

# *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.

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# 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Samuel Fleming', written in a cursive style.

**FADE IN:**

**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.

*Knock. Knock. Knock.*

**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

A guide. An escort. Through the Bighorn Mountains.

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 more 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.

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.

MARLENE (CONT'D)

You with me?

Clay doesn't respond.

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

Eager to move, Marlene slaps him across his face.

MARLENE (CONT'D)

Clay! Are - you - with - me?

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

MARLENE (CONT'D)

Move!

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.

CLAY

It's quite a way, huh?

Clay is met with silence.

CLAY (CONT'D)

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

MARLENE

Maybe that's your problem, Clay.

CLAY

How's that?

MARLENE

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.

MARLENE (CONT'D)

What you waitin' for?

CLAY

You've got me all wrong, Mrs Mace.

MARLENE

I doubt it.

CLAY

(snapping back)

Well you don't know a fucking  
thing!

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

CLAY (CONT'D)

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

MARLENE

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 LATER**

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 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 Pyrro 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 echos 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 outskirts 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  
That young man from Pryor. John  
Claremont.

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.**