

RESTRICTED TERRITORY

Act III The Property in Question

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End of Act III

To Act II

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Act III

[The Property in Question]

Act III, Scene 1

[The Tour]

Scene: Sam's room. He is still sleeping. There is a slight glow through his window from the light of dawn. Sam's bags are stacked neatly by the wall. The cabin is quiet. Light footsteps approach.

Gentle knock on the open door. (Door is open to allow heat into the room.)

Wac ih a': Mr. Reynolds. Breakfast is ready.

Sam: (Startles awake. As he starts to wake, he clears the cobwebs of his deep sleep with a shake of his head.) Sorry, I must have over slept. I can't remember sleeping this well in a long time. It must be the fresh air.

Sam sits up, swings his feet out of bed to the floor and sits on the edge of the bed while he rubs his face with his hands, in an effort to be more alert.

Wac ih a': It's been gettin' lighter now for about a half hour. We're only looking at about six hours of good riding light. We should make the best of it.

Sam: Oh, sure. (Camera flashes to the dinning table and shows two plates of breakfast - Bacon, eggs & hash browns, each with a cup of coffee nearby. Camera back to Sam: Sam takes a large whiff of bacon and eggs in the air.) Smells good. I'll be right in.

Wac ih a': There's water at the basin for you. (He points to the pitcher and basin on the table against the wall.) And if you need the privy, you're going to need your boots. It's half way to the barn.

Sam: Yeah, (Remembering - three second vignette of scene last night as he drove past the outhouse to put his ATV in the barn.) the out house. (Not looking forward the cold trip out and back.) I remember.

Act III, Scene 2

[Where it Began]

Scene: Out by the barn. Sun is filtered by the broken clouds. Wac ih a' is mounted on a fine looking horse facing uphill, toward Sam and the cabin. Sam is standing beside another horse. Sam adjusts the bridle of his horse and checks the cinch straps. Then he mounts the horse and settles comfortably in the saddle.

Sam: (Speaking to the horse while patting it on the neck.) Easy now. We're just going to take it slow and easy today.

Wac ih a': (Smiling.) Looks like you know what you are doing. Not as rusty as you thought?

Sam: Naw, it's all coming back to me now. I spent a summer at a dude ranch in my early teens. Didn't know I could remember so much.

Wac ih a': Don't get over confident just yet. There's some tricky areas (Pointing back over his shoulder.) along the fence line and likely ice in the shade.

Sam: Don't worry. I know just enough to be dangerous. At 53, I learned that I don't revivify quickly.

Wac ih a': (He points to the cabin and barn.) Since this ride is supposed to get you informed about the property, might as well start right here. This is the first family cabin the Creighton clan built when they arrived here back in 1872. They got 1280 acres through a government land grant. All three families lived here as they built the homes down in the valley. (Wac ih a' turns his horse to follow the two track road going down the hill, past the barn and into the wilderness. Sam joins him.)

Wac ih a': (Sam and Wac ih a' are riding side by side at a leisurely pace.) None of them moved into their new homes until all three ranch houses were built. It took a bit over two years. After that, these five acres were put into an easement to be managed by Bill Creighton's family. The first tenant was an old prospector named Ren. He wasn't here all the time, but would come by every couple months, get re-supplied and head back out. It's been said Ren and the young Creighton got along well. Seems Austin liked the stories of adventure and gold.

The camera drone takes in the beauty of the area from above and behind the riders.

Sam: What kid wouldn't? How about Ren's family?

Wac ih a': Nope. No family, just a lone Prospector. Never caused trouble. He was liked by most everybody.

Sam: Did he ever get a good strike?

Wac ih a': Sure didn't hear of it. They say he'd go out for a while 'till he got enough gold for more supplies. Then he'd come back to the cabin, rest a couple days, gather up what he needed and head back out. He died in the summer of 1877. . . (The trail passes over a narrow wooden bridge that crosses the creek.) The miners put this road in when they started the mine by the cabin. It goes down to the lake. (He points through the trees.) It's just a few hundred yards through the trees. (His voice fades away as the scene becomes more visual and less audio.)

Montage: Wac ih a' continues to point out various things along the trail and Sam seems quite interested. Camera shows the things Wac ih a' is pointing out: the ridge lines, power lines, the transmission tower, showing the river path, and the old fence lines. They stop at an opening in the trees and look across a narrow meadow that stretches between the lake to the north and the steep slope back up to the cabin, to the south. The narrow meadow eventually leads to a large meadow on the west side of the lake. In the distance are the remains of the Ben Creighton cabin site. They proceed another five hundred yards along the creek then turn west into the trees, just across the creek and up on a small knoll in the forest.

Music takes over for the dialog as Wac Ih a' continues to point out the various points of interest.

Act III, Scene 3

[Secret Burial Site]

Wac ih a': (To his horse.) Whoa. (To Sam.) Out of respect, we should leave the horses here and go to this next spot on foot. It shouldn't be needlessly disturbed.

Sam: (Wondering why the site is so sensitive.) Umm, okay. I'll just follow your lead.

Wac ih a' leads Sam to a clearing in the trees. There are six wooden head markers in three groups. A group of three, a single marker and a group of two. There are fresh flowers at each marker. The wooden markers are hard to read but, some writing can be made out. All markers have the date of death: "Killed on the 21st of November 1877", with one exception. The third marker, of the group of three, has no name, just an upright image of a squirrel. It says, "Missing, November 1877".

Wac ih a': (Hushed) This is the secret burial place of the Creighton clan.

Sam: (Hushed) Why are they hidden and why is it a secret?

Wac ih a': (Hushed) As the story goes, Yellow Feather, a family friend, was afraid that Hank Wilson's men would dig them up to hide evidence of the murders. Her family and some friends from town, snuck up here one night and buried them.

Sam: Oh. Sounds rather ominous. (Looking at the third marker. It is not standing upright like the others.) What about this one?

Wac ih a': White Squirrel was the name given to Austin Creighton by his Miwok friend, Falling Leaf. She was the daughter of Yellow Feather. It is said that, after the murders, his body was never found. Legend has it that Falling Leaf refused to accept his death. She put this marker here as a symbol of her belief that he was just missing and not dead.

Sam: And the girl? Victoria?

Wac ih a': She is the only known survivor of the murders that night. She moved to Ohio to continue her nursing career, got married to a doctor, raised a family and became a respected doctor in her own right. When she died, she was buried in Ohio next to her husband. The letter you received must have come from one of their descendants.

Sam steps up, straightens Austin's marker, takes a reverent step back they both turn and exit the way they came in.

Music fills the audio space augmented by riding foley.

They continue their ride through the various areas. They visit the home sites that were burned 140 years earlier. The homes have only crumbling remnants of stone used for the fireplaces. Fruit trees indicate where the gardens once were. The two track trail that connected the properties is barely noticeable. Wac ih a' points out another radio tower, and some more power lines. As they are riding, snow begins to fall. Wac ih a' puts on a poncho while Sam zips up his coat a little more. They arrive back at the cabin at dusk and take the horses to the barn. Sam helps put the horses away. He and Wac ih a' head to the house as it becomes dark. The nearly full moon peeks briefly between the clouds as light snow continues to fall. The red light on the tower can be seen blinking in the background.

Act III, Scene 4

[What?]

Scene: At the barn door. Sam closes the barn door. Wac ih a' waits for him so they can walk together to the cabin.

Sam: (As he speaks, fog forms from his warm breath mixing with the cold night air.) Wac ih a', thank you for the ride and the information. I don't think I can remember it all, but it is truly amazing that this family's tragedy hasn't been exposed. Maybe the renewed interest in the property will reveal information that will help get the property back to the rightful owners.

Wac ih a': I'm sure that is one of the reasons you were asked to visit here.

Sam: Of course, that's exactly the reason.

Wac ih a': Perhaps.

Sam looks at Wac ih a' a little befuddled and shakes his head wondering what Wac ih a' is talking about.

Act III, Scene 5

[Change Needed]

Scene: The back door of the cabin. Wac ih a' removes his poncho outside, shakes it off and takes it inside to dry. Sam removes his coat before entering the cabin. His shirt and pants are wet from the snow. As Wac ih a' crosses the kitchen to the ante room, he sees that Sam is quite wet.

Wac ih a': (Reaching out to take Sam's coat.) Next time you go ridin' in the snow, you should try using a poncho. You'll stay much drier.

Sam: (Looking at his wet clothes.) Yeah, I'll keep that in mind. (He hands his wet coat to Wac ih a'.)

Wac ih a': (Wac ih a' hangs both the poncho and the coat on hooks in the ante room where other hats and coats are hanging.) Why don't you get on some dry clothes (Pointing over to Sam's room.) and I'll get dinner ready. (Wac ih a' heads over to the stove to get it fired up for cooking dinner.)

Sam: Okay. (Crossing to his room.) I'll just be a minute, then I'll help out.

Wac ih a': No need to help, but I wouldn't mind the company. It gets a little quiet around here with the family gone.

Sam: (As he exits to change.) Be right back.

Act III, Scene 6

[Water, Water, Everywhere]

Camera: In Sam's room. Sam looks at his clothes in his bag and they are all wet. His hydration pack leaked and soaked his bag.

Sam: (Loudly.) What the . ! . (His voice trails off; he rarely cusses.) This is certainly not a good way to end the night. [Internal voice: The boys won't be here 'till day after tomorrow, so I guess I'll be wet for a few days.]

Wac ih a': [\(Standing at the doorway.\)](#) Sam. Everything alright? I heard a disappointing tone from the kitchen.

Sam: [\(A little startled that Wac ih a' was there.\)](#) Seems as though I sprung a leak. My whole bag is soaked.
[\(Sam holds up the wet clothes and the offending hydration pack.\)](#)

Wac ih a': It's not a worry. There are some old things handed down over the years that'll likely fit you. You're more than welcome to use 'em for the next couple days while your things dry. [\(As he's walking away.\)](#) I'll get 'em now so you have something dry to wear for dinner.

Sam: [\(Raising his voice so Wac ih a' can hear him.\)](#) Wac ih a', once again, I deeply appreciate your hospitality.

Wac ih a': [\(From a distance.\)](#) Of course, my pleasure.

Act III, Scene 7

[Quiet Dinner]

Scene: Sam's room. Sam's pocket contents (keys, change, pocket knife and wallet) are on the wash table in his room. Sam's clothes are hung all over the cabin in an effort to dry them. Camera drifts into the dinning area. Sam and Wac ih a' are eating dinner. Sam is wearing clothing almost identical to Wac ih a', except, no vest.

Sam: This is very good. Thanks for cooking. I'll do the cooking tomorrow.

Wac ih a': Sounds good. You'll find the food in the pantry through there. [\(He points to the doorway of the ante room.\)](#)

Sam: That's a great idea to put the pantry in the mountain like that.

Wac ih a': This used to be the head of the Ladybird gold mine. They shut it down not long after it opened due to low production.

Sam: Looks like it was a lot of work for nothing.

Wac ih a': That's pretty much the way mining was around here.

Sam: Humph.

Act III, Scene 8

[Talking Walls]

Scene: In the Kitchen, after dinner. Sam, dries the last plate and puts it in the cupboard. Camera follows Sam. He then turns the oil lamp off and proceeds to the main room where Wac ih a' is feeding and stoking the heating stove. Sam stops to warm his hands as Wac ih a' stokes the stove.

Sam: Sure was quite a story about those families.

Wac ih a': (Adjusting the flue damper.) All true my friend, unfortunately, all true.

Sam makes his way to his room, carrying an oil lamp. He puts the lamp down on the night stand by the bed, turns it off, gets undressed and climbs into bed. Moonlight occasionally breaks through the clouds to give a light bluish tint to the now quiet room.

Sam: (Quietly, to himself.) If these walls could talk

Sam settles in to sleep. Fade to black.

Act III, Scene 9

[The Night Before]

Note: This footage is shot at half color saturation with higher brown saturation.

Scene: It's Tuesday night, Nov 20, 1877, 140 years earlier.

Scene: A rustic ranch house room, (main room of Greg and Gwen's cabin). It is dimly lit by the fireplace and oil lamps. There are two doors leading to bedrooms from this main dining room. The front door is cross-bared. Three men - Ben and Bryan Creighton and Gregory Hill - sit around the table, with a whiskey glass in front of each of them and a saddle bag hung over the back of each of their chairs. Each is wearing a holster with revolver. Hats and coats are hung near the door. They are obviously discussing a private matter. The men drink their whiskey during the conversation.

Camera: Starts at the hanging coats and hats. Camera view pans the room and stops at the men sitting at the table. Sound fades into the conversation.

Bryan: Don't know what Hank is capable of and don't really wanna find out. The deadline for us selling to him is tomorrow. Never said what would happen if we didn't sell, but he's got plenty of men to cause us problems if we don't.

Ben: I agree, *(Glancing at the other two men to indicate the importance of what he is about to say.)* . . . his men have been watching us for a while now. He's definitely planning something.

Gregory: Sean O'Brien mentioned that Hank's had a couple of strangers stop by town just last week. They showed up for a couple of days, then left in the night. Weren't going far though. Packed real light. Said one of 'em's a doctor.

Ben: If somethin's going t' happen, it'll be soon.

Bryan: We all know McGinn ain't no use t' us, but the sheriff knows Wilson's up to no good. There's rumors that Wilson got in trouble back in Kansas over land deals. Sheriff just got nothin' on him, yet. So, what I guess I'm sayin' is, we can't expect any help from the law.

Ben: *(Continuing the sentiments of Bryan.)* Meanin', what ever we're going to do, we'll have to do it ourselves, but we'll do it together. *(Looking directly at Bryan. In a matter-of-fact tone.)* Bryan, last time we talked, it sounded like you'd rather pick up and go.

Bryan: No. I just meant I was tired of this bullshit. I'm damn tired of buildin' a place, just to move on. 'Spect Wilson t' cause some trouble, but I'm stayin', no matter what! 'Course, we'll need t' be extra mindful and watch our backs.

Ben: ([Addressing Bryan's comment.](#)) Agreed. ([Now addressing Greg.](#)) Greg? What 'bout you?

Greg: I say we stay and hold our ground. It took us two years to get this land and another two to build our homes. I'll be damned if I'm going to just give it away.

[The three men sit back in their chairs and sip the whiskey to ponder the options. After a few second pause . . .](#)

Ben: Maybe that's exactly what we should do - give it away.

[Bryan and Greg are surprised at this thought. They look at him as if he lost his mind.](#)

Greg: You gone loco? We all jus' said we're gonna stay.

Ben: Hold on. ([Putting his hands up as to fend off an onslaught.](#)) Hear me out now. Bryan has a point about being careful. I'm sure Hank has a plan, but maybe we can out-flank him on this. What if we transfer the land to Victoria. Just 'till we get a better handle on this.

Bryan: I don't know. Ain't she leavin' to Ohio next week? What could she do from there?

Ben: That's the point. Hank won't be able to harass her in Ohio, like he can us. Besides that, Colin has lots of family there. She'll be safe and we won't be able to sell him land that ain't ours. He'd have to go through an agency to deal with her. I'm sure he ain't plannin' on that. He's been after this land for a long time, but this is the first time he came up with a deadline. Makes me think Wilson's in a hurry. This kind of delay may make him lose interest.

Greg: 'Course, when Hank figures that he can't buy what we don't have, he'll be pretty upset. I'm sure that won't stop him from harassing us.

Bryan: Of course not, but it could buy us some time. Could be 'nough for the sheriff t' put him away.

Greg: After the dust settles, we'll divide it back up again.

Bryan: Heard that the County Clerk is supposed to be in town tomorrow and Thursday. It'll be a couple weeks before he gets back around these parts.

Greg: With winter settin' in it could be months . . . [\(Addressing Ben.\)](#) Do you think we could get it all together that soon?

Ben: I wasn't plannin' on getting down there 'til next week, but if we draw up the papers tonight, we can make the trip in the morning.

Bryan: To keep Victoria safe, we're goin' t' have to keep this from her. Least 'til she gets to Ohio.

Greg: I'd like to but, can't do that. She'll have to be signin' somethin' to keep it all legal.

Ben: Guess y're right. [\(Pause\)](#). We'll just have her sign it and keep it quiet 'til after she gets on the train. When things cool off, we'll send a letter to start gettin' everything back the way it is now.

Greg: What about the deeds and stuff? We certainly can't keep 'em safe at the ranches. Think they'll be safe in the bank?

Ben: You kiddin' me. No way! Hank don't even need to rob the place. They'd just open the doors and let him take whatever he wants. We gotta hide 'em somewhere that he'll never find 'em. Any ideas?

[Just as before, the three men sit back in their chairs and sip the whiskey to ponder the options. After a few second pause . . .](#)

Bryan: Well, ya' might not like it Ben, but I think Austin's our best bet.

Ben: (Bryan is barely finished when Sam speaks up.) You're right. I don't like it. I don't want him involved in this. It's too dangerous.

Bryan: C'mon Ben, y' know I'm right. He knows every secret place in this whole damn valley. He'll be safe. No one will suspect a kid of knowing anything 'bout deeds an' stuff. And there ain't nobody knows what that kid's up to - ever. Can you think of anyone better?

Ben: It's too big a responsibility for a ten year old. Greg, back me up on this. (Checking to see if Greg has any better ideas.)

Greg: Sorry Ben, I'd like to but, I agree with Bryan. No better person to hide anything than Austin. He's so sneaky, no one would ever know he knew anything about this. (Ben is not pleased with Greg siding with Bryan.) Bryan and I love Austin nearly as much as you do, Ben. (Looking at Bryan for confirmation. Bryan nodding in agreement.) We wouldn't even suggest it if we thought he'd get harmed. Besides who can you trust more?

Ben: I don't like it. (Ben pauses as he weighs the options.) I don't like it one bit, but there's no arguin' yer points. If his mother ever hears of it we'd all be strung up by our privates. (Pauses, takes another sip of whiskey.) I guess we ain't got much choice. However, *no one*, (Putting his fist on the table.) no one except us will know that he's got anything to do with this. We aren't going to put our troubles on him.

Greg and Bryan nod in agreement.

Ben: I'll take the family t' town first thing in the morning. Austin and I 'ill meet up with ya 'bout an hour and a half after sunrise at O'Brien's.

Bryan: That's the plan then. Let's get things in order for the morning.

All three men begin signing papers and getting everything in order. Fade to black. Change camera angles to show time has past. Fade in to next scene.

Act III, Scene 10

[Uneasy Feeling]

Ben gets up to leave and the other two get up as well. Greg unbolts the door as Ben and Bryan get their coats on.

Greg: (To Ben.) We'll see you tomorrow. (To Bryan.) Stop by and we'll ride in together. It'll be safer that way.

Ben: (To Greg.) Take care of Gwen.

Greg closes and bolts the door. Gwen steps into the doorway from the bedroom. They look at each other with a bit of worry. Fade to black.

End of Act III

[To Act II](#)

[To Act IV](#)