Marlene

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Abstract

When I was developing the concept for *Marlene*, I knew that my primary objective was to provide commentary on revenge and the cycle of violence. More importantly, I wanted to highlight how easy it is to get lost in that cycle.

Subsequently, Marlene Mace was created to be a character not only lost to violence, but within a landscape that defies typical genre conventions. Marlene is a strong, female protagonist in the American Frontier. This environment has typically been associated with hardened characters portrayed by the likes of Clint Eastwood, Franco Nero and Charles Bronson.

Marlene is broken on the day that her husband and son are murdered. During the time spent as a prisoner and her transition into a bounty hunter, Marlene convinces herself that killing Ellis Waylon, the outlaw that crossed her, is the only hope for salvation.

I continued to introduce and surround Marlene with characters, such as Marshal Eli Clay, to try and convince her that participating in the cycle of violence is not necessarily a means to find peace. Additionally, Clay tries to communicate that Marlene is not alone, and approaching Ellis with the firm hand of the law can appease more than just her.

While Marlene ultimately fails in her quest to kill Ellis, she successfully breaks the cycle of violence and tries her best to find peace at her family farm. While she may never be whole again, she is no longer lost.
List of Contents

ii. Abstract

iii. List of Contents

iv. Author's Declaration

1–80. Marlene
Author’s Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Name (printed): Samuel Fleming

Date: 13th September 2022

[Signature]
EXT. MACE FARM - COW PASTURE - NIGHT

The sun has set over the Mace family farm, with the moon lingering over a father and son silhouette as they lock down the barn which sits at the back of a large cow pasture.

SUPER: "Wyoming, the American Frontier"

On the far end of the pasture stands a modest farmhouse.

MARLENE - 45, blonde, an attractive and charming country woman - can be seen preparing a meal by the flicker of a candle through the window.

INT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Marlene moves a large bowl of stew from the stove to a round wooden table.

HENRY, 47, enters with JAMES, 12, both of whom are wearing tattered clothes and laughing amongst themselves.

    MARLENE
    Never a moment too soon.

    HENRY
    Marl, you should'a seen this boy!
    He's herdin' like a man.

    JAMES
    It's true, Ma!

    MARLENE
    Well, why don't you celebrate by washing like a man.

James runs to a large wash basin perched next to the stove.

    MARLENE (CONT'D)
    I mean it, James Mace! you scrub those hands.

Henry moves playfully over to his wife, wrapping his arms around her.

Marlene returns a smirk, before rustling his beard as she kisses him.
JAMES
(interrupting)
I'm hungry.

HENRY
Me too, son.

Henry ruffles James's hair as they both take a seat. Marlene joins them as she begins serving up the stew.

MARLENE
Y'all ready for tomorrow?

HENRY
What's that now?

MARLENE
It's tomorrow, ain't it? You're taking cattle to Big Horn.

Henry squirms, knowing he is about to disappoint.

HENRY
Nah...
(a beat)
Nah, they changed their minds.

Marlene looks up to her husband, who keeps his gaze on his meal to avoid meeting hers.

MARLENE
I'm sorry... that would'a been a nice sale.

Henry moans in agreement.

HENRY
Well, it's Bill's sale now.

MARLENE
(startled)
Bill?! How's he managed that?

HENRY
He's a goddamn leech... that's how.

Marlene throws down her spoon and runs her hands through her hair with frustration.

She shakes her head in disapproval and begins:

MARLENE
It ain't right, Henry. He's cuttin' you off at everyone corner. We've got cattle to sell and not a dollar to show--
HENRY
(interrupting)
Shush, shush, shush!

Marlene is stunned into silence by Henry's interruption, with a look of concern consuming his face.

Then - Marlene hears it too. The sound of trotting horses moving closer to the farmhouse.

HENRY (CONT'D)
That's... that's horses, ain't it?

Marlene makes a move for the window which looks down the long road up to Mace farm.

HENRY (CONT'D)
(still in his seat)
Who'd be callin' here at this hour?

EXT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Marlene struggles to respond as she sees a band of riders move towards the farmhouse.

Are there seven riders? Eight? Her eyes dart between them as her chest tightens.

INT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MARLENE
They have rifles.
(a beat)
Oh, Henry... they have rifles! All of them!

JAMES
(with fear)
Ma?

Henry pushes himself to his feet.

HENRY
Now, let's just hold on a minute. We don't know who's callin'. Might just be the Sheriff--

MARLENE
--and it might be thieves. Get your gun, Henry!

HENRY
Alright, alright! Just give me a damn minute...
(to James)
Stay with your Ma, boy.
Henry shuffles out of sight and into a small side room, returning with a repeater a few moments later.

**EXT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

The riders have reached the farmhouse.

They form a line across the front of the property, the light from the windows of the Mace home now revealing their faces.

They aren't friendly callers. *They're outlaws.*

**INT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

James has attached himself to his mother's waist, who has started to slowly edge away from the window. Henry has positioned himself in sight, clutching at his rifle with both hands.

**EXT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

The outlaws are scruffy and conceited, watching the farmhouse with little urgency.

ELLIS WAYLON, 40s, sits in the middle of the pack - smug, hardy and intimidating.

ELLIS  
(shouting)  
What 'cha plannin' with that gun you got there?

**INT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Henry remains silent, glancing over to Marlene who is shielding her cowering son.

**EXT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

ELLIS  
You hard 'o hearin', friend?

A beat.

ELLIS (CONT'D)  
Come on out. We're weary travellers who've lost their way.  
(smirking)  
We ain't gonna bite.
INT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MARLENE
(hushed)
Henry!

Henry scuttles over to his wife, murmuring inaudibly to himself.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
What're we gonna do?

HENRY
(stalling)
Okay, okay, okay.
(a beat)
Lemme just--

Before taking a chance to collect his thoughts, Henry moves back over to the window.

He peers around to see Ellis smiling with no real urgency.

EXT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ELLIS
We were hopin' to join you, friend!
A little shelter from the night could go a long way indeed.

INT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Henry looks to Marlene for guidance before--

JAMES
Dad!

Henry swiftly lifts a finger to his lips, demanding his son be quiet.

He looks back out the window to see Ellis frowning with concern, his smile completely wiped from his face.

EXT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ELLIS
(stern)
Is that a boy in there?

INT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Henry falls back from the window and retreats to his family, startled by Ellis's disgruntled reaction to James.
A silence falls over the farm, broken only by slow footsteps moving up the wooden stairs leading to the farmhouse's door.


**EXT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Ellis is behind the wooden door. A long, painful silence follows.

*KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.*

**INT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

The Maces stand frozen on the spot, Marlene's grip tightening around her husband and son.

*KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.*

**EXT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

The porch creaks underneath Ellis's weight.

**INT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

The Maces can hear as he adjusts himself, listening intently to the shuffling of his coat.

Before a moment can pass, the door CRASHES open behind the force of Ellis's boot.

The wind whooshes past him as he aims at Henry, who is yet to even cock his own gun.

Marlene stands firm behind her husband, struggling to keep hold of James who takes shelter behind a wooden column in the centre of the room.

**ELLIS**

I'd like you to drop that rifle.

Henry shakes, fear attacking his hands and feet as he struggles to make a move.

**ELLIS (CONT'D)**

Disarm or die, friend. The choice is with you.

Henry breaks into a sob as he drops the gun at his feet.

Without hesitation, Ellis moves his sights over James and--

**BANG.**
A clean shot. James hits the floor as his parents turn with anguish.

Marlene collapses as she hurries over to his lifeless body.

Henry's pain quickly forms as anger, lunging at Ellis in the doorway.

CRACK.

Henry's face meets the butt of Ellis's gun stock, busting his nose and dropping him to the floor.

ELLIS (CONT'D)
(to his gang)
G'wan now boys, have your fun.

Two outlaws brush past Ellis, giggling to themselves as they drag Henry from the farmhouse.

HENRY
(dazed)
No, no, no, no....

Ellis meanders over to Marlene, who is wailing and creating a human shield around her son.

Ellis crouches down.

ELLIS
It may be for nothin', but I am sorry. I was told by my friends out there that there'd be a farmer and his wife. Nothin' more. We've got no business with children.

Marlene doesn't move.

ELLIS (CONT'D)
What's your name, ma'am?

Still - nothing. Ellis pulls back on Marlene's hair, who screeches in pain.

ELLIS (CONT'D)
I said what's your fuckin' name?!

MARLENE
Marlene! Marlene Mace!

Ellis stands, dragging Marlene with him.

ELLIS
Well... you're with me, Marlene.

OVER BLACK: Marlene's screams ring out across the farm.

CUT TO:
EXT. HORSE TRAIL - LEADING TO SHERIDAN - DAY

SUPER: "Five Years Later"

Marlene travels down a long horse trail.
She's haggard and stern, with piercing eyes that have sunk into her face.

*She's different.*

She's wearing a tattered white shirt with a thick, weathered waistcoat for warmth.

Marlene rides a black and white Appaloosa, Sadie, who gently trots down the road to Sheridan.

EXT. SHERIDAN - MAIN STREET - DAY

Marlene arrives in town and makes her way down Sheridan's main street - her eyes fixated on the Sheriff's office at the far end of town.

She passes several town folk, some of whom offer a gentle nod whilst others do their best to avoid eye contact.

*It's obvious - they all know her.*

Marlene reaches the Sheriff's office and climbs down from Sadie, hitching her against a wooden post.

INT. SHERIDAN - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Marlene enters the Sheriff's office.

It's a small, single-room building with an empty cell and a wooden desk.

Behind the desk sits SHERIFF WILLIAMS, 50s, who appears hardened, yet approachable.

He boasts a large grey moustache and a bulbous whiskey nose.

*SHERIFF WILLIAMS*
Is that you, Marlene Mace?

Sheriff Williams stands to his feet, moving quickly round his desk to greet Marlene with a firm handshake.

*MARLENE*
Sure is, Sheriff.
Sheriff Williams isn't deterred by Marlene's cool response.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Well, I say! Must be a few months since y'last been back in Sheridan. Sit... sit!

Sheriff Williams ushers Marlene into the chair facing his own as she removes her hat.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
You gettin' by?

MARLENE
I am - it was a busy summer. Enough folk thought they could manage the mountains while it was warmer.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Could they?

MARLENE
They couldn't. Always had a corpse to show for my troubles.

Sheriff Williams faked a chuckle.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
... and a lawman doing his best to hold off on a payout.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Well, you don't worry about that in Sheridan! If you're looking for work, I got a bounty or two.

MARLENE
Cattle rustlers and horse thieves?

Sheriff Williams sits back in his chair, uninterested in taking Marlene on.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
You got anything for me, Sheriff?

A beat.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
(sigh)
No - no word on Waylon.

Marlene doesn't attempt to hide her disappoint, shaking her head with dejection.

MARLENE
Then work it is. What you got?
Sheriff Williams shuffles through handbills, cherry picking a couple for Marlene's approval.

    SHERIFF WILLIAMS
    Well... I've got a cattle rustler, or...
    (witty)
    ...a horse thief.

EXT. BILL'S FARM - PORCH - DUSK

Marlene rides into Bill's farm, one of several farms operating on the outskirts of Sheridan.

She hitches Sadie before approaching the farmhouse and knocking.

BILL, 60s, answers, looking dishevelled with a white, scraggy beard and a stained union suit.

    MARLENE
    Evening Bill.
    BILL
    Mrs Mace?

Marlene offers a subtle nod.

    BILL (CONT'D)
    (startled)
    Well... oh my. It's good to--
    MARLENE
    You take on any new farmhands, Bill?
    BILL
    Farmhands?
    MARLENE
    Yeah. Sometime over the last month or so.
    BILL
    It's hard to say, Mrs Mace. There's always comin' and goin'.

Marlene doesn't respond, staring directly at Bill.

    BILL (CONT'D)
    I guess... Beau?
    MARLENE
    Beau?
BILL
Yes, ma'am. He's been with us a few weeks now.

MARLENE
From Big Horn?

BILL
(hesitant)
Well... let's see. I guess so. Yeah... Big Horn sounds about right.

MARLENE
Alright then. I'd like to meet him. He sleep on the farm?

Bill nods cautiously.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Where?

BILL
Mrs Mace... please. Can you tell me what's going on here? You're calling at this hour, askin' 'bout a boy--

MARLENE
(blunt)
I'm lookin' for a cattle rustler, Bill. He's come over from Big Horn and been askin' for work around Sheridan. He ain't dumb... he gives you a few months of work then makes his move.

Bill gasps in confusion, failing to conjure a response.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Now, I've been to the other farms - no luck. You're the last stop, Bill, so I'm hopin' that your Beau is my Amos.

BILL
Amos?

MARLENE
Yeah. Amos.

Bill scratches at his head.

BILL
Maybe I should speak to the Sheriff, y'know? I ain't lookin' for trouble. We can do this the right way - no late night--
MARLENE
Bill! Tell me where he fuckin' sleeps!

Bill jumps back in shock, quickly extending his arm to point towards a worn shack along the far side of his cow pasture.

Marlene looks back at Bill, spits on his porch and walks off towards the shack.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Fuckin' leech.

EXT. BILL'S FARM - FARMHAND'S SHACK - MOMENTS LATER

Marlene has moved over to the farmhand's shack and bangs on the door. She cocks her revolver as she waits for a response.

After banging once more, 'BEAU', 30s, appears in the doorway - topless and mangy.

He's rubbing his eyes as he sizes up Marlene.

'BEAU'
Yeah?

MARLENE
What's your name, boy?

'BEAU'
Who's askin'?

Marlene doesn't hesitate and moves towards the open doorway, ensuring her gaze catches his own.

MARLENE
What's your name?

'BEAU'
(intimidated)
Beau.

MARLENE
Beau what?

'BEAU'
Beau Dawson.

Marlene smirks, carefully moving her shooting hand over her holster without Beau realising.

MARLENE
Now - that's funny, 'cos I'm lookin' for a Mr Dawson.
'BEAU'
The hell you say... I ain't done nothin' wrong!

Marlene stares for a moment, like a predator teasing her prey.

MARLENE
You're Amos Dawson.

Fuck.

'Beau' looks ready to crack, catching his tongue as he tries to reply.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
You're Amos Dawson from Big Horn.

'BEAU'
N-No I ain't... No I ain't...

MARLENE
You're a cattle rustler from Big Horn - and your name is Amos Dawson.

'Beau' says nothing, sinking under the pressure imposed on him by Marlene. His limbs go loose as he attempts to scramble.

Before a moment passes, Marlene draws her sidearm and--

BANG. BANG. BANG.

Three shots nestle into Amos Dawson's chest.

Collapsing into the shack, he splutters and gargles blood as he takes his final breath.

Marlene takes a few steps forwards, moving over him as she watches him die.

Marlene stands for a brief, mindless moment, before holstering her weapon and sauntering away.

EXT. SHERIDAN - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sheriff Williams is locking up his office as he hears Sadie trotting up from behind.

On top of her sits Marlene, accompanied by Amos Dawson's lifeless corpse.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Well, I'll be damned. Who's that you got there?
MARLENE
Amos Dawson.

The Sheriff's look of confusion quickly dissolves into exasperation.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Somethin' wrong, Sheriff?

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Marlene - he's dead!

Marlene frowns at the Sheriff.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Don't be like that, Mrs Mace. You shot a cattle rustler!

MARLENE
(stern)
I've got me a handbill that says "Dead or Alive", Sheriff. This ain't a fuckin' stagecoach.

Sheriff Williams puts his hands to his waist, struggling for an angle.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
When did you get so high and mighty? A bounty is a fuckin' bounty. We've killed plenty of thieves in Wyoming, Sheriff.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
There was a better way to go... there could'a been justice. You don't gotta cheat the hangman in Sheridan - you should know that.

Marlene jumps off Sadie and throws the corpse at the feet of the Sheriff.

She quickly saddles back up and heads away from the Sheriff's office.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Nothing to say to that, eh?

MARLENE
I ain't in the business of talkin' justice. I deliver it... and it's by your fuckin' feet.

(a beat)
You owe me $20, lawman.

The Sheriff watches Marlene ride away from him with a look of gloom and dissatisfaction.
BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Outlaws gather round the Mace family's dinner table: laughing and drinking.

In the far corner, Marlene sits on the cold wooden floor, her hands tied around the leg of a side table.

She glances out the window and, with help from the withering moonlight, she can see Henry hanging above the barn door.

His body is already decomposing.

Suspended from a noose, his lifeless corpse still gently sways. *Humiliated, brutalised and murdered.*

ELLIS
What'cha lookin' at, Marlene?

Marlene's eyes dart over to Ellis, who is moving from the table with a sinister smirk.

ELLIS (CONT'D)
I hope you ain't still wailin' about Mr Mace out there.

MARLENE
(softly)
Henry.

Ellis leans in.

ELLIS
What's that you say?

MARLENE
His name... is Henry.

Ellis laughs at Marlene's attempt of defiance.

He moves in front of the window, admiring the sight of the swaying corpse under the night sky.

ELLIS
Y'know, we like it here Marlene - we really do.
   (turns to her)
   But I think it's time we say farewell to the farm.

A beat.
ELLIS (CONT'D)
What'dya say, Marlene?
(laughing)
You need a hand with a bag?

Marlene looks up to Ellis, terror crossing her face.

MARLENE
I ain't goin' anywhere with you.

SMACK.

Ellis's hand strikes Marlene. She lets out an exhausted whelp as a painful sting sinks into her cheek.

ELLIS
I've been good to you, Mrs Mace.
You're fed, washed... and alive. We even buried the boy - and he don't mean a fuckin' thing to us.

Ellis stands, offering a last piece of advice as he moves away:

ELLIS (CONT'D)
Now's the time to wise the fuck up.

END FLASHBACK.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIDAN - SALOON BOARDING ROOM - DAWN

Marlene wakes and gasps for breath as the morning sun crashes through the window.

She looks around the barren room, sitting for a moment before pushing herself from the battered mattress.

INT. SHERIDAN - SALOON - DAY

Marlene trudges down the stairs, arriving in a seemingly empty saloon before seeing HANK, 50s, appear from behind the bar.

The sweat shine of his shaved head emphasises the dirt across his face.

He bares a strong resemblance to his brother - Henry Mace.

HANK
Morning, Marl.

MARLENE
Hank.
Marlene leans against the bar. Without a word, Hank pours a generous whiskey and slides it into Marlene's grasp.

**HANK**
A lil' breakfast for your day.

Marlene nods with appreciation.

**MARLENE**
You keepin' well?

**HANK**
I am, I am. I just...

Marlene looks up Meet Hank's eye line.

**HANK (CONT'D)**
I miss him.

Marlene delivers no reply.

**HANK (CONT'D)**
I always said it - there's six Mace boys, and he was the best of us.

Marlene throws back the drink, clearing her throat as she slides the glass back.

**MARLENE**
I gotta get, Hank -- Buffalo is a fair ride.

**HANK**
Oh -- yeah, yeah, yeah. If you do got just a single moment though...

**MARLENE**
What'd need?

**HANK**
I'm just being nosey is all, but what's got a Marshal in Sheridan?

A Marshal in Sheridan - Marlene's interest is piqued.

**MARLENE**
There's a Marshal here?

**HANK**
Yes, ma'am. Rode in this morning on a black Arabian. Beautiful horse, sorta like--

**MARLENE**
Where is he?
HANK
He's with the Sheriff... been there all mornin'.

Without a word, Marlene takes her leave.

EXT. SHERIDAN - MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Already twisting her neck as she leaves the saloon, Marlene spots a black horse hitched outside of the Sheriff's office. She darts down the street.

INT. SHERIDAN - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Marlene crashes into the Sheriff's office.

Across from Sheriff Williams sits MARSHAL ELI CLAY - 30s, strawberry blonde and well-presented.

He boasts slicked-back hair and a clean shave.

He's dressed in a long black coat which exhibits a flawless necktie.

Sheriff Williams bolts upright.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
(abrupt)
Marlene - this is Eli Clay.

CLAY
Marshal Clay will do just fine.

Clay offers Marlene a gentle nod.

Marlene stares for a moment then extends her hand to greet him.

Clay sizes her up before meeting the gesture.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Apologies Marshal.
(to Marlene)
Marshal Clay has just arrived from Montana.

MARLENE
What brings you to Sheridan?

Clay is surprised by Marlene's direct questioning.

CLAY
Are you a deputy, Marlene?
MARLENE
Nah.

A beat.

CLAY
(to the Sheriff)
Who is this?

MARLENE
I'm a bounty hunter.

Clay can't help but scoff.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
What's got you excited?

CLAY
My apologies. You just don't see many women pursuing such a line of work.

Marlene doesn't reply, instead offering a cold stare.

Clay glances between her and the Sheriff.

CLAY (CONT'D)
If it's all the same to you Marlene, I do have business to discuss with the Sheriff.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Marshal, if I may... it'd be wise for her to stay.

CLAY
How so?

The Sheriff returns to his seat.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Amuse me, Marshal. Tell her what you told me.

Clay takes a brief moment to wriggle in disbelief.

CLAY
Your town, your call.

With a deep sigh, the Marshal begins:

CLAY (CONT'D)
Pay attention, Marlene. A few months ago, a family of five was murdered in Billings, Montana. Not a week later, it was a family of four in Pryor.

(MORE)
CLAY (CONT'D)
The eldest son, John Claremont, managed to survive that time, at least.

(a beat)
We've been doing our best to keep tabs and we believe the perpetrators are up in the Bighorn Mountains.

MARLENE
Who killed 'em?

CLAY
The Ellis Waylon gang.

 Fuck. Ellis Waylon is in Wyoming.

Marlene feels ready to burst. Anger and grief roar through her body as she feels every limb clench.

Gritting her teeth, Marlene has to ask:

MARLENE
Where is he?

Clay is taken aback, absorbing her reaction to the mention of Ellis's name.

CLAY
You've heard of this gang?

MARLENE
I have - and I'll kill them. Just tell me where I'm headin'.

CLAY
Whoa! Easy now. I'm not here to recruit a mad-dog bounty hunter. It's my job to find Ellis Waylon and return him to Montana.

MARLENE
You wanna take him alive?

CLAY
Yes, ma'am. He's got crimes to answer for.

MARLENE
You're goddamn right he has - and he can answer to me.

CLAY
(to the Sheriff)
What is this?

The Sheriff is lost for words, aware that this is a fight he won't win.
MARLENE
If you know where he is and it's your job to bring him down, why the hell did you ride for Sheridan?

Clay looks at Marlene with open disapproval.

CLAY
That isn't your concern.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
(interjecting)
He's looking for a guide.

MARLENE
A what?

SHERIFF WILLIAMS

MARLENE
(to Clay)
You need an escort?

CLAY
Not that it's your business... but there isn't many people who can navigate the mountains and deal with outlaws.

Marlene listens carefully.

CLAY (CONT'D)
I was told to ride for Sheridan and ask for a man called Mace. Not unlike yourself, he's a bounty hunter - one that knows the mountains and can handle himself.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
It ain't a man you're looking for.

Sheriff Williams points to Marlene.

CLAY
What - she's Mace?

MARLENE
That's right. Marlene Mace... and I'll take you up the mountains.

Clay squints with uncertainty.

CLAY
I don't know, Mrs Mace. Believe me when I tell you - Ellis is coming back alive.
Marlene objects with a menacing glare.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Who is Ellis Waylon to you? Why's he got you so tied up?

MARLENE
There'll be time to talk on the road, Marshal. Are we doin' this?

Clay looks back to the Sheriff for support. Sheriff Williams delivers a firm nod of approval.

CLAY
Alright, Mrs Mace. It seems I'm not spoilt for choice. I asked a dozen men who can take me and they all said you. So, yes - you can help me find Waylon.
(a beat)
Alive.

Without another word to either men, Marlene bolts to the exit.

Through the window, they watch her dash to Sadie who is still hitched outside the saloon.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Are you sure about her?

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
She'll get you where you need to be.

Clay accepts his response, collecting his hat from the Sheriff's desk.

CLAY
Thank you for your time, Sheriff.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Be safe.

Clay makes a move for the door.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
--and Marshal? She is friendly with the trigger. You let her get too close... she'll finish him.

Begrudgingly, Clay leaves.

EXT. SHERIDAN - OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - DAY

Clay is riding on his black Arabian with the town of Sheridan now behind him.
He slows and halts next to Marlene, who is waiting by the road for the Marshal.

CLAY
Mrs Mace.

MARLENE
Marlene will be just fine.
(pointing into the distance)
You see that? Base of Darton Peak?

CLAY
I do.

MARLENE
A man called Morgan keeps a shack there. He'll be happy to give shelter for a night.

CLAY
You think we'll get so far in a day?

MARLENE
If you keep up.

CLAY
Loud and clear, Marlene. Let me just--

Clay delves into his satchel, pulling out a refined pair of brown leather riding gloves.

The shine under the morning sun tells Marlene that they had been recently sewn.

The Marshal looks over to her who is quietly analysing him.

CLAY (CONT'D)
They help me ride.

MARLENE
How old are you, Marshal?

CLAY
I'm just shy of thirty five. Why do you ask?

MARLENE
You seem a lil' green is all.

Clay is confused as to whether he should be flattered or offended.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
You been workin' long?
CLAY
As a Marshal?

Marlene nods.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Since I became a man. My father was
a Marshal before me.
(a beat)
He is a good man.

Uninterested by his reply, Marlene clicks her tongue and
Sadie begins down the road.

MARLENE
You ready to ride, Marshal?

CLAY
Lead the way.

The unlikely companions quickly break into a run, heading
towards the mountains in the distance.

SERIES OF SHOTS - RIDING TO THE BIGHORN MOUNTAINS

A) Marlene and Clay gallop along a winding road.

B) Sadie's hooves slowly move from grass to snow as the
companions begin the ascension.

C) Marlene leads a steady pace as Clay tries to warm himself
by tightening his coat.

D) Marlene chews tobacco, Clay now lagging behind as he
struggles to match her pace.

E) We see Marlene and Clay from afar as the sun begins to set
behind the mountains.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

EXT. BIGHORN MOUNTAINS - OUTSIDE MORGAN'S SHACK - NIGHT

Marlene and Clay arrive at a rundown shack, barely visible
with daylight now behind the two of them.
CLAY

Marlene?

MARLENE

Yeah?

CLAY

Are you sure someone lives here?

MARLENE

I am.

The two of them dismount their horses, landing in thick snow.

MARLENE (CONT'D)

Hitch the horses under the shelter behind the shack.

Clay takes the reign of both animals and leads them round the decrepit property.

INT. BIGHORN MOUNTAINS - MORGAN'S SHACK - NIGHT

Marlene enters the shack, throwing down her coat with apparent familiarity.

MARLENE

(loudly)

You here, Morgan?

A noise crashes from a room at the back of the shack.

Without flinching, Marlene throws herself down onto a wooden chair in front of a dying fire.

Scattered around the room are pelts and handmade drying racks for meats of all sizes.

A real hunter's dwelling.

She makes quick work of reigniting the flames as Morgan, 70s, enters from over her shoulder.

Despite his age and elderly appearance, he moves with confidence and purpose.

Morgan groans to welcome Marlene.

MARLENE (CONT'D)

How you doin'?

Morgan groans once more, placing a hand on her shoulder as he sits down beside her.

Clay enters, loudly brushing off the snow.
CLAY
Oh...
   (removing his hat)
Good evening, sir.

Morgan looks over at Clay.

A beat.

CLAY (CONT'D)
I'm Marshal Eli Clay... from Montana.

MORGAN
(to Marlene)
Lawman?

Marlene nods, chewing on her tobacco.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
Curious.

Clay moves into the room with the conversation seemingly continuing without him.

MARLENE
Don't let it bother you, he's got a line on Waylon.

This immediately grasps Morgan's attention.

MORGAN
He's in Wyoming?

MARLENE
Yeah. He's up here somewhere.

MORGAN
Where?

MARLENE
The Marshal here has been pretty tight lipped on that.

Morgan's attention quickly diverts to Clay, scowling at the shivering Marshal.

MORGAN
(frustrated)
What you keepin' secrets for, boy?

CLAY
There's no secret, sir--

MORGAN
--stop with that sir shit. This ain't Moan-tan-nah.
   (MORE)
MORGAN (CONT'D)
Formalities won't get you much mo' than lead and a shallow grave here.

Clay sits quietly, worried he'll infuriate Morgan further.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
Pfft. Another hired gun with a badge. Tryn'a snatch the bounty whole, boy?

MARLENE
There ain't a bounty, Morgan.
(sardonic)
Marshal Clay is gonna take Ellis back to Montana to hang.

Morgan laughs hysterically, filling his cracked lungs with the cold mountain air.

MORGAN
Goddamn it, Marlene, if he's here to deliver salvation to Ellis Waylon, what's he need you fo'?!?

MARLENE
I'm his tour guide.

Morgan manages to laugh even harder, with Marlene even breaking a smile.

After catching his breath, Morgan continues with Clay:

MORGAN
How can she guide you if she don't know where he is?

Clay looks between Marlene and Morgan knowing the concern is justified.

MARLENE
I do need to know where we're headin' sooner or later.

CLAY
And you will. But I can't have you running off ahead in the night.

MARLENE
How do I take you further without even a fuckin' direction?

CLAY
For now? South west.

Morgan and Marlene share a look of concern.
MARLENE
We can't keep on headin' south west
for too long. There's folk up here
worth avoidin'.

Morgan groans in agreement.

CLAY
Like who?

MARLENE
Ellis Waylon ain't the first son-
of-a-bitch to go hide up a
mountain.
(a beat)
Then you have all sorts of cave
dwellers up Bighorn.

CLAY
(with concern)
Cave dwellers?

MORGAN
Troglodytes.

Morgan spits on the floor, rubbing over his phlegm with the
sole of his worn boot.

Clay retreats from the conversation with a moment of
consideration, processing the dangers of the mountains.

MARLENE
We're gonna spend the night,
Morgan.

Once again, Morgan acknowledges her with a groan. As he
stands, Marlene stands with him.

The two share a short embrace as he returns to the back room.

Marlene sits back down and, without a word, covers her face
with her hat and crosses her legs by the now roaring fire.

Clay, after a brief moment of silence, follows suit.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. WYOMING WILDERNESS - NIGHT

Marlene - breathless, exhausted and her hands still bound -
runs through a clearing in the woods.

She struggles over the terrain with bare, bloody feet.

Her legs give in and she collapses, unable to push on.
She rolls on to her back, basking in the clear night sky.  
*She's ready to die.*

SNAP.

A branch breaks behind her. She shoots up to identify the sound. *They couldn't have caught up.*

There stands Morgan, dragging a dead coyote by its tail and with a bolt-action rifle over his shoulder. Marlene struggles to compose herself as her ability to control her breathing runs away from her.

```
MORGAN
You keep suckin' air like that, your lungs gonna pop.
```

Marlene is frozen.

Morgan clocks the rope cutting into her wrists.

He moves over to her, retrieving a large, steel knife from his belt.

Marlene gasps and tries to scuttle away.

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MORGAN (CONT'D)
Quit your wallerin'. I'll cut you loose.
```

Morgan reaches Marlene.

He stands over her, waiting for permission to free her.

Strained and shaking, she raises her hands.

Morgan makes quick work of cutting the rope, Marlene gasping in relief as her bindings fall to the ground.

Morgan slides his knife back into a sheath and makes his way back the way he came.

Marlene watches him walk away, before hearing in the distance:

```
MORGAN (CONT'D)
If you don't wanna die out here, you better move yourself.
```

Morgan continues.

Before losing him in the tree line, Marlene forces herself to her feet and quickly chases after him.

*END FLASHBACK.*
INT. BIGHORN MOUNTAINS - MORGAN'S SHACK - DAWN

Clay kicks Marlene, who shoots up from her seat. Panting, she stands over Clay as he eats 'squirrel' from a stick.

CLAY
You make real unsettling noises in your sleep, Marlene.
(a beat)
There's some demons in you.

Marlene chooses to ignore Clay and scans the room.

MARLENE
Where's Morgan?

CLAY
Hunting.

Marlene wastes no time in getting herself together.

MARLENE
C'mon, eat up. Let's get movin'.

CLAY
Don't you eat? He cooked squirrel.

Marlene looks down on the Marshal.

MARLENE
Morgan tell you that's a squirrel?

Clay nods innocently.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
That ain't a squirrel, it's a fuckin' rat.

Clay doesn't respond, spitting out a mouthful of rodent meat in disgust.

Marlene leaves through the door behind him.

EXT. BIGHORN MOUNTAINS - SNOWY PATH - DAY

Marlene and Clay trot down a path, pushing on through heavy snowfall.

CLAY
Let me ask you something, Marlene.

Marlene looks over to the inquisitive Marshal.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Who is Morgan to you?
MARLENE
Same as he is to you - a sulky ol' hunter livin' on the side of a mountain.

Clay forces a chuckle.

CLAY
You seem familiar is all.

Undaunted and uninterested, Marlene continues to ride.

CLAY (CONT'D)
...and he seems to know you and Waylon have history.

MARLENE
And?

CLAY
You don't seem to be an open book, Marlene. A man who knows about you must be a man you really know.

MARLENE
(rhetoric)
Is that right?

The two ride in tandem for a few quiet moments.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Morgan is a good man is all. I'd lost my way and he took me in. If it's gonna take a label to shut you up...
(a beat)
...he's a teacher.

CLAY
A teacher?

MARLENE
Yeah - you know... a mentor.

Clay is satisfied, nodding solemnly to himself.

CLAY
He didn't seem too fond of me.

MARLENE
That's because you're a Marshal. And you talk like that.

CLAY
Like what?

MARLENE
Like an asshole.
Clay scoffs, seemingly indignant towards the comments.

    CLAY
    I can't help being raised to talk proper.

He shakes his head, surprised by Marlene's personal affront.

    MARLENE
    Don't get twisted now. It's lawmen Morgan can't stand.

    CLAY
    He despises all lawmen?

    MARLENE
    Yup. The police, Sheriffs, Marshals - any officer of the law gets him spittin'.

    CLAY
    And why not bounty hunters?

Marlene slows to a stop, looking over at Clay.

    CLAY (CONT'D)
    You're a servant of the court.

    MARLENE
    I ain't a fuckin' slave. I kill men who deserved to be killed.

    CLAY
    ...on behalf of the law.

Marlene. Sees. Red.

    MARLENE
    No, Clay. Not for the law - for me. Let me tell you, the days I kill rapists and fuckin' killers, I sleep like a baby.

Clay feels subdued, watching Marlene misplace her self-control.

    MARLENE (CONT'D)
    And I'll tell you another thing, when I see Ellis Waylon bleedin' because of me... (a long, hateful beat) I'll sleep for a goddamn year.

Marlene glares at Clay, waiting for a response. But none come.

He looks back at her as she flares with anger, before he slowly resumes a trot.
Marlene watches Clay pass her. She wonders for a moment before carefully following behind.

**EXT. BIGHORN MOUNTAINS – EDGE OF THE WOODS – DUSK**

Marlene leads Clay up a snowy path as the sun begins to set.

Tension resides between the companions as they travel beside a dark tree line.

Marlene comes to a stop, letting Clay catch up and halt next to her.

    MARLENE
    We've gotta camp.

Clay briefly looks around their surroundings.

    CLAY
    Here?

    MARLENE
    Yeah – it'll do.
    (dismounting)
    We gotta get settled before it's dark.

Clay doesn't respond.

    MARLENE (CONT'D)
    You happy with that, Marshal?

Again, he doesn't respond.

Marlene looks over to the Marshal and sees that his attention is ahead of him.

He's staring up the path ahead of him.

    CLAY
    What do you suppose that is?

Clay throws a gesture into the distance.

Marlene scans ahead, unable to register anything of interest.

    MARLENE
    What'd see?

    CLAY
    Shoes.

    MARLENE
    ... shoes?

Without hesitation, Clay kicks the side of his horse and rides further up the path.
Marlene adjusts her position, trying to mirror the Marshal's eye line - and there they are.

Only fifty metres ahead of them, the tips of two worn leather boots poke out of the snow.

Pointy and narrow, it's safe to assume that these are women's shoes.

A look of dread takes hold of Marlene's face as Clay closes in on the shoes.

Now only a few metres away, the Marshal realises the shoes are not worn by a woman - but a man.

Bearded, filthy... and alive. His eyes are open and looking directly at Clay.

Cave dwellers.

Before the Marshal has an opportunity to respond, a second troglodyte has approached his horse and pulled him from his mount.

Clay crashes onto the cold snow, followed quickly by his attacker.

The cave dweller is desperate to grab the Marshal's neck.

Clay does all he can to fight him off before both troglodytes are pinning him down and strangling him.

The Marshal feels defeated.

Unable to gasp for air and unable to overcome his attackers, he pushes his head up until he's able to see above him.

There stands Marlene.

BANG.

A shotgun shell roars through the skull of the first troglodyte, a red mist exploding inches from the Marshal's face.

Marlene cocks the gun and swiftly fires off a second shot.

The other cave dweller falls.

Blood fills the air, covering the white snow around the companions.

Clay lies motionless, with blood, skull and brain covering his face.

Marlene quickly moves to him, dragging him up by his collar.
Clay doesn't respond.

He stands dazed and confused as Marlene tries to shake him.

Eager to move, Marlene slaps him across his face.

The Marshal shakes off his insensibility, nodding erratically at Marlene.

She pushes Clay back towards his horse.

The Marshal mounts his Arabian while Marlene whistles and rushes towards the approaching Sadie.

Before Marlene and Clay are able to force a gallop through the deep snow, an arrow shoots out from the tree line and pierces Clay's shoulder.

Once again, the Marshal crashes on to the snow.

A second arrow follows and penetrates the black Arabian's neck. The horse whelps and circles unpredictably.

Marlene jumps from Sadie, kicking her away as she lands to move her from the line of fire.

With a single revolver, Marlene suppresses the tree line with aimless fire as she moves behind a large rock.

She throws herself behind it, composing herself in cover.

Marlene looks over to Clay gripping the arrow in his shoulder. A small pool of blood is forming where he lies - the arrow has gone straight through.

Marlene rolls over, finding herself on her belly as she begins to peer around the rock.

That's when she sees them - three more troglodytes.

The cave dwellers are slowly emerging from the woods, two of which are primed to shoot more arrows.

One aims at the Marshal, wallowing in the snow. The other is fixated on Marlene's rock.

She's trapped.
Retreating behind the rock, Marlene opens the chamber of her revolver - a single bullet remains.

She pulls back the hammer--

BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG.

Marlene jumps with fear. The gunshot wasn't her own.

She looks over to the Marshal - he's managed to reach his sidearm and open fire on the cave dwellers.

Marlene jumps up and shoots the last-standing troglodyte - a clean headshot.

One of the floored cave dwellers squirms. Marlene runs over to the flailing assailant and quickly attacks.

She stamps on his face.

Over.

And over.

And over.

And over.

CLAY
(in pain)
Marlene!

Clay's call for help startles Marlene who quickly runs over, crashing on to her knees beside the Marshal.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Fuck - they shot me! They fucking shot me!

Marlene whistles for Sadie.

After a brief moment, Sadie appears from over the brow at the top of the path and runs down to the companions.

Marlene stands and grabs Clay by the back of his collar.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Mar-- Marlene! What are you doing?!

MARLENE
We gotta move, Marshal! I gotta move you.

As she drags him towards her horse, he screams in pain.

She moves around the Marshal and braces him to stand:
MARLENE (CONT'D)
I am sorry--

Marlene pulls Clay up as his cries rip through the Bighorn Mountains.

She moves him to Sadie's side, offering a brief warning:

MARLENE (CONT'D)
One more time - you've gotta get on this horse, Clay.

Clay drags himself up onto Sadie, Marlene pushing with all her strength from behind.

The Marshal positions himself behind Marlene's saddle, wailing in agony.

Marlene delves into a saddle bag, retrieving revolver ammunition.

She loads one in the chamber and moves over to Clay's Arabian. The horse has fallen and is throbbing in pain on the snowy path.

Marlene fires a single bullet into the head of the horse, offering sought-after mercy.

She rushes back to Sadie and clambers on to the horse.

Using rags, she quickly slings herself and Clay together before galloping deeper into the mountains.

CUT TO:

EXT. BIGHORN MOUNTAINS - CAMP - MORNING

Marlene chews tobacco, gazing at the morning sky above her. She's still covered in blood, unwashed from the night before.

Clay is led on the other side a small camp fire. The arrow has been removed and a makeshift dressing covers the wound.

The Marshal slowly opens his eyes, groaning in pain as he awakens.

Marlene quickly stands, walking over to him with a canteen of water.

MARLENE
How you feelin'?

Clay lies for a moment, bleating quietly to himself.
MARLENE (CONT'D)
Here.
(passing the canteen)
Drink.

Clay reaches for the water, suffering with pain as he moves. The Marshal drinks for a moment.

CLAY
You pulled the arrow out?

Marlene nods.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Is that safe?

MARLENE
I was checkin' for poison.

Clay looks to Marlene with horror.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
I wouldn't worry, the wound is as clean as it can be.
(a beat)
Nasty trick they pulled with those shoes.

CLAY
You think it was set up?

MARLENE
Yeah - ain't the first time I've seen somethin' like that. They use all sorts to get men like yourself stoppin' to help. Credit where it's due though... I ain't never seen a man dress in women's shoes to go huntin'.

CLAY
Well - I'm glad one of us is impressed.

Marlene chuckles to herself, relieved to see the Marshal relatively sound spirited.

MARLENE
I shot your horse.

CLAY
(deflated)
I saw.

MARLENE
Seemed like the right thing to do.

Clay sits quietly, fondly remembering his faithful companion.
Marlene offers the Marshal some peace as she moves back round the fire.

CLAY
Thank you.

MARLENE
It's fine.

CLAY
No - really, Marlene. Thanks for getting me out.

MARLENE
It's what you brought me for.
You're welcome.

The two sit quietly for a moment.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
If you're up to it, we should get you off this mountain. That cotton wrap ain't gonna save your arm.

CLAY
If we're sat waiting with a doctor for my arm to mend, that'll waste some time.

MARLENE
I know.
(a beat)
That's why I'm gonna take you down and you're gonna tell me where he is.

Clay shakes his head.

CLAY
This doesn't change anything, Marlene.

MARLENE
It changes everythin'. I can't drag you through the snow with one arm. And I ain't lettin' Waylon move on while we wait for that hole to seal up. That could be weeks.

CLAY
He won't move on. We'll find him when we're fit--

MARLENE
You don't seem a dim man, Clay. You can't honestly believe Ellis Waylon ever stops movin'.
CLAY
I'm sorry, Marlene. But this is going to be done the right way.

Marlene huffs, exasperated by the Marshal.

She kicks down on the camp fire, extinguishing the flame between them.

She stands and turns away from Clay.

For a brief moment, she appears frozen to the spot, before Clay realises....

She's crying.

A wave of guilt crashes on to the lap of Clay, as he sees the stubborn and coarse Marlene appear truly vulnerable.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Marlene--

MARLENE
Why are you like this, Clay?
(a beat)
Why's it matter to you how he dies?

CLAY
Dying up here with nothing but a great silence to watch is not the closure everyone needs.

MARLENE
It's the closure I need.

CLAY
And you'll get it with a dozen others - when he hangs. You are not the only person to want Ellis dead. You're not alone here!

Marlene turns back to Clay, her eyes filled with tears and despair.

MARLENE
But I am, Clay! I am alone - because of Ellis Waylon. He--

She stops for a moment to compose herself.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
He killed my husband. My son. And he was close to finishin' me.

Clay looks at her with understanding.
He leans forwards and pushes himself off from the sleeping mat below him - despite the pain - and shuffles over to Marlene.

CLAY
I'm sorry, Marlene. I am. He will die for all he's done. But you don't need to pass the sentence.

MARLENE
I do.

Clay sighs with defeat.

CLAY
Then you're lost, Mrs Mace, and I don't think any manner of death coming for Ellis Waylon will change how you feel.

Marlene is taken aback by the Marshal's firm words.

He doesn't waste another moment before using the last of his energy to help collect their belongings.

For another moment, Marlene stands in silence.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) DAY - Marlene and Clay trudge through the snow.

B) NIGHT - the companions camp for the night. Marlene chews tobacco while Clay gazes into the fire.

C) DAY - they continue on through the harsh terrain, snow hitting them as they push on.

D) NIGHT - without a word, Marlene changes Clay's dressing.

E) DAY - Marlene and Marshal see the town of Hazelton in the distance.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

EXT. APPROACHING HAZELTON - DUSK

Marlene leads the way as the companions approach Hazelton.
It's quite a way, huh?

Clay is met with silence.

I'm sorry if my words hit hard, Marlene. I just want the best for everyone.

Maybe that's your problem, Clay.

How's that?

You've been raised to expect a win for everyone.

Visibly irritated by Marlene's suggestion, Clay clicks his tongue and urges his horse to pass Marlene's, bringing them both to a stop.

He frowns at Marlene.

What you waitin' for?

You've got me all wrong, Mrs Mace.

I doubt it.

Well you don't know a fucking thing!

Marlene is almost surprised by Clay's emphatic response, waiting for his next move.

You may see a young man, but I've chased after men like Ellis before - and I ain't looking for a win.

Sure looks that way from here.

Clay shakes his head and looks away from Marlene, off into the distance.

A beat.
CLAY
I was barely nineteen when I started chasing an outlaw like Ellis. A real fuck, this fella was. I wouldn't care to waste my breath on his name.
(a beat)
He took a real liking to children.

Clay looks back to Marlene.

CLAY (CONT'D)
You know?

Marlene solemnly nods.

CLAY (CONT'D)
There were a lot of mothers looking to me for justice. Answers. Hell, they just wanted a little bit of peace. But it's one lady in particular I remember. Real pretty - at least, she was.
(a long, drawn-out sigh)
Losing children takes a lot away from you.

MARLENE
You bet.

CLAY
It was a long couple of years, but we keep hunting and we found him. I dragged him home myself - and he hanged.

Marlene catches tears building in Clay's eyes.

CLAY (CONT'D)
I remember looking out to the crowd - looking for her. I wanted to see her face when she saw her demons die. And there she was.

Clay continues to struggle through his words as Marlene watches on.

CLAY (CONT'D)
She couldn't care less, Marlene. She was already a ghost. Her soul died just... waiting.

Marlene carefully approaches Clay.

MARLENE
Listen to what you're sayin', Clay. Is that what you want for me?
CLAY
It's what you've already gone. You've lost touch with your soul. You're convinced salvation is waiting for you down the barrel of a gun.

MARLENE
What would you have me do?

Clay tries to make a start further down the path.

CLAY
I'm sorry I brought you up here.

MARLENE
No you don't, Marshal - you talk to me!

Marlene quickly closes the gap between the two of them.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Clay!

Marlene's reckless approach results in a collision between the two horse riders.

CLAY
Goddamn it, Marlene!

MARLENE
You talk to me!

Despite his injury, Clay makes little work of getting off his horse.

Marlene matches his move and squares up to the Marshal.

CLAY
Tell me your plan.

MARLENE
My what?

CLAY
Your plan.

MARLENE
I'm gonna kill Ellis.

CLAY
Then what?

MARLENE
Huh?

CLAY
You kill Ellis. Then what?
MARLENE
Does it matter?

CLAY
Yes it does. You going home? You going to keep working?

MARLENE
Clay--

CLAY
Tell me your plan!

Marlene can't help but strike Clay, slapping him sharply across the face.

Clay shakes it off and gets back on his horse.

CLAY (CONT'D)
There's your problem Marlene. There is no end coming for you. You don't have a plan.

Clay looks back to Marlene.

CLAY (CONT'D)
And if you did, it certainly wouldn't end with peace.

Clay sets off towards Hazelton. Marlene, stunned, waits for a moment.

EXT. HAZELTON - MAIN STREET - DUSK

Marlene and Clay ride into town.

No one is around and the air is filled by the sound of commotion spilling out from a weather-beaten saloon.

Marlene stops outside of the Doctor's office. Still silent, she dismounts and helps Clay down.

Clay climbs a couple of steps before looking back.

Marlene has already begun leading Sadie further down the road.

CLAY
Marlene?

MARLENE
(without looking back)
I'll find a room.

Clay pushes on up the stairs and into the Doctor's office, as Marlene follows the noise of the rowdy saloon.
INT. HAZELTON - SALOON - MOMENTS LATTER

Marlene enters the bar. As she pushes through the door, a room full of cowboys, drinkers and outlaws turn to her.

She isn't phased.

She heads to the bar where she finds the saloon's Proprietor.

MARLENE
I'd take a whiskey... and a room if you have them.

PROPRIETOR
$2 a night.

Marlene nods as the Proprietor slides a whiskey over.

A moment later he throws down a key.

She keeps her back to the room as she drinks, listening to conversations taking place behind her. About her.

Amidst the bull session about her "snatch", something catches her attention:

..."Ellis Waylon"..."the lake"...

Marlene quickly throws a look over her shoulder, identifying the speaker.

It's BUTCH, 40s, a dim-witted outlaw letting the alcohol do the talking.

She chugs her whiskey and walks over to his table. Butch and his companions look to her, startled by a woman's company.

BUTCH
You need somethin', lady?

MARLENE
You want to buy me me a drink, partner?

Butch looks around the table - all of his companions sit as shocked as him.

BUTCH
You a whore?

MARLENE
I'm jus' a traveller like yourself, lookin' for a lil' friendly company is all.

Again, Butch looks to his friends - all of whom are unfamiliar with flattery.
BUTCH
Maybe you're over here for a free
drink - poor house or somethin'.

MARLENE
You don't gotta buy me a drink,
partner.

Marlene turns and heads for a door into the back of the
saloon.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
(walking away)
Jus' join me.

Butch looks over her body as she walks away, breaking a smile
as he grabs at his crotch. He moans inaudibly to himself.

With some hushed praise from his companions, Butch stands to
his feet and scurries after Marlene.

EXT. HAZELTON - SALOON BOARDING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Butch stumbles into the room. Marlene is facing a sturdy
wooden bed and removing her coat.

Butch chuckles softly to himself, moving closer to Marlene--
THUMP.

Marlene swings around, striking butch with the butt of her
revolver. Butch crashes to the floor.

CUT TO BLACK:

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. BIGHORN MOUNTAINS - FOREST - DAY

Marlene is led on the floor, looking through the scope of a
bolt-action rifle.

A deer is seen in the distance, picking at grass through a
cover of snow.

Morgan lies beside her, offering hushed advice:

MORGAN
Easy, now, easy... not too soon.

The deer is slowly turning towards them.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
Wait fo' that sweet spot.
The head of the deer is now visible in Marlene's scope. She takes a deep breath and--

**BANG.**

A bullet rips through the air and pierces the deer's skull. The deer falls fast.

**MORGAN (CONT'D)**

'Atta girl.

Morgan gives Marlene a firm pat on the back as he stands and approaches the deer.

Marlene holds her position, her eyes filled with motivation.

**EXT. BIGHORN MOUNTAINS - PATH FROM THE FOREST - MOMENTS LATER**

Morgan drags the deer behind him, pulling the dead animal with a long length of rope.

Marlene walks beside him with the rifle over her shoulder.

**MARLENE**

I've been thinkin', Morgan.

**MORGAN**

Go on.

**MARLENE**

Maybe it's time I head down the mountain.

Morgan nods quietly for a moment, hesitant to respond.

**MARLENE (CONT'D)**

(looking over to him)

Don't you think?

**MORGAN**

It could be.

**MARLENE**

You seem unsure.

**MORGAN**

It ain't gonna be as simple as stumblin' down from the snow and killin' him.

Marlene murmurs to herself.

**MORGAN (CONT'D)**

I'd wager he's left Wyoming. Men like that don't stand still too lon'.
MARLENE
I can do the same.

MORGAN
No, no, no. You'll be makin' the same circles.

MARLENE
How would you do it?

MORGAN
Keep to Wyoming. He's been once, he'll be back. Check in with big towns - Buffalo, Big Horn.

MARLENE
Sheridan.

Morgan groans in agreement.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
That could take months, Morgan.

MORGAN
It'll prolly be years.

MARLENE
I can't wait that long.

MORGAN
Hold up--

Morgan comes to a sudden stop, throwing his arm in front of Marlene to hold her back.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
This ain't gonna be easy, Marlene. A lil' patience won't hurt you.

MARLENE
So I jus' wait? Do nothin'?

MORGAN
I didn't say that. You gotta accept he ain't sat back home waitin' for you to have your way.

(a beat)
Ask around. Bad men know bad men. You could be sat in town and hear his name. Find weaknesses and poke 'em. You hear me?

Marlene nods.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
Poke 'em.
END FLASHBACK.

EXT. HAZELTON - SALOON BOARDING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Marlene is sat at the foot of her bed, looking down as she waits.

Butch is now tied to a wooden chair; unable to budge an inch. He is roused by Marlene as she kicks at his shin. He quickly snaps out of his daze:

BUTCH
The fuck is this?

Marlene doesn't respond as she slowly stands.

BUTCH (CONT'D)
(shouting)
The fuck--

Marlene jumps over him, quickly covering his mouth.

MARLENE
You start shoutin', I'll cut your dick off and sit here while you eat it.

Marlene steps back from Butch, who is panting fast with fear. She grabs a second chair and places it in front of him. Marlene and Butch are now sat face-to-face.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
You know Ellis Waylon?

Butch doesn't respond as his eyes begin to well up. Marlene strikes him with the back of her hand.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Ellis Waylon.

BUTCH
(unconvincing)
Who?

She strikes him again with even more venom.

BUTCH (CONT'D)
Stop that!

Once more. SLAP.

His face feels like its burning with a red sting.
MARLENE
I won't ask again.

Butch doesn't budge, breathing heavily as he waits for Marlene's next move.

She quickly pulls a knife from her sheath and stabs straight down into his leg, only a few inches from his knee.

Before Butch has chance to scream, she covers his mouth.

Marlene twists the knife as she looks into the depths of his eyes.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
I pull this knife down and I'm takin' your goddamn knee with me.

Butch's mumbled cries spill from behind Marlene's hand.

She slowly raises her palm to give him another chance.

BUTCH
Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop....

MARLENE
You got somethin' to tell me?

BUTCH
Yes, alright! I know him!

MARLENE
When did you see him last?

BUTCH
We rode down from Darton Peak.

Marlene twists the knife.

MARLENE
I - said - when?

BUTCH
Fuck, man - I don't know!... a couple of months ago. Maybe more.

Marlene sighs with disappointment.

BUTCH (CONT'D)
That's all I know - please, that's all I know.

MARLENE
I don't believe you.

Marlene swiftly pulls the knife down, tearing out Butch's knee cap.
Once again, she covers his mouth as he wails and shakes in pain.

Blood gushes from his leg and on to the wooden floor.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
You know where he is. You've got one last chance to tell me. I like what I hear and I'll let you try your best to walk out of here.
(a beat)
You understand?

Butch nods erratically as Marlene moves her hand.

BUTCH
Meadowlark Lake...

Without taking another moment, Marlene moves behind Butch and strangles him.

His face turns red as she squeezes the life out of him.

His eyes close and Marlene lets go, letting him slump over in chair.

Marlene makes a quick exit.

EXT. HAZELTON - MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Marlene is back on the street. She heads towards the Doctor's office, meeting Clay before she reaches it.

Clay is back in his coat, a bandage visible underneath.

CLAY
I'll live - you manage to get a room?

Without a word, Marlene brushes past him.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Marlene?

Marlene doesn't respond, mounting Sadie behind him.

CLAY (CONT'D)
You're leaving?

MARLENE
I'm ridin' for Meadowlark Lake.

Clay's face drops. The two look at each other without words for a few moments.
CLAY
Who's been telling you about
Meadowlark Lake?

MARLENE
Bad men know bad men.

Marlene mounts Sadie as Clay quickly approaches.

CLAY
C'mon, Marlene - you don't need to
do this.

MARLENE
I do.

Clay throws his working arm with exasperation.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
All the best, Marshal.

As Marlene tries to pass him, Clay grabs her and pulls her
down from her horse.

Sadie rears in a sudden panic.

Clay falls back as Marlene tries to find her footing.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
What the fuck are you doin', Clay?

CLAY
Let me find your justice for you!

Marlene punches Clay, landing a blow on his wound.

Clay falls back on to the snow.

MARLENE
Fuck off, Clay. Your badge doesn't
mean a fuckin' thing.

Clay isn't ready to surrender, and crawls across the floor to
grab at Marlene's legs. He succeeds and she trips.

She quickly rolls over and kicks out at Clay, who bows his
face into the snow to avoid her boot.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Get! - Off!

Clay resists, holding on to Marlene's legs. Unable to kick
him off, Marlene draws her revolver and cocks the hammer.

Clay slowly looks up from the snow, straight into the barrel
of her gun.

He doesn't dare speak.
MARLENE (CONT'D)

Let go.

Clay slowly releases her legs.

Marlene crawls back and pushes herself up when she's free from his reach.

Despite his cooperation, she continues to hold her gun over the Marshal.

CLAY
You're gonna shoot me?

MARLENE
If you make me!

CLAY
Then what are we doing here, Marlene? You could have put a gun to me at any point.

Marlene scoffs, holstering her weapon.

CLAY (CONT'D)
It's because you ain't as evil as you want to be. You really think a good person can't stop him?

MARLENE
You're goddamn right!

Marlene moves over to the Marshal, grabbing him by the collar.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Ellis Waylon ain't news! It's been five years. Five years since he murdered my son... had his men rape, torture and hang my husband. Then took me from my home and drag me round like whore!

(a beat)

Good men and lawmen could have stopped him at any time. But they didn't - you didn't. You sit behind behind desks and throw money at people like me. We've got nothin' left but pain and that's what pays you!

CLAY
I'm here with you, aren't I?

MARLENE
All you're doin' is holdin' me back. And for what? Because you think I ain't gonna find peace?
Clay shrugs Marlene off and works his way to his feet.

CLAY
Because Ellis Waylon will be tried in a court of law and hang for what he's done. A bullet in the head on the top of the world is not justice! And it ain't what you need!

MARLENE
It's all I need!

CLAY
And what about everyone whose lives have been ruined by him? What about John Claremont?

MARLENE
What about him?

CLAY
Because you're the same, Marlene! You are not alone. He's a young man in Pyror with nothin' left because of Waylon.

MARLENE
Then you should'a brought him.

CLAY
(groans)
I just can't win with you.

Marlene turns and saddles up again. Shaking her head, she sighs and offers the Marshal a last glance.

MARLENE
And there it is. You are lookin' for a win.

Marlene and Sadie run off into the night, leaving the battered Clay alone in the street.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. SHERIDAN - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff Williams sits behind his desk, his hands locked over his stomach.

His attention is held by the newspaper in front of him as he gently hums to himself.

His door slowly opens, and the Sheriff greets the visitor without looking up:
SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Mornin'.

MARLENE
Hey, Sheriff.

 Immediately recognising her voice, the Sheriff slowly stands.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
... Mrs Mace?

Marlene steps in, looking around the room as she enters.

MARLENE
Y'know, I reckon I've never seen a man or woman sat in that cell.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Mrs Mace--

MARLENE
Marlene.

The Sheriff moves around his desk, still processing her arrival.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
You're alive.

MARLENE
Yeah - thanks for the help with that one.

The Sheriff doesn't say a word.

Not one.

He looks her over, taken aback by her rugged appearance.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Do you have any leads on him?

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Who?

MARLENE
Who'd think? Ellis Waylon.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Why'd you ask?

Marlene takes out a small pouch of chewing tobacco.

MARLENE
I need to find him, is all.
SHERIFF WILLIAMS
If I'm honest, Marlene, I thought you'd be in his company.

MARLENE
I was - for a lil' while. Ran off into the woods one night.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
You don't look like you've ran from the woods.

MARLENE
Yeah. Well.

She shrugs, with Sheriff Williams still struggling to accept her arrival.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
You look--

MARLENE
You don't have anythin' at all? I didn't expect much, but... you must have seen the farm.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
I did.

Marlene looks up to the Sheriff, seeing if he's got anything to add.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry fo' what happened to you.

MARLENE
I'm sure you didn't lose too much sleep.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Do we have a problem, Marlene? You and me?

MARLENE
We don't. I do. I need to know where Waylon is.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Why?

MARLENE
I'm gonna kill him.

Sheriff Williams quickly moves over to her.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Where is this comin' from, Mrs Mace?

(MORE)
SHERIFF WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

(a beat)
There are men lookin' for him,
don't get yourself involved.

Marlene forces a chuckle.

MARLENE
Lawmen?

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
You're goddamn right. The best lawmen.

MARLENE
I bet.

Marlene brushes past the Sheriff and makes for the door.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
I'll be in Sheridan for a few days.
Get me if you've got somethin'.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
You're leavin'?

MARLENE
I am. Can't expect me to sit waitin' in one town, can you?

As Marlene reaches the door, she spots a number of pinned bounty posters on the wall.

She stands for a moment before pulling down a handbill.

She turns to the Sheriff, offers him a nod and makes her leave.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. MEADOWLARK LAKE - NIGHT

Marlene arrives at the lake. She has a wide vantage point across the water.

She sees and hears nothing. No flickering campfire and no outlaws drinking into the night.

She continues to scan.

On the far end of the lake she can make out a dimly lit hut, a small smoke column rising from its stone chimney.

With little options, she clicks her tongue and sets off towards the property.
EXT. MEADOWLARK LAKE - FISHER'S HUT - MOMENTS LATER

Marlene arrives at the hut. Sceptical, she begins to dismount before the door swings open.

A dark silhouette appears from the wooden home, the barrel of his gun piercing through the darkness.

MARLENE
Easy, now.

STRANGER
What'cha doin' in the dark?

MARLENE
Heard you had a problem with outlaws.

The stranger shuffles forward, his dark eyes now visible in the moonlight.

STRANGER
You police?

MARLENE
No, sir.

STRANGER
Bounty hunter?

She nods. He raises his rifle and retreats into the darkness.

STRANGER (CONT'D)
There's been commotion north of the lake.

MARLENE
What sorta--

The door slam shuts. As quickly as he appeared, the stranger is gone. Marlene wastes no time in turning and riding north.

EXT. MEADOWLARK LAKE - CLEARING TO THE NORTH - MOMENTS LATER

Marlene gallops into a clearing.

She quickly finds herself trotting through the remains of a camp.

Marlene dismounts and slowly walks over the deserted clearing.

She stops by a camp fire - it went cold some time ago.

Marlene kneels and, by the base of the fire, retrieves bindings similar to her own when she was a prisoner.
She squeezes the bindings in anger and releases a mighty scream that echoes across the lake.

Ellis Waylon is not here.

Marlene thrashes out, kicking at the fire, discarded cans and the dirt around her.

Unable to compose herself, she moves over to a round rock, perching on top of it.

She can't help but sob.

    MARLENE
    (softly)
    I'm sorry...

She looks up to sky. There isn't a star in sight.

    MARLENE (CONT'D)
    I'm sorry.

LATER:

Marlene is defeated and alone.

She throws the bindings away and walks slowly to her horse.

    MARLENE (CONT'D)
    C'mon girl. I think we're headin' home.

Before Marlene has chance to saddle up, Clay appears, riding swiftly around the lake.

He comes to a sudden stop just short of Marlene.

He looks around the camp with bewilderment.

    CLAY
    What happened?

Marlene doesn't respond.

    CLAY (CONT'D)
    Hey! Do you hear me? What happened here?

    MARLENE
    They're gone, Marshal.

Clay jumps from his new mare, still carrying anger as he walks.

    CLAY
    Never mind Waylon, I should be taking you back with me.
As Clay moves close to her, he can see that she's deflated.

A beat.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
You can't push a Marshal around, Marlene.

MARLENE  
Look around you, Clay. We did things your way - and look what we have to show for it. Ellis is gone.

CLAY  
I don't think you're hearing me--

MARLENE  
(shouting)  
Clay!

Clay takes a step back.

MARLENE (CONT'D)  
He is gone. We're done.

CLAY  
This isn't the end Marlene, there's always something.

MARLENE  
What the fuck are you talkin' about?

Marlene squares up to the Marshal.

MARLENE (CONT'D)  
I need to know - right now. Why are you like this? Why are you tryna save Ellis Waylon?

CLAY  
I'm not trying to save him, I'm trying to save you!

(a beat)  
The law is not about shortcuts. I want bad men dead just as much as you... but if I can help people along the way? You're goddamn right I will.

(a beat)  
I am sorry that you're broken, Marlene. I truly am. But you are not the only broken soul in the world! You're not even the only broken soul wanting to see Ellis Waylon die.

For once, Clay is in control.
CLAY (CONT'D)
You're right Marlene, we are
done... For now. And when he comes
back, I'll come back.

MARLENE
Do what you want, Clay. I just hope
you stop leavin' a trail of broken
people behind you.

Without another word, Marlene heads over to Sadie.

She mounts her horse and glances over to the Marshal for the
last time.

Marlene rides away.

BEING FLASHBACK:

EXT. WYOMING WILDERNESS - CAMP - NIGHT

Marlene sits in a camp of outlaws. She sips a mug of coffee
as the men drink whiskey around her.

On the far side of the camp, a woman is pushed up against a
tree with her hands tied behind her back. She's raped by one
of the many men in the camp.

She's unmoved by what she sees. She's used to it.

Ellis Waylon appears from behind her, taking a seat next to
Marlene.

ELLIS
You're quiet, Mrs Mace.

She doesn't reply, still watching the poor girl against the
tree.

Ellis looks over, smiling at what he sees.

ELLIS (CONT'D)
You feelin' dirty, is that it?

MARLENE
I'm jus' tryna understand.

ELLIS
Understand what?

MARLENE
That.

Ellis chuckles softly.
ELLIS
You ain't makin' sense.

MARLENE
When I first saw your men, I thought they were wolves.

Marlene looks into Ellis's eyes.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
But they ain't. They're sheep.

ELLIS
Is that right? What does that make you?

Marlene smiles.

MARLENE
You'll see.

Ellis returns a look of concern.

Marlene looks back over to the young girl.

END FLASHBACK.

SERIES OF SHOTS - RIDING AWAY FROM BIGHORN MOUNTAINS

A series of shots that mirrors Marlene's initial journey to the mountains:

A) We see Marlene from afar as the sun begins to rise behind the mountains.

B) Marlene chews tobacco, alone on a snowy path.

C) Snow falls on an exhausted Marlene as she rides.

D) Sadie's hooves slowly move from snow to grass as Marlene reaches the base of the mountains.

E) Marlene rides slowly, the Bighorn Mountains now behind her in the distance.
END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. SHERIDAN - MAIN STREET - DAY

Marlene rides into Sheridan. She looks dirty and drained. She passes the usual faces as she pushes on to the Sheriff's office.

INT. SHERIDAN - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Marlene opens the door of the Sheriff's office, who is reading his paper as you'd expect. He jumps to his feet as he sees Marlene.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Marlene!

She neither responds or enters, choosing to lean against the door frame.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
You look rough!
(a beat)
Good huntin'?

Her face says it all. She looks at the Sheriff with a vulnerability he's unfamiliar with.

Sheriff Williams looks down to his feet.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Marlene.

MARLENE
You got anythin' for me?

He looks back to her, wishing he could give her just a shimmer of hope.

But he's got nothing - he shakes his head.

She solemnly nods and begins to close his door.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
There's work if you want it.

She holds for a moment, looking down at her own feet.

MARLENE
Lemme guess - cattle rustlers?

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Always.
She stands for a moment, then gives a gentle nod.

CUT TO:

EXT. BILL'S FARM - DAY

SUPER: "One Year Later"

Upon Sadie, Marlene approaches Bill's farm, seeing him repair a fence on the outskirt of his land.

Bill turns at the sound of a horse's trot, seeing Marlene heading directly towards him.

She looks worse than ever.

BILL
(cautiously)
Mrs Mace.

MARLENE
How you keepin', Bill?

BILL
Just fine, Mrs Mace. Just fine.

MARLENE
You have any new farmhands you wanna tell me 'bout?

BILL
Well...

Bill scans the fields behind him, observing a number of farmhands attending to a field of cattle.

Bill points to a young man sat against the fence on the far end of the field.

MARLENE
He's new.

Without a word, Marlene sets off towards the resting farmhand.

BILL
Marlene, just--

MARLENE
(riding away)
Stop hirin' them, Bill, and I'll stop killin' them.
EXT. BILL'S FARM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Marlene arrives at the feet of JOHN, 20s, who is carving away at a wooden branch with a small knife.

John looks up to Marlene.

Fear takes over his face.

MARLENE
What's your name?

He tries to push himself to his feet, falling to the side on his first attempt.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Can you hear me, boy? Your name.

He doesn't respond, slowly raising his hands to show that he isn't a threat.

Marlene waits for a moment, before dismounting.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
I reckon your name is John Waters and you're new in town. You wanna know why I know that, John Waters?

John struggles to find his words.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
It's because you're wanted - dead or alive - for stealin'--

JOHN
I know you.

Marlene looks at him, trying to place his face.

MARLENE
You know me?

He responds with a meek nod.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
How'd you know me?

A beat.

Marlene pulls her revolver, aiming it at John's head.

JOHN
Wait, wait, wait!

MARLENE
Well, how'd you know me?
JOHN
Hazelton! You were in Hazelton?

Marlene slowly lowers her gun.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You were in Hazelton - and, and, and... we were drinking and you came over to us and...

John tries to calm himself and catch his breath.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You wanted Butch.

MARLENE
Who the fuck is, Butch?

JOHN
What? You don't even remember?

MARLENE
No - I don't know no Butch.

JOHN
You... you tortured him! You tied him down, cut him up... you killed him!

She remembers.

MARLENE
Butch a friend of yours?

JOHN
He was.

Marlene takes a step forwards.

MARLENE
So you're one of Ellis Waylon's boys?

John shakes in confusion.

JOHN
Ellis?

MARLENE
You know him.

JOHN
I mean--

Marlene hits him with the butt of her gun. He falls to the floor.
MARLENE
Come on, John! You know Ellis!

John is sobbing on the ground, hiding his face from Marlene's anger.

JOHN
Leave me alone!

MARLENE
Where is he?!

JOHN
I don't know!

Over Marlene's shoulder, Bill is running at a slow pace towards the commotion.

BILL
Marlene! Marlene!

Marlene ignores Bill and tries to drag John out of a defensive fetal position.

Bill arrives.

BILL (CONT'D)
Marlene! Goddamn it, get off him!

Without hesitation, Marlene turns on her heels and aims her gun at Bill.

MARLENE
Shut the fuck up, Bill! Just shut up!

Bill throws his hands above his head, cowering away and avoiding Marlene's grim stare.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
This little prick is gonna tell me where Ellis Waylon is!

Marlene turns back to John.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
I'm sick of you fucks defending Ellis. He's a goddamn monster and so are you!

Marlene pulls John up by his collar and stares deep into his eyes.

JOHN
You call him a monster, but I saw what you did to Butch... and you didn't even remember his name!
MARLENE
Who the fuck would remember a name like Butch?

JOHN
It was just a nickname, no one called him James.

James?
Marlene still shudders when she hears her son's name.

MARLENE
(softly)
What?

JOHN
It was a nickname...
(a beat)
James Butcher. Butch.

Marlene holds John's collar for a moment, a wave of clarity seemingly falling over her.

A beat.
She stands for a moment before releasing him. Without another word, Marlene leads Sadie away and leaves John and Bill behind.

INT. SHERIDAN - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - LATER
Marlene is sat in the single cell in Sheriff Williams' office.

The Sheriff sits at his desk, glancing between Marlene and the clock.

Hank Mace arrives through the door.

HANK
Sheriff.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Thanks for comin', Hank.

HANK
It's no bother.

Hank looks over to Marlene.

HANK (CONT'D)
You okay there, Marl?

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
She hasn't a word since she arrived.
HANK
What happened?

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Well, the way Bill tells it -- she showed up looking for a thief. One thing leads to another and she's beating on a farmhand and pointing a gun at Bill.

HANK
Jesus.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS
Marlene showed up an hour ago. Sat herself in the cell.

Hank gives the Sheriff a pat on the shoulder and moves over to Marlene.

SHERIFF WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
(sitting back down)
The cell's open.

Hank pulls back on the cell door and sits on the bench across from Marlene.

She sits silent and broken.

HANK
You wanna talk about it?

A beat.

MARLENE
You know, all Henry ever wanted was a farm. You remember?

HANK
I do. Even 'fore he met you, all he talked about was his own fields, his own barn and his own cows.

MARLENE
I never saw myself as a farmer. Or a farmer's wife, fo' that matter.

Hank offers a smile of understanding.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
But that's Henry for you. He could charm you anyway he needed you.

HANK
He was something, huh?
MARLENE
There we were. Our own farm. And it weren't always easy, but we tried somethin' fierce to make it work.
(a beat)
It has me thinkin', you know.

HANK
What's that?

MARLENE
I can't remember who I really was before I wanted that farm.

Marlene looks up to Hank.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
And that scares me.

HANK
What's scaring you, Marlene?

MARLENE
What if I forget who I was before Ellis Waylon?

Marlene can't hold back the tears and openly sobs before her brother-in-law. Hank glances over to the Sheriff, who is doing his best to look uninterested.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
That farmhand, at Bill's farm. He knew Ellis.

HANK
He did?

MARLENE
And he called me a monster?

Marlene continues to cry as Hank reaches out to hold her hand.

HANK
Marlene. It's okay to be lost.

MARLENE
But what do I do?

HANK
I think that you need to draw a line.

MARLENE
What'd mean?
HANK
You've got to remember that Henry and James... they existed without Ellis. They brought nothing but love and you can't let a snapshot of hate soil that.

MARLENE
That's your advice? Just forget about it?

HANK
Accepting ain't forgetting. Accepting is just doin' what it takes to live a little.

A beat.

HANK (CONT'D)
I'd do anything for another drink with him. But all my brother ever wanted was for his family to be happy. Can we really let Ellis Waylon change that?

Marlene bends towards Hank, seeking his embrace.

EXT. MACE FARM - LATER

Marlene rides into her family's farm, approaching from the long road down to the farmhouse.

It doesn't stand as it once did as it's been burnt to the ground.

She looks over to the barn, also decimated by the Ellis Waylon gang. Overwhelmed, Marlene can't help but well up.

EXT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Marlene enters where a wooden door once stood, walking over the remains of her family home.

She stands for a moment in the room of charred wood and lost memories.

She throws herself down where she was once bound by Ellis Waylon. She opens her tobacco pouch and begins to chew.

A beat.

She closes her eyes.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:
EXT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - DAY

Henry Mace sits at the family table in the farmhouse, drinking a mug of fresh coffee.

He looks at peace.

Marlene enters - younger than we've seen her - kissing her husband as she passes him.

HENRY
Mornin'.

MARLENE
Good mornin', Mr Mace.

They giggle as she pours herself a drink and looks out of the window.

She admires a large, wooden barn and a populated cow pasture.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
... or should that be farmer Mace?

Henry is chuckling as he stands, throwing his hands around his wife's waist.

HENRY
Well, I do like the sound of that!

Marlene turns around to face him.

MARLENE
We did it, honey. We bought a farm.

HENRY
We just gotta run it now.

MARLENE (playful)
Actually, you gotta run it.

HENRY
Is that so?

MARLENE
I believe that's what we agreed. You run this entire farm and I... make breakfast.

HENRY
Breakfast does sound good.

They share a laugh and Henry sits back down, getting himself into a pair of boots.
HENRY (CONT'D)
Unfortunately - I do have a job for you, Marlene.

MARLENE
What's that?

A beat.

HENRY
Give me a son.

Marlene turns quickly to her husband, already cracking a smile.

MARLENE
Henry!

HENRY
You heard me.

He stands back up, moving to his wife as she puts her arms around him.

HENRY (CONT'D)
I want a family, Marlene. This is gonna be a family farm.

MARLENE
... and if I want a daughter?

HENRY
Ain't a problem fo' me, it'll be nice for our boy to have a sister.

Henry winks and moves over to his jacket.

MARLENE
You think we're ready?

HENRY
I really do. We can make something for ourselves here - a Mace farm for generations.

Marlene's smile is gleaming.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Nothin' is gonna stop us now, Mrs Mace.

He makes for the door, turning as he gets there.

HENRY (CONT'D)
I love you.
MARLENE
(smiling)
Go on now, farmer Mace.

Henry chuckles and closes the door behind him.

From the window, Marlene watches him skip over to the cow pasture.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MACE FARM - FARMHOUSE - DAY

SUPER: "Four Years Later"

Marlene sits alone in the restored farmhouse, she drinks a hot mug of coffee.

She stands and makes her way over to the window.

An open field now sits where the cow pasture and barn once stood.

No longer a working farm, Marlene lives alone in an isolated wooden home.

Through the open window, trotting can be heard coming down the long path.

She quickly moves to get a glance and, to her surprise, she sees Marshal Clay riding towards her.

A bearded face makes him look older than he is.

Confused, she heads out on to the porch still with coffee in hand.

Clay stops when he sees her.

CLAY
(cautious
Mrs Mace.

The two hold eye contact before Marlene slowly breaks a gentle smile. He returns the gesture.

MARLENE
Is that you behind that beard, Marshal?

CLAY
Yes, ma'am. It's been a while.
MARLENE
It has.
A beat.

CLAY
Is that coffee?

Marlene gestures for the Marshal to follow her inside.

MOMENTS LATER:

Clay enters, with Marlene already sat back at the table. She pours him coffee and slides it down to him.

Clay removes his hat and takes a seat.

CLAY (CONT'D)
You didn't get old, did you? Is that grey hairs I see?

Marlene laughs.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Suits you.

MARLENE
And look at you. You're a man.

Silence briefly takes hold of the room.

CLAY
I haven't heard your name in a while. Figured you stopped working.

She nods.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Good - I'm glad.

More silence.

MARLENE
Are you here about Hazelton, 'cos I am sorry--

CLAY
Marlene, you don't have to apologise for anything.

MARLENE
I do, Clay. You're a good man.

Clay accepts with a gentle nod.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
You jus' passing through?
CLAY
No, I'm still working as a Marshal in Montana. I rode to Sheridan looking for you.

Marlene waits patiently for him to continue.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Ellis Waylon is dead.

A beat.

Marlene's eyes fill with tears.

CLAY (CONT'D)
He was killed a week or so ago. I came straight for you.

MARLENE
You caught him?

CLAY
Not me. It wasn't a lawman, you wouldn't be surprised to know. He was shot down - his crimes caught up with him.

MARLENE
Who was it?

CLAY

Marlene sits in disbelief, wiping her tears away as they fall.

CLAY (CONT'D)
He'd been lookin' for some time.

Clay sits quietly, allowing Marlene to compose herself.

CLAY (CONT'D)
You alright?

MARLENE
Yeah.
(a beat)
Yeah - I'm fine. I appreciate you comin' down to tell me.

Clay extends a hand to Marlene. She reciprocates and squeezes his hand tight.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
Thank you.
CLAY
I'm sorry it wasn't what you wanted.

Marlene sits back in her chair.

MARLENE
I wouldn't worry about that, Marshal. I think you were right about me.

CLAY
What'd mean?

MARLENE
There are more demons than Ellis Waylon in me.

Clay chuckles.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
I've thought about the mountains a lot. It was as close as I'd ever been to him, but still... it wasn't enough. I realised I was chasin' whispers and shadows. If I ever did kill Ellis... it would have been dumb luck.

CLAY
That ain't true, Marlene. I've brushed shoulders with a lot of people since Bighorn, and I'll tell you... you're worth ten of any man or woman I've met.

(a beat)
I stand by what I said. You were never as evil as you wanted to be.

Marlene stands, moving over to the window to retreat briefly from the conversation.

MARLENE
It's funny, ain't it?

CLAY
What's that?

MARLENE
We walked all over those mountains bitchin' about justice and evil... and a farmhand tears Ellis down with no help.

Clay shuffles in his seat with discomfort.

CLAY
Well, that isn't the whole truth.
Marlene turns back to the Marshal with folded arms, waiting for his tale.

CLAY (CONT'D)
I knew John. He was just like you - he was torn.

Clay looks down to his feet.

CLAY (CONT'D)
I made a mistake five years ago, Marlene. I should have told you exactly where Waylon was, and we should have killed him ourselves.

MARLENE
Clay--

CLAY
I wasn't prepared to make the same mistake. It took a few years, but I got another lead on him. (a beat)
I didn't waste my time with Sheriffs, or escorts, or my father... and I didn't wanna look you in the eye knowing Ellis was alive.

Marlene nods with understanding.

CLAY (CONT'D)
So, I went to John Claremont. He was detached from the world and I wanted to bring him back. If I brought him back, maybe I could forgive myself for not offering you the same courtesy.

Clay finishes his coffee.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Ellis was back in Montana - he'd killed another family. So we rode through the night to find him... and John killed him. A bullet in the back of his head.

Marlene moves back over to the table. She grabs the coffee pot and moves it over Clay's mug. He nods.

MARLENE
Did it work? Did you bring John back?
CLAY
He hasn't discovered a new love of life, but he's moving on. That's all I wanted.

Marlene pours herself a cup and sits back down.

MARLENE
And what now?

CLAY
Now? Nothing. For me - it's over. I just hope it's the closure you needed.

MARLENE
I gave up chasin' closure a long time ago. Ellis took somethin' from me that killin' him wouldn't have brought back.

The two ponder for a moment, sharing a comfortable silence.

CLAY
I better get movin'.

Marlene stands with the Marshal. He moves over and opens his arms.

The two embrace each other.

MOMENTS LATER:
Marlene watches Clay climb back on his horse.

He offers her a final nod and makes his way back up the path.

MOMENTS LATER:
Marlene is sat back at her table, wiping away her tears.

She takes a sip of coffee and basks in the silence.

FADE OUT.