguel left the house to go to work.

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JUAN

Ready?

YOUNG MIKE

Yep.

**NARRATOR:** Juan was a widower who ran a successful grocery  
and, amongst other things, Miguel prowled the back alleys  
looking for bottles that Juan could boil and return to the  
local brewer.

SFX: The bottles clink in the crate.

JUAN

You want me to carry that?

YOUNG MIKE

No, I can do it.

JUAN

Well, you be careful then . . . that's  
glass.

Let's go.

(CONTINUED)

SPENCER  
(coming on)  
'morning, Juan.

JUAN  
Good morning.

YOUNG MIKE  
Good morning, Mr. Spencer.

SPENCER  
Hello, Michael. That's quite a load  
you've got there.

YOUNG MIKE  
Yes, Sir.

**NARRATOR:** They continued on, Spencer up the street to the  
bank, Miguel and his father to their store.

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**SFX:** Juan unlocks the store, Mike carries in the crate.

JUAN  
Here ... let's have those bottles.  
Ooo, that's heavy.

YOUNG MIKE  
Aww, Papa ...

JUAN  
Okay, it's not that heavy. Let's see,  
two, four, eight ... ten. What's that  
come to?

YOUNG MIKE  
It's twenty cents.

JUAN  
Very good ... and a nickel for carrying  
it down.

YOUNG MIKE  
Thanks!

JUAN  
Hard work always pays off . . . you're  
for better things than running a grocery,  
Miguelito, God willing.

5 CONTINUED:

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**NARRATOR:** As the sun began to burn away the morning mist the gang of outlaws drew up in an alley beside the bank.

6

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BEN

There'll be no shooting ... unless you have to.

**NARRATOR:** Doc Sawyer stayed with the horses. The others rounded the corner and started for the bank. Colley took up a position just outside the door, watching the street. Ben and Dan Peeples went inside ...

John Spencer had just finished unlocking the vault.

SFX: Ben and Dan Peeples enter.

SPENCER

Sorry, Gentlemen, we're not open yet.

SFX: Gun cocking.

PEEPLS

Oh yes, you are.

**NARRATOR:** Down the street at the Santos grocery, Juan was moving a display of canned goods to the window in front of his store. As he came back, Miguel was sitting on a stool tilting the label of a jar to the light.

7

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7

YOUNG MIKE

Papa ..?

What's pur ... pur-red ...

JUAN

Pure-eed. That's mashed ...

YOUNG MIKE

Yuk.

**NARRATOR:** Juan took a box of tinned fruit and began setting the cans on the shelves. Finishing, he straightened and glanced up the street.

JUAN

(off)

Que es eso?

(CONTINUED)



**NARRATOR:** Miguel jumped down from his stool and came to the window.

YOUNG MIKE

What's what?

JUAN

Somebody at the bank ...

**NARRATOR:** Across the street and up a block a rider trailing three saddled horses appeared from an alleyway and stopped before the bank. As the man drew up he looked down the street and straight into Miguel's eyes. He wore a bandanna drawn up over his mouth and was carrying a Henry rifle across his saddle bows.

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SFX: Spencer piles up bags of gold coins.

**NARRATOR:** The sacks of money were passed from Peeples to Ben to Colley and then out to Doc Sawyer who had drawn their horses onto the walk.

PEEPLS

Come on! Come on! Move it along!

**NARRATOR:** John Spencer pulled the last bag out of the safe.

SFX: Peeples hits Spencer with his pistol barrel.

SPENCER

(Gasps in pain)

PEEPLS

You put one foot outside this door and I'll kill you.

**NARRATOR:** Ben grabbed Dan and hurled him towards the door.

BEN

Come on. Did you hear me tell you? No rough stuff.

PEEPLS

Damn you, Ben!

**NARRATOR:** Ben Curry back handed Peeples across the mouth,

BEN

And no names. Now move!

9

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9

**NARRATOR:** Juan Santos pulled Miguel away from the window.

JUAN

Miguel, I'm going to have to get the  
Marshal. You stay right here,  
understand? I'm going out the back.

YOUNG MIKE

Okay ...

SFX: Juan starts out.

JUAN

... and get down on the floor, there may  
be shooting!

**NARRATOR:** He paused a moment to see Miguel hidden behind a  
display case, then made for the back door.

Juan cracked the door and peered out. A path led along  
behind the buildings and then dipped down to cross a low spot  
before joining the side street where the Marshal had his  
home. He closed the door quietly behind him and took the  
path at a run.

Inside the store Miguel sat behind the display cases and  
wondered what was going on . . . it was very quiet. He  
crawled out on hands and knees and made his way to the door,  
scrunching over against the brick to get an angle where he  
could peer up the street.

They were mounting and turning their horses toward him.  
Miguel pulled back. To get to the road out of town they  
would have cut over behind these buildings ... and that was  
the way his father would take to the Marshal's house! Miguel  
turned and ran for the back door.

10

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10

**NARRATOR:** The outlaws made for the end of Main, reined their  
horses into a side street and thundered into the low ground  
behind the stores.

As they hit the gully, Dan Peeples was in the lead. A slight  
man in a storekeepers apron scrambled down the bank and  
Peeples' horse reared.

Turning in the saddle, Dan Peeples shot him in the chest.

YOUNG MIKE

Papa ..? Papa!

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** The outlaws reined up taking in the situation; the dead man, Dan Peeples, and the little boy standing on the bank above them.

BEN

Daniel. You haven't been listening to me.

PEEPLLES

He was in my way!

**NARRATOR:** Ben drew a large Dragoon Model Colt and shot Dan Peeples in the forehead. The man slumped in the saddle then collapsed to the ground. Ben turned to the boy. He tugged his bandanna down, exposing his face.

BEN

Boy! You tell them what happened here, understand me?

SFX: The horses gallop off.

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SFX: A woman's voice singing Amazing Grace. Wind in the trees.

**NARRATOR:** They buried Juan Santos the next day, after services. Most of the townspeople turned out; for Juan had been an affable man and well liked by all.

PREACHER

We gather to celebrate the life of Juan Santos. The presence of so many friends  
...

**NARRATOR:** Near the end of the ceremony two strangers arrived at the cemetery gate. Some probably thought they had been drawn by the singing, others may have surmised that they were men Juan had done business with in other towns. Certainly one of them looked like a prosperous merchant from Stockton or San Francisco. He was a large gentleman with dark wavy hair, dressed in a fine black suit.

The other, a lean and gray old man with a closely cropped beard, could have been one of the hunters who supplied the Santos Grocery with elk and venison. He was dressed in the buckskin outfit of a woodsman. He wore his hair long and his skin had been tanned and seamed by more than half a century of sunlight.

PREACHER (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
... and so, my friends, we commit the  
body of Juan Santos to the earth, and his  
soul to the Kingdom of Heaven.

SFX: Ben steps forward.

**NARRATOR:** The big stranger in the black suit stood, hat in  
hand beside Mrs. Keating, the brewer's wife.

BEN  
Ma'am . . .

MRS. KEATING  
It's a terrible thing.

BEN  
That it is. Where's the boy's mother?

MRS. KEATING  
I'm afraid Mr. Santos was a widower. Mr.  
Denslow will take him. He's done it  
before.

**NARRATOR:** She indicated a worn-out looking farmer in stained  
over-alls. Beside him was his wife, one of their six  
children held in her arms. The others stood uneasily or  
scuffed their toes in the dirt, looking bored.

BEN  
Is that the best home you can give him?

MRS. KEATING  
He's an honest, God-fearing, man . . .  
and being a farmer, he's got plenty of  
work for children.

BEN  
Poor kid.

**NARRATOR:** Men and women offered their condolences. Slowly  
the cemetery emptied.

**NARRATOR:** The big man walked over and knelt down beside the  
boy.

BEN  
Do you remember who I am?

**NARRATOR:** Miguel looked at him and felt his breath catch for  
an instant.

YOUNG MIKE

You're the bank robber ... you shot that man ...

BEN

And are you afraid of me?

YOUNG MIKE

(he is, a little)

No.

BEN

Good boy. Now, what's your name?

YOUNG MIKE

Miguel.

BEN

What happened to your father is my fault. I'm very sorry ... do you understand that?

YOUNG MIKE

Yes.

BEN

Do you know who's going to take care of you now?

YOUNG MIKE

I'm going to live with Farmer Denslow.

BEN

And is that what you want?

YOUNG MIKE

(squinting up at BEN)

Do I have a choice?

SFX: Ben chuckles.

BEN

You always have a choice, if you have the courage to make it.

You could come with me.

Now, I don't know if you'd like it ... We don't get up early. There'd be no slopping the hogs or milking cows ...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BEN (cont'd)  
I live a long way from here and if you  
came along I'd have to teach you to ride,  
and shoot ...

**NARRATOR:** Miguel looked across at Mr. Denslow, wondering what would happen if he didn't go to live with him. One of the older Denslow kids started to pick his nose with a dirty finger. Almost without looking, Denslow cuffed the boy on the side of the head.

BEN (cont'd)  
Doesn't look good, does it?

**NARRATOR:** Miguel looked somberly up at Ben and shook his head.

BEN (cont'd)  
Do you want to come along?

**NARRATOR:** Miguel nodded.

Ben Curry stood and placed a hand on the boy's shoulder, he walked Miguel a few steps away from the side of the grave. Over in one corner of the cemetery the old man in buckskins was on his horse in one fluid motion, like an Indian mounting bare-back. He led Ben's horse over to where Ben and Miguel stood.

ROUNDY  
You ready to dust out of here?

BEN  
This here's Roundy. He's my oldest  
friend.

YOUNG MIKE  
Hello Sir.

**NARRATOR:** Roundy gave Miguel a little salute as Ben got on his horse.

BEN  
Now, shake my hand like we're saying good-  
bye. We don't want to alarm these good  
people ...

**NARRATOR:** Taking the boy's hand Ben swung Miguel up behind his saddle.

BEN (cont'd)  
... until the last moment.

DENSLOW  
Michael?

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** Ben and Roundy turned their horses as Mr. Denslow stepped forward.

DENSLOW (cont'd)  
Hey, what are you doing?

BEN  
Hi-yhaa!

**NARRATOR:** Roundy and Ben, with Miguel riding double, galloped off, their horses easily clearing the cemetery fence.

DENSLOW  
Michael?!

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SFX: Riding, birds chirp, a pleasant day in the hills.

BEN  
Out there, is the Sierra Nevada.  
Tomorrow we'll be at Robber's Roost.

YOUNG MIKE  
What's that?

ROUNDY  
Robber's Roost? Why that's home, young fellow.

BEN  
It's in a secret canyon where no one can find us.

YOUNG MIKE  
A Secret Canyon?

BEN  
That's right. Only my boys and the Indians know where it is.  
  
There won't be any other kids, but there'll be the whole canyon to play in.

YOUNG MIKE  
Will I have to go to school?

BEN  
Hell, no . . . Well, I guess we will have to teach you . . .

I'll send for all the books.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BEN (cont'd)

We can't have you growing up ignorant.

What do you think, Roundy? We could get Tom Croydon to teach him to open safes, and I'll ask Burton to show him how to cheat at cards ...

ROUNDY

(Laughing)

BEN

What's so funny?

ROUNDY

If you're not careful, he'll grow up to be just like you.

BEN

And what's wrong with that?

ROUNDY

Time will tell, Ben. Time will tell.

**NARRATOR:** By devious trails they made their way from the rolling foothills into the High Sierra. They crossed and recrossed the forks of an icy river and rode amongst giant fir trees and then through a desolate basin of gray granite boulders where the last remnants of a glacier lay glowing faintly in the twilight. When they camped it was in a sheltered spot that seemed familiar to Ben and Roundy; perfectly chosen but with no evidence of previous fires. In the morning Miguel watched quietly as Roundy removed all trace of their camp. He could tell that these men lived by caution as much as boldness and left no more sign of their passing than a wild animal.

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**NARRATOR:** They came, at last, to a gap in the rocky wall of a mountain through which a narrow stream poured. All around them were massive trees, common spruce and pine that had grown so old and large that two men could not wrap their arms around the trunks.

SFX: Whistle.

**NARRATOR:** Up in the rocks a man's head appeared.

OUTLAW 1

Come on in, Boss. I know it's you; I've had you in my sights for five hundred yards.

(CONTINUED)



**NARRATOR:** They rode into the stream and through the crack. Then, turning right, they took a trail with a steep cliff above and below. By this route they came to a high mountain meadow surrounded by trees and snow capped rocky peaks.

In the center of the open area there were several buildings; One was a saloon and meeting hall, four were plank-walled tents, and across the stream was an ancient dug-out fronted with huge logs and sprouting a crop of fresh spring grass from it's sod roof. And off by itself, there stood a large two story cabin carefully built of native stone and squared timber.

BEN

This is it, Michael. Welcome home.

YOUNG MIKE

Wow!

BEN

You know, Roundy, I've always wanted a son . . .

**NARRATOR:** From then on Ben spent more and more time with the boy. Together they hiked in the mountains, fished the streams, hunted and rode in the lonely hills.

Occasionally, they traveled to the towns at the base of the Sierra or farther out, over the eastern range to the booming Nevada silver camps. Ben took pains to conceal his identity. He grew a fancy mustache and goatee, always dressed in the finest of clothes and he had Michael with him ... his son, the best cover in the world.

All this time he was scouting jobs. Not just face-to-face robberies, but the night time burglaries of safes in vacant offices, and freight from warehouses and unattended boxcars. Ben would plan meticulously, sometimes years in advance. Then, unexpectedly, his men would ride in to pull the hold up, blow the safe, or to load up wagons with stolen merchandise. Michael was always there when the men came back, tired, sometimes bloody, but triumphant. He was raised on outlaw's tales of bold robberies and daring escapes.

Often, when the boys from Robber's Roost rode out, little Mike would be the one to bring their horses up to the saloon where they would be going over the plans one last time.

YOUNG MIKE

Here you are, sir.

COLLEY

Sir! You hear that, I'm being treated like a real gent. If I can I'll return with my pockets full of gold and a *high hat*, if'n I can find one.

YOUNG MIKE

Good luck, Mr. Sawyer.

DOC

Colley's right, you are of formal bent this morning. Tell us to 'break a leg.'

YOUNG MIKE

But . . .

DOC

It's not what you're thinking. It's a bow, a bow to the audience. Robbery is a performance, like many other things in life.

BEN

He's right, Son.

(to the departing men)

Break a leg!

(to himself)

Break a leg, my Gentlemen of Opportunity.

YOUNG MIKE

I want to go with them.

BEN

No . . . no, Michael, I don't think so.

YOUNG MIKE

I want to go with them someday.

BEN

We'll see. All in good time.

**NARRATOR:** It is to be noted that since the day of the bank raid on Brant's Crossing, the day of the death of Juan Santos and Dan Peeples, Ben Curry never personally commanded another hold-up.

There were one or two who thought he might have lost his nerve and tried to test him -- they died in a sudden explosion of gunfire.

(CONTINUED)

There was another who tried to blackmail Ben, a card sharp who recognized him in a hotel lobby in Virginia City. Ben left Michael in the room that evening and did not return until long after midnight. They found the body six months later in a pool of water at the bottom of a mine shaft, seven hundred feet underground.

Several times a year Ben would be gone for a few weeks. What he did in these times was unknown but when he returned he always looked rested, and he brought with him gifts for his adopted son.

Michael Santos got an education in more than how to plan a hold up. True to his word, Ben got the boy all the books he could read. Roundy taught Michael to hunt and track and other things as well; how to read the weather from the clouds and the behavior of birds, how to make his own moccasins and find the forest and desert plants that could be used as medicine and food.

He was taught by the best how to cheat at cards, peel a safe, and to work over a brand. Doc Sawyer, once a veterinarian, taught him something of medicine for both animals and men. He guided Michael's reading as well, for the Doctor was a cultivated man.

But there came a time, after the passing of years, when Ben could see the limitations of what he and the others had to teach. Michael was man-grown in many ways but the only world he had known, beside his brief trips outside, was the world of Robber's Roost. And so, one afternoon, in the fading warmth of Michael's sixteenth summer, Ben Curry made the hardest decision of his life.

**NARRATOR:** Mike and Ben climbed, to sit on a rock overlooking the canyon; a place where the buildings and corrals looked very small. It was here, Mike knew, that Ben brought him when he had something difficult or important to discuss.

BEN

You know, there's more to life than this.  
There's cities and there's lights and  
music and women. A lot of different  
places and different kinds of people.

You need to see that, Mike.

**NARRATOR:** Mike felt a tightening in his stomach, he feared what was coming. Feared it, yet he was excited too.

BEN (cont'd)

There's a world of experience out there and you're going to have to learn how to make your way in it sooner or later.

MIKE

You want me to go?

BEN

Yes I do. Before the snow comes.

Roundy will take you down and he'll help you find a job somewhere. Then you'll be on your own.

MIKE

Pa? I ... I want to work with you. I want to ride out with the boys, and help you.

**NARRATOR:** Ben put his arm around Mike. He was still so much a boy but now he must become a man.

BEN

We can talk about that later. There's a lot to life I can't teach you.

MIKE

Do I have to go right away?

BEN

In a month. You'll be all right, it won't hurt you to work for a living.

Hell, even I did it once.

**NARRATOR:** High above them a flock of geese passed by heading south. Ben almost shivered, for there was a crispness in the air he had not noticed before.

As the years passed Ben could never look at the migrating birds without remembering that day. And as the flocks dwindled with the years, he found that he regretted it almost as much as he knew deep in his heart, that he had done the right thing.

MUSIC/TIME TRANSITION

SFX: Thunder crashes, rain falls. A steam engine approaches.

**NARRATOR:** In all his born days, Roundy thought, he had never seen a sight more like hell on earth. It was full night, rain was falling in sheets, and up ahead smoke billowed and carbide lights glared with their unnatural white light.

His horse nervously picked its way through the rail yard, no more comfortable than its rider.

SFX: Train whistle. His horse snorts and blows.

ENGINEER

Hey Buddy, get that nag outa here!

**NARRATOR:** A switching engine cut across in front of him and Roundy's mount reared in panic. It was only his long years in the saddle that kept the horse from bolting.

He pressed on, carefully, through tracks and ties invisible in the darkness.

The roundhouse loomed ahead and before it the deep well of the turnstile. Three engines sat on the tracks outside and within, several more. Crews of mechanics swarmed over them performing tasks that Roundy could not even guess at.

He pulled up before a group of men and stepped down; a smooth, easy motion; smooth for a man now in his late sixties. The men stared at him in his buckskins and his buffalo coat, his wide hat dripping rain.

YARD WORKER

Would you look at this? We got the great scout in from the woods.

Hey! You seen any injuns out there?

OTHERS

(laugh)

ROUNDY

Tell me, son, have you ever seen a scalp taken?

YARD WORKER

No . . .

ROUNDY

Well it's not a pretty sight.

**NARRATOR:** He reached out, caught a fore-lock of the yard worker's hair in one hand and drew his Bowie knife with the other.

(CONTINUED)

YARD WORKER

Hey? Hey! Let me go!

ROUNDY

You start about here and kind of work  
your way back.

**NARRATOR:** The men watched, frozen.

ROUNDY (cont'd)

If you don't tell me where I can find  
Mike Santos I might take me a scalp right  
here . . . just to amuse my self . . .  
and to teach you and your friends here  
respect for your elders.

YARD WORKER

He's ... (clears throat) He's in the pit.

ROUNDY

Best lead me to him, son. I wouldn't  
want to lose my way.

**NARRATOR:** It was Grant's Pass, Oregon, and the year was  
1886.

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**NARRATOR:** Roundy tied his horse outside and followed the man  
between steaming engines, past a forge, and through a shop  
where machines ran, driven by leather belts from a shaft half  
hidden in the shadows between the rafters. The heat and  
noise were nigh unbearable and along the way men gawked at  
him, a figure from another place and time in his long coat  
and high boots.

Beneath an enormous locomotive, in a pit where men struggled  
to move steel wheels five feet across with huge jacks and  
heavy wrenches, Roundy found Mike.

YARD WORKER

Hey! Hey, Mike! Someone's, ahh ...  
There's someone here to see you.

MIKE

Roundy!

**NARRATOR:** But it was a different young man who looked up at  
him, face stained with oil and grime, heavy muscles bunched  
as he worked the jack. He was twenty-one years old, bigger,  
harder, a man, or nearly one.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)  
Here, Patty take my place.

**NARRATOR:** He vaulted out of the pit and grasped the old man in a fierce bear hug ...

MIKE (cont'd)  
Roundy!

**NARRATOR:** ... then released him, looking sheepish.

MIKE (cont'd)  
It's good to see you.

ROUNDY  
Likewise, son. You've been gone far too long.

**NARRATOR:** Mike had seen Ben and Roundy several times since leaving Robber's Roost but the meetings had always been hurried, a day or two here or there, dinner at a railroad station cafe, an evening in a waterfront saloon.

ROUNDY (cont'd)  
Let's go outside. Can you take a minute?

MIKE  
Yeah ... sure.

**SFX:** They walk to the door of the roundhouse.

**NARRATOR:** They walked to the huge doors of the roundhouse, standing behind the locomotive tender, just out of the rain.

ROUNDY  
Ben wants you to come home.

MIKE  
Is there something wrong? Is Pa all right?

ROUNDY  
He's fine but he wants to talk with you.  
Ben's not getting any younger ... and things are changing.

MIKE  
What do you mean?

ROUNDY  
I'd rather you see that for yourself.

(CONTINUED)

ROUNDHOUSE BOSS

(coming on)

Hey!

What is this? Santos, get back to work!

MIKE

Sorry, Sir. This is my ... This is my  
uncle. He was just ...

ROUNDHOUSE BOSS

Not on company time! Now I want steam up  
on Number Three by the time Schiller  
comes in. Now move, mister!

MIKE

Yes, sir.

**NARRATOR:** The foreman moved off into the darkness. Mike  
looked at Roundy and shrugged.

MIKE (cont'd)

There's a parlor car you can sack out in.  
I'll draw my time and we'll leave in the  
morning.

(MIKE draws a deep breath)

Right now, I've got a shift to finish.

-----

**NARRATOR:** The next day found Mike and Roundy headed south  
past lower Klamath Lake. Off in the distance a steamboat  
chugged slowly northward, pulling a raft of timber. That  
night they camped in a desolate wasteland of stumps and torn  
up earth; the destruction left by a logging company.

Over the course of days they rode through deep forests and  
across wide plains. Until at last, they came into the tawny  
grass and scattered oaks of the Sierra foothills. Holding to  
the higher ground Roundy lead them by obscure trails to a  
camp in an outcropping of standing stones.

The following morning Roundy noted with pride that Mike's  
horse stood still, without a hand on the reins when Mike  
began to saddle up.

ROUNDY

You've done a good job training that  
horse.

(CONTINUED)



MIKE

Well, Ben always told me; "treat a horse like you treat a friend, because you never know when you'll need one or the other."

ROUNDY

Not bad advice.

**NARRATOR:** Roundy glanced at the sun and thought for a moment  
...

ROUNDY (cont'd)

Let's picket these critters again and take a walk. I've something to show you.

**NARRATOR:** He lead Mike across a saddle in the ridge to the top of a nearby hill. Bending low to keep the crest of the hill above them he made his way around to a thicket of oaks and brush. There, they hunkered down and Roundy pointed out a ranch nestled in the little valley below.

There was a house, a small two story affair with a surrounding porch, a granary, chicken coop, and a large barn. Along one side of the house was a kitchen garden and across the back, perhaps a little too close for comfort, ran a small stream.

ROUNDY (cont'd)

Nice place, isn't it?

MIKE

So ...

**NARRATOR:** Roundy put a finger to his lips and then handed Mike a pair of binoculars.

A man led a large horse up to the front of the house. After a moment someone emerged, Mike could not make him out in the shadow of the porch but then the man stepped into the sunlight ...

**SFX:** Mike starts to stand.

MIKE (cont'd)

That's Ben!

ROUNDY

No, Mike ...

**NARRATOR:** Roundy pulled Mike down.

(CONTINUED)

ROUNDY (cont'd)  
... We can't let him see us.

MIKE  
Why not?

ROUNDY  
That there is the Rafter R ranch, Ben owns it under the name Ben Regan.

MIKE  
So Pa bought a ranch; it's a good front operation.

ROUNDY  
The Rafter R isn't a front. Ben has owned it for seventeen years, and besides me, you are the only other person that knows that Ben Curry and Ben Regan are the same.

MIKE  
Seventeen years ..?

There's a woman down there.

ROUNDY  
Ben Regan has two daughters, Drusilla, and Juliana.

MIKE  
Daughters?  
(pause)  
What about a wife?

ROUNDY  
Her name was Abigail. She died giving birth to Julie. That was about a year before Ben found you. Abigail's brother, Jack, runs this place.

MIKE  
You're the only one who knows?

ROUNDY  
And now you.

You can't ask Ben. If he knew I brought you here he'd have my hide.

**NARRATOR:** Mike looked back through the glasses. Ben embraced and kissed both of the girls.

(CONTINUED)

Then, after shaking hands with the man, he mounted his horse and rode off, disappearing into the trees only to reappear again momentarily further down the road.

DRU & JULIE  
(distant)  
Good-bye. Come back ... Ride safe, Pa.

BEN  
(distant)  
Good bye!

**NARRATOR:** Mike turned to Roundy.

MIKE  
Why did you show me this?

ROUNDY  
Your father could walk away from Robber's Roost and live comfortably for the rest of his life. In fact, one of these days, he plans to do just that.

-----

**NARRATOR:** Mike said no more about what he had been shown until he and Roundy paused before fording the river. Beyond, the trail dwindled rapidly for once on the other side there was little but wilderness for many miles ... little except for Robber's Roost that is.

MIKE  
Roundy? Why didn't he tell me?

ROUNDY  
Ahh, Ben hoards secrets like some men hoard money.

MIKE  
Well, if this is all some big secret, what happens if we run into Ben on the trail?

ROUNDY  
He doesn't come this way.

MIKE  
The only other place to cross is forty miles down river.

ROUNDY  
Ben'll be at the Roost more than two hours before we are. He's got his own way across, but I don't know where it is.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Roundy, you're making me nervous.

ROUNDY

Why's that?

MIKE

You're showing this and that-- But you aren't telling me anything.

ROUNDY

People learn better when they figure things out for themselves. Telling the answers just makes them lazy.

**NARRATOR:** Mike looked at him appraisingly, it was a harder, more adult look than Roundy was used to.

MIKE

Yeah? Well, I hope later on you don't wish you'd just come out and said it.

ROUNDY

So do I.

Gid-ap!

**SFX:** They ride their horses into the water.

21

**OMITTED**

21

22

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22

**NARRATOR:** They came to the crack in the rocky wall where the huge trees stood, Roundy waved to the man on guard and they went up, through the stream and into the narrow valley under the snow capped peaks.

Robber's Roost had changed. More log cabins had been put up and there were easily a dozen walled tents. A full barn had been built where once there had been merely a shed to shelter the horses in the winter. There were new dugouts for storage and many more horses in the pasture and corral.

Men loafed on the porch of what they had called the saloon and crates of merchandise, stacks of tinned food, and raw planks, lay in piles between the tents.

MIKE

Jesus, Roundy ... Who are these guys?

(CONTINUED)

ROUNDY

The gang has grown. There's twenty men here now.

**NARRATOR:** They reined up in front of Ben's big house. The rock-work of the first floor looking strong as ever and the chinking between the logs of the upper story was fresh and carefully laid.

The front door opened and Ben appeared. He was heavier now and his hair was almost completely gray.

Mike slipped off his horse and climbed the porch. Then he stopped, looking at Ben, close up. Ben stuck out his hand.

BEN

Ahh, Mike. Welcome home.

**NARRATOR:** Mike took the hand, and then, grabbed Ben in both arms and lifted him off the ground.

MIKE

(Growling and laughing.)

BEN

(The same)

MIKE

Hi, Pa.

BEN

They've been putting some meat on your bones, haven't they?

Come on inside, Roundy. I'll have Shan Bao fix up some supper.

SFX: Ben lights match, draws on pipe, night sounds.

**NARRATOR:** After they had eaten and Roundy had drifted off to his dugout, Mike and Ben stood on the porch while Ben had his evening pipe.

MIKE

Pa, did you ever want a family? More than just me, I mean.

BEN

I was married once ... she died before you came along.

MIKE

Did you have any children?

BEN

That's old history, Mike. If I had it to do over ... I don't know what I'd do.

Come on, let's go get a drink.

**NARRATOR:** Ben pushed away from the rail and Mike followed him as they walked across the meadow towards the saloon.

MIKE

This place has changed ...

You've got a lot of new men here.

BEN

We're doing more jobs. Last year my cut alone was over a hundred thousand dollars.

MIKE

It's not like the old days though, is it?

BEN

What do you mean?

MIKE

Do you really know all these men? I didn't recognize anybody down there. How do you trust them?

BEN

Trust them? They're thieves!

... they know what happens if they hold out on me.

MIKE

So, who's left ... from the old gang?

BEN

Colley, and Doc ... and Roundy, but he just likes living up here ... away from "civilized" men.

MIKE

I worry about you ...

BEN

You afraid I can't take care of myself?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

No, but you're not getting any younger.

BEN

Ahh? Well, the older I get ... the meaner I get.

**NARRATOR:** They paused on the doorstep of the saloon.

BEN (cont'd)

Go on. I'll see if Colley's around, he'll want to see you.

MIKE

Okay.

BEN

Pour me one, I'll be right in.

-----

**NARRATOR:** Mike pushed open the rough wooden door and looked around. The light in the room was low and smoky. Several men Mike had never seen before sat at a table playing cards and another was sleeping in the corner.

Mike walked over to the bar, which was a rough set of shelves supporting an uneven pyramid of glasses, a mixed collection of whiskey bottles and a tapped hogshead of beer.

At the table where the men were playing cards, a Californio named Molina had been watching Mike's progress. He caught the eye of the man across from him and Kirb Perrin turned in his chair to look at Mike.

MOLINA

(under)

Hey, Kirb ... who's that?

PERRIN

(under)

Hell if I know.

MOLINA

(under)

Well, someone brought him up here.

**NARRATOR:** He glanced at Ducrow, who sat across the table, but Ducrow shrugged; he didn't recognize the newcomer either.

DUCROW

I never seen him before. Give me a card.

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** Perrin shoved his chair back and walked over to the bar where Mike had just topped off a mug of beer from the tap. He leaned on the keg slowly inspecting Mike, his attitude elaborately casual.

PERRIN

I don't know you.

MIKE

I'm Mike Santos.

(hardening)

I don't know you either.

PERRIN

I'm Perrin. And if you're new around here it's best you check in with me first.

MIKE

I'm just visiting Ben ... and I'm not new.

**NARRATOR:** Molina and Ducrow got up and wandered over to see what was going on. Mike was beginning to feel dangerously hemmed in.

MOLINA

You know the name, but nobody "just visits" Ben.

DUCROW

How the hell'd you get in here?

PERRIN

Kid, I've never seen you before, and if you haven't got it figured, we don't hang out the string for strangers around here.

MIKE

I don't want any trouble.

PERRIN

Yeah? Well that's good.

**NARRATOR:** Perrin reached out and tapped Mike on the nose with his index finger.

PERRIN (cont'd)

I'll tell you the secret... You find me in the morning and we'll see what Ben says. If you're okay with him, I'll let you have a drink. If you're not, I'll kill you. *Comprende?*

(CONTINUED)



MIKE

Jesus ...

PERRIN

Now, get out of here.

**NARRATOR:** Mike waited, slowly taking a breath, and then turned and walked to the door. He pushed it open and went out into the night.

-----

**NARRATOR:** He paused a moment, trying to get his composure back. From the darkness there was a noise. He turned quickly and saw Ben Curry standing there.

BEN

You know son, the rules are different up here.

**NARRATOR:** Mike's face flushed. He stood there looking Ben dead in the eye ... and then he turned and strode back into the room.

Perrin was back at the card table. He glanced at Mike and then turned to his companions.

PERRIN

Uh-oh, we've made it mad ...

**NARRATOR:** Mike crossed the room toward them. Without missing a step he scooped up one of the chairs from a nearby table.

The chair sent Perrin crashing to the floor. Mike, however, did not take advantage of this opportunity. He stood back and let Perrin get to his feet.

PERRIN (cont'd)

You are one STUPID kid!

DUCROW

Get him Kirb!

**NARRATOR:** Perrin rushed.

PERRIN

(Growls)

**NARRATOR:** Mike stood his ground until the last instant and then, turning slightly away, punched Perrin solidly in the kidney. The bigger man came around and Mike blocked a punch and countered.

(CONTINUED)

Then, working Perrin back against the wall, he slammed in a right just under Perrin's heart. As Perrin jack-knifed forward Mike clipped him on the back of the neck for good measure.

DUCROW

Whoa!

MIKE

This is my home. And I don't like being pushed around!

BEN

That's enough, Mike. That's enough, it's over.

**NARRATOR:** Ben was suddenly standing there. He bent and hauled the outlaw to his feet. He made a show of dusting Perrin off.

BEN (cont'd)

Kirby, you just got to be more careful who you fool with.

PERRIN

Ow!

BEN

Gentlemen, it's my pleasure to introduce you to my son, Mike.

**NARRATOR:** For a moment the men just stared at him ...

MOLINA

El hijo del jefe.

**NARRATOR:** ... then the big Mexican who had been playing cards stepped forward.

MOLINA (cont'd)

Me llamo Joaquin Molina.

**NARRATOR:** He offered his hand.

MIKE

Hola, Joaquin. Como estas?

BEN

He's been working up north, but now he's going to stay with us for awhile.

That's Ducrow.

(CONTINUED)

DUCROW

Hey.

BEN

And your dancing partner here is Kirby  
Perrin ...

**NARRATOR:** Perrin spat blood on the floor.

BEN (cont'd)

Don't hold this against him, Kirb. Come  
on ...

**NARRATOR:** Ben put an arm around Perrin's shoulders and shook  
him in a rough but friendly way.

PERRIN

Ow.

**NARRATOR:** Mike took a step forward and held out his hand.  
Perrin, without looking up, took it briefly.

BEN

Kirb brought in a lot of these new men.  
He's a good man, even if he is getting  
too big for his britches.

**NARRATOR:** Ben put his other arm around Mike.

BEN

Shall we have that drink?

MIKE

No, I'm going to get some sleep.

**NARRATOR:** Mike slipped away and went out the door. Ben was  
right, things were different here, but Mike had never been on  
the outside before. Ben set people up to test them. Mike  
had seen it without ever thinking that it could someday be  
him. It made him mad. Mad that he'd knuckled under to  
Perrin but also mad at Ben.

Mike looked at the moonlight on the mountains and took a deep  
breath of the crisp night air. Then he laughed ... it was a  
different world up here, wild and lawless and free.

Mike took another breath, then went up to Ben's house and to  
bed.

SFX: Morning birds and distant activity.

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** He awoke to sunlight pouring through the windows of his bedroom. When he rolled over his feet kicked the footboard ... Ben had built this bed years ago, when he had first brought Mike to Robber's Roost; Mike had grown considerably since then.

SFX: Ben comes in and stops at the bottom of the stairs.

BEN

Michael?

Michael?

SFX: Mike rolls over, Ben starts up the stairs.

MIKE

Yeah..?

(louder)

Yeah!

SFX: Ben opens the door to the room, sticks his head in.

BEN

Get up. Let's go, we're burning daylight.

SFX: He immediately heads back downstairs leaving the door open.

MIKE

(to himself)

Go?

(calling to BEN)

Go where?

BEN

(off)

Come on! I've got something to show you.

MIKE

What? What is it?

SFX: Sighing, he pulls himself out of bed.

**NARRATOR:** Mike hurriedly pulled on his clothes and stamped into his boots. Tucking in his shirt, he started down the stairs.

He came to an abrupt halt on the front porch. Ben was standing at the foot of the steps holding the reins of the most beautiful horse Mike had ever seen. She was an Arab, the color of ivory, tall and lean with a long arched neck and an untrimmed tail.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

When I saw her I couldn't help thinking of you.

**NARRATOR:** Mike moved past him, running his hand down the mare's muscular flank and noticing, with a grin, that a brand new saddle was cinched in place.

MIKE

She's beautiful ...

BEN

Come on. You try her out.

**NARRATOR:** Ben mounted a big appaloosa gelding that he had also brought up. He turned the horse and, yanking his hat down on his head ...

BEN (cont'd)

Yeaaa!

**NARRATOR:** ... he pressed the sides of his spurs to the horse's flanks, charging out of the yard and away past the saloon.

**NARRATOR:** Mike shook his head, watching him go ...

MIKE

Get up. Ha!

**NARRATOR:** He started after Ben, getting the feel of the new horse, then he tightened his legs and leaned forward. She stretched out, putting the wind in his face and carrying him after his father.

27

OMITTED

27

28

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28

**SFX:** Horses approach and Ben and Mike dismount.

**NARRATOR:** When they had run for miles, then walked the high trails on the cliffs above Robber's Roost where last year's snow still lay, they came, at last, to a rock overlooking the canyon. It was a place where the buildings and corrals looked very small. The sun was warm and the rock where they sat was old and familiar to the both of them.

BEN

You know, you got me thinking last night. There are some things I should have told you about long ago.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

About your family?

BEN

No. My life ... and you're part in it.

When I was just a boy, I worked in the mines in Pennsylvania. From when I was eight until I ran away at sixteen I never saw the sun.

Roundy and I were part of the rabble that General Scott turned out of the army in Mexico City. But when gold was discovered here in California we decided to get some for ourselves.

Roundy disappeared into the mountains and I took to robbing stages. I thought I was 'Brennan on the Moor' or perhaps Robin Hood. Only I gave mine to the poor saloon keepers and the ladies of ... Well, let's just say the ladies. I took a lot of risks and I spent freely. Needless to say, I never had any money.

One night I was put in jail. Nothing serious, they locked me up for fighting. So, I was sitting there on the floor and I started to sober up ... You can't get away with this forever, I thought ... But then I realized-- *I could!* *If* I was careful and *if* I was smart.

Now, I'll be getting around to the point here in just a minute.

MIKE

No ... no. Go ahead.

BEN

I'm getting older and I've got to think about all that I've built here.

I'm going to retire, Mike. In my business when you start thinking about it, you'd best do it ... because you're losing your edge.

MIKE

Well, what are you planning to do, where are you going to live?

(CONTINUED)

BEN

I haven't made up my mind yet.

There's something more important. I'm concerned about the boys. They've been very successful, but they need a strong leader.

So Mike, I'm going to give it to you.

MIKE

To me?

BEN

It's everything I've built. I have to leave it in good hands -- and you're the only person I trust.

MIKE

Whow. When you sent me away I figured that was the end of it.

BEN

I had to wait for the right time. I've thought about this for years, but you had to be ready.

MIKE

Ben, I'm honored. But I always thought more of working *with* you. Running this operation ..? I don't know if I could live up to everything ...

BEN

Of course you can. You've been trained by Old Tom, Burton, and even Roundy. How many times have I taken you with me when I went to scout a job?

MIKE

I don't know ... often enough.

BEN

You have all the training but no record. You'll be a mystery. The law will never find you, and if they do they'll have the devil's own time proving anything.

MIKE

What are the others going to think of this?

(CONTINUED)

BEN

I'm going to let you plan a job, then lead it. It'll be something big. You have to impress them, let them know you're the boss.

I have to be getting back.

SFX: Ben gets up.

MIKE

Pa? What if impressing them isn't enough?

BEN

Well, that's why I had you practice with that six-gun. There won't be more than one or two of them that give you trouble.

SFX: Ben mounts and turns the horse away.

BEN

There'll be a get-together tonight. Join us, it'll be like old times.

-----

SFX: From the distance a pounding of hooves comes closer. Mike drops to the ground and pounds on Roundy's door.

MIKE

Whoa! Whoa!

Roundy!

ROUNDY

I heard you coming, you don't have to pound down the door.

MIKE

Roundy, you knew. Why didn't you tell me?

ROUNDY

Simmer down, son. I know a lot of things, but you haven't let on to what your trouble is.

MIKE

Ben wants me to take over the gang.

ROUNDY

Uh-huh ...

(CONTINUED)



MIKE

And why wouldn't he tell me about his family? He wants to put me in charge, but he still doesn't trust me.

ROUNDY

Ahh. He doesn't trust anybody, probably doesn't trust himself.

So what are you going to do?

MIKE

I don't know. I was always afraid he didn't want me in it.

ROUNDY

You'd best figure it out. What did you tell him?

MIKE

Nothing really. He thinks I'll do it, no questions asked.

ROUNDY

That sounds like Ben.

How well have you thought about this, Mike?

MIKE

He only told me just now -- You don't think I should?

ROUNDY

You just remember, Mike, Ben's getting out. He has somewhere to go.

**NARRATOR:** Mike headed down the mountain, away from Robber's Roost. Ben had left him wanting answers but he hadn't gotten very far asking the questions that ran through his mind ... He would have to do some investigating on his own.

By mid-afternoon Mike lay in the tall grass on the hill overlooking the Rocking R ranch. Below all was quiet except for the wind in the trees and the distant rushing of the creek behind the house.

Other than a figure that walked in from the pump just as he worked his way into position he had seen no one. The place lay in a hollow, and around it were the low, tawny, hills dappled with the shade of occasional oaks. Mike pulled back over the crest of the hill and, once out of sight, made his way down into a curve of the creek bottom and then back toward the house.

He found a spot in the cover of some brush and settled down to watch.

He didn't know what he had come to find, he only knew that this was something that Ben had kept secret ... Ben might trust him with the outlaw gang but not this other part of his life. And Mike had to understand why.

SFX: Dog growls.

MIKE

Uh-oh.

SFX: Drucilla approaches.

DRU

What are you doing?

**NARRATOR:** He turned, confronting a lean black hound with its teeth bared. Behind the dog stood a tall girl wearing a simple dress and carrying a pair of lace-up shoes. Another dog stood at her side.

MIKE

Um ... I just wanted to see who lived here.

**NARRATOR:** She stepped closer for a better look at him. She was seventeen or eighteen. Her hair was long and brown, her eyes light blue.

DRU

Well, you shouldn't be spying on us. Why didn't you ride up to the front?

MIKE

I was being careful. I don't mean any harm.

SFX: Dru snaps her fingers.

DRU

Sit.

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** The dogs immediately sat and the girl took a moment before she spoke again.

DRU (cont'd)  
You'd better get up. You look stupid  
down there on the ground like that.

SFX: Mike starts to get up ...

DRU (cont'd)  
Um ... take your gun off first.

SFX: Mike moves but the dogs growl.

DRU (cont'd)  
Go on. They won't come after you unless  
you make me mad.

SFX: Mike gets up and drops the gun belt

DRU  
Now, what were you doing, creeping around  
here ...

MIKE  
I'm not. I'd never been over this way so  
I thought I'd take a look.

**NARRATOR:** Mike wondered what Ben had told this girl, wondered how much she knew.

DRU  
Do you have a name?

MIKE  
Mike ... Santos.

DRU  
Well. All right, Mr. Santos. Follow me.

MIKE  
Maybe it's better if I got on my way.

DRU  
I can't let you go wandering around out  
here ... the dogs might eat you.

MIKE  
Alright.

31

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31

**NARRATOR:** They came up to the front of the house and there, sitting in the shadows of the porch was the younger of the two girls.

JULIANA

Drucilla! Who's this?

DRU

Just a minute ...

(she calls inside)

Uncle Jack ... Come out here.

**NARRATOR:** An older man appeared in the doorway. He was about fifty, with a balding head and the beginnings of a paunch.

DRU (cont'd)

I caught him spying on us.

JACK

What were you doing out there, young man?

DRU

You're lucky it wasn't Jack that found you in the bushes, he'd of shot you in your tracks.

MIKE

I was just looking over the house, sir. I sure went about it the wrong way.

JACK

I should say you did. My name's John Coneely and that youngster who's wisely keeping her mouth shut over there is my niece Juliana.

You met Dru.

MIKE

Yes, Sir.

JACK

Now I'm not as bad as she says, but being so far from everything we've got to be careful. What's your name?

MIKE

It's Mike Santos, Sir ... Ma'am.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

You girls go on inside for a moment ...  
we need to talk alone.

SFX: Dru hesitates a moment then turns, looking over at  
Juliana.

DRU

Come on, Julie.

Come on ...

SFX: Juliana reluctantly follows and they close the front  
door. In side there is a whispered comment and a giggle.  
JACK waits until they are gone.

JACK

Now, I'd like to believe you're up from  
Brant's or Jackson ...

MIKE

Yes, Sir.

JACK

... and someone told you that along this  
way there's a place where two pretty  
young ladies are livin'.

We have to be careful, there's a gang of  
outlaws that hide somewhere over on the  
other side of the river. I imagine you  
might have heard that too.

MIKE

No sir, I'm afraid not.

JACK

Well, I have an understanding with the  
head man over there. If any of his men  
come poking around here I'm to tell them  
that this place is under his protection  
and to clear out.

Now, we go into Brant's Crossing or  
Jackson most Sundays. So if you see Dru  
or Julie, and one or the other invites  
you out proper ... fine. Otherwise, I  
will shoot you dead as a stump.

MIKE

I'm sorry , sir. It was a bad way to  
introduce myself.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: (2)

31

JACK

Now you move along now. I'll make sure  
the dogs are inside.

32

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32

**SFX:** Mike is searching for his gun belt.

**NARRATOR:** Back in the brush, Mike searched for his pistol.

MIKE

Great, just great! I'm a double idiot.

DRU

Is this what you're looking for?

**NARRATOR:** She stood there, the belt and holster dangling  
from her fingers.

MIKE

Uh ... Yes.

DRU

Where's your horse?

MIKE

Up there.

DRU

Here.

**NARRATOR:** She handed him the belt. Their hands touched for  
a moment.

DRU (cont'd)

Living out here we don't see too many  
people ... maybe we will see you in town

**NARRATOR:** Mike collected himself. He needed to know how  
much she knew. He needed to walk away from this with  
something more than a minor case of humiliation.

MIKE

I know I made a fool out of myself. I  
wouldn't want your parents knew about  
that. It's bad enough your uncle was  
here.

DRU

Well, Pa travels a lot, so he doesn't  
have to know. He might even like you.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Yeah?

DRU

Of course, it depends on whether or not he found you crawling around in the dirt.

MIKE

I didn't mean anybody any harm.

DRU

Tell me; what do you do for a living, Mr. Santos?

**NARRATOR:** She seemed to sense the worst questions ... or the best.

MIKE

I used to work for the railroad. Now there's another job I might take ... I guess I'm figuring out what kind of life I'm going to have.

DRU

Well, that's the first thing I've heard you say where I didn't think you were hiding something.

**NARRATOR:** She turned and walked away and Mike watched her go. Then he buckled on the pistol and headed up the hill toward his horse.

-----

**NARRATOR:** It was night by the time he made it back to Robber's Roost. He'd had hours to think but thinking had done him no real good. He had been offered the one thing that Ben had ever denied him only to discover another even more mysterious aspect to the old man's life.

Drucilla Regan was a beautiful young woman and, despite his embarrassment, there had been an instant familiarity between them. Mike told himself that he should not be surprised by this for they had both been raised by the same man, but he could not stop thinking about her eyes, how beautiful they were and how much like Ben's ... eyes that could look so much like a spirited child's and in a moment turn cold and hard as a rattler's.

**SFX:** Mike's steps, crowd inside from outside then coming inside.

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** Mike pushed open the door to the saloon at Robber's Roost.

COLLEY

Mike!

**NARRATOR:** A heavy, gray haired man pushed through the group near the bar. It took a moment before Mike realized this old man with a limp and several missing teeth was Colley. Colley who, when Mike was sick as a child, had sat up night after night caring for him.

COLLEY (cont'd)

Hey Mike!

MIKE

Hey, Colley!

COLLEY

It's sure good to see you! Ben's been asking for you but come over here first.

**NARRATOR:** He led the way to a group clustered around a safe. One of the men was struggling with a brace and bit, trying to put a hole in the steel above the combination dial.

COLLEY (cont'd)

Here, hold on. We'll see what Mike can do.

FRANK

What?

COLLEY

Mike Santos, he can do it ... with just his fingers.

FRANK

Crap.

FRANK (cont'd)

Leave me be, I don't need anybody's help.

COLLEY

You're going to take all night and use up my good bits. Mike'll have it open in a minute.

FRANK

Ahh, don't give me that.

(CONTINUED)



COLLEY

Here's twenty dollars, Frank ... can you match it?

Mike here's the only one Tom Croydon ever taught. He can pick, blast, or peel, any safe there is.

SFX: Frank suddenly gives up on the drilling, he slaps the brace and bit down and steps back.

FRANK

Okay. Go ahead, see if you can do it.

COLLEY

Come on, Mike.

MIKE

I'm a bit rusty.

SFX: Mike spins the combination dial back and forth.

MIKE (cont'd)

It's got to be quiet.

COLLEY

Right.  
(then yelling)  
Shut up!

SFX: Nobody shuts up.

COLLEY

Hey ... I SAID SHUT UP!!! We got work to do here.

SFX: Mike turns the knob until he hears a faint click, then turns in the other direction carefully finds the next number, then back tracks to the third. Then he grabs the latch handle and jerks it down and out, pulling the safe door open.

MIKE

There it is ...

SFX: The crowd applauds.

**NARRATOR:** Beyond the circle of onlookers Ben emerged from the private room in back.

BEN  
(to all)  
Good work, son.  
(aside, to MIKE)  
We're having a meeting ... I want you to  
join in.

**NARRATOR:** Gathered around a table were Doc Sawyer, Perrin,  
Molina, and Ducrow.

BEN  
Gentlemen, we've all met.

DOC  
The prodigal son returns from lands  
beyond.

MIKE  
Hey, Doc. Long time.

PERRIN  
Hi, kid. Sorry about the other night.

MIKE  
Yeah, me too.

**NARRATOR:** Mike and Ben took seats at the far end of the  
table.

PERRIN  
Maybe while you're here we can get you  
out on a job. Who knows, you might like  
working for your old man ...

BEN  
Kirb was just filling me in on a little  
something he spotted. Go ahead, Kirb.  
Go back over it again for Mike.

PERRIN  
It's the payroll for the Garnet-Union  
Mining Company. They're working three  
holes and a mill. Now, at the end of the  
month they pay off about four hundred  
workers and twenty gents who are bosses  
and such.

Now, the money comes from Stockton to  
Brant's Crossing on the Consolidated Spur  
mail car on the last Thursday each month.

(CONTINUED)

DUCROW

We heard it's more than twenty thousand dollars!

PERRIN

I figure we stop the train. Unhook the passenger cars, pull ahead a mile or two and use dynamite to pop the box.

BEN

So how many guards would there be?

PERRIN

... don't worry, I can take care of them.

BEN

How many guards?

PERRIN

There's four.

BEN starts to laugh.

MOLINA

But we got a plan.

BEN

I would hope so ... A Mexican stand off is not my style.

PERRIN

We dynamite the whole car, Ben. Blow off the walls, roof, everything. All that'll be left is the trucks, the frame, and the box. We use a smaller charge for that and we're out of there.

BEN

All right. You did good scouting this up ... but I want to get some other ideas. I'm going to turn it over to Mike.

PERRIN

You're gonna do what?

**NARRATOR:** Mike turned to stare at Ben.

BEN

I want the boy to get his feet wet ... see what he can do.

What do you say, Mike?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BEN (cont'd)

If you leave in the morning you can get to Brant's in time to look over the set up yourself.

MIKE

Uh, yeah ... I guess I could.

BEN

Well get started, this is your shot.

PERRIN

We don't have the time! This payroll is coming in day after tomorrow.

BEN

It comes in every month, doesn't it Kirb?

PERRIN

Aww, damn it!

BEN

It is a payroll ...

PERRIN

Yes.

BEN

So we've got the time to do this right.

PERRIN

It's mine, Ben. I scouted it, I came up with the plan, and I'm gonna pull it off. If you want the kid to come along, fine, he can come.

BEN

Your "plan" needs more work. I'm not going to blow up those payroll guards, and I'm sure as hell not going to be railroaded into doing it this Thursday.

PERRIN

I know it'll work!

BEN

Don't get all riled up over this. We haven't done a job in Brant's Crossing in six or seven years, taking it there might be better than the train. I'm going to let Mike decide.

PERRIN

(struggling for words)  
This ... God Damn it!

(CONTINUED)

BEN  
Kirb, I've given you jobs that other men  
scouted and planned.

PERRIN  
This is different!

BEN  
Yeah? How would that be?

**NARRATOR:** Perrin turned and glared at Mike.

PERRIN  
Because everyone knows I'm *segundo* around  
here.

**NARRATOR:** He pushed away from the table and stalked out of  
the room. After a moment Molina and Ducrow followed.  
Leaving Ben, Mike and Doc sitting at the table.

-----

MIKE  
Whew! (or whistle)

BEN  
Everybody has their place, Mike.

MIKE  
And you just put him in his.

BEN  
Yes, I did. Those guards he wanted to  
blow up are probably from American  
Express. (Wells Fargo) If we take this  
payroll they'll surely investigate. But  
if he killed four of them they'd never  
stop looking. With that kind of  
attention I wouldn't be able to use  
anybody who went on that job for a long  
time.

MIKE  
You really threw me in his face.

**NARRATOR:** Ben glanced at Doc and cut his eyes toward the  
door ...

DOC  
Good night, Gentlemen.

**SFX:** Doc exits.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

It was good for him. Perrin's had a swelled head for the last year; I've been looking to cool him down.

MIKE

Is he going to be a problem?

BEN

Kirb's the best man here if it comes to pulling you out of a tight spot or watching your back, but he's just not any good at planning.

MIKE

So I should find him a piece of this job that'll show that I respect him ...

BEN

You're catching on ...  
I've waited a long time for this. Damn, it's good to have you back.

Now, who are you planning to take when you scout this job?

**NARRATOR:** As Mike and Ben got down to the serious business of planning the heist two figures met in the moonlit darkness behind the barn.

-----

PERRIN

Goddamn Ben! I've made that old man more money ... I could get that payroll right now! Ben's too old, he's lost it ... sitting up here on his FAT ASS playing General. Can't stand to let anything happen that he hasn't put his fingers into and MESSED IT UP!

**NARRATOR:** Molina grabbed Perrin to stop his pacing and pushed the younger man up against the side of the barn.

PERRIN (cont'd)

Hey! What's wrong with you?

MOLINA

You better start thinking my friend ... because that kid is his son.

The kid is his son! Comprende?

(CONTINUED)

PERRIN

Yeah. Ben's going to let him go out and get my payroll!

MOLINA

No. He's going to get the whole thing.

PERRIN

Yeah.

MOLINA

Think about it. All you said is true. Ben is a big man, he's proud. He's like a king ...

PERRIN

... and he's setting the kid up to take over.

PERRIN (cont'd)

Goddamn Ben! I put in the time ... If he wants to get out, I run this gang. I put in the time, I'm owed.

I got to find out what's going on.

The kid went somewhere today, back track him and find out where it was. I'll have Ducrow keep an eye on him when he goes down to The Crossing.

MOLINA

He wasn't away more than six or eight hours, he could not have gone too far.

PERRIN

Well you find out. I'm gonna show that old man just who he's been pushing around.

**NARRATOR:** Away to the west, the same moonlight filtered down on a small ranch near the foot of the mountains. Inside the house Juliana turned down the wick of the last lamp and joined Drucilla in the darkness of the porch.

JULIANA

What's wrong with you? You didn't say two words during supper.

DRU

Just thinking.

JULIANA

... about that Mike. I think you like him ...

DRU

Yeah? Well, there was something ... It bothered me.

JULIANA

I still think you like him.

DRU

Be quiet, you.

I wish Pa would come home.

JULIANA

He's going to be spending more time with us ... he said that.

DRU

I still worry.

SFX: Juliana turns to go inside.

JULIANA

Was it Pa?

DRU

What?

JULIANA

Mike Santos. That's who he reminded me of.

Not looks. Just some ... mannerisms.

**NARRATOR:** The following morning, Mike chose the men who would go with him on his reconnaissance of the Garnet-Union payroll. Mike knew that his selections were important because they should also be the men that actually went with him once the heist became a reality. That meant Colley and Doc Sawyer. They were steady men of long experience and would not be shy about asking hard questions.

Mike realized that Ben knew well what he was about when he handed him this particular job. The mine office was in Brant's Crossing, a town Mike had played in as a child. He'd collected bottles in every street and back alley. He knew the trails through the canyons and oaks and he knew where the river was shallow.



Finding a job for Perrin could wait, at this stage his hot temper was likely to cause trouble. But Mike needed someone who understood the country to be sure he planned the get-away correctly. And, of course, Mike knew exactly where that man could be found ...

SFX: Roundy is using stone to sharpen an axe.

MIKE

Morning.

ROUNDY

Yes Sir, it is at that.

MIKE

Ben gave me a job last night ...

We're going down to look over the Garnet-Union payroll. I'd like it if you'd come along.

ROUNDY

You know Mike, I don't think I could.

MIKE

I've never had to plan a job I was going to pull myself before. I need your help.

You taught me most everything I know.

ROUNDY

I never taught you to be a thief. That was him.

Mike, I may live up here, and I love Ben like a brother and you like a son ... but when I want money I trap furs or pan some gold.

You go on. You've made your choices, you'll be better than most when it comes to living with them.

SFX: Roundy goes back to his grinding.

**NARRATOR:** Mike turned and rode off to meet Doc and Colley on the trail to town. His breath came shallowly for a moment and he didn't know what to think, didn't know if he should feel bad because he had insulted the old trapper ... or because it seemed like Roundy had abandoned him.

**NARRATOR:** Brant's Crossing had changed in the sixteen years since Mike Santos had been taken away ... The most prosperous businesses were now on a street that Mike remembered as a wagon track between two fields. This street ran the short distance between Main and the new railroad station.

Mike rode wide around the station and then back across the tracks; getting the lay of the land. When he was a child the closest the railroad had come was Sacramento, so this was all new to him. The double tracks were empty but activity around the station was picking up; the doors to the freight office were rolled open and men were loading the hand trucks with packages for delivery to the cars. In his office, the telegrapher was clicking away, sending dispatches off down the lines.

Mike turned into a back street, riding slowly, casually working his way across town. He secured his horse at a hitching rail outside a candle shop then started back toward the station.

He had not gone more than a dozen yards when he saw something that brought him to a stop in the middle of the dusty lane.

It was only a house. A house on a side street in a small town ... last seen on a foggy morning so many years ago. Mike walked toward it, as if in a trance.

From around the side of the building a small boy came running.

BOY  
(shyly)  
Hi ...

**NARRATOR:** The boy looked at Mike for another moment then broke off and ran back around the corner of the building. Mike stood there looking at the empty yard.

**SFX:** A train whistle blows in the distance. It blows again much closer, the engine approaches.

**NARRATOR:** By the time Mike made it to the station the train was just rounding the last bend before the long straight run into the switch yard. He spotted Colley leaning on a boxcar near a group of waiting men.

Colley glanced briefly at Mike then looked away, a moment later he gave an almost imperceptible nod. After the agents had unloaded the payroll it would be Colley's job to get a look at the inside of the baggage car.

(CONTINUED)

As the engine entered the yard, Mike stepped across the tracks and climbed to the platform. The train came to a stop and, as it did, the door to the baggage car slid open and two Express Agents stepped out. It was only after they had given the area a thorough once-over that the other two Agents appeared. All four were hard looking fellows whose collection of scars, broken noses, and cauliflower ears belied the businessman's vests and derbies they wore. The first two were armed with shotguns, the second two with rifles, and all had pistols hanging in shoulder holsters or stuck behind their belts.

Two of the men stepped back into the car and, as Mike walked past, he got a glimpse of one of them crouched in front of a large safe working the combination dial. Mike walked through the station waiting room, past the ticket window and out into the sunlight on the other side of the building. His heart beat fast and he grinned to himself ... this was easy.

He walked slowly up the middle of the street, turned onto Main and headed toward the Express Company (alt - Wells Fargo, American Express) offices. It was now mid day and Brandt's Crossing was bustling with townspeople headed to take their noontime meal. Mike had only two more blocks to go and was satisfied that he was well ahead of the Agents when he heard a wagon slow alongside.

JACK

Ho-whoa.

SFX: The wagon slows.

DRU

Well, good afternoon Mr. Santos.

**NARRATOR:** It was none other than Drucilla Regan. Driving the wagon was Jack Coneely and riding in the bed was Juliana.

MIKE

Good afternoon.

(to JACK)

Sir.

(to JULIANA)

Miss Juliana ...

SFX: JULIANA stifles a giggle.

MIKE (cont'd)

So, what brings you to town?

DRU

(going under)

Well, we do come in occasionally.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED: (2)

40

DRU (cont'd)  
Juliana and I are going to shop, and  
Uncle Jack has business to attend to.

**NARRATOR:** Mike glanced back down the street. The express  
company agents were turning onto Main.

JULIANA  
First we're going to find some buttons  
... (going under)

**NARRATOR:** Two of the men carried a large box secured with a  
heavy lock. He turned nervously back to the girls, he was  
running out of time.

JULIANA  
(emerging)  
... then we're going to buy some cloth  
and patterns ... Dru said she'd help me  
make a dress, right?

MIKE  
I'm sorry, what?

DRU  
Is something the matter?

MIKE  
Could you excuse me, I have to do ...  
something.

**NARRATOR:** Mike moved away as the Express Agents came up the  
street. He quickly made for the company office.

DRU  
(to Jack)  
Well ... That was strange ...

JACK  
Girls, let's go. Plenty of other young  
men. More polite, too. *Git!*

SFX: The wagon starts off.

41

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41

SFX: Mike enters the Express office.

ACCOUNTANT  
Yes, can I help you?

MIKE  
I want to get a job ... work as an  
Express Messenger.

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** Mike took in the interior of the Express Company (alt -- Wells Fargo, American Express,) office. It was a long room with a high ceiling. Behind a rail two book-keepers worked at their ledgers. In the back wall was a heavy vault door with a scene of English hunters riding to the hounds painted above the combination knob.

ACCOUNTANT

If you want to apply you'll have to send a letter to the office in Sacramento.

SFX: Outside there are footsteps on the boardwalk.

MIKE

Um ... Thanks ... But can't I talk to somebody here?

**NARRATOR:** Mike turned to see the four tough Agents enter the office. One of them went to the barred windows and began closing the drapes. The Clerk stood and held open a gate in the railing to let the Agents with the box through.

EXPRESSMAN

Pardon me, Sir ... you'll have to step outside while we make our delivery.

SFX: There is the sound of the vault door opening.

**NARRATOR:** Mike turned back for a last look. One of the Express Agents had opened the vault door.

EXPRESSMAN (CONT'D)

(cont'd)

Come on, then.

ACCOUNTANT

Have a seat, gentlemen. It will take awhile to count this.

SFX: The door to the office closes behind MIKE.

**NARRATOR:** Mike went along the boardwalk to the corner of the building. He glanced down at a man sitting on a bench against the wall, the man looked up ... it was Doc Sawyer. Mike turned away and without looking at Doc he spoke.

MIKE

Keep them in sight, I'll meet you at the saloon on Beal Street in a couple of hours.

**NARRATOR:** Mike stepped off into the street of his old home town without a backward glance.

SFX: Softly, in the distance a woman sings Amazing Grace.

**NARRATOR:** The graves lay side by side within the rusting iron fence that separated the cemetery from the church-yard.

"Juan Santos 1836-1872, Isabel O'Neil Santos, 1843-1867."

Michael sat beside his father's grave and leaned back against the stone. A warm wind blew softly. Outside the cemetery gate his horse stamped and scratched his head against the trunk of a tree.

This was his father. His real father. The store, the little white house with the rope swing, Mrs. Spencer having a widower and his son to dinner on Sundays, collecting bottles early in the morning, playing in the ruins of the old mill. It seemed like another world. It might as well have been another world. When he thought about it, it made him wonder what was real ...

JUAN

... you're for better things than running a grocery, Miguelito, God willing.

ROUNDY

(Laughing - emerge from under)

BEN

What's so funny?

ROUNDY

If you're not careful, he'll grow up to be just like you.

SFX: Wind and approaching footsteps.

**NARRATOR:** There was a quiet movement, out of time with the wind; a scent of summer fields before the sun had burned them brown. Mike sat up.

Down the line of head-stones a lithe figure moved. Drucilla Regan knelt to place a small bouquet of flowers on a grave. Mike stood, and hearing him, she looked up.

MIKE

Hi.

DRU

Hello.

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** Mike took off his hat.

MIKE

I'm sorry. ... about the way I acted back there. There were people I had to meet. I wanted to talk to you, but I was late.

DRU

That's alright.

MIKE

"Abigail Regan 1844-1868" Is this your mother?

DRU

Yes.

MIKE

She was the same age ...

DRU

What?

MIKE

As mine ... my mother. My parents are buried right over there.

DRU

Oh.

MIKE

That's nice ... the flowers. I didn't think about that.

DRU

They're just wild flowers, I picked them on the way out.

MIKE

Do you remember her? I've forgotten so much.

DRU

Mom used to sing to me ... It's been so long. I wish Julie had known her.

MIKE

When she died, was your Pa sad for a long time?

(CONTINUED)

DRU

I don't know. He rented us a room here in town a couple of weeks before Julie was due, and then he went off.

She died and he didn't get back until three days after.

MIKE

Oh ...

You didn't ever ask him, a lot of things can happen.

DRU

No, I didn't. He would have been there if he could, but he never should have gone off in the first place.

My father is as good a man as he knows how to be, but there's something out there that's important to him ... more important than my mother was.

It's getting hot. Will you walk me back?

-----

**NARRATOR:** Mike untied his horse and they slowly walked back into town.

The livery barn was a huge structure backed by a maze of corrals and sheds. Inside it was dim and cool. A giant pair of Clydesdales gazed at them from one of the stalls.

MIKE

Hello ..? Hello ...

DRU

Mr. Doonan's never here in the afternoons. You just put your horse up and pay when you leave.

MIKE

Oh ... I haven't been back ... well, since I was a boy.

DRU

Mr. Santos, you are becoming more of a mystery all the time. I thought you lived here.



**NARRATOR:** Mike secured his horse to a pole and began stripping off the saddle and gear.

MIKE

No. No, I live in the mountains up past your ranch.

DRU

My Uncle says there is a gang of outlaws up there. I hope you're not one of them.

MIKE

No. I'm not. I've been ... trapping.

DRU

What about that job you told me about?

MIKE

My job?

DRU

You told me you were going to decide about a job.

MIKE

Yeah.

**NARRATOR:** Mike took a curry comb to his horse and began brushing down the damp hair where the saddle had been. Drucilla took another comb from a hook on the wall and worked beside him combing the dust and burrs out of the horse's hair.

DRU

You don't know if you want it?

MIKE

It's what I always wanted. It's *more* than what I always wanted. And I owe him ... an awful lot. But once I'm in ... I'm in forever.

DRU

Forever? You can't owe anyone your life, that's not right. That's like slavery.

MIKE

Yeah ... I guess it is.

**NARRATOR:** He glanced over at her and then looked away shyly. He ducked under the horse's neck and began to work on the other side.

(CONTINUED)

As they brushed down to the chest and belly of the mare there was a moment when they both had a hand on the mare's back to brace the strokes of their combs. Their hands touched and suddenly drew back. They looked up into each others eyes.

Neither spoke but Mike reached out and took her fingers in his. She looked down, embarrassed, but didn't let go of his hand. After a moment he let go and they both went back to work, each on their own side of the horse. Bending down, out of sight, Dru bit her lip to keep from smiling.

Mike peered over the horse's neck at her and she gazed back. He took his hat off and wiped his forehead with his bandanna. Before he could get the hat back on she reached across and took a swipe at his hair with her curry comb.

MIKE

Hey!

SFX: The laugh.

DRU

There. My father said that you should always treat a horse like a friend.

MIKE

Really? Mine too.

**NARRATOR:** Mike led the mare to a stall and opened the gate. He forked some hay into the feed box.

DRU

I should go. My sister will be waiting for me.

**NARRATOR:** She turned away but paused for a moment.

DRU

You could be trouble ... but I think I like you anyway.

**NARRATOR:** She looked into his eyes and then turned and headed for the door.

MIKE

Is that the formal invitation that your Uncle was talking about?

DRU

Yes, I guess it is.

**NARRATOR:** Mike took an overgrown path that ran behind the Main Street businesses; heading back toward the old part of town and the saloon where he was to meet Doc and Colley. The path was familiar ... Michael walked faster until he came to a stop at one locked and barred door in a high brick wall. The store, his father's store ...

*YOUNG MIKE*

(off)  
Papa ..?

What's pur ... pur-red ...

*JUAN*

(off)  
Pure-eed. That's mashed ...

**NARRATOR:** The path dipped down into a wide lot that was lower than the buildings. In the center of the lot was a gully that for years had been draining the run-off from Main Street.

**SFX:** The outlaws horses rush down into the gully.

*YOUNG MIKE*

(off)  
Papa ..? Papa!

**NARRATOR:** Mike turned, remembering:

*BEN*

(off)  
Daniel. You haven't been listening to me.

*PEEPLES*

(off)  
He was in my way!

**SFX:** Gunshot.

**NARRATOR:** A whirlwind of memories surrounded him.

*BEN*

(off)  
Boy! You tell them what happened here, understand me?

**SFX:** The horses ride off.

**SFX:** Door closes. Saloon ambiance up.

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** When Mike finally got to the Saloon he found Doc Sawyer and Colley sitting at a card table in the back of the room.

DOC  
(speaking up for others to  
hear)  
Evening ...

MIKE  
Hey ...  
(then same as above)  
Hello, Gents. What's the game?

**NARRATOR:** They followed the rules handed down to them by Ben Curry. Every meeting between gang members was to look like a casual meeting between strangers.

**SFX:** Mike sits.

DOC  
Are you doing alright?

MIKE  
Yeah. I don't know. So what about it.

DOC  
(to COLLEY)  
You go first, my friend.

COLLEY  
Well, it's nothin' but a baggage van with  
a safe bolted to the frame. Burns &  
Smith; it's a blast job.

MIKE  
Alright. Was there much freight?

COLLEY  
No, but that could change.

MIKE  
Right.  
(he looks at DOC)  
What did you get?

DOC  
They waited until all the money was  
locked up. Then they came here for one  
drink a piece then to the hotel. They've  
all have tickets on the 12:45 stage  
tomorrow. So what do you think?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

I wonder if they'll take turns watching the office tonight? If I was paying them that's what I'd have them do.

COLLEY

Maybe ... but you know they're gonna get robbed.

SFX: The saloon doors open.

DOC

Wait ... Interesting characters this place attracts, eh?

**NARRATOR:** Mike turned in his seat. Standing in the door were Frank and Ducrow from Robber's Roost. Both were dusty from the trail and armed to the teeth.

SFX: Frank and Ducrow walk over.

DUCROW

Well, howdy. You don't mind if we join your game?

... All right then, we'll sit in for awhile.

SFX: Ducrow & Frank pull up chairs and sit.

MIKE

What the hell are you two doing here?

DUCROW

Just came by to give you a hand ...

The Kid's new, you guys are over the hill ... Figured we'd show you how it's done.

DOC

Now look here!

FRANK

Look at what, old man?

MIKE

Hold on ...

(to DUCROW)

We know what we're doing, and I don't want you drawing attention ...

(CONTINUED)

COLLEY

Mike here's planned more of these jobs  
with Ben than you've even dreamed of.

FRANK

We'd have that payroll right now if it  
wasn't for this pup ...

DUCROW

... and Ben's weak stomach.

MIKE

Enough of this! You two clear out of  
here right now.

**NARRATOR:** Ducrow leaned across the table.

DUCROW

Or what? You'll call Daddy? Go ahead,  
Ben's through!

**NARRATOR:** Mike grabbed a handful of Ducrow's hair and  
slammed his face down into the top of the table. Ducrow  
reeled back, nose bloody. Frank reached for Mike but Doc  
pulled him out of the chair and threw him against the wall.  
Mike kicked the table out from between himself and Ducrow.  
Ducrow's hand dropped for his gun. Mike jumped forward  
twisting the pistol away.

SFX: The gun goes off.

**NARRATOR:** The bullet bit a chunk out of the wall. Mike  
hooked a punch into Ducrow's wind and jerked the gun from  
Ducrow's hand.

Frank had turned Doc around and, backing him against the  
wall, slugged the older man over and over. Colley pulled him  
off.

Ducrow dove at Mike who smashed him alongside the head with  
the butt of the pistol, sending him limp to the floor.

Frank whirled on Colley, drawing a long Arkansas toothpick  
from his belt. Mike stepped up and, flipping Ducrow's gun  
around, cocked it.

MIKE

No! Put it away.

**NARRATOR:** Frank slid the knife back into its sheath and  
Ducrow lay groaning on the floor. The few patrons of the  
saloon had cleared out.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

You two get out of here and ride!

**NARRATOR:** Ducrow unsteadily got to his feet.

DUCROW

Gimme my gun.

MIKE

Get out of here! You'll be lucky if I don't shoot you with it!

MARSHALL BACA

(off)

There will be no shooting.

**NARRATOR:** Behind them the doors had opened. Standing there was a middle aged man wearing a black frock coat and carrying a sawed-off shotgun. A Marshall's badge shown dully on his lapel.

MARSHALL BACA (cont'd)

Don't do anything stupid. You, put the gun on the floor.

**NARRATOR:** Mike dropped Ducrow's pistol.

MARSHALL BACA (cont'd)

Good ...

**NARRATOR:** The Marshall turned his shotgun on Frank.

MARSHALL BACA (cont'd)

... now you.

**SFX:** Frank places his guns on the floor.

MARSHALL BACA

Gentlemen, this way to the jail.

**NARRATOR:** The jail was a stone building built against the hill behind the city office. The two cells inside were little more than metal boxes bolted together from slabs of steel. They were dim and claustrophobic, smelling of fear and other odors.

**SFX:** Low voices and movement from the next cell. Colley snores.

**NARRATOR:** Mike sat on the cold floor of the cell trying to read the various messages that had been scratched into the dull green paint. Doc and Colley were locked in the cell with him but there were only two narrow bunks. An extra mattress had been dragged in so that he could lay on the floor. Frank and Ducrow were in the other cell and when they moved Mike could feel their footsteps resonate in the metal plate under him.

DOC

Mike, are you all right?

MIKE

No. No I don't think I am.

ROUNDHOUSE BOSS

(off)

Santos, get back to work!

**NARRATOR:** Mike spent the night in a state that was neither awake nor asleep. Phantom images filled his head, memories of different times in his life mixed with fantasies and fears of the future.

ROUNDHOUSE BOSS (cont'd)

(off)

I want the steam up on Number Three by the time Schiller comes in. Now Move, Mister!

BEN

(off)

Well, that's why I've had you practicing with that six-gun.

ROUNDY

How well have you thought about this, Mike?

DRU

... that's the first thing I've heard you say where I didn't think you were hiding something.

ROUNDY

Just remember, Mike ... Ben's getting out.

BEN

(off - chuckling)

You always have a choice, if you have the courage to make it.

(CONTINUED)



45 CONTINUED: (2)

45

**NARRATOR:** Moonlight streamed through the tiny window, leaving a pattern of bars on the floor.

46

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46

SFX: Morning birds. Marshal Baca arrives with a jingling of keys.

MARSHALL BACA

Good morning, Gents. Sorry we didn't have beds for all of you.

SFX: Marshall Baca unfolds a sheet of paper.

MARSHALL BACA (cont'd)

Now ... Maxwell Ducrow? I am going to hold you for arraignment with the circuit judge. I have a warrant charging you with the robbery on last June 24th of the Nevada City stage.

DUCROW

I didn't do it ... you got the wrong guy.

MARSHALL BACA

Of course.

The rest of you can go. I suggest that you don't come back.

**NARRATOR:** Mike, Doc Sawyer, Colley, and Frank Parman, collected their horses and slowly rode out of town. As Mike rode up the street he passed a line of men waiting outside the express company office. Their faces were streaked with dirt and grease, but underneath the grime their skin was the pallor of men who worked underground from dawn to dusk.

Occasionally, a woman or a child stood beside one of the men as they slowly moved forward toward the temporary desks that the paymasters had set up under the watchful eyes of the armed payroll guards.

Once into the hills Mike, Doc, and Colley rode together with Frank following a couple of miles behind. It was a day and a half back to the hide-out but no one was in a mood to talk, so they traveled much of the way in silence.

47

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47

MZK: Transition.

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** From the hill above the Rocking R ranch Joquin Molina waited and watched. He had seen the trail leading off the main road to the river crossing many times and he'd even heard that there was a ranch at the end of it, but in the past he'd never been very interested. Now he was realizing that Mike had probably found himself a girl, maybe two of them.

But as he lay in the tall grass throughout the morning and patiently observed the goings on down at the house, he thought that there might be more to it than that. He'd been with Ben for more than five years and in all that time he'd never seen Mike. The idea that Mike would come home after being so long away and within a week be courting some girl that lived in an out-of-the-way spot like this seemed like a long chance. Molina could understand if it had been some town girl, someone easily met, but this was something different. So he waited, and he watched.

After noon the man came from the house.

SFX: Jack whistles.

**NARRATOR:** He called in the dogs, tied them to a post near the vegetable garden, and tossed them a couple of bones. Then he led a horse into the shade of the barn, saddled it and rode off toward town.

Joquin Molina smiled. Here was an opportunity in the making  
...

SFX: Water is boiling.

**NARRATOR:** The cook house was a partly enclosed porch overlooking the creek. The sides were canvas curtains, now lowered but blowing slightly in the breeze. On the stove a bucket of water was warming up and reclining in a big enameled wash tub, Drucilla Regan was taking a bath.

SFX: Julie enters carrying another pot of water.

**NARRATOR:** Juliana came up the stairs from the creek with another bucket of water. She placed it on the stove and then poured the one that had been warming into the tub at Drucilla's feet.

DRU

Thanks.

JULIANA

Well don't take forever, I'm next.

(CONTINUED)

SFX: She flicks some water at Dru and leaves, going back to the creek.

DRU

Hey!

**NARRATOR:** Molina moved cautiously down the hillside. He paused alongside the barn, squatting on his heels and gazing at the area around the house without looking directly at anything. It was a skill he used when scanning for movement.

The younger girl was back at the creek. A moment later she went up the steps to the back porch carrying another pail of water. Keeping the granary between himself and the house, and staying well away from the chicken shed, Molina creapted forward.

SFX: There is a slight noise, out of sync with the blowing of the canvass.

DRU

Julie ..?

SFX: There is no answer, then Juliana steps up into the cook house and sets the bucket on the stove.

JULIANA

What?

DRU

If you wait I'll help with that.

JULIANA

If I want a bath I figure I might as well get started. You're not washing or anything. I'll bet you're thinking about that Mike Santos.

DRU

You might be wrong.

JULIANA

I'm not.

DRU

I thought of how he's like Pa.

JULIANA

Yeah, how?

DRU

I think he lies ...

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** Staying down-wind of the dogs, Molina slipped up alongside the house.

Near the vegetable garden the older of the two dogs sat up from her bone. Her nose tested the wind ... nothing. Nothing, but all was not right.

With a sudden, fluid, movement Molina was across the porch and at the side door to the house, listening ... he opened the door and quietly went through into the parlor and froze.

SFX: The dogs begin to bark.

**NARRATOR:** Through a partly open door he could see the edge of the tub and part of a girl's naked foot. Then the other girl crossed his limited field of vision. He pulled back and stepped through the doorway to the front rooms of the house.

SFX: Water in tub.

JULIANA

You think Pa lies?

DRU

I don't know, it's just a feeling I get. He'll tell us about where he went and I just think that he's making it all up ... why are the dogs barking?

JULIANA

Maybe cause they're tied up. Uncle Jack didn't want them following him. I guess I'd better let them loose.

SFX: She heads back to the pump, then turns.

JULIANA

You sure have got a suspicious mind Dru. Now I'm gonna worry about Pa.

**NARRATOR:** In the hallway Molina was confronted by several closed doors. As Dru stepped out of the tub Molina made his decision. He twisted the knob on what looked to be a bedroom door and stepped inside.

It was a girl's room. No one was in it ... but something had caught his eye.

MOLINA

Jesus ...

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** It was a photograph in a silver frame. A man sitting in a big comfortable chair flanked by two girls, these girls. That was not surprising. The man, however, was something else entirely ... the man was Ben Curry.

Joquin Molina dropped to the ground beneath the window and slipped away into the brush. He took the picture with him.

DRU

Julie? I'm out.

SFX: Juliana steps up onto the porch.

JULIANA

Something's wrong. When I let the dogs go they just ran off around the barn.

DRU

They probably saw a rabbit. Come on I'll help you fill the tub.

**NARRATOR:** Molina ran as he never had in his life. He slashed his lead rope with a bared blade and vaulted into the saddle.

He didn't know what to make of all he had learned but by the time he got back to Robber's Roost he'd be sure to have it figured out. He would also know the best way to present it to Kirb Perrin.

MZK: Transition

**NARRATOR:** When they arrived back at Robber's Roost Mike went on up to Ben's big house alone.

He entered the parlour to find Kirb Perrin slouched on the settee, his feet propped on a low table.

PERRIN

Hey, Kid.

**NARRATOR:** Ben sat across from him in a big wing backed chair.

SFX: Mike up stairs, across porch, comes through door.

BEN

Well, how'd it go?

MIKE  
(quietly)  
Not good.

BEN  
What happened?

**NARRATOR:** Mike sat down on the other end of the settee.

MIKE  
Frank and Ducrow showed up in town and  
caused some trouble.

BEN  
What kind of trouble?

MIKE  
We were trying to figure out the job.  
Ducrow came in and started a fight. He's  
still in jail.

**NARRATOR:** Ben shot a look at Perrin.

BEN  
What were those men doing down there,  
Kirb?

PERRIN  
Hell if I know.

BEN  
That Ducrow's becoming a problem. I've a  
good mind to leave him there ...  
  
Now, what about the payroll? What did  
you find out?

MIKE  
It's too risky a job, especially now the  
Marshal has seen us. I think we should  
drop the whole thing.

PERRIN  
I can't believe we're still foolin'  
around on this. We oughta be counting  
that money right now!

MIKE  
It's too well guarded, and that damned  
Ducrow got us thrown in jail.

**NARRATOR:** Perrin stood up.

(CONTINUED)

PERRIN

So what? My idea to hit the train outside town is still the only way. You let me at it, and I'll get it done!

MIKE

So go ahead, be my guest!

BEN

Now just hold on a minute ...

PERRIN

No! We've waited long enough Ben!

BEN

Kirb, you haven't been listening to me. This is Mike's job.

I'll discuss it with him, and if he wants to do it, he'll do it. If he decides it's too risky ... it's off, understand?

PERRIN

Yeah ... yeah, I do! He hasn't got the guts to pull it off and neither do you!

**NARRATOR:** Ben stood. For a moment he looked at Kirb Perrin in an amused, almost admiring way. Then he hooked a fist into the younger man's midsection.

SFX: Ben punches Perrin.

BEN

Open the door, Mike. Open the door!

SFX: Mike opens the door to the house.

**NARRATOR:** Ben picked up Perrin by his collar and belt and tossed him out, onto the porch.

BEN (cont'd)

Kirb, you be careful. I might have killed you for that.

SFX: Ben closes the door and turns to Mike.

BEN

Now, let's go over this. There's always a way. What about a night job, go in against the vault?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Jesus Ben ...

We think the guards take shifts inside the office until they open the building in the morning.

BEN

You think?

MIKE

I don't know for sure, I was locked up all night!

BEN

There's always Perrin's way.

MIKE

You said yourself that you didn't want to kill the guards.

BEN

Right. What if we find a way around that.

MIKE

Ben, I'm tired ...

BEN

Come on boy-o, I know you've had a little scare, but don't let it get to you. We'll sit down, figure something out.

MIKE

No. I scouted it. I gave you my opinion. If you don't like it, get someone else. I didn't ask for this.

BEN

I gave you this job because I want the men to look to you as their leader.

MIKE

Well I don't want it.

BEN

What's that?

MIKE

Ben, I'm sorry ... I'm not going to run your gang.

(CONTINUED)



BEN  
I thought this was what you wanted!

MIKE  
No. It's what you wanted!

**NARRATOR:** Mike turned away but Ben grabbed him and jerked him back, bringing him up nose to nose.

BEN  
I brought you up to be the best, and now you're turning your back on me?

**NARRATOR:** Mike shook loose but didn't back up.

MIKE  
I don't owe you this. You took me in because you felt guilty about what happened to my father!

BEN  
I never knew you held it against me.

MIKE  
Well, I just started thinking about it!

BEN  
I've given you everything, now's a hell of a time for you to start worrying about why!

Mike, I'm warning you. There's only two kinds of people; some take what they want from life ... the others get the scraps!

You could have anything you want.

MIKE  
Well it doesn't look like much. You're practically a prisoner up here, I'd have to be crazy to want to live like this ... spend my life waiting to be thrown in jail ... I don't want to be afraid every time I run into a deputy on the street ... or hear a dog bark at night.

BEN  
I never thought of you as a coward.

MIKE  
Yeah? Well, maybe I am, but I wouldn't have left my wife to die while I went off on some Damn Fool robbery!

(CONTINUED)

BEN  
(shocked)  
You don't know anything about that!

MIKE  
I know enough to see what a mess you  
made.

BEN  
Get out ... get the hell out, understand  
me!

MIKE  
Yes I do!

SFX: Mike goes slamming out the door.

**NARRATOR:** Ben stood in the big empty room for a long time.  
Finally, his shoulders sagged.

BEN  
Oh, God ... God Damn it!

-----

**NARRATOR:** Mike strode swiftly down the street. He didn't  
know where he was going but, tired as he was, he was getting  
out. Ben was an arrogant, manipulative, old bastard. He  
lied, and he stole, and he tried to push people around like  
they were men on a chess board. It had all come to a head  
much too fast, but Mike was sure that he had meant everything  
he'd said -- that and more was a telling-off that Ben had  
needed for years.

As he passed the saloon Frank stepped off the porch and  
staggered up to him. He carried a bottle in one hand.

FRANK  
Hey ... hey! You goin' come in 'n have  
a drink?

MIKE  
No.

FRANK  
No?

**NARRATOR:** Frank leaned up against him and, as Mike pushed  
him away...

MIKE  
Get away from me!

(CONTINUED)

**NARRATOR:** ... Frank pulled Mike's pistol from it's holster.

FRANK  
You come with me.

**NARRATOR:** Frank was completely sober.

High on the mountain above Robber's Roost Roundy was making his way back from running his trap line. He carried several pelts from a pole and his old Sharps buffalo gun was slung across his back.

There was movement down at the buildings, movement with a different pace to it than what was normal. He slowed and, dropping his pelts, settled down to watch.

Someone, it looked like Mike, was being pushed toward the saloon. The two figures were into the shadow of the porch before Roundy could get a good look. But over near the tents Owen, Brady and a couple of other men were milling about and sunlight flashed momentarily on a rifle barrel. Roundy knew that particular tent was Colley's.

Things were definitely not right. Roundy left his furs behind and, unslinging his rifle, headed down the slope.

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**SFX:** Outlaws argue and mill around.

**NARRATOR:** Mike was tied to a chair when Doc and Colley were led into the saloon by Perrin and a group of other men.

MIKE  
Just what is it you think you're doing?

PERRIN  
(laughs)  
Think? It's what I *am* doing. -- I *am* sick and tired of Ben lording it over us.

I *am* through with his sitting up there taking a third of the money that we rightfully stole, throwing away jobs worth thousands because he's too old to know what it's like anymore.

and ... I *am* going to stop him from handing this gang over to his STUPID, TIN-HORN, kid.

MIKE

Is this because of *me*?

... if it is you're making a mistake ...  
Ben's going to retire and I don't want  
anything to do with this!

PERRIN

That's not going to help. It's NOTHING!

FRANK

So ... how are you going to go about  
this, Kirb?

PERRIN

Easy, I'm going to walk up there and  
shoot the old bastard!

MIKE

He threw you out. You think you're just  
going to walk back in?

**NARRATOR:** (Perrin turned and back handed Mike across the  
face.)

PERRIN

... and then I'm going to split his  
money with whoever comes with me, equal  
shares!

VIC

Yeah? How much you figger he's got?

PERRIN

Think about it; you ever see old Ben  
spend anything?

He's sitting up there on a third of the  
money we ever stole!

VIC

Jeeze ...

FRANK

Suppose he doesn't want to open up?

PERRIN

Ben'll do anything I want. Because if he  
doesn't, I'm going to fertilize the  
street with his kid's brains.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

I'm not his real son. He's not going to get killed over me.

PERRIN

Then you'll die for nothing, and Ben'll come out anyway ...

**NARRATOR:** Molina stepped forward and dropped the picture of Ben and his daughters on the floor in front of Mike.

MOLINA

You are not the only ace in the hole, my friend.

-----

**NARRATOR:** At the head of the crowd Perrin strode up the street to stop fifty yards in front of Ben's house.

PERRIN

Ben? Ben! Come out here!

**NARRATOR:** There was no movement. The outlaws looked nervously around, then several broke for cover; Monson taking a position behind a large boulder and Frank in the shelter of one of the tents.

PERRIN

Ben, damn you, open up!

**NARRATOR:** Perrin turned and spoke over his shoulder.

PERRIN (cont'd)

Clatt. Bring him up here.

**NARRATOR:** Dave Clatt led Mike out, a gun to his head. Mike's hands were tied in front of him. They stopped on Perrin's left. Clatt holding Mike as a shield.

PERRIN (cont'd)

Get out here Ben, or I'll kill him!

**NARRATOR:** Standing far back from the window in a room on the second floor of Ben's house, Roundy steadied his big rifle and took careful aim at the small section of Clatt's skull that was exposed to his line of fire.

**SFX:** Roundy cocks his gun.

**NARRATOR:** On the floor beside the window lay a fully loaded Winchester.

(CONTINUED)

Out of sight beside the front door Ben waited. Over at the gun case, Shan Bao was loading rifles.

PERRIN

(off)

All right! You asked for it!

**NARRATOR:** Ben stepped through the door onto the porch. His hands were raised to shoulder height and he was not wearing a gun belt.

BEN

I'm right here, Kirb.

**NARRATOR:** Molina and an outlaw named Vic found cover behind an outhouse. Molina glanced over at Perrin. So far so good, but he was wondering if Perrin was really up to this.

BEN

Now Clatt, you let my boy go.

**NARRATOR:** Clatt did not remove the pistol but he did carefully release the hammer.

PERRIN

Well now Ben, looks like I've got you.

-----

SFX: Shot and then a burst of firing.

**NARRATOR:** Clatt spun back, dead before he hit the ground. Then Ben whipped two short barreled revolvers from his hip pockets.

Perrin drew and fired. Ben went down, his right leg knocked from under him by Perrin's bullet. He rolled over and emptied both pistols into the group of outlaws. Tied to the hitching rail, Mike's horse bucked and jerked at her lead rope in panic.

Mike sprinted for the house. Perrin dove for cover. And Roundy, putting down the Sharps, opened up with the Winchester.

Mike dodged the kicking horse, grabbed Ben and hauled him through the door. Roundy came clattering down the stairs into the safety of the stone first floor. He slid Mike his Bowie knife so that Mike could cut his hands loose. Roundy reloaded the rifle and passed it to Mike.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

Give me that ... you get another and help  
Shan Bao have a look out back.

MIKE

Pa, You're hurt ...

BEN

I don't shoot with my feet, boy!

**NARRATOR:** Mike and the Chinaman took up positions at the rear of the house. Sure enough there was a flickering movement behind the brush along the river bank and then two of Perrin's men, Hernandez and Jake, rushed forward. Mike came up with the Henry rifle he had snatched from the case and dusted the ground in front of the two running men.

They came to an abrupt stop and when Hernandez brought up his rifle to fire. Shan Bao shot him in the chest. Jake ran and Mike let him go.

-----

SFX: Molina crawls up.

MOLINA

Kirb. Hernandez is down. Dead, as far  
as I can tell.

PERRIN

Damn! Send Owen to help Jake.

MOLINA

Owen! Come on!

PERRIN

No you stay here.

**NARRATOR:** Molina signaled for the other man to pull back into the trees and circle the house. He crouched back down just as Monson came running up carrying two whiskey bottles with strips of rag stuffed into the necks. One of the rags was burning.

MONSON

Come on, we'll fire the house!

**NARRATOR:** Perrin reached up and dragged him down.

MONSON

Hey!

**NARRATOR:** Perrin yanked the burning rag out of the bottle and threw it in the dirt.

PERRIN  
You idiot, you want to burn all the money?

**NARRATOR:** He glanced at Molina.

PERRIN (cont'd)  
There is a better way of doing this.

MOLINA  
Yeah? You want me to go?

PERRIN  
No reason to bang on the door when you've got the key. Take whoever you need and get going.

MOLINA  
Morning. That's when I'll be back.

**NARRATOR:** Kirb Perrin yanked the rag from the neck of the other whisky bottle and took a short pull.

PERRIN  
Might as well make ourselves comfortable.

**NARRATOR:** Except for an occasional shot or two the fighting had broken off. Mike stared out the window, surveying the dusty expanse between the back of the house and the creek. If a man were to follow it down to the stand of cottonwoods on the right then drop into the low spot where the horse pasture drained off he could get pretty close to the back of the house. Too close for comfort.

So why weren't they trying it? They knew they couldn't starve Ben out; everyone was aware of the large supply of canned food that was kept in the house in case of heavy winter snows. Ben had enough food to last for months and a well dug right under the kitchen. Had they given up, or were they planning something ...

Mike crawled into the front room where Roundy was working on Ben's leg, cleaning and bandaging the wound.

BEN  
Ungh! Damn it, Roundy. That hurts.

**NARRATOR:** They looked up as Mike crawled through the door.



BEN (cont'd)

What are you doing up here? Get on and watch the back.

MIKE

Have you seen Molina out there?

**NARRATOR:** Ben and Roundy glanced at each other. Roundy got up and, moving close to the window frame, examined the cover that several of the outlaws were hiding behind.

MIKE

I think he's gone to the Rafter R to kidnap the girls.

BEN

How do you know about that? That's nonsense!

MIKE

Perrin said that's what he would do if he had to kill me ... he has a photograph of all of you.

**NARRATOR:** Ben's face went white, then he staggered to his feet. Roundy stepped in quickly to stop him.

ROUNDY

Now hold on Ben ...

BEN

I have to stop them!

**SFX:** Ben staggers and grabs the back of a chair.

ROUNDY

... you can't put your weight on that.

BEN

It's my family!

MIKE

I can go. If you tell me your short cut across the river, I can get there first.

**NARRATOR:** Ben grabbed Mike, pulling him close.

BEN

Does Perrin know about that, too? You caused all this, I hope you're satisfied!

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

No, I didn't, Ben. It's been coming for years!

ROUNDY

I told him you had a way ...

BEN

Jesus! The two of you ...

**NARRATOR:** Ben limped to the window.

**SFX:** A bullet smashes into the wooden frame.

**NARRATOR:** Ben jerked back, his bad leg gave out and he fell heavily to the floor ...

BEN (cont'd)

Damn it!

**NARRATOR:** ... Heaving himself up on one knee he grabbed his rifle.

**SFX:** Ben fires out the window.

BEN

You traitors better pull out or I'm gonna kill every last one of you!

**SFX:** A fusillade of shots batter the house.

**NARRATOR:** Mike and Roundy dove for the floor as a fusillade of gunfire battered the house.

MIKE

You can cover me. My horse is still out there.

ROUNDY

No. You don't stand any better chance than Ben would ... we'll have to wait for dark ...

MIKE

I wasn't thinking of going out the door.

**SFX:** Wood splinters carefully.

**NARRATOR:** Using their knives and the poker from the kitchen stove Mike and Roundy went to work prying up a patch of floorboards in the middle of the room.

(CONTINUED)

Their progress in opening the hole was maddeningly slow, for the closest of Perrin's men were less than fifty yards away and the sound of breaking wood might allow them to decipher just what it was the defenders were up to.

Occasionally, when a board had to be broken Ben would fire a shot or two out the window to cover the noise. All in all the job took the better part of half an hour.

BEN

... it's a big rock in the middle of a clearing, you'll find a game trail on the south-west side. You just follow it to the canyon.

MIKE

Then I cross the river?

BEN

Don't go trying it after dark. You're no good to anyone if you get yourself killed.

**NARRATOR:** Mike slung the Henry rifle across his back and dropped down into the hole.

ROUNDY

Good luck, boy!

**NARRATOR:** Mike looked at Ben, who glanced away.

BEN

Better get going.

**NARRATOR:** Mike didn't know whether to grin or throw a punch at the old man. Ben Curry had spent years laying this particular fire but he surely didn't like being cooked in it.

He made his way under the porch until he was just ten feet away from the hitching rail. Now came the trickiest part. Mike's horse had been tied throughout the shoot-out. Peering out Mike could see blood where her hackamore had bit through the skin as she jerked at the rope. He was pleased to see that she was no longer shaking or wild eyed, but he was worried that his sudden appearance would make her unmanageable.

Mike rolled out from under the porch, the horse flinched back, he cut the rope and swung into the saddle as the horse turned away from him. Mike dropped the knife, stabbed his other boot into the stirrup, and using the animal's fear to his advantage he spurred right towards the rock where Perrin was hiding!

(CONTINUED)

An outlaw named Sinclair was up and firing but then the dull boom of Roundy's Sharps sounded and the Scotsman was down. Perrin was scrambling to his feet but Ben was laying down fire so thick that for a moment Kirb couldn't bring his rifle to bear.

Mike galloped past, putting the mare over a section of broken fence. Then the saloon was between him and the other outlaws. The firing stopped and moments later Mike was fighting to slow the mare as she clattered down through the stream bed and out of the rocky cleft by the trees. He was away but Molina was at least an hour ahead of him and Mike was riding a route he had never taken before.

55

**OMITTED**

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SFX: Gunshot, glass breaks.

BEN

Polecats are breaking all my windows.

Damn it, Roundy! When I told you about my family, you swore it'd be a secret.

ROUNDY

He needed to know. I don't mind breakin' my word to do what's right. Stop whining.

BEN

I'm not whining!

ROUNDY

You are. What were you yellin' at Mike for?

BEN

Stay out of it.

ROUNDY

Tell me.

BEN

None of your business.

ROUNDY

Okay, fine.

BEN

He wouldn't ...

(CONTINUED)

ROUNDY

Forget it.

BEN

Roundy ...

ROUNDY

None of my business.

BEN

I offered to give him the gang ...

ROUNDY

And he finally had the sense to tell you no.

BEN

Had the sense ..?

ROUNDY

You stupid old goat. If he doesn't want it, it's not a gift, it's a curse.

-----

**NARRATOR:** Mike rode in a tight circle around the big rock. To him it looked like there were two game trails headed off in the direction of the canyon. Then he saw it. In the slanting light there was an indentation made by a hoof. Coming around again he looked carefully and saw a scuffed rock about ten yards up the left hand trail ... This was the way Ben had come when he returned from the ranch a week ago!

Mike turned his horse and took the trail at a run.

In an hour he was trotting along the rocky rim of the canyon. It was over one hundred feet deep and in the bottom the water rushed over boulders and cascades, pausing in an occasional pool of deep green before being torn again by huge rocks and snags of splintered logs.

The trail veered away from the river. It lead through a stand of pines and then came back alongside a deep stretch of white water.

Finally Mike topped a low rise and there, nestled in a grassy cove, was a large fenced pasture. He left his horse and took a foot path that cut down into the gorge.

The path lead to a ledge that slanted down above the river. At the bottom was a rock shelf and anchored in a hole drilled into the rock face was a rusting steel cable about an inch in thickness.

(CONTINUED)

It ran over a wooden bracing and out across the river, fifty feet above the raging torrent. On the other side, the cable looped around another set of wooden pilings and came back, four feet lower, to pass over a protruding rim of rock and then into another hole.

Mike took a deep breath and climbed up onto the bottom cable. He took the top wire in his hands, locked the heels of his boots over the bottom, and slid his right foot and then his right hand out, then he pulled his left hand and his left foot up to them.

MIKE

(under his breath)

Ben, you're a crazy man.

**NARRATOR:** He moved along the two wires, right hand, right foot, left hand, left foot, one movement at a time, inching along.

The middle of the span dipped slightly and below him the water thundered between the rocky walls of the canyon. The air was thick with moisture and the setting sun caused bands of rainbow colors to shimmer in the space above the canyon rim.

Mike's boot heel suddenly slid, and his hands clenched, the motion made the wires wobble.

MIKE

Whoa!

**NARRATOR:** The bottom cable was covered with a thin film of green -- moss. The center of the cable was slick with it. He slid his feet, stabilizing himself with his legs, and drawing himself along the wet wire with his hands.

Where the cable looped around the massive timber, Mike's toes found notches that had been cut into the log to form steps on which he could descend. From here Mike climbed upward to a small, fenced pasture where three horses fed. Under a tarp he found a saddle and tack and was soon headed off, down the westering trail.

**SFX:** Jack and Drucilla are forking the last of a wagon load of hay into place.

**NARRATOR:** It was after dark when Jack Coneely and Drucilla forked the last wagon-load of hay into place in the center of the barn. Carefully placed hurricane lanterns lit the front of the big building and the air was adrift with dust and chaff.

Earlier, Julie had been helping too, but now she sat, exhausted, on the top rail of a gate near the big doors, staring off into the darkness. Drucilla had donned a man's trousers and shirt, clothes that she would have been ashamed to have been seen in by anyone other than her Uncle. She had tied down the cuffs and sealed her collar with a bandanna but flecks of hay had still worked their way to her skin and she was itching and red-eyed. Jack Coneely seemed unaffected. He set down his pitchfork and walked over to where Julie sat.

JACK

Go on to bed, honey, We'll finish up the last of it.

JULIANA

The crickets, they've stopped ...

SFX: The sound of a horse approaching comes to them.

JACK

It's late for someone to be coming by.

SFX: The dogs start to bark somewhere off in the night.

MOLINA

(off mic and faint)

Damn it!

SFX: There is a gunshot. The dog yelps.

VIC

(off mic and faint)

Ha!

**NARRATOR:** Suddenly horsemen appeared silhouetted in the lamp light from the house. Jack swept Julie off the gate and pushed her out of the light.

JACK

Run! Run and hide!

SFX: Gunshot.

**NARRATOR:** Jack fell to his knees, a hole in his shoulder, a hole that darkened his shirt with blood.

Joquin Molina reined his horse to a stop in the patch of light from the barn doors and jacked a shell from his rifle.

MOLINA

Vic! Cover the back. Find the girl, she ran off somewhere.

(CONTINUED)

VIC

Right.

SFX: Vic spurs his mount around the house.

**NARRATOR:** Jack started to crawl into the barn but Jonny jumped off his horse and dragged him back into the yard.

VIC

(off)

Arghh!

MOLINA

Victor! Que pasa?

VIC

(off)

She stuck me with a pitch fork!

MOLINA

You get her?

VIC

(off)

No! ... it's too damn dark.

MOLINA

Well get her!

I'm going after the other one.

**NARRATOR:** He turned his horse in the direction that Julie had taken when she ran off.

JONNY

I'll take care of this ...

**NARRATOR:** Jonny drew his gun and cocked it. But a bullet from the darkness took him in the leg. He fell as Mike Santos appeared, running his horse into the yard. Jonny fired wildly at him and Mike dropped low on the opposite side of the horse and fired from beneath its neck like an Indian. Jonny fell as Mike flashed past in front of the barn.

MOLINA

(off)

He's in back! Vic, he's in back!

**NARRATOR:** Mike moved swiftly to a side door that was standing open. He peered in.



Hazy lamp light drifted through cracks in the planks that closed off the center of the barn. From what Mike could see it looked like a calving area. Laying in one of the streaks of light was a broken pitchfork. Nothing else was visible.

Mike stepped through the door. A hatch high in the wall that led to the hay room was hanging slightly open, Mike nudged it wider with his pistol barrel but all he could see was a pile of loose hay and the suggestion of light beyond.

Suddenly, the stall door to his left jerked open and a slight form flew at him swinging the broken handle of the pitchfork

SFX: Mike and Dru struggle.

MIKE

Stop! Stop!

DRU

Mike! What're you doing here?

MIKE

I heard there was trouble ...

SFX: There is the sound of a cocking gun and the creak of a door.

VIC

How in hell'd you get here?

**NARRATOR:** Vic stood in the doorway to the tie-stalls on the other side of the barn. Mike turned to face him, his gun held in the shadows at his side. He pressed his pistol into Dru's hand and she looked at him, shocked. He stepped away from her, forcing Vic to turn, then he raised his hands and walked forward.

MIKE

(hoarse and deadly)  
I'm not going to kill you.

VIC

What?

MIKE

I killed someone out front.

**NARRATOR:** Mike took the gun gently from Vic's hand.

MIKE

Go.

GET OUT OF HERE!

(CONTINUED)

SFX: Vic runs away, mounts hooves disappear.

DRU  
You're insane.

MIKE  
No. I'm just not cut out for this.

Better give me my gun. Molina is still here.

DRU  
What?

MIKE  
There's one more man.

-----

**NARRATOR:** She lead him through the door behind the stacked hay. They edged around it into the light.

Jack Coneely was slumped in the big front doors, Dru went to him. Mike quickly blew out the lamps so that they wouldn't be visible from the shadows of the ranch yard.

JACK  
I think he's gone ... The last one rode off.

DRU  
Oh, Jack ...

JACK  
It's not bleeding much, but I'm going to have to go to town.

**NARRATOR:** He tried to stand and she helped him to his feet.

DRU  
Where's Juliana?

JACK  
I told her to hide.

DRU  
I'll get her.  
(off)  
Julie? Juliana..?

JACK  
It's good you showed up when you did, son. Do you know what's happening here?

(CONTINUED)

DRU  
(heading off)  
I'll go look in the corral.

MIKE  
Ben's in trouble.

JACK  
Ben?

MIKE  
Curry.

**NARRATOR:** Jack nodded, silently.

MIKE  
Perrin's trying to take over. Ben's  
forted up and they came looking for  
hostages.

DRU  
(off)  
Juliana ... you can come out now ...

**NARRATOR:** Mike and Jack suddenly looked at each other in  
horror.

MIKE  
Oh Jesus ...

**NARRATOR:** He took up one of the lamps and fumbling with a  
match ran toward the corral where Dru was searching.

JACK  
(off)  
Julie!

**SFX:** Mike comes running up.

MIKE  
Drucilla!

**NARRATOR:** She spun around.

MIKE  
Where would she hide?

DRU  
Maybe the bridge.

MIKE  
Come on!

(CONTINUED)

JACK  
(off)  
Julie?

-----

**NARRATOR:** In the darkness the black cross pieces of a small bridge materialized. The creek had created a snag of driftwood on the upstream side.

DRU  
Julie?

**NARRATOR:** The light from the lamp revealed a torn fragment of gingham cloth. On the ground nearby lay Molina's black hat.

MIKE  
He got her ...

DRU  
Who did? Do you know those men?

MIKE  
Yes ... they were Jouquin Molina and two others from Robber's Roost.

DRU  
Mike, you tell me what's going on and it had better be the truth.

**NARRATOR:** Mike glanced at Jack ...

JACK  
Go on, this has been a long time coming.

MIKE  
You're father's not in the cattle business.

He's a criminal named Ben Curry and he's had a price on his head for twenty years.

He raised me too.

DRU  
I don't know what you think you're doing ... You've lied to me every time I've talked to you!

JACK  
It's the truth. He didn't want you girls to know.

(CONTINUED)

DRU  
Uncle Jack!

**NARRATOR:** Jack took her in his arms but she pushed him away and stepped back.

DRU  
Get away! You all know this ... You all know ...

**NARRATOR:** She glared at them and Mike turned to Jack.

MIKE  
You need a doctor ...

DRU  
What about Juliana!

MIKE  
Molina will take her back to the hide out. You give me a fresh horse. I think I know how to stop him.

-----

SFX: Distant voices.

**NARRATOR:** Ben could hear distant voices and laughter from down at the saloon. The building was dark, however. They'd boarded up the windows visible from Ben's house, for when they had first lit a lamp Roundy's Sharps had blown out the globe. There had been a few minutes of return fire and Ben and Shan Bao had spotted two men watching the house from closer in ... they were still trapped, and Ben Curry hated it.

BEN  
None of this is going like I planned.

ROUNDY  
... and how would've that been?

BEN  
Is that some kind of a trick question?

ROUNDY  
(laughs)

BEN  
I wanted to spend time with my girls ... move into town, someplace where they could have fun.

(CONTINUED)

ROUNDY  
... and Mike?

                  BEN  
I wanted him to have everything I had.

                  ROUNDY  
He has got it, Ben ... inside. He  
doesn't need the rest.

BEN is quiet for a moment.

                  BEN  
How many you think they left watching the  
house?

                  ROUNDY  
Just the two. They're taking shifts,  
most of the others are down at the  
saloon.

                  BEN  
Mike's right, this place is a trap.

SFX: Ben gets up, steadying himself carefully.

                  BEN (cont'd)  
They've betrayed me. If Mike's not going  
to run this gang ... no one is.

-----

SFX: Mike brings up the Rafter R wagon.

                  MIKE  
Whoa.

SFX: He sets the brake and gets down.

                  MIKE (cont'd)  
All right Mr. Coneely, let's get you up  
there.

**NARRATOR:** As Mike helped Jack up onto the seat of the wagon  
Drucilla came back from the corral leading a black mare.

                  MIKE  
What are you doing?

                  DRU  
I'm going with you.

MIKE

You have to take your uncle to the doctor.

DRU

He can make it, those horses will go straight to the livery at The Crossing, it's like home to them.

MIKE

No. No!

**NARRATOR:** Mike mounted up but Dru grabbed ahold of his stirrup leathers.

SFX: He swings into the saddle.

DRU

Mike, she's my sister!

MIKE

Dru, you couldn't make it, certainly not in the dark. I'll come and find you as soon as I can.

SFX: He rides off. DRU turns to where JACK is sitting in the wagon.

DRU

I have to go ... It's Julie and Pa, they need me.

JACK

I can make it. I'll be all right.

DRU

I'm sorry ...

JACK

Go on then, I'll be fine. Just you be careful, if you can't catch him, turn around and come back.

JACK starts the wagon off.

JACK (cont'd)

Ha! Git up ...

**NARRATOR:** Monson had been watching Ben's house for hours. Watching while the others retired to the saloon for a drink, a game of cards or, more importantly, a meal.

(CONTINUED)

No one had come to relieve him and he knew that if he went on down there to suggest it he'd catch hell from Perrin.

He was beginning to have his doubts about this whole plan ... Ben could be the meanest cuss alive but, at the end of the day, he was fair. It had all sounded good when Perrin was going to take their chances for them. Now, however, it had all turned into a foul up and they had gone to kidnapping women and children. He worried about what would happen to the girls in that picture once they had gotten Ben to surrender. Monson thought about riding out, changing his name and being done with all of this. He glanced longingly at the lights of the saloon ... morning couldn't come soon enough.

There was a sound, it was as if the night had taken a breath. He turned and just before the butt of the Sharps caught him on the chin he saw old Roundy standing there, face and buckskins blacked with soot, eyes glowing like the wrath of God.

Roundy had gone out the same way as Mike but after taking care of the two guards he walked back in through the front door. Ben was at the gun case belting on the pair of Dragoon Colts he'd had since the days when they'd been young and stupid down in Mexico. A short barreled shot gun hung by its sling from one of Ben's shoulders and he began loading a second. Roundy crossed the room and stopping beside Ben, and exchanged his single shot Sharps for a Winchester.

ROUNDY

All right. Come on.

BEN

You're not going, old friend.

ROUNDY

Now, Ben ... (that just doesn't make sense)

BEN

I built all this, so it's my responsibility ... alone.

If Molina comes back and he's got my girls ... well, one of us has to be in shape to take care of him.

**NARRATOR:** Ben took a tentative step, testing his bad leg. He looked up at Roundy, a slow smile pulled at one corner of his mustache.

BEN

Besides ... there's only six of them.



SFX: Water roars beneath the wire bridge.

**NARRATOR:** The two cables disappeared into darkness. Mike looked at the edge of the chasm and steadied his breath.

SFX: A rock turns under Drucilla's foot.

**NARRATOR:** Mike whirled toward the noise, drawing his gun.

Drucilla Regan stood there, outlined against the rocks behind her.

MIKE

What are you doing here?

DRU

I followed you ...

MIKE

Yeah? Well, you see that, that's why I didn't want you to come.

DRU

(unsteady)

I can make it. You can't stop me.

**NARRATOR:** Mike holstered his gun, giving up.

MIKE

All right ... I have an idea.

**NARRATOR:** The cinch strap went twice around Drucilla's narrow waist and Mike pulled it as tight as it could go with loop after loop of latigo leather.

MIKE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

You okay?

DRU

It's tight. I feel like a horse.

MIKE

Good. Breathe out.

**NARRATOR:** Mike had dismantled both of their saddles. He threaded a length of rope between the make-shift harness and her stomach, looping it from the upper wire then under the cinch strap and back again so that she was connected to the cable by several strands of rope about two feet long. He tied the ends tightly together.

(CONTINUED)

MIKE (cont'd)

Get started. If you slip, the rope will catch you and I'll be right along.

**NARRATOR:** She hooked her heels hesitantly over the lower wire and looked back ... Mike was tightening the other cinch around his own waist ... she slid her foot out along the line, shifted her grip and took another step.

The canyon opened up beneath her but she couldn't see it. It was more a feeling of space ... of a vast, roaring, emptiness. When she looked down she saw nothing, when she looked up she could see a swath of stars and cloud framed between the dark walls of the canyon.

The wire under her feet trembled. Mike must be starting toward her. Then she felt herself moving up the slightest incline in the cable; she was half way to the other side.

As she hitched her way along she was alarmed at how the cable was moving now that both she and Mike were on it. It shook and jumped whenever he took a step, and as she corrected her balance the upper cable moved toward her slightly. A few steps more, now the cliff above her blotted out many of the stars. Suddenly, the lower cable bucked under her feet and the upper cable jerked downward!

MIKE (cont'd)

Ahhh!

DRU

Mike? MIKE?

**NARRATOR:** She froze, arms and legs locked, praying for balance.

MIKE

Yeah! I'm okay. I think I'm okay.

**NARRATOR:** She moved back toward his voice ...

MIKE

I'm here.

**NARRATOR:** ... feeling along until her hand struck the rope looped around the wire and under Mike's cinch strap.

DRU

Are you all right?

(CONTINUED)

MIKE

Yeah. Just ... you got to help me get back on the wire. I can't get my feet back on the wire.

DRU

Can you pull yourself up?

MIKE

Yeah.

**NARRATOR:** He grabbed the upper wire and pulled himself up until it was at his chest. Then Drucilla caught his pant leg with one hand. She guided his leg toward the wire as he lowered his body, trying to regain his position.

MIKE

Got it!

DRU

Go slower this time.

MIKE

I was trying to catch up to you.

**NARRATOR:** Carefully they started out again and soon reached the end of the wire. With trembling fingers Mike untied her latigos and then she set him loose. They collapsed on the rock ledge but after a moment Mike was on his feet and hurrying Drucilla up the slanting trail.

-----

SFX: Snoring, coins clink ...

**NARRATOR:** At the Robber's Roost saloon Owen, Brady, and Frank were unenthusiastically playing cards. In one corner Doc and Colley were tied. Doc, by now, was asleep but Colley sat with a gag in his mouth and glared at anyone who would look his way. Two other men lay on the floor, asleep, and Perrin sat at a table, staring into an empty shot glass.

SFX: From outside there is a dull "whuff" sound, and then the sound of wood slowly breaking.

**NARRATOR:** Perrin looked up. He could see a flickering light reflected from somewhere up the street.

SFX: Perrin springs from his chair and runs to the door.

OWEN

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

BRADY

Kirb?

PERRIN

Ben!

**NARRATOR:** One of the tents was a tower of flame and two of the cabins were burning...

PERRIN (cont'd)

Damn it!

**NARRATOR:** Pulling the thong off his six-gun, Perrin stepped out into the street.

The back door of the saloon crashed open as Ben Curry slammed through. The outlaws turned from the windows, startled. Ben raised his shotgun and fired at Brady. Owen ducked and grabbed for his pistol and Ben fired again, missing. Frank dove through the front door as Ben dropped the first shotgun and flipped the second off his shoulder. Owen started shooting wildly.

The shotgun blast cut Owen down as the two other men collided getting to the door. Ben lurched forward. He tossed a knife to Colley then pushed through the door and into the street.

**SFX:** Ben emerges from the building, fire up, gunshot.

Fire lit the front of the building. A bullet notched the rail and he turned and fired his final buckshot charge at Frank who was behind the corner. Frank jerked back, firing his pistol again.

Ben drew one of his Colts and stepped off the porch. His bad leg collapsed and, as he grabbed at the rail, Frank stumbled to his feet. Ben fired twice and Frank went down. Getting his feet back under him, Ben turned and surveyed the street.

-----

A breeze parted the smoke, and ahead of him stood Perrin. Each had a drawn gun and, as they locked eyes, Ben limped forward.

PERRIN

Don't make me do this!

BEN

I'm not makin' you do anything.

(CONTINUED)

PERRIN

That whelp of yours isn't up to it and never will be.

BEN

What's mine I do with what I want, Kirb, you know that!

PERRIN

Ahhh!

**NARRATOR:** Perrin threw his gun up and fired. His first shot notched Ben's ear and the second took Ben in the left shoulder. Then Ben raised his pistol and purposefully shot Perrin in the chest. Perrin hit the ground, his gun falling from his fingers. Ben limped toward him then his leg gave way again and he sprawled in the dirt near Kirby Perrin's outstretched hand.

PERRIN

I thought ... Oh Lord ... (coughs)

BEN

I'm sorry, Kirb. I'm sorry.

**NARRATOR:** But Perrin was dead. His breath stilled, the wetness in his eyes drying.

68

---OMITTED---

68

69

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69

SFX: Running horses.

Mike and Drucilla took the trail to the river ford at a flat out run. They had saddled Mike's mare and another horse that Ben kept on this side of the bridge and pressed their mounts as hard as they could, for Mike knew that the river was the best place to try for a rescue.

The trail wound down between the steep walls of a side canyon. As they turned onto the sand flat that ran alongside the river they could see a man swimming his horse toward them through the deepest stretch. Mike slipped the Henry rifle from his back.

It was Molina, and sitting in the saddle in front of him was Juliana. The outlaw looked up and saw them. As his horse found its footing he reached up and locked his left arm around Julie's throat and the right reached for his pistol.

At the sight of her sister Julie began to struggle.

(CONTINUED)

JULIANA

Dru ..?

**NARRATOR:** Molina tightened his arm and twisting his hand pulled up on the reins, stopping his horse.

MOLINA

You be good now, nina. Don't give me no trouble.

MIKE

Let her go!

MOLINA

You be smart here. One of these young ladies could get hurt. I don't care about that ... but I think you do.

MIKE

You let her go and ride out of here.

MOLINA

I don't think so. It looks like we got us a stand off.

**NARRATOR:** Dru turned her horse alongside Mike's. She reached out and slid the Smith & Wesson from it's holster. She dropped to the ground and in two steps had reached the partial cover of a boulder.

DRU

No it doesn't, mister. You put that gun away.

MOLINA

Hey ...!

MIKE

We're not backing off. And you're going no farther, understand?

MOLINA

Don't test me. You got to be crazy if you test me.

**NARRATOR:** Just then Juliana pulled her head back and bit deep into Molina's arm.

MOLINA

Arrgh!

**NARRATOR:** She threw herself sideways, squirming to get out of the saddle.

(CONTINUED)

DRU

Julie!

JULIANA

Dru!

**NARRATOR:** Julie dropped into the water. Mike jumped his horse forward and the two horses collided, the men firing at point blank range. Mike swung the rifle barrel, hitting Molina in the chest. Molina fired again, so close that Mike could feel the muzzle blast tear at his skin. His rifle muzzle snagged in Molina's shirt and Mike pulled the trigger.

**SFX:** Mike and Molina shoot, horses splashing in the water. A body falls into the river.

**NARRATOR:** Molina hit the water and the current spun him away.

DRU

Mike? Mike are you alright?

MIKE

Fine ...

**NARRATOR:** Mike moved and was suddenly aware of a raw burning across his back ... he realized that Drucilla and Julie were staring at him.

DRU

You don't look fine.

**NARRATOR:** One of Molina's bullets had cut his skin, shoulder to shoulder, like a knife.

DRU

Get off that horse. You're hurt. Come on ...

-----

**NARRATOR:** It was hours later that they finally reached the hide-out. From the minute they entered the rocky crack by the trees Mike knew that something had happened, for the smell of smoke drifted on the wind.

MIKE

Oh my God ...

**NARRATOR:** Much of the meadow was blackened. The tents were smouldering ruins, and two of the cabins had fallen in, their walls charred, their roofs gone.

(CONTINUED)

Ben's big house still stood but with all the glass shot out and one wall blackened. Roundy's dug out, thankfully, was untouched, as was the barn.

They found Ben sitting in his favorite wingbacked chair in the meadow in front of the saloon. He was soot blackened and bloody, but alive. A half empty whisky bottle was at his side and Doc Sawyer had cut away part of his trousers and was working on his leg. Colley sat on the saloon porch and Roundy paced nearby.

JULIANA

Pa ..?

**NARRATOR:** Roundy helped Juliana out of the saddle and she ran to Ben.

BEN

Julie? God, I hope I'm not seeing things.

JULIANA

You're not ... you're not ...

**NARRATOR:** Drucilla glanced at Mike. They hung back, unsure of how to react.

BEN

I'll be all right sweetheart ... If this damn horse doctor'll stop twisting my leg.

DOC

If you don't let me fix it today, I'll be cutting it off tomorrow.

**NARRATOR:** Ben waved him away.

JULIANA

Oh Papa, what happened?

BEN

I got shot ... a couple of times ...

**NARRATOR:** Mike slipped off his mare and helped Drucilla down.

BEN

Don't you two be looking at me like that.

DRU

Papa, you've got a lot of explaining to do.

(CONTINUED)



BEN

Son, if you'd called the law down on me  
you couldn't have caused more trouble.

DRU

I made him bring me. They ... your men  
took Julie.

BEN

Well, between the two of us we made a  
mess of things, that's for sure.

MIKE

I'm sorry I disappointed you.

BEN

Help me up.

DRU

Here.

MIKE

Here you go.

BEN

Come on Doc, you'll get your chance.

You didn't disappoint me, boy.

... I've always had to respect anyone  
with guts enough to tell me to go to  
hell.

**NARRATOR:** With Mike on one side and Roundy on the other they  
headed for the big house.

BEN

I fear a long convalescence where this  
Gentleman of Opportunity will have to  
repeatedly apologize for his wild and  
thieving nature.

**NARRATOR:** If you were to come, after the passing of years,  
to a certain secluded meadow high in the Sierra Nevada you  
might chance upon the ruins of a wood and stone cabin. It is  
collapsed now from years of neglect and the weight of winter  
snows. A strongly built dugout remains nearby where, it is  
said, one of the last of the mountain men once lived.

(CONTINUED)

Nothing is truly known about the fate of Ben Curry. By the turn of the century few could even place his name amongst the legends of the old west. One could easily believe that he died in the obscurity of age or accident. Except, that is, for an odd story recounted in the summer of 1911 to a reporter from an almost unknown western newspaper printed in San Diego, a resort city in Southern California.

It read: (Narrator clears throat?) An elderly man died last week of gunshot wounds received defending the passengers of a train held up by bandits in the state of Sonora, Mexico. Said bandits had stopped the engine and were approaching the passenger cars when a man, seemingly of some four score years, stepped from the train brandishing a pair of ancient pistols and, with a flurry of shots, put the banditos to flight. The elderly man died a day and a half later from wounds sustained during the disputation. Nothing is known of the man's identity except for the report of a passenger, who stated that when the desperados identified themselves as Soldiers of the Revolution, the elderly pistolero made a disparaging sound and remarked ...

NARRATOR  
Used to call *myself* a  
Gentleman of Opportunity.  
Well, I'm no gentleman --  
and, by God, this is not an  
opportunity.

BEN  
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Gentleman of Opportunity.  
Well, I'm no gentleman --  
and, by God, this is not an  
opportunity.

**NARRATOR:** He then put down his cane and, taking pistols from his valise, proceeded to rout the bandits.

The man's funeral was attended by the Chairman of the Sonora-Arizona railroad company, the Honorable Michael C. Santos, his wife, and all four of their grown children.