

RUSTLER'S MOON – PILOT: PICK A SIDE

Written by

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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. DELANEY FAMILY HOME - YOUNG JARED'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A QUARTER MOON casts a dim light through an open upstairs bedroom window. Thin cloth curtains move in the breeze.

MAMA, 20's, hurries into YOUNG JARED DELANEY'S, 10, dark bedroom. Her face is in full shadow.

Young Jared is sound asleep in his bed. Mama shakes him hard and fast with both hands to wake him up.

MAMA

Wake up. Ya hear? Wake up, son.

Young Jared sits up in bed with his eyes still closed. He reaches up to rub his eyes but Mama grabs his hands.

Young Jared opens his eyes wide and shakes his head to wake up.

YOUNG JARED

What, Mama?

MAMA

(anxiously)

Git up. Ya gotta git up the hill.
Hide deep in them thick mesquite
bushes.

Mama shakes Young Jared's hands roughly and pulls him up. She gets on her knees and leans down close to Young Jared's face.

MAMA (CONT'D)

You don't come out till me or Pa
come for you. Ya hear?

YOUNG JARED

Mama, where's Pa?

MAMA

(angry)

Hush. I mean it. You wait.

Young Jared nods his head YES.

Mama pushes Young Jared out of his bedroom door. He stops to look at her. His eyes are wide with fear.

Mama GRABS Young Jared roughly, turns him back to the doorway. She SLAPS him on the back to get his attention.

MAMA (CONT'D)

Now. Git. Git goin'.

EXT. DELANEY FAMILY HOME / FRONT - CONTINUOUS

Horse HOOVES THUNDER on the ground. DUST moves in from the dirt road leading to the front of the Delaney's home.

EXT. DELANEY FAMILY HOME / BACKDOOR - CONTINUOUS

Young Jared creeps low out the backdoor in his long underwear and no shoes. He pauses for a few seconds.

His bare feet hit the rocks and the rough dry grass. Young Jared WINCES. He starts up the hill.

A GROUP of FIVE COWBOYS are yelling in the distance.

Young Jared's foot catches on a sharp rock, he falls, hits his head on the ground. He gets back up and heads up the hill fast.

EXT. TOP OF THE HILL - CONTINUOUS

Young Jared crawls deep into a large mesquite bush near the top of the hill.

PA (O.S.)

Leave her alone. She ain't done nothin' to you.

MAMA (O.S.)

(shrieking)

No, no, no!

Two GUN SHOTS ring out from a single RIFLE. All is quiet for a few seconds.

Young Jared's body shakes. He squeezes his hands hard over his mouth. He tries to stand up but falls back down and SQUEALS.

Young Jared peeks out of the bush to see the group of cowboys HOLLERING and CELEBRATING. More gun shots ring out from several rifles.

Young Jared looks down where he's squatting. Urine runs onto his feet. He SOBS.

EXT. DELANEY FAMILY HOME / FRONT - CONTINUOUS

SIX COWBOYS stand near Ma and Pa's dead bodies. The cowboys' faces are hidden in the dark.

A tall big chested cowboy, MORGAN O'BANNON, 20s, stands near Mama's lifeless body.

Morgan's holding a Smith & Wesson .44 with an ornamental handle. He waves the four cowboys over to him.

Morgan's voice has a menacing and gritty tone.

MORGAN

That's enough celebrating, boys.
Ya'll get cleanin' up now. No
traces left.

Three of the cowboys walk toward the barn and COWBOY #5 heads toward the house. He jumps over Mama's body.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

(yells)

And hurry up. We have other fun
left to tend to before dawn.

Cowboy #5 heads back out of the house. He runs to Morgan.

COWBOY #5

Ummm... Sir. We have a problem.

MORGAN

You mean you do.

COWBOY #5

Right. Right. Sorry, Sir. There's
children's toys in the house.

MORGAN

Well... shit! How did y'all miss
this?

COWBOY #5

(ashamed)

The planning wasn't my job, Sir.

MORGAN

(sarcastic)

Yup. Check the house. Then clean
up. Shoot whatever moves.

Morgan GLARES at Cowboy #5.

Morgan's menacing ICE BLUE EYES show from under his hat.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

(angry)

I mean it. Anything that moves.

Cowboy #5 heads back into the house.

Morgan heads up the hill.

EXT. TOP OF THE HILL - CONTINUOUS

Morgan's FANCY BOOTS drag LOUDLY as he walks toward Young Jared's hiding place.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. OUTSIDE OF CIMARRON, NEW MEXICO - AFTERNOON

It's a HOT summer afternoon - 1878.

A tall cowboy is slumped over on top of a strong BAY GELDING HORSE named BLAZE.

The cowboy is JARED DELANEY, early 20s, over 6' tall, extremely handsome except for a deep red scar on his right cheek, his hair is dark black and curly.

Blaze LEANS BACK and KICKS FORWARD sending Jared to the ground HARD.

Jared HOPS up while pulling his PEACEMAKER COLT, with an ivory grip, from his holster. He surveys his surroundings.

There's no one there.

Jared grabs his worn brown cowboy hat off the ground. Looks at his dusty clothes with disgust. He holsters his gun.

JARED

(to Blaze)

Don't you move now. I've had enough of your damn games.

Blaze takes a slow step forward and looks to Jared.

Jared gives Blaze a sideways look. He slaps the dust from his clothes and puts his hat back on.

CLOSE UP ON Jared's tan neck. His dark black hair clings to his sweaty neck. Sweat slowly runs down his neck.

Jared gets back on the horse and looks up to the sun and rubs his forehead ROUGHLY.

Blaze shakes his head. Jared shakes his head.

EXT. TOWN OF CIMARRON - AFTERNOON

A brand new wooden sign on two tall posts, with white neatly painted lettering, reads: CIMARRON, NEW MEXICO.

Jared rides past the sign on his horse. He slowly enters the small and dusty town of Cimarron.

Some TOWNSFOLK, who are a mixture of Anglo and Hispanic nationalities, watch Jared suspiciously.

WOMEN and CHILDREN of different ages walk the new wooden boardwalks in front of the shops.

A few OLD MEN sit on benches in front of the shops in the shade.

Jared ignores the townsfolk as he rides past a Western Union office, a bank, the Sheriff's Office, and an abandoned building that resembles a courthouse.

Blaze stops suddenly. A sign reads "COLFAX TAVERN." Printed underneath the tavern's name is "COLD BEER."

Jared hops off his saddle and ties Blaze to a tavern post.

EXT. COLFAX TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Jared enters the tavern quickly.

INT. COLFAX TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

After Jared enters, the SWINGING DOORS SLAM LOUDLY. He JUMPS and turns toward the doors.

Jared SQUINTS his eyes and rubs them. He looks around at the GROUPS OF MEN at the tables.

Some of the men are wearing clean expensive suits while other men are ragged and dirty.

A few WORKING GIRLS are sitting on customer's laps, others are serving drinks, and one heads up the stairs GIGGLING with a man.

The "Rose of Killarney" is being played by one of the working girls on a new piano in the corner.

Jared heads to the bar and tries to get the BARTENDER'S attention.

The bartender, HECTOR RAMIREZ, 30s, a burly Hispanic fella, chats with a few ROUGH LOOKING COWBOYS at the other end of the bar.

JAKE (O.S.)

(angry)

Y'all are some cheatin' sons-of-a bitches.

HEC

(to Jake)

Dammit, Jake. I'm not gonna tell you again... callarse la boca.

Jared impatiently taps on the bar with a coin. The bartender responds with a look of irritation.

HEC (CONT'D)

(to Jared)

What can I get you, Stranger?

JARED

I'll have one of them cold beers you're advertisin' on your sign.

Hec gives Jared a SIGH of exhaustion and gets him the beer. Jared slides a couple more coins onto the bar.

Hec smiles at the coins and puts them in his apron.

Jared gives Hec a curious look. Hec takes a rag out from under the bar to wipe at the counter.

JARED (CONT'D)

Where might a workin' cowboy find a job around Cimarron?

HEC

(sarcastic)

Depends on what he knows how to do and who's side he's on.

Jared takes a long swig. He wipes his mouth with his shirt sleeve.

Jared looks around the tavern again and halts briefly at a table of LOUD TALKING COWBOYS.

He turns back to Hec and stands a little straighter.

JARED

Well...I just rode in and the only side I'm on right now is my own.

Jared wipes his right hand on his pants and reaches out to Hec who shakes Jared's hand with his wet hand.

JARED (CONT'D)

Name's Jared Delaney.

Hec looks at Jared with brighter curiosity and a hint of friendliness.

HEC

I'm Hector Ramirez. Most call me Hec. I bartend and manage this grandioso establishment you're drinking in. Where you coming from?

Jared notices the cowboys at the end of the bar listening in on his conversation.

JARED

I just worked for Mr. Goodnight at the JA Ranch in Palo Duro Canyon. I was with his outfit for three years.

HEC

(chuckles)

If you worked for Señor Goodnight, you're a bueno vaquero then. You might get help in figuring out who's side you're on.

JARED

Sides of what?

Hec keeps grinning and wipes the bar in a mindless way.

HEC

What brings you to our little community?

JARED

I left Mr. Goodnight's ranch about nine months ago.

HEC

Nine?

JARED

Heard it was good cattle country up this way. I was ready for a change.

Hec looks down the bar at the group of cowboys for a second. He clears his throat with a nervous look on his face.

HEC

Nine months is a lot of drifting. Makes me curious what you were up to on your way here.

Jared looks at the cowboys at the end of the bar, finishes off his beer, and looks directly at Hec with annoyance.

JARED

I stopped off for the last six months in Lincoln. I was workin' as a deputy for Sheriff Mills. Steady work ya know and I got to sleep inside most of the time.

Hec quits wiping the counter and goes down the bar. He gets Jared another beer.

Hec returns quickly. Sets the beer down on the bar in front of Jared.

HEC

Why'd you give it up then?

Jared takes a long swig of his beer and stares at the bottle for a few seconds.

JARED

That job was the most boring I ever had. Mostly gettin' paid to be nosing in other people's business.

HEC

Sounds mucho interesting to me.

Jared arches his eyebrow and takes another long swig of his beer.

JARED

That ain't really my style.

HEC

Maybe he thought his real job was to be re-elected.

JARED

Sheriff Mills spent most of his time kissin' up to folks who had money for his re-election.

HEC

Nothing wrong with that. A man does what needs to be done.

Jared SHAKES his head with confusion at Hec.

HEC (CONT'D)

What're you willing to do to get what you want?

Jared finishes off his second beer.

HEC (CONT'D)

You're an interesting hombre. Things have been dull around here lately but maybe you will liven them up.

JARED

I ain't never been called lively.

A woman swishes her way up to the bar. She stands close to Jared who takes a step back.

Her honey brown hair is in ringlets and pink bows. This is CHRISTIE QUICK, 20's, who's pretty in an innocent way except for the RUBY RED lipstick and rouge plastered on her face.

Jared tips his hat to Christie.

CHRISTIE

Howdy, handsome. Welcome to the Colfax Tavern. What's your name?

Jared blushes and takes a side look at Hec who CHUCKLES at him.

JARED

(stammers)

Why... I'm Jared Delaney from Texas, ma'am.

CHRISTIE

Glad to meet you, Jared from Texas,
name's Christie Quick and I ain't
no ma'am.

JARED

My apologies, ma'am... uh... Ms.
Quick.

CHRISTIE

You ain't only handsome, you're
polite too. That ain't somethin'
girls see 'round here too of'en.

Jared smiles and blushes again.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

Ya know, cowboy, Quick ain't my
real name neither - just a
nickname. I got it a few years back
in a place that wasn't near as
fancy as this one.

Christie stretches out her arm and swings her hand in a half
circle presenting the bar.

Jared watches where she points and gives Christie a puzzled
look.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

I'd go upstairs with some cowboy to
tend to business and the bartender
would holler at me - "Christie...
quick." The name just stuck. Ya,
know?

Jared shakes his head NO slowly. He looks at Hec with a look
of needing help.

HEC

(chuckles to Jared)
She's something.

Christie leans her head back and ROARS with an unusually DEEP
LAUGHTER. She looks at Jared like he's her next meal.

HEC (CONT'D)

Your next stop should be our
Sheriff. Might have some tips on
finding some work. He'll want to
know your leanings too.

CHRISTIE

(to Jared)

Wait up, handsome. You care to join
me for a drink first?

Christie touches Jared's arm. He jerks back and bumps into a cowboy standing behind him at the bar. This is JAKE O'BANNON (Cowboy #2), 40s, a cowboy with the look of killing as his hobby.

Jake is holding a half empty shot glass.

JAKE

(belligerent)

Hey, boy. Ya made me spill my
whiskey.

Jared turns and steps back toward Christie. He raises his hands to Jake showing the man his palms.

JARED

My apologies, Sir.

JAKE

(slurring)

I ain't no Sir. Where hell you
from, boy? Arizona, Kansas City,
the Moon?

Jared moves toward Jake.

Hec wipes Jake's spilled whiskey off the bar.

HEC

Calm down, Jake. I'll get you
another drink. The boy didn't bump
you on purpose. He's new. Give him
a break.

JARED

(to Jake)

I don't need a break.

HEC

Here, Jake. I'll make it two shots.
One from me and one from Jared.

Hec puts two shot glasses on the bar and fills them quickly.

Jake LAUGHS MANIACALLY, drinks one of the shots, SLAMS the shot glass on the bar. He picks up the second and holds it close to Jared's face.

Jared gets as close to Jake as he can. Pulls a coin from his pocket and drops it into the shot glass Jake is holding.

JARED
 (to Jake)
 Here ya go, Old Man. Enjoy.

Jared bumps Jake's shoulder as he moves past him toward the tavern door.

Jake watches Jared with a WICKED stare.

HEC (O.S.)
 Remember to stop by the Sheriff's
 Office.

Jared doesn't acknowledge Hec's words as he exits the tavern.

EXT. BOARDWALK OUTSIDE OF COLFAX TAVERN - AFTERNOON

Jared walks into the middle of the road. Takes a full circle look at all the buildings. Horses and wagons move around him.

Blaze turns to look at Jared and he stomps his feet.

Jared takes off his hat and rubs his forehead HARD and continues across the street.

EXT. CIMARRON GRADE SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Jared stops in front of the CIMARRON SCHOOL and looks across the street.

SCHOOL BELL RINGS. Jared is suddenly engulfed by SCHOOL CHILDREN.

A strikingly beautiful young woman, 20s, with raven color hair in a tight bun exits the school right in front of Jared. This is ELEANOR COULTER the town's straightforward-talking school teacher.

Eleanor's intense eyes connect with Jared's for a few seconds. Then her attention is back to the children.

ELEANOR
 (to the children)
 Look out, children. Don't trample
 innocent bystanders. You aren't
 stampeding cattle.

Several of the children turn and wave goodbye to Eleanor.

Jared watches Eleanor like he's in a trance. Eleanor waves back to the children and smiles broadly.

Eleanor nods friendly to Jared who tips his hat and nods back.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jared rushes past Eleanor and doesn't stop until he reaches the Sheriff's office door. He RAPIDLY knocks on the door.

Eleanor looks at Jared CURIOUSLY from across the street.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

SHERIFF NATHAN AVERILL, 50s, iron-gray hair, deeply lined tan weathered skin, sits at a large wooden desk cleaning a COLT REVOLVER.

The Sheriff looks up at the knock on the door.

SHERIFF AVERILL
(gruffly)
Come in. It ain't locked.

Jared pushes through the door, turns, and takes a quick glance at the street before he closes the door SOFTLY.

Jared walks up closely to the Sheriff's desk.

Sheriff Averill takes a long and intent look at Jared.

Jared steps back from the desk and removes his hat.

JARED
(nervously)
Name's Delaney, Sir. Jared Delaney.
I just rode into town. Stopped by
the tavern and the bartender told
me I oughta check in with you.

Sheriff Averill looks at Jared with a GRIN in his gray eyes.

SHERIFF AVERILL
Hec Ramirez sent you over, did he?
Did he say my name like a mouthful
of sawdust?

Jared gives the Sheriff a puzzled look.

SHERIFF AVERILL (CONT'D)

Never mind. I prob'ly oughta not start teasin' you until I get to know you. If you stick around that long... You look like a workin' cowboy, son.

JARED

Yes, sir. I'm a hand with a lotta experience in the saddle. Do you mind pointin' me in the direction of some ranch work?

Sheriff Averill sets down this revolver, stands up, moves around his desk. He leans on the front of it.

SHERIFF AVERILL

I could be of assistance. Slow down though and tell me a little 'bout yourself first

Jared rubs his forehead and slides his fingers back and forth across his hat.

JARED

Uhh... I worked for Mr. Goodnight at the JA Ranch in the Palo Duro Canyon for three years. And then I worked for Sheriff Mills as a lawman in Lincoln County.

Sheriff Averill stands up straighter.

JARED (CONT'D)

That wasn't the place for me though.

SHERIFF AVERILL

Why not, son?

JARED

Well... Sheriff Mills spent more time kissin' up to folks than bein' a decent lawman.

Sheriff Averill lets out a DEEP LAUGH.

SHERIFF AVERILL

Yeah, if ol' Ham Mills was as good with his six gun as he is with runnin' his mouth, he might get re-elected for cleanin' up all the riff-raff.

Jared's shoulders relax a little, he nods, and laughs weakly.

SHERIFF AVERILL (CONT'D)

He'd rather get his mouth dirty than his hands.

JARED

Looks like you've made the acquaintance of Sheriff Mills. Anyway, I lost my taste for bein' a lawman and drifted up this way.

SHERIFF AVERILL

There's a lot of political going-ons around here too.

JARED

I'm thinkin' I've wandered into a hornet's nest in this town. The bartender mentioned a couple of times about sides and leanings.

Sheriff Averill motions for Jared to have a seat. Jared sits down with hesitation.

The Sheriff returns to his desk and cleaning his revolver.

SHERIFF AVERILL

Most of our folks are good law-abidin' citizens. But like some barrels we have them bad apples 'round here too.

JARED

That sounds like most of the towns I been to, Sheriff.

SHERIFF AVERILL

That might be true. But we got a group of men connected with some fellas up in the capital who call themselves The Santa Fe Ring. Between them they carry a lot of weight here in Colfax County.

Sheriff Averill sets down his revolver and leans back in his chair. He takes a long look at Jared.

SHERIFF AVERILL (CONT'D)

Ya know with your experience, you might consider bein' my deputy. My last one ran off a few weeks ago. I gotta pretty good feel for people. It seems you've got a little bit of granite inside you.

Jared stands up from his chair and fidgets with his hat.

JARED

No offense, Sheriff. That's a mighty flatterin' offer since you don't know me. Right now, I'm lookin' for cowboy work.

Sheriff Averill takes a long thoughtful look at Jared.

SHERIFF AVERILL

Well, I understand. You should get a good night's sleep in a real bed. Ya look kinda beat.

Jared rubs his forehead and puts on his hat.

JARED

I'd be alright with that. One night in a bed would be a real treat. It's been a while.

SHERIFF AVERILL

The Saint James Hotel is just north of the tavern. Just past the old courthouse. Tell 'em I sent ya and said to give you a room on the west side.

JARED

West side?

SHERIFF AVERILL

It'll keep the sun from waking you. Tell 'em I said to change the sheets too. Ya never know.

JARED

Thanks, Sheriff.

SHERIFF AVERILL

I'll think on some job possibilities for an experienced cowboy. Meet you for breakfast at the Saint James.

Jared nods in agreement and exits the Sheriff's office.

EXT. COLFAX TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Jared unties Blaze. Blaze BUMPS Jared with his nose. Jared shakes his head NO at Blaze.

Jared walks Blaze slowly up the street past the Saint James to a STABLE just north of the hotel.

EXT. COLFAX STABLE - CONTINUOUS

Jared hands the STABLEBOY a couple of coins and Blaze's reins.

Blaze turns to Jared and BOBS his head up and down. Jared turns his back to Blaze, walks toward the hotel, and gives him a big WAVE GOODBYE.

JARED

(to Blaze)

Yep, we're both sleepin' inside tonight on the hay. But don't git used to it.

Jared keeps walking south and enters the Saint James Hotel.

DREAM SEQUENCE - EXT. DELANEY FAMILY HOME / HILL - NIGHT

CLOSE UP on COWBOY BOOTS scraping across the dirt and rocks near a group of mesquite bushes. Spurs JINGLE.

Young Jared slides back quickly in the mesquite bush. A branch DIGS DEEP into his right cheek. Blood trickles. He doesn't make a sound.

The Quarter Moon is behind Morgan. It silhouettes him in full shadow.

MORGAN

(happily to the sky)

We have an interesting situation here... Don't we?

Young Jared sees only Morgan's blue eyes appear as a GLOW. Morgan leans back like a howling wolf to let out an EVIL LAUGH.

Young Jared turns from Morgan and sees his house on fire. His Pa and Ma are laying on the ground.

All goes black. Shots RING out. Mama's SCREAMS echo in the darkness.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. SAINT JAMES HOTEL / JARED'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Jared lays SWEATY and SCREAMING on the hotel bed. He leaps out of bed and pulls his gun from under a pillow.

Jared surveys the room frantically, opens the hotel room door slightly, peaks out, and closes it quickly.

Jared goes to the window and takes a quick look out. He slides to the floor against the wall, sets down his gun, and rubs his head with both hands.

Jared BANGS his head against the wall a few times.

He stands slowly and goes to the water bowl on a side table. Rubs his face VIGOROUSLY with water.

Jared STARES into the mirror above the bowl. Water runs down his face.

JARED

What's wrong with you? No one's here. When are you gonna to get your shit together, cowboy?

Jared hits the mirror and it cracks.

INT. SAINT JAMES HOTEL RESTAURANT - MORNING

Jared pauses when he sees Sheriff Averill at a table in the middle of the packed dining room. He removes his hat, smooths his hair, and rubs his forehead.

Sheriff Averill looks up at Jared when he sits down at the table with him. Jared looks exhausted.

SHERIFF AVERILL

Looks like the hotel bed didn't suit you.

JARED

(frustrated)

No. The bed and room were fine. Thank you.

SHERIFF AVERILL
Well, let's get you some food.

JARED
Sure.

Sheriff Averill gets the attention of WAITRESS #1 and points to Jared.

JARED (CONT'D)
If breakfast is half as good as my
supper was, I might just retire
here.

Waitress #1 arrives with a cup and a small coffee pot. Places the cup in front of Jared, fills it, and leaves the pot.

Jared takes a GULP of his coffee. His face doesn't show any pain from the HOT coffee.

Jared takes another big GULP of his coffee. Sheriff Averill looks at him with concern.

SHERIFF AVERILL
Ain't it funny what a man can get
used to when he has to.

JARED
I reckon you're right.

Sheriff Averill looks at Jared pensively.

SHERIFF AVERILL
Sometimes that's a good thing.
Sometimes not so good.

Waitress #1 sets Jared's plate on the table.

Jared finishes off his coffee and pours another cup.

SHERIFF AVERILL (CONT'D)
I had some thoughts 'bout a where
ya might start looking for work.

Jared GULPS down his second cup of coffee and starts on his breakfast.

SHERIFF AVERILL (CONT'D)
But first, I wonder if you'd be
willing to tell me more about
yourself. I hate to pry.

Jared finishes chewing and looks Sheriff Averill in the eyes.

JARED
(sternly)
Then don't.

SHERIFF AVERILL
I'm just curious. You always this
cautious 'bout committing yourself?

Jared puts his utensils on the table. Rubs his forehead.

SHERIFF AVERILL (CONT'D)
Don't get me wrong, son. You seem
like an upstanding young man. But
things are a bit dodgy around here.
This means I gotta keep a lid on
any possible trouble.

JARED
Look, Sheriff Averill. I know you
got a hard job. If you're doing it
right.

SHERIFF AVERILL
That's what I'm trying to say. I...

JARED
(interrupting)
I don't know you. I'm not going to
unravel my business to you like a
broken rope. I'll tell you I'm a
man of my word and not here for
trouble.

Sheriff Averill sits back in his chair and adjusts his gun
belt.

SHERIFF AVERILL
All right, Jared. Maybe another
time.

JARED
Maybe.

SHERIFF AVERILL
Anyway, I think a good bet for
you'd be to ride out and see Ned
Kilpatrick. His ranch is northeast
of town just passed the lake. I
heard he's short a few hands.

JARED
I appreciate the tip. I'll head out
there after I finish up here.

SHERIFF AVERILL

You might not thank me before it's done. Kilpatrick's short hands because of visits from cattle rustlin' thieves and murderers.

ELEANOR enters the hotel restaurant. She dabs the sweat from her forehead with a lace handkerchief.

Eleanor walks to Jared and Sheriff Averill's table.

ELEANOR

Mornin', Nathan. I see you've already begun recruiting the new gentlemen in town without givin' the rest of us a chance.

SHERIFF AVERILL

Ummm... Mornin', Eleanor.

Eleanor slides her gloves off one finger at a time.

Jared watches her intently with a scowl on his face.

ELEANOR

Who's your new friend?

Sheriff Averill rises from his seat and half-bows to Eleanor.

SHERIFF AVERILL

Jared, I'd like to introduce you to Miss Eleanor Coulter, our town's school marm.

Eleanor takes a seat at the empty chair next to Sheriff Averill who sits back down.

SHERIFF AVERILL (CONT'D)

Eleanor, this is Jared Delaney. I've offered him a job as my deputy but I have a feeling he's seeking quieter employment as a ranch hand.

JARED

(under his breath)
Cowboy.

Eleanor looks at Jared with concern who returns a half-smile.

Eleanor places her hand on Sheriff Averill's hand. Jared watches their contact.

ELEANOR

Pleased to make your acquaintance,
Mr. Delaney. Will we be seeing you
at church tomorrow?

Jared tugs uncomfortably at his clothes.

JARED

I'm not much of a church-goer, Miss
Coulter.

Eleanor looks at Jared curiously.

JARED (CONT'D)

(to Eleanor)

I just never had the opportunity
with workin' on ranches for most of
my life.

ELEANOR

(teasingly)

Why, Mr. Delaney, if you were a
regular church-goer, I wouldn't
expect I would've invited you.

Eleanor pauses to smile at Jared. He rubs his forehead and
wiggles in his seat a bit.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

And you probably wouldn't be
sitting here with an old sinner
like Nathan Averill.

Eleanor pats Sheriff Averill's hand again and places her
hands in her lap.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(to Jared)

And your first stop in town most
certainly would not of been the
Colfax Tavern. It's now my duty to
get you to church.

JARED

(blushing)

Ma'am?

Sheriff Averill fills his coffee cup and Jared's. He shakes
his head with a smile and a chuckle.

ELEANOR

(to Jared)

We have our Methodist Church with the Reverend John Richardson and our Catholic Church with Father Antonio Baca. They have many spirited discussions over coffee at the Mares Cafe.

JARED

I reckon I don't know who's side I'd be on, Miss Coulter.

JARED (CONT'D)

(to Sheriff Averill)

Which one's better?

ELEANOR

The Reverend and the Father are great friends. My personal preference is the Methodist Church. Will we be seeing you at church tomorrow morning?

Jared glances at Sheriff Averill for help.

SHERIFF AVERILL

(grinning)

Don't look at me, cowboy, you're on your own. I got no dog in this fight so I don't want no part of it.

ELEANOR

It's - I don't want any part of it - Nathan, and I thank you for your discretion.

Eleanor turns slightly closer to Jared.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

So, Mr. Delaney, what's your answer?

Jared sits up straight in his chair.

JARED

Miss Coulter, I can't think of any place I'd rather be tomorrow mornin' than church.

ELEANOR

Well, now. Mr. Delaney, that wasn't so painful, was it?

Eleanor smiles another SUNNY smile at Jared.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I promise to sit beside you, Mr. Delaney, in case you start to nod off during Reverend Richardson's very interesting sermon, I'll give you a little nudge.

Jared finishes off his cup of coffee.

JARED

I promise to get a good night's sleep and drink my usual pot of coffee, Miss Coulter.

ELEANOR

If you really show up and stay awake through the whole service, Mr. Delaney, I'll consider the possibility of you addressing me by my given first name.

Eleanor stands. Puts on her gloves.

JARED

Well, then, I guess that gives me two good reasons to make it to church tomorrow, Miss Coulter.

Eleanor leaves the restaurant with a subtle sway to her walk.

Jared watches Eleanor in an indirect way. Sheriff Averill smiles with a cheesy grin.

JARED (CONT'D)

She seems nice.

SHERIFF AVERILL

Yep.

EXT. SAINT JAMES RESTAURANT/FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jared rushes out of the restaurant door and heads to the Colfax Stable.

EXT. COLFAX STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Jared retrieves Blaze.

EXT. NORTHEAST TRAIL TO KILPATRICK RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Jared rides out of town on Blaze toward the Kilpatrick's Ranch. Flashes of Eleanor's smiling face appear.

The LAKE is shimmering as the sun glistens across it.

EXT. KILPATRICK RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Jared rides through the main gate of the Kilpatrick Ranch.

He reaches a few yards from the front porch of the ranch house and Blaze pulls back to a complete HALT.

A short man, 40s, is hidden in the shade of the porch. He holds his HENRY RIFLE firm and steady at Jared's chest. This is NED KILPATRICK.

NED (O.S.)
 (Irish accent)
 Hold it right there, stranger. Stay
 on ye horse and put your hands up
 where I canna see 'em.

Jared drops Blaze's reins.

NED (CONT'D)
 I've a rifle pointed at your chest
 and I'll blow a hole ta size of a
 cabbage right trew you.

Jared puts his hands up high.

NED (CONT'D)
 State your name clear and yur
 business here, and careful not to
 move too fast cause I don' mine
 shootin' first and talkin' later.

Jared stays motionless on Blaze who doesn't move either.

JARED
 Name's Jared Delaney, Sir. I'm new
 to these parts. I'm lookin' for
 work as a cowboy. Sheriff Nathan
 Averill said you might be hirin'.

Ned doesn't move or relax his grip on his rifle.

JARED (CONT'D)

If I caught ya at a bad time, I'm happy to turn 'round and ride back to Cimarron. I'd like to go back without a cabbage hole in me, Sir.

Ned steps to the railing of the porch. Keeping his rifle steady.

NED

You say Nathan sent ye out here?

Jared nods his head YES. Blaze nods his head YES too.

NED (CONT'D)

Why should I believin' ye just cause ye know our Sheriff's name?

A woman BARRELS out the screen door of the house to Ned. She's a striking woman with blond wavy hair that runs down her back. This is Ned's young wife, LIZBETH KILPATRICK, 20s.

LIZBETH

(Irish accent)

Ned, I doubt this young man woulda say he came lookin' for a job by way of Nathan unless it be trew.

Jared takes a deep breath but keeps his hands up.

LIZBETH (CONT'D)

If Nathan tinks this fella be worth talkin' to then that good enough for me. Put down dat canon of yours and invite him in for a glass of me delicious lemonade.

JARED

Much obliged, ma'am. I apologize to ya folks for just ridin' in here like I own the place. I know better.

Blaze SNORTS at Jared's comment.

Ned slowly lowers his rifle. He doesn't take his eyes off Jared. Blaze shudders and stomps one of his front hooves.

Jared slides off Blaze. Slowly takes off his gun belt and lays it over Blaze's neck.

Lizbeth moves to the porch steps and waves for Jared to come up.

Ned shakes Jared's hand when he reaches the porch.

Lizbeth opens the screen door.

NED

Sorry 'bout da way I welcome ye.
We've a bit of trouble lately. I
canna be too careful. Some real
rough types have been around.

LIZBETH

Come on in. What ye say ye name is?

Lizbeth, Ned, and Jared enter the house.

INT. KILPATRICK HOME/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The screen door SLAMS behind Jared and he jumps slightly.
Looks at the door and out to Blaze who shakes his head a bit.

JARED

Ummm... Jared Delaney, ma'am. It's
nice to meet y'all.

LIZBETH

They'll be none of dat ma'am stuff.
You call me Lizbeth and Ned here
will say da same. Won't ye, Ned?

NED

Yes, ma'am.

LIZBETH (O.S.)

(sassy)

Ned... You be careful or you be
sleeping with da cows tonight.

Ned and Lizbeth laugh SIMULTANEOUSLY. Ned hangs his Henry
Rifle above the fireplace.

Jared waits at the front door with a puzzled look. He takes
in the beauty of the Kilpatrick's home.

NED

Come have a seat, Jared. Lizbeth
may have the cooler mind but I keep
me promises. I'll behave.

INT. KILPATRICK HOME/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jared and Ned sit at a large oak dining table.

NED

Tell me what you done in the way of being a cowboy. We be short handed but we need someone who be experienced. There be no time for training.

Lizbeth pours three glasses of fresh lemonade, puts them on the kitchen table, and sits down.

JARED

I suppose I might do that, Mr. Kilpatrick.

Ned smiles friendly at Jared.

NED

Since I didn't shoot you, I'd not mind if ye be calling me Ned.

Jared looks to Lizbeth for confirmation. She nods YES.

JARED

Thanks, Ned. I understand you want a cowboy who's been around. I worked three years for Charles Goodnight on the JA Ranch.

Ned leans up to listen a little closer.

JARED (CONT'D)

I've been up the Goodnight-Loving trail on two cattle drives. I know every chore on a ranch. I know horses and cattle as good as anyone twice my age.

Lizbeth GIGGLES in her lemonade glass as she takes a drink.

JARED (CONT'D)

I don't mean to brag. But I wanna be square with you about my qualifications.

NED

Charlie Goodnight's respected around here. If ye be gettin' his respect and trust then ye be gettin' mine as well.

JARED

Well, I'd like to think so.

JARED (CONT'D)

I don't mind hard work. I can take orders from anyone I respect. I learn fast too.

Lizabeth smiles kindly at Jared.

NED

I guess I should be asking if ye be handy with a gun. These days, dat almost as important as knowing how to rope and ride.

Jared rubs his forehead. He GULPS down his lemonade.

Lizabeth picks up the pitcher to fill Jared's glass. He puts his hand over his glass.

JARED

That's enough for me, Lizabeth. Thank ya though.

JARED (CONT'D)

Ned, I just rode into town yesterday and right away, people started urgin' me to take sides. I ain't even had a chance to know what the sides are.

Ned's face goes serious and he leans on the oak table.

JARED (CONT'D)

I can handle a six-shooter and a Winchester just fine. But I prefer to never have to use 'em on anything but game and a rattlesnake.

LIZBETH

He wasn't meaning anything...

NED

(interrupting)

That sounds real sensible, son, but it be easier said than being done.

JARED

If you don't think I'm man enough to make the right choices, ya don't have to hire me.

Jared stands and puts his hat on.

Ned stands. He has to look up at Jared to meet his eyes.

NED

There be snakes a lot more
dangerous than rattlers.

JARED

I aim to take my time and size up
the situation before I decide if
I'm takin' anyone's side.

NED

Calm down, please. I don't mean to
offend ye. I want to be sure ye
know what ye be gettin' yourself
into.

Jared walks to the front door. Looks out at Blaze. Turns and
takes a DEEP breath.

JARED

I appreciate ya bein' honest with
me, Ned. I'm sorry I got testy. I'd
like to hear more of what you're
offerin'. If ya still willin' to
consider me.

Ned motions for Jared to come back to the table. Ned sits.
Lizbeth fills Jared's lemonade glass.

Jared removes his hat and returns to the table to sit down.
He smiles tensely at Lizbeth and Ned.

NED

Standard cowboy wages for up here
in New Mexico be twenty-five
dollars a month. Being we got a
little trouble with these outlaws,
I'm going to offer ye thirty-five
and found.

LIZBETH

Grand idea, me husband.

Lizbeth pats Ned's arm. Ned relaxes back in his chair.

LIZBETH (CONT'D)

Ye have the experience we need and
we want to make it fair. What do ye
think, Jared?

Jared puts his hand out to Ned for a shake.

JARED

Ned, you got yourself a cowboy and ranch hand.

Ned happily shakes Jared's hand.

JARED (CONT'D)

If you don't mind, I'll spend tonight in town though. I got me an invite to the Methodist Church tomorrow with the school teacher lady, Miss Coulter.

Ned and Lizbeth look at each other knowingly. Lizbeth laughs LOUDLY in a pleasant and boisterous tone.

LIZBETH

You might be needing to raise Jared's pay another ten dollars. His life be getting even more dangerous.

Ned laughs along with Lizbeth. Jared shakes his head.

JARED

Lizbeth, I've only met Miss Coulter one time but you might be right. I guess if ya wantin' proof I'm not afraid to get myself into a little scuffle, ya got it now.

Lizbeth laughs more and wraps her arm around Ned's arm.

LIZBETH

(to Jared)

Eleanor's got one of de sharpest tongues around if she be thinking you're wrong-headed. She don't mind using it either. Some think she isn't lady-like but I'm not one of them. She'll be a friend for life as long as ye be honest and trew.

Jared gets up from the table.

JARED

That's good to know. I reckon if I survive my church goin' tomorrow I'll be out here before dark and ready for Monday mornin' work.

Ned and Lizbeth get up from the table too. They all walk together to the front door.

INT. KILPATRICK HOME/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ned opens the screen door. Lizbeth gives Jared a little SQUEEZE on his arm.

LIZBETH

Good luck with ye invite. We be seeing ye tomorrow night then, Jared.

Lizbeth walks back into the kitchen.

EXT. KILPATRICK HOME/FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Jared and Ned exit the house.

Jared puts his hat on, shakes Ned's hand, and heads to the porch stairs.

NED

Looks like ye already know who be the boss around here. Clearing ye starting times with my wife.

Jared turns to face Ned.

JARED

Well, ya didn't shoot me when I rode up and ya don't seem inclined to shoot me now, so I guess we'll get along.

Ned gives Jared a sour look.

JARED (CONT'D)

What... I... uh, meant to say is I hope it's alright with both y'all if I get started Monday mornin'.

NED

That be fine, Jared. Just be gettin' here in enough time to have Sunday supper with us so you don't be upsetting the boss.

Ned gives Jared a friendly WINK.

NED (CONT'D)

Monday mornin' we be seeing what you're really made of.

Jared NODS in agreement, grabs his gun belt from Blaze's neck and puts it on.

NED (CONT'D)

That be a fine gun in ye holster.

Jared slides into Blaze's saddle and tips his hat to Ned.

Blaze turns 360 degrees twice and then heads toward the main gate of the ranch. Jared pats Blaze on the neck.

JARED

I know. Me too, Blaze.

EXT. KILPATRICK RANCH/MAIN TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Jared rides out of the Kilpatrick ranch. He glances over to a small rise beyond the fence and notices three wooden crosses.

The dirt is fresh on the graves.

Blaze's mane shivers.

EXT. COLFAX TAVERN - EVENING

Jared ties Blaze to the same post outside the Colfax Tavern and enters the tavern.

Blaze shakes his head and looks at the other horses.

INT. COLFAX TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Jared enters and catches the swinging doors before they slam.

He looks around at the tavern customers and working girls. It's filled with some of the same cowboys, including Jake.

Jared heads to the bar.

JARED

(to Hec)

Good evening', Mr. Ramirez. I mean
Hec.

Hec approaches Jared quickly.

JARED (CONT'D)

I'd like a beer and a shot this
evenin'. Since I'm gonna be a
workin' cowboy again day after
tomorrow. I reckon I can afford it.

Hec gives Jared a SURPRISED look. Gets him a beer and pours a shot of whiskey.

HEC

So who's the lucky rancher, Jared?
I know it's not Señor Morgan
O'Bannon since you haven't made his
acquaintance yet.

Jared takes the shot first and a swig of beer.

HEC (CONT'D)

Taking a job before you even hear
Señor O'Bannon's point of view
wasn't the wisest decision.

JARED

There ya go again, Hec, goin' on
about who I should take up with in
this town. I hired on with
Kilpatrick as a cowboy...it's a
good job.

Christie sashays up next to Jared and leans her back on the
bar. She meets Jared's eyes, smiles, and winks at him.

HEC

(to Jared)

I knew a gentleman once who
couldn't decide what side of the
street to walk down. He was worried
about upsetting any of the shop
owners. So he walked down the
middle of the street. You know what
happen to him?

JARED

(to Hec)

No. I'm sure ya gonna tell me
though.

Christie GIGGLES at Jared's comment. She turns to look at Hec
and moves a little closer to Jared.

Hec laughs WEAKLY and gives Christie an angry look.

HEC

(to Jared)

He kept right in the middle of the
road and then a wagon tears through
the middle of town. He met his
maker quick. It's mas seguro to
choose the correcto side, Jared.

CHRISTIE

(to Hec)

That damn story's older than you are, Hec. I am sure Mr. Handsome Texas can take care of himself.

Christie puts her hand on Jared's arm. He doesn't move.

HEC

Hush. Get back to work, Christie. He's not buying your servicios tonight.

HEC (CONT'D)

(to Jared)

Cowboys who ride with Señor O'Bannon have respect around here. And there's the beneficios. Having a tab at my tavern and the ladies... well... they're a lot more free with their prendas too.

Jared gives Hec a look of frustration.

Christie bumps Jared with her shoulder.

CHRISTIE

Handsome Jared from Texas, did you come back to see me?

Jared tips his hat at Christie. Fluster shows on his face.

JARED

It's a pleasure to see you again, Miss Quick. I... came in to wet my whistle but the beer's tastin' a little stale tonight. No offense, ma'am.

Jared gives Hec a quick angry look and exits the tavern.

INT. SAINT JAMES HOTEL / JARED'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jared tosses and turns in his hotel bed. His clothes are a bit cleaner and laying neatly over a chair.

Jared stands up with his eyes closed and lays back down fast. He tosses and turns again in his bed.

Mama's SCREAMS ECHO in the room.

INT. SAINT JAMES HOTEL / FRONT DESK - MORNING

Jared comes BARRELING DOWN the stairs to the front desk.
Greets the HOTEL MANAGER and hands her a few coins.

HOTEL MANAGER

Thank you, Mr. Delaney. It's a
pleasure to have you stay at the
Saint James Hotel.

Jared tips his hat.

JARED

Thank you, ma'am.

She smiles BRIGHTLY at Jared and watches him enter the hotel
restaurant.

INT. SAINT JAMES HOTEL / HOTEL RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Jared takes a seat. Removes his hat and rubs his forehead.

Waitress #1 brings him a cup and a small coffee pot.

WAITRESS #1

Breakfast, Mr. Delaney?

Jared looks at her surprised at the mention of his name.

JARED

Umm... not this morning. Thank you.
Just the coffee. And thanks for the
pot.

Waitress #1 smiles sweetly at him.

WAITRESS #1

You're welcome. I hope you have a
wonderful day at church.

She turns on her heels and hurries to another table.

EXT. METHODIST CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

A variety of CHURCH-GOERS are outside the Methodist church
CHATting and LAUGHING. CHILDREN run around. Some are CHASING
each other.

EXT. SAINT JAMES HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Jared exits the restaurant, walks out to the road, and heads quickly toward the church. He waits a few feet from where the congregation gathers.

Jared scans the crowd.

Eleanor walks up behind Jared. She is wearing a simple but beautiful purple Sunday dress with a matching parasol.

ELEANOR
Good morning, Mr. Delaney.

Jared jumps and moves to put his hand on his gun but it's not there. He looks down at his hand and then at Eleanor.

Eleanor moves back with fear.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
My apologies. Aren't you a jumpy one.

JARED
I'm here and I've had my coffee like I said I would.

ELEANOR
Yes, I can see that.

Jared tips his hat at Eleanor and offers her his arm.

She accepts it with hesitation. They walk into the church. Eleanor POLITELY NODS at those who stare at her and Jared.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
We better grab a pew before we cause a scene.

Jared's eyes are wide as he takes a seat next to Eleanor on the pew she chooses.

He smells the air. Eleanor looks at him curiously.

JARED
Lavender?

ELEANOR
Why, yes. How did you know?

JARED
It was my mama's favorite scent.

ELEANOR

Was?

Jared doesn't respond.

REVEREND RICHARDSON (Cowboy #4) appears at the pulpit. He's a thin man in his 40s with an average face and nothing that would be distinct on a Wanted Poster.

Jared WIGGLES uncomfortably in his seat.

REV. RICHARDSON

Good morning, All. Today, is a beautiful day to talk about walking and staying on the straight and narrow. Many choices are being made in our town. Some good. Some pouring out from Satan himself.

The congregation AGREES with the Reverend in unison.

Jared's breath quickens in his chest. A HUMMING SOUND begins. The Reverend's sermon and congregation are drowned out by the noise.

Jared puts a finger into each ear and wiggles it attempting to clear out the humming sound.

ELEANOR

(mouthing/no sound)

Jared, are you okay?

Although he can't hear Eleanor, Jared nods YES. Smiles at her. He rubs his fingers across the brim of his hat that lays in his lap.

He gently wipes the sweat collecting on his forehead.

The humming sounds turn to a BOY'S SOBS. Jared looks around at the congregation. There's no boy crying.

He wipes his forehead again and blows air out of his mouth like he is whistling without the sound.

Jared is having a silent PANIC ATTACK.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

We can't stay here all day, Jared. They've got to ready for the church social. Come on, I'll introduce you to Reverend Richardson.

Jared stares at Eleanor with a blank pale face.

Eleanor gently touches his arm. He pulls back from her, stands straight up, and reaches for his gun that isn't there.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
(softly)
Jared? Are you alright?

JARED
Yes...yes, Miss Coulter.

He laughs slightly and uncomfortably.

Jared and Eleanor walk to Reverend Richardson who stands at the entrance of the church.

EXT. METHODIST CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

REV. RICHARDSON
Miss Eleanor, it's a always a
pleasure to see you.

He smiles widely, revealing a gold tooth, and bows slightly to Eleanor.

REV. RICHARDSON (CONT'D)
Would you mind introducing your
friend?

ELEANOR
It's a pleasure to see you as well,
Reverend. My friend here is Mr.
Jared Delaney, formerly from Texas.

JARED
Please to meet you, Reverend. Your
words this mornin' got me thinkin'.

The Reverend nods thoughtfully.

REV. RICHARDSON
(to Jared)
I can appreciate that. Begin by
remembering we are generally judged
by the company we keep, and judging
from your company today, you are a
brave man indeed.

Jared looks at Eleanor with a sincere smile in his eyes.

REV. RICHARDSON (CONT'D)
Miss Eleanor is not shy about
challenging us to think about how
we live our lives.
(MORE)

REV. RICHARDSON (CONT'D)

It's one of the things that makes her such a good teacher.

ELEANOR

Thank you, Reverend. Those are high compliments coming from one of my favorite people.

The Reverend blushes.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(to Jared)

We shouldn't monopolize the Reverend's time.

REV. RICHARDSON

I hope we'll see you again, Mr. Delaney. Watch out for that rascal, Father Antonio, he's always looking for new recruits.

JARED

I'll watch my step, Reverend.

Eleanor and Jared walk to a shade tree near the church.

ELEANOR

By the way, I guess you can call me Eleanor now since you stayed awake through the entire sermon. Although, you looked like your mind was in some far away place.

JARED

Sermons are supposed to make ya think, aren't they?

Eleanor doesn't respond.

JARED (CONT'D)

I was thinkin' 'bout my new job with the Kilpatrick's too. I start tomorrow mornin'.

ELEANOR

That's wonderful, Jared. Congratulations. They're special folks.

Eleanor opens her parasol. They begin their walk back toward the center of town.

JARED

Would you be interested in joining
me for a cup of coffee to
celebrate?

ELEANOR

(teasingly)

You think you should have more?

Jared surveys Eleanor's face.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I'd would be delighted to accompany
you for coffee. Have you tried out
our Mares cafe?

Eleanor and Jared walked toward the Mares Cafe. A couple of
children GIGGLE and point at them as they pass by.

EXT. MARES CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Jared opens the door for Eleanor. She closes her parasol.

He notices a few cowboys watching him a few yards away,
removes his hat, and enters the cafe after her.

INT. MARES CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor leads Jared to a table near the window.

As soon as Jared sits down, an older Hispanic man, 40s, with
a well-groomed mustache and cheery eyes, is standing at their
table. This is the cafe's owner, MIGUEL MARES.

Miguel takes Eleanors hands in his gently.

MIGUEL

Señorita Eleanor, I demand to know
who this man is and what his
intentions are.

ELEANOR

Señor Miguel, my deepest apologies.
I don't want you to think for a
moment my love for you has died but
this young gentleman is new in town
and I feel I need to take him under
my wing so he won't go astray.

Miguel LAUGHS heartily.

Eleanor WINKS at Jared and lets go of Miguel's hands.

Jared looks confused and pours himself some water from the glass pitcher on the table.

MIGUEL

(to Eleanor)

I suppose I can set my jealousy aside. You are doing a good deed.

Miguel turns to Jared and bows his head slightly.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

Welcome, Señor. I am Miguel Mares, owner, cook, and waiter of this cafe. Please excuse my jokes with Señorita Eleanor. She brightens my days by coming here and pretending that a belleza such as she would be romantically interested in an old Zopilote like me.

Miguel waves at his wife, ANITA MARES, 30s. She is petite, dressed in bright colors, and light on her feet.

Anita brings a silver coffee pot and fills Eleanor and Jared's cups.

ELEANOR

Nonsense, Miguel, you know you alone bear my heart. Although, I'm sure you let your lovely wife, Anita, hold it for safe keeping.

Anita lets out a small laugh, winks at Eleanor, and dashes away to another table.

Eleanor and Miguel LAUGH together.

Jared looks at Eleanor curiously.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Yes, by the way, this is Jared Delaney. He's taking a position with the Kilpatrick's as a cowboy starting tomorrow morning.

MIGUEL

Enough of my foolishness, then, you'll need your strength, Señor Delaney. Can I get you anything special today?

JARED

Do you mind leaving the coffee pot on the table?

MIGUEL

Of course not, Señor. Bueno.

Anita drops off two plates of food.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

My treat to you both.

ELEANOR

Miguel it isn't necessary.

MIGUEL

It is truly my pleasure, Señorita Eleanor. Please enjoy.

JARED

Mighty kind of you, Sir. This might be my last warm lunch for a while.

Miguel kisses Eleanor's hand, shakes Jared's hand, and heads to another table.

Eleanor places her linen napkin on her lap. They both slowly start in on their food.

ELEANOR

I've heard some things from different folks about you but I'd like to get to know you first hand. Would you mind telling me a bit about yourself and how you came to Cimarron?

Jared wipes his mouth with his napkin, takes a couple of swigs of his coffee, and leans back in his chair.

JARED

There ain't a lot to tell. When I was a young boy, in the Texas Panhandle, my folks were murdered in a raid by outlaws tearin' up every place they went. I don't much remember them.

Eleanor holds her napkin up to her face. She has a look of horror in her eyes.

ELEANOR

Oh, I'm so sorry. That must've been awful for you. How on earth did you survive?

Jared wiggles uncomfortably in his seat and rubs his forehead.

JARED

I don't remember the details of the raid. A family, the Gilbertsons, found me hidin' in their barn. I don't know why they decided to take me in.

Eleanor reaches over and places her hand palm side up on the table. Jared looks at her hand but doesn't move.

Eleanor moves her hand back to her lap. Jared rubs his forehead and drinks more coffee.

JARED (CONT'D)

Mrs. Gilbertson taught me how to read and write which accounts for my interest in readin' books. I found out when I got older that I could save up my Bull Durham coupons to send away for books.

Jared smiles PROUDLY. Eleanor listens intently.

JARED (CONT'D)

Umm... Mr. Gilbertson worked me pretty hard and I became a good hand. When I turned sixteen, I took a notion to see more of the West so I left lookin' for work.

Anita comes to the table. Eleanor waves her away with a gentle head shake.

JARED (CONT'D)

I caught on with a couple of ranches and cattle drives before I went to work for Mr. Goodnight at the JA Ranch. That's where I learned how to be a top hand.

ELEANOR

It sounds to me as if you have every reason to feel proud of your accomplishments.

JARED

I don't mean to sound boastful.

ELEANOR

I didn't take it as boasting, Jared.

Jared takes a few more bites. With a sad demeanor, Eleanor watches him.

Jared looks up from his plate and catches her look.

JARED

I didn't mean to change your mood.
Now, Miss Eleanor, it's your turn
to tell me your story.

ELEANOR

That's fair enough.

Eleanor takes a few drinks of water.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I was born in St. Louis. My father
was a lawyer and my mother was a
school teacher. My parents were two
of the smartest people I've ever
known. Even as a small child I
remember listening to them have
long debates.

JARED

That sounds enjoyable. You keep
saying was.

ELEANOR

Yes... they've both passed.

Jared looks at Eleanor with understanding.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

We came out West because my father
believed things had gotten too
crowded in St. Louis. I remember it
being a tense argument between my
parents. I don't know how my father
persuaded my mother but we arrived
in Cimarron when I was 11 years
old.

Tears well-up in Eleanor's eyes.

JARED

I sure do know how to show a lady a
good time.

Eleanor GIGGLES a little at Jared's attempt at humor.

Jared pulls a handkerchief from his pocket. Hands it to
Eleanor. She notices it has a fancy "L" embroidered on it.

Eleanor wipes her eyes with the handkerchief.

JARED (CONT'D)

I know about losing parents. I figure not much in life hurts any worse. I'm sorry.

ELEANOR

Thank you, Jared, for your words of comfort. I didn't mean to get emotional but even after all these years it still hurts. I can't imagine what it's like for you not to be able to remember your parents.

Jared doesn't respond.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

What time are you heading to the Kilpatrick's?

JARED

I should be going soon. I have a few things to take care of before headin' out.

SHERIFF AVERILL (O.S.)

Looks like you survived the Reverend's sermon this morning, Mr. Delaney.

Sheriff Averill pulls a chair from an empty table near Jared and Eleanor. He sits down with them.

SHERIFF AVERILL (CONT'D)

I see Miss Eleanor hasn't chewed you up and spit you out. I guess you're showing you're tough enough.

ELEANOR

Be nice, Nathan. We're having a lovely visit.

JARED

(laughing)

This is prob'ly a good way to prepare myself for gettin' back to cowboy life tomorrow.

SHERIFF AVERILL

(to Jared)

You got the job with Ned?

Jared nods his head YES with a BROAD smile.

JARED
I appreciate your help, Sheriff.

SHERIFF AVERILL
That's great news. Good for you.
You're on the right side so far.

JARED
Yes, my side.

Sheriff Averill and Jared share a brief tense stare.

JARED (CONT'D)
I hate to leave good company, Miss
Eleanor, but I better get packed up
and be heading out to the
Kilpatrick's.

Jared nods to Eleanor. She gives him a sweet smile.

He stands and puts his hat on.

Sheriff Averill stands and reaches for Jared's hand.

Jared ignores Sheriff Averill's hand.

ELEANOR
It's a pleasure getting to know
you, Jared.

JARED
It's been a pleasure gettin' to
know you too, Eleanor.

ELEANOR
Will we be seeing you at church
next Sunday?

JARED
Only wild horses can keep me away.

Jared tips his hat to Eleanor, turns, and walks to the cafe's door.

He gives Eleanor one more look as he opens the cafe door.

EXT. MARES CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Jared closes the cafe door. He stops to get oriented. Notices the same cowboys. They haven't moved from their spot.

He walks across the street and heads to the Colfax Stables. Turning around a few times to see if he's being followed.

No one is following him.

EXT. COLFAX STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Blaze is being brushed down by the stableboy when Jared arrives.

Jared reaches for Blaze's bridle. He holds it gently.

JARED

Well, well... if the other ranch horses could see you, Blaze. My, oh my.

Blaze shakes his head and stomps his front hooves.

Jared laughs at him.

JARED (CONT'D)

(to Stableboy)

Did the hotel deliver my bag?

STABLEBOY

Yes, Mr. Delaney. It's on your saddle.

JARED

(to Blaze)

Enough primpin' for you, Blaze. Gotta git.

STABLEBOY

He's done in just a couple. Okay?

Jared looks at the sunlight outside the stable doors.

JARED

(to Blaze)

I suppose that's fine.

Blaze nods his head YES.

Jared gets his saddle bag and checks its contents. He pulls his holster and gun from his saddle bag and puts it on.

Jared rubs his saddle down. Spending extra time on the "D" carved into the saddle.

EXT. TRAIL OUT OF TOWN - AFTERNOON

Blaze moves at a walking pace. Jared sits confident in his saddle.

The grasses are moving in the BREEZE. A few LIZARDS scurry by. A ROADRUNNER watches Jared from a rock.

The sun glistens off the small lake.

Suddenly Blaze moves a little NERVOUSLY to the side. Jared halts him. Leans down to check his cinch.

A single rifle SHOT RINGS out.

Jared sees the VIOLENT SPEWING of rock chips to his left. Panic sets on his face. Blaze takes off in a FULL GALLOP.

Jared pulls his gun. Turns quick to see who's behind them.

Jake and a SMALL GROUP OF COWBOYS are a little ways back.

Horse hooves CHURN up the ground.

More SHOTS FIRED.

A bullet tears through Jared's shirt sleeve.

JARED

Come on, Blaze. Enough of this
running bullshit.

Blaze quickly turns into a cluster of boulders. He comes to a sliding stop.

Jared hops off Blaze and slaps his hind end. Blaze runs off.

Jared takes a peak around a boulder.

The group of cowboys stop near the cluster of boulders.

Jared pulls back again behind the boulder.

COWBOY #4 (O.S.)

Hey, Delaney. There ain't no where
for you to be goin'. Why don't you
come out and play?

Jared leans out slightly again from the boulder.

From behind Jared -- Jake steps to the edge of a small hill and SHOOTS toward Jared.

BANG. A bullet RICOCHETS off the boulder above Jared's head.

Jared turns with his Peacemaker Colt steady in both hands.

JAKE O'BANNON
(yells down to Jared)
Nobody needs to buy my drink, boy.

CAMERA shot up towards Jake from Jared's POV.

Jake points his gun at Jared. Pulls the trigger. BANG.

Jake laughs WICKEDLY.

Blaze, from a FULL RUN, knocks Jake off his feet.

Another gun shot rings out - BANG.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF PILOT