

RESTRICTED TERRITORY

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Act IV

[Change of scene]

Act IV, Scene 1

[Trip to Town]

Scene: Dark loft of the Ben Creighton Ranch. Austin is asleep under a thick layer of blankets. Dim light comes from a doorway, down and out of sight. A light from a lantern moves in quietly. Boots are heard as they quietly climb a wooden ladder.

Ben: (In a half whisper.) Austin . . Austin . . Time to get up, son. We have a long day ahead of us and we need to get back before the storm sets in.

Austin: (Austin's eyes open slightly as his waking brain interprets the information, then, as if electrified, his eyes open wide, and in an excited whisper .) Is it really going to be just me and you? (In a not so quiet voice.) I like it when we have our own adventures without the girls.

Camera: Pans to second person sleeping in the loft.

Victoria: (In a sleepy, semi-sarcastic voice.) It would have been nice to have been left out of it completely.

Austin realizes that he's been too loud and woke his sister. He scrunches his face a little.

Austin: (In a softer voice, directed at Victoria.) Sorry.

Ben: (In a soft, but not quiet voice) Hurry-up. Mom's got your breakfast ready. Victoria, you're going too. You need to sign some things and since you'll be leaving next week, you should probably make some final medical visits and let the ladies know what's going on.

Victoria: (Annoyed by both the early hour and her dad being correct about making some final visits.) Okay dad. It's been a couple of weeks since I last paid them a visit, anyway.

Austin: (Disappointedly.) Awe. I thought it was just going to be you and me.

Ben starts down the ladder, then stops and comes up a rung.

Ben: (Directing his comment to Austin.) It will be just you and me *after* we get to town. Your mom and sister have other errands. We'll go our separate ways when we get there and meet up when it is time to head home.

Austin: (Smiling and his good mood restored.) Good. I like our *men only* adventures.

Ben: (Still in a soft voice, addressing Austin, referring to the adventure comment.) Me to.

Ben: I'll go get the horses ready and meet you on the porch.

Austin: Okay, Dad. I'll be right out.

Act IV, Scene 2

[Manners Matter]

Scene: Main floor of the ranch, in a bedroom with a loft. As Ben continues down the ladder and out the door, Austin hops out of bed wearing his long-johns and quickly gets dressed. He hurries to the kitchen where his mom, Marsha, is drinking a hot beverage. Victoria is not far behind him.

Austin sits down and starts to gobble up some potatoes and eggs. Marsha gets up to work on some dishes on the counter.

Victoria sits across from Austin, bows her head for a short prayer before eating politely.

Austin sees Victoria pray, feels embarrassed, lowers his head for a very quick prayer, then continues his rapid eating.

Austin finishes his breakfast and pops up out of his chair.

Austin: (Used as both gratitude for the meal and to announce that he is finished.) Thanks, Mom.

He starts to leave the table as Marsha leaves the counter area, crossing to the table.).

Marsha: (In a stern tone and with an aggressive, arms crossed, stance.) Yes, son, you may be excused. (Letting Austin know he is forgetting his manners - again.)

Austin freezes his movement, then drops his head, with a sigh, knowing that he is messing up.

Marsha: (Taking Austin's plate to the counter, rebukingly.) In order to appreciate the care and effort that goes into making a meal. You'll be helping me in the kitchen every morning for the next week.

Austin: (His first thought was to complain about the extra workload; however, with his eyes still looking down, realizing he was showing poor manners and disrespect, in a sincerely sorry manner, he accepts his sentence.) Yes Ma'am. Sorry. (Back to guarded excitement.) I'm just a bit too excited I guess.

Marsha: (In an instructional tone.) That's no excuse to forget your manners.

Austin: (Contritely.) No ma'am.

Marsha: Okay. On your way.

Austin: (Finally taking his eyes off the floor, smiles at his mom.) Thank you, ma'am.

Marsha smiles at the exuberant energy of her son.

Austin puts on his heavy coat, grabs a biscuit from the table, and puts it in his pocket.

Austin: (As he is headed out the door.) I'll help dad with the horses.

Marsha: (Calling out to Austin as she is clearing some dishes from the table.) We'll clean up and be right out.

Marsha glances at Victoria and they both get a little laugh out of Austin's excitement. Victoria rises and clears her plate from the table.

Act IV, Scene 3

[Something's Different]

Scene: Sam's room in the cabin. The light from the window is gray and gloomy while the house is cold and dark. The wonderful aroma of yesterday's breakfast is disturbingly absent. The house is very quiet. Through the windows, a light snow is being swirled by small gusts of wind that buffet the house. The foot of snow of yesterday is down to barely an inch. A cold draft, that was not felt before, puffs as the breeze outside is erratically dancing around the compass points. Sam sits up and turns to drop his legs off the bed. He can see his breath as he warms his hands by briskly rubbing them together. He seems to gather some energy, then, with a determined fervor, he quickly gets up and gets dressed in the cold room. He is cold and concerned about the lack of heat in the building. In his haste to check on the stoves, he does not notice the two additional beds as he exits his room. He moves quickly into the main room with the camera following.

Sam: (Calling.) Wac ih a'. Wac ih a'! Are you here?

He then goes to Wac ih a' s room to see if he may have over slept. There is no sign of Wac ih a'. The room is bare except for the bed with folded linens at the foot, a dusty dresser and the rug in front of the bed.

Sam: Wac ih a'!

Nothing returns but an eerie silence.

The cabin is not as refined as he remembered it last night. He looks back into his room and notices that all of his hanging clothes are no longer hanging. The clothes and the ropes are all gone. He examines his room and sees that all of his bags are gone. The dresser that contained all of his pocket treasures was cleared off. The oil lamp he used last night is missing and he now notices that there are two additional beds in his room. He is getting colder. He walks over to the heating stove and quickly touches it. Then he pats it and finally lays his hand on it. It is cold. He looks inside where he sees kindling and starting wood carefully placed for an easy start. He goes into the kitchen and finds matches by the stove/oven. While there, he checks the stove/oven for heat as well. It is also cold. It also was set up for a quick start with wood and kindling already in place.

Sam: (Out loud speaking to himself.) Humph! There's no way these could both be this cold.

Sam starts the cooking stove. Once the fire seems to be started, he uses a small stick from the fire to light one of the oil lamps on the wall. He stumbles over a small pile of wood stacked under the lamp that wasn't there

Eerie, slow , light and quiet music.

yesterday. Sam goes to the heating stove and lights it as well. Sam walks over to the window looking onto the front porch. He places his hand up near the window and feels the breeze coming through the window. He closes the inside shutters then begins to go around the rest of the cabin closing all the shutters to help keep the cold out.

He returns to the kitchen, he notices that the plates and utensils are different. On the stove is a large cast iron pot, a coffee pot, a kettle and a skillet. Sam remembers the skillet and kettle, not the large pot. Sam puts his hands over the cooking stove to warm his hands, but it has not had a chance to warm up yet. Sam looks through the cupboards to find some food, but there is only some beans, sugar, salt, coffee and flour. He then remembers the root cellar off the ante room. Sam crosses to the pantry. As he searches through the pantry, he comes across several cans of food, some jars of pickled vegetables and old, but still useable potatoes and onions stored there. He also notices on the back of the cupboard some doodling around some of the knotholes. It appears that a kid put the letter R around where one of the knots of the wood had fallen out. There were letters around some of the other knot holes as well. There was dust on everything. It looks like it hasn't been touched for several months. He takes a few items from the pantry and heads back to the kitchen.

Sam: (Heat is coming off the stove now, so Sam warms his hands. Speaking out loud to himself.) What the heck? Even if Wac ih a' stole all my stuff, (Sarcastically.) if that's his real name, there's no way he could change everything overnight. Maybe I can get some answers back in town.

Sam bundles up as best he can. His jacket and hat are not on the hook, but other jackets and hats are still there. He puts those on and heads out to the barn. On the way to the barn, he passes a large pile that is covered by several canvas tarps. He is sure it wasn't there yesterday. Sam looks under the tarps and sees that it is, indeed, firewood. He looks at the woodshed to see that it is nearly empty. He shakes his head in disbelief of the overnight changes and continues to the barn.

He opens the door to the barn finding only a few piles of hay and another stack of wood. His ATV is gone, the horses are gone. He looks out the barn door and sees that the only tracks in the snow are his.

Sam: (Defeated, out loud to himself.) Boys'll be here in a couple of days, might as well get comfortable: Not like I've got much choice in the matter.

He takes some of the wood back to the house. The snow is in light flurries.

Act IV, Scene 4

[Easy Ride In]

A good half-hour's ride from the Creighton's ranch, about a quarter mile from town center, is the train station. The town is typical of the 1870's west with at least a dozen buildings on the main street. There is a church / school at the far end (north end) of the main street. As you enter the town, from the south, on the left is a saloon/hotel, the Harmony Valley Inn. Then a few more businesses. Then, the mercantile and then, a few more businesses to complete the block. On the right side of the street, is a barbershop, a jail/town marshal's office and a printing shop. Just north of that is O'Brien's saloon, which is across the street from the mercantile. There are a few more businesses beyond that. Between the businesses and church are scattered some nice homes that belong to the town's wealthier business owners. Behind the nice homes are some shacks used by the workers of the businesses. On the east side of town, is the livery, behind the main street shops, as is the blacksmith.

There are two taverns in the town. One, near the middle of town, is owned by Sean O'Brien. Of the two, his is by far less rowdy. O'Brien's has a hotel on the second floor and a restaurant on the first floor with adjoining bar and gaming tables. O'Brien is the owner and main barkeep. Jessie is his assistant and manager of the hotel.

The other tavern is the Harmony Valley Inn. It sits on the south side of town on the west side of the street. It is owned by Hank Wilson. The 'hotel' upstairs is run by Hank for prostitution. Harmony Valley Inn is anything but harmonious. Most of the clientele are cowboys from the Bar R Bar (-R-) or surrounding large ranches. Fights are common-place. Hank gets most of the money that he pays his crew, back through this tavern.

The barkeep is Eric. Eric is a large and burly man. He can be polite, but takes no abuse from the cowboys. If they step over the line, he is happy to remind them to straighten up in very quick, effective and painful ways.

The Madame is Julia. She runs the second floor, the barkeep, Eric, is the security. She has three workers: Liz (Elisabeth), Niki (Nichole) and Bai (Chen Bai, Chinese). Victoria and Julia have a mutually beneficial arrangement. In exchange for medical procedure practice that is required for her nursing education, Victoria uses her medical skills to help keep the girls healthy.

Scene: Near the train station. The Creighton's ride into town on horseback. They are all accomplished riders and are at ease riding in the light snow flurries. There was no need to bring the wagon for today's activities. The small amount of purchases they will make can fit in the saddle bags each of them have.

Ben is wearing a holster with one revolver on his right hip. Austin has a rifle in the scabbard on the right front of the saddle. Ben notices three sets of horse tracks in the snow and points them out to Austin. Austin nods to indicate his understanding.

They cross the tracks and pass by the train station. It sits on the east side of the road leading to town. Right now, it is quiet with no activity. There are no expected trains today. The Creighton's ride up the main street of town, passing Harmony Valley Inn and a couple smaller shops. There are a few people running errands and tending to business, but overall, the town is fairly quiet. They wave at a couple of people they know as they ride through town, eventually arriving at the mercantile.

Marsha and Victoria dismount and hand their reins to Ben and Austin, respectively. The women then use a set of stairs to get up on the boardwalk. Although Marsha and Victoria are capable, tough, western women, they carry themselves as proper ladies in manner and speech: Not pretentiously, but as a matter of pride and self respect.

Ben: (To Marsha and Victoria), The boy and (Ben, feeling the heat of Austin's stare, glances back at Austin and sees the intense glare. Ben then realizes his error and corrects himself.) Um, *Austin* (Austin smiles at the acknowledgment of respect.) and I will take the horses to the livery. We'll meet you back here in a few hours. Saw some tracks on the way in. Bryan, Gwen and Greg should already be here. (Teasingly.) When you find Gwen, you should be able to catch up on your gossip.

Marsha and Victoria satisfy Ben's expectations with a smirk. Ben smiles. Austin is clueless as to the meaning of the smirk, gives it a half shrug and quickly puts it behind him.

Ben: (In a bravado tone.) So, if you ladies will excuse us, (To appease Austin.) *we men* have some manly stuff to do.

Austin: (In his most manly manner and voice, tips his hat.) Ladies. (He rides off toward the livery with Victoria's horse in tow.)

The rest of the family laugh a little behind his back to see him act so grown-up. Ben follows Austin with Marsha's horse.

Act IV, Scene 5

[Parking the Horses]

Scene: Livery. Standard livery stable, two stories high with the upper story being the hay/feed loft. It is all wood construction with some very large beams and columns. The west end of the stable has a large open area with large barn doors for intake and out take. The rest of the building has stalls on each side with a center corridor that continues to the other end. There are a few windows, but most of the light comes from the huge vented roof over the open area and Dutch style, exterior stall doors. The exterior stall doors open into partially covered pens on each side of the stable.

Robert, about Ben's age, is the owner. Paul, about a year older than Austin, is Robert's son. Robert is brushing down a large horse while Paul is down the corridor, cleaning out a stall.

Ben and Austin ride up to the open barn door.

Ben: (To Robert.) Got room for a couple more? Just need to keep 'em out of the snow a few hours.

Robert: (Stops brushing the horse and walks to the doorway. Pleased to see his friend, he greets Ben happily.)
Ben! Sure. Bring 'em in.

Ben and Austin ride in and up to the hitching post. Paul, hearing the announcement of Ben's arrival, comes out of the stall and into the intake area. Robert and Paul approach the riders to assist. Robert to Ben and Paul to Austin.

Robert: (Taking Marsha's horse.) I'll take that. (He proceeds to tie Marsha's horse to the hitching post.)

Austin: (To Paul as he takes Victoria's horse to tie it to the rail as well.) Thanks.

Ben and Austin dismount and tie their horses with the others.

Camera follows Robert and Ben as they wander off to the horse Robert was working on. Austin and Paul hang out near Austin's horse.

Robert: Brought the whole gang in huh? (Referring to the four horses.)

Ben: Yeah. [\(Still walking back to the horse Robert was working on.\)](#) We have a little business to tend to before the storm sets.

Robert: [\(Pointing to some stalls further down.\)](#) Must be a family thing. Bryan, Gwen and Greg got here about half an hour ago. Said they'd be waitin' at O'Brien's for ya'.

Ben: Okay, Thanks. [\(Looking over the horse Robert has returned to work on.\)](#) By the way, isn't this Dave Mc Daniel's horse?

Robert: Was. [\(Stops brushing, looks it over as if to show it off, with a slight pause.\)](#) Mine now. Sold it t' me when they left.

Ben: [\(Surprised.\)](#) Left? Thought he was doin' just fine up there.

Robert: [\(Starts brushing again.\)](#) Yup. Was . . . 'till Wilson started houndin' 'em. After a bit, them an' the Weston's sold out to Wilson, packed up and left. Heard they only got about a quarter on the dollar fer their land. On their way outa' town, you could see they's both angry and scared. But if ya' ask'd me, I'd say more scared than angry. [\(After a glance around, in a forced whisper.\)](#) Told me they'd be headed up to Whiskeytown, just a bit from Redding. Said Wilson didn't need to know where they went, so don't be spreadin' it around.

Ben: I certainly understand that.

[Camera moves over near Austin's horse. Camera: On Austin and Paul. Paul admiring the rifle in Austin's scabbard. Austin looking a bit proud.](#)

Austin: Not really mine . . . *yet*. Dad said I could start carrying it when I could shoot the pine cones at 40 yards. I got four out of five of 'em. Said it'll be mine after I shoot and dress my first deer.

Paul: [\(Impressed.\)](#) Wow! 40 yards, that's pretty good.

Austin: [\(Modestly proud.\)](#) Yeah, Dad's a good teacher. [\(Glancing over at Ben, then back to Paul.\)](#) I don't get to practice much though. Dad says killin' pine cones costs too much. [\(Paul nods his head in agreement.\)](#) After the storm clears out, he's gonna' take me up to Pilot hill t' get a buck.

Paul is impressed by his friend becoming mature.

Camera back to Ben.

Ben: Reckon we'll be 'bout three hours. (He puts his hand on Robert's shoulder.) They can have some oats and if you don't mind, check their shoes. (Taking his hand off of Robert's shoulder.) The snow and mud been causin' 'em t' slip a bit. Hate for somethin' to come loose on our way home.

Robert: Yeah, no problem.

Camera back to Austin.

Austin: (Slightly under his breath, referring to his horse.) If you could find him a carrot, I'd be much obliged.

Paul: I'll see what I can do.

Austin smiles and give him a nod. Austin heads over toward Ben. They head out together, side by side.

Act IV, Scene 6

[On the Boardwalk]

Scene: Boardwalk by O'Brien's

Victoria and Marsha walk down the boardwalk, past O'Brien's. They stop at a window display in front of a shop. As they are admiring an item displayed there, Gwen steps out of the store.

Gwen: (Smiling and pleased to see them.) Well, good morning ladies. What a sight for sore eyes. (She gives them each a hug.)

Victoria: Good morning, Aunt Gwen. (As they hug.)

Marsha: Morning, Gwen. (As they hug.)

Gwen: Hoped you wouldn't make me do my errands alone.

Marsha: We weren't sure you would be down today.

Gwen: Oh. Well, I really had hoped to get some chores done at the house, but this may be the last time I'll be down here for a couple weeks. With the storm settin' in and the winter cold and all. What about y'all?

Marsha: Same with me. Figured I better make the best of the weather while I can. Besides, Ben and Austin were coming down to take care of the family business discussed last night.

Victoria starts to talk: I thought. *(Clair Greenborough steps out of the shop and approaches the trio. Victoria interrupts herself to prevent Clair from hearing what she was about to say. The trio make way for the passerby to continue down the boardwalk.)* Oh. Good morning, Mrs. Greenborough.

Clair Greenborough: Good morning ladies. *(She nods at them as she makes her way through them.)*

Marsha and Gwen: Good morning, Clair.

Marsha, Victoria and Gwen watch as the woman continues down the boardwalk. When Clair gets far enough away, Victoria continues.

Victoria: I need to talk to the ladies at Hank's place. It may be a while before they get to see the traveling nurse. I should be on my way. It was nice to see you Aunt Gwen. *(Victoria starts to leave. Over her shoulder to Gwen.)* Hopefully, we will have time later to catch-up. *(She goes down the steps to the street.)* Bye. *(She continues down and across the street toward Hank's place.)*

Gwen: Bye. *(Turns to Marsha.)* I hope those girls realize how much Victoria is doing for them.

Marsha: I'm sure they do.

Gwen: Greg said that the business wouldn't take very long. If we don't get our errands done before the boys get finished, we'll never hear the end of it. *(They both chuckle.)*

Marsha: That's for sure. Where do you want to start?

Gwen: How 'bout the mercantile?

Camera begins to zoom out.

Marsha: Sounds good.

Gwen and Marsha continue talking as they head over to the mercantile. Camera: zooms out from Gwen and Marsha, turns to look down the street at the town's activity, moves down the street, zooms in to Victoria and follows her into Hank's place.

Act IV, Scene 7

[Closed]

Scene: Harmony Valley Inn (Hank's tavern).

Hank's place is a bar with eight gaming tables. Three of the tables are currently occupied by cowboys. One of the tables has three cowboys drinking and talking. One of the tables has a single cowboy, eating without manners. At the table in the back corner is a single cowboy watching the rest of the place and keeping an eye on the clients. He has a rifle across the table and is wearing two handguns. There are two cowboys standing at the bar in front of Eric.

There is a stairway on the right side of the room to the second floor. The straight flight of stairs leads to a mezzanine over the bar. There are five rooms off this mezzanine. Four are for entertaining, the fifth is the ladies' private dorm. A prostitute is available if their 'entertainment' door is open. Patrons are not permitted in the ladies' private dorm. A rope at the base of the stairs is used to keep patrons out when the upstairs is closed. Eric provides security and enforces the rope gate.

The camera follows Victoria into the saloon. As soon as she enters, the bar becomes quiet. Eric looks from behind the bar, past two patrons standing there, to see the who just came in.

Victoria: (Calling across the room.) Eric, The ladies will be busy for a little while. I'm guessing about an hour.

Eric gives a nod to indicate for her to go up.

One of the cowboys: (Complaining to Eric across the room.) 'Bout an hour, I was just about to . . .

Victoria: (Perturbed at the cowboy's whining and obviously disgusted with the men that visit the prostitutes, interrupts the cowboy.) Maybe two or three hours. (She stares right at the cowboy, and says with disdain.) Could be longer.

The cowboy looks down in defeat and sits down.

Second cowboy: (Knowing the influence Victoria has over the availability of the prostitutes, is upset with the first cowboy. He slaps the first cowboy on the arm.) Idiot. You know she could have Eric keep you off them stairs for a long time. And maybe us too.

The third cowboy: (Seated on his other side slaps the first cowboy's other arm.) Idiot!

Victoria turns away from the cowboys and heads up the stairs. She stops at the foot of the stairs and puts the rope up after her. She then proceeds up the stairs and knocks once on each of the four open doors continuing into the fifth room, leaving the door of the fifth room open. Each of the prostitutes leaves their room, closing their doors behind them. They go into the fifth room. The last prostitute closes the door to the fifth room. The camera ghosts through the door of the fifth room.

Act IV, Scene 8

[The Check-Up]

They are inside the fifth room, the dorm. It has four beds, a couple of chests of drawers, a vanity with wash basin and pitcher, and a large mirror on the wall. Victoria is seated in a chair by one of the beds. The ladies find comfortable seating in a manner that they can see and hear her.

Victoria: I am so sorry for the unexpected visit. I hope you're all feeling well.

The three ladies talking over each other.

Elisabeth: Don't be silly.

Nichole: It's nice to see you.

Chen Bai: It is not a trouble for us.

Julia: (Her tone and diction are of an educated and mannered person.) Nurse Victoria, You are always welcome here, any time. (The others nod in agreement.)

Julia continues: If it weren't for you and your nursing skills. . . well, who knows. We may all have been dead by now. ([The ladies nodding in agreement.](#))

Victoria: Let's not exaggerate. We've all helped each other over these past couple of years and I am grateful for all you've done for me. You've challenged me to always get better and encouraged me to follow my dreams. I can't thank you enough.

Julia: ([Stands up while Victoria is talking, goes over to the whisky bottle on the table, gestures an offer for a drink to Victoria. Victoria declines by shaking her head. Julia pours herself a drink and takes a sip.](#)) Sounds like a goodbye speech.

Victoria: Well, it kind of, is. ([The ladies are shocked.](#)) This will be your last examination from me.

Julia: What's the matter?

Nichole: Did we do something to upset you.

Elisabeth: ([Angrily](#)) Is it that son of a bitch, Hank?

Victoria: No, No, No. . . I've been offered the nursing position I was looking for, back in Ohio. I'll be working in the same hospital as Colin. I'm so excited. ([In a kind of wishful, secretive tone.](#)) I think we'll get married by summer. My train leaves Placerville next week. Of course, I'll keep in touch.

[The ladies get up and give Victoria congratulatory hugs, pleased at her good news.](#)

Nichole: ([Taking both of Victoria's hands in hers and stepping back taking a look as if Victoria were in a wedding dress.](#)) You will certainly make a beautiful bride. ([Victoria smiles at her.](#))

Julia: We're very happy for you. Congratulations. ([She takes another sip of whisky](#)) Of course, you'll be missed.

Chen Bai: ([Slightly broken and in a Chinese accent.](#)) What does your family think of this? Will they not be missing you also?

Victoria: Well, yes, of course. We'll miss each other, but we'll keep in touch by wire. [\(She retakes her seat while talking.\)](#) And I'm sure I can come out in a few years to visit. Oh, that reminds me. Don't think I'm leaving without someone to take my place. [\(Chen Bai and Nichole reseat themselves.\)](#) There's a new nursing student from San Francisco that's supposed to start ridn' the train to visit towns like this and help out. I'll leave each of your medical records here [\(She takes out some papers \[the medical records\] from her saddle bag and hands them to Julia.\)](#) for her when she visits.

Elisabeth: [\(Taking her seat again, waving off the concern.\)](#) Now don't go worrying 'bout us. We'll be fine.

Victoria: Of course you will. But since I won't be around, I've arranged for a way you can get some help, confidentially. I believe you've all met my little brother, Austin, at least once, right?

[They all nod their heads.](#)

Nichole: Sure, we see him around town all the time. Is he going with you?

Victoria: No. He's staying here. And that's why I mentioned him. If you need to contact me for any reason, or you need any kind of help, you can tell him in confidence. Just put this in one of your windows. [\(She hands Julia a cutout of a squirrel.\)](#) He'll know which adults to trust that can help and which ones to keep everything from.

Nichole: [\(In protest.\)](#) I ain't sayin' nothin' 'bout trustin' him, but he's just a kid. This ain't no place for him.

Victoria: He won't be hangin' around here, he's just is a great messenger, if you need one. No one would suspect him. [\(Addressing the concern that he is a kid.\)](#) He's certainly not so naive that he doesn't know what happens here, [\(Also protecting his innocence.\)](#) but at the same time, you don't need to tell him unimportant details.

Chen Bai: He alway show respect when he meet me on street. I think he be a good message boy.

[Elisabeth nods in agreement.](#)

Victoria: [\(Directed mostly to Julia.\)](#) He'll know where I am and how to wire me better than anyone else. He can also get around town without anyone noticing him. He's pretty sneaky. In fact, he found the hidden entrance to the back stairs. [\(Julia is impressed by that.\)](#)

[\(Camera ghosts through the wall where a mirror hangs. The camera continues down the stairs and through a hidden door at the base. The camera turns around to see the board and baton exterior of the building. A super fast rewind of the stair reveal, returns the camera to the dorm room.\)](#)

Chen Bai: He knows every secret place in town. I don't know how he find them, but he does. [\(Everybody stares at Chen Bai, surprised that she would say that. Bai feels uncomfortable and explains.\)](#) Every time I find a new place, he already know where it is. [\(They still find it odd that she would have so much communication with a ten year old, but their curiosity is short lived.\)](#)

Victoria: Bai, for his sake, please keep that a secret. If the wrong people find out, it could get him hurt. [\(Bai covers her mouth, realizing that she just revealed a secret that she was supposed to keep.\)](#)

Chen Bai: Very sorry. [\(She directs her eyes to the floor in submission.\)](#)

Victoria: It's okay. [\(In a direct and concerned, but not angry manner.\)](#) Just don't say it again. The wrong person might hear you.

[Chen Bai gives an abbreviated nod in acknowledgment.](#)

Victoria: Anyway, I told him to sneak up here in a few weeks to see if you are doing okay. He'll use my knock, [\(she demonstrates on the table nearby as she explains - knock, knock, pause, knock, knock, pause, knock\)](#) two, two, and one, so you will know it's him. If that's okay with you.

Julia: Yes. Like you, he is always welcome here. [\(She takes another drink of whisky. Looking at the other ladies.\)](#) For talking only, [\(In a tone to make a point. Stressing.\)](#) even when he's older. [\(Victoria smiles in reassurance of the protection implied.\)](#)

Victoria: [\(As she stands up.\)](#) Well, better get started. Like usual, I'll come to each of your rooms, one at a time.

The ladies all get up and file out the door to their respective rooms, closing their doors behind them. Julia has the room next to the dorm. Nichole has the next room. Chen Bai is next. Victoria follows Elisabeth to the farthest room and closes the door behind her.

The camera, floats to the middle of the bar room, zooming out to show the whole mezzanine at eye level. Then the camera drops to the first floor like a quick elevator ride and turns 180 degrees, to a window directly ahead. The camera ghosts through the window, out onto the street, proceeds up the street to O'Brien's and then ghosts through the wall into an alcove.

Act IV, Scene 9

[Meeting of the Men]

Scene: Alcove in O'Brien's saloon.

Bryan and Greg are seated opposite each other at a dimly lit table, each, with a beer in front of them. There is some chatter coming from the rest of the saloon, but the conversations are not distinct enough to make out.

The camera moves beyond Greg and Bryan to the bar where Ben and Austin are standing. The camera moves from their backs around to the side as Sean puts two glasses down on the bar in front of them, one tall, one short.

Sean: One sarsparilla (Tall glass.) and one whiskey (Short glass.).

Ben: Thanks, Sean.

Ben puts a couple coins on the bar. Sean gives Ben a nod. They each grab their glass and walk over to the alcove where Greg and Bryan are seated.

Austin: Thanks, Dad. (Offering a smile and a glance as compensation for the treat.)

Ben: Next time, you buy. (Patting him on the shoulder.)

Austin: Okay. (Trying to accept the responsibility of being an adult, but knowing, full well, that his dad would continue to buy the drinks until he becomes old enough to start drinking himself.)

Ben and Austin arrive at the table and put their glasses down. Greg and Bryan stand up to greet them.

Austin: Hi, Uncle Greg. (He reaches out to shake Greg's hand. Greg grabs his hand and pulls Austin in for a hug. Austin hugs him back.)

Greg: Not going to get away with just a handshake from me. (Finishes the hug and then shakes Ben's hand.)
Ben.

Austin: Uncle Bryan. (Reaching out to Bryan. They shake hands.)

Bryan: Austin. Great to see you. (Shakes hands with Ben.) Ben. He sure is gettin' big.

Ben: (To Bryan) Of course he is. He eats enough for the three of us. (They all get a chuckle and take their seats.)

Ben: Got your documents? (Ben reaches into the saddlebag he's carrying and gets a set of papers that he puts on the table.)

Bryan: Yeah. (Bryan slides the documents in front of him towards the center of the table.)

Greg: Me too. (Greg opens his coat to show documents in his pocket.) Right here.

Ben: Okay. Let's finish our drinks and then we'll head up to the council office to get the new papers drawn up.

Ben: (Looking at Austin) When we go to the office, you can disappear in town like you always do, but keep an eye out on the office door. When we have everything in order, we'll change the sign from "closed" to "open".

Austin: Okay. So I'll bring Victoria then?

Greg: Yep. Don't be too obvious though.

Austin: Okay. That won't be hard.

Bryan: (Uneasy to bring up the subject, especially since it involves his nephew.) I certainly don't hope for problems, but there should be at least two people who know where the new deeds will be hidden until Victoria

leaves. If Austin forgets where he hid them, or for some other reason can't tell us, someone else should know. (Greg nods in agreement.) It's not that I'm doubting Austin's abilities, I just think it would be good to have a back-up plan for something this important.

Greg: I have all the confidence in the world in Austin, but a back-up plan is a good idea.

Ben: Maybe it's a good idea, but how can we do it safely, without compromising our main goal of keeping Austin safe and the deeds a secret?

Austin: (Camera: Close up of Austin. It is obvious that he is devising a plan as he stares at his drink for a little while.) I have an idea, but it's a little complicated.

Ben: Okay, let's hear it. (All three of the men stare at Austin making him a little nervous.)

Austin: (Takes a deep breath and looks at the table to avoid eye contact and to keep his train of thought. Bryan starts to drink his beer.) I'll write down the location in a letter so only one other person in town can read it. And I'll give the letter to someone else that doesn't even know what to do with the letter. (Bryan stops drinking his beer, but still has it up to his mouth. He is listening intently.) Then I'll give you each a notice that you can put on the town's notice board, that makes sense only to the person with the location information that they can't read. When the notice gets posted, then the person with location information will know to give it to the person that can read it. And then the person that can read it will tell only the person that put up the notice where the documents can be found. Neither of them knows what it is that's hidden. I play this game with my friends all the time. Of course, this time I'll tell them it's not a game.

Bryan: (Notices that he is not drinking his beer, so he puts it down.) Uh, what?

Greg: Yeah. I think I got it. So nobody really knows where it is until we post the notice. That starts the process of getting a coded message to the right person, who can then tell us the location. Right?

Austin: Right. And even if someone, some how, could read the location, they still couldn't find it because the location name only means something to my friends and me. And since neither of my friends know what any of this is about, they can't accidentally reveal any secrets.

Ben: Sounds complicated enough to me. (He takes a sip of his whiskey.)

Greg: When can you get all this clandestine work finished?

Austin: It will take about 20 minutes. (The men look at each other in surprise of the short time frame .) I'll get started right away. (He finishes his sarsparilla and leaves in a hurry.)

Bryan: (Puts down his beer.) Greg, did you really understand all that?

Greg: No. I think I got most of it. Damn Ben, I think your kid's too smart for us.

Ben: If he's too smart for us, then I'm sure he's too smart for Wilson and his henchmen.

Bryan: Agreed. Bottoms up boys, lets get this done so we can get home. (They all raise their glasses to a toast.)

Ben: To the future.

Greg and Bryan: Here, here.

They finish their drinks and leave the table. Camera follows them through the front doors into the street. The trio walks toward the council office.

Act IV, Scene 10

[Unreadable Letters]

Scene: Starts on Main street. The camera goes down the street, turns into the printing office, past the printer who is working on setting some type, into the back room. Austin is finishing up the last of three notices. There are three letters next to his work, written in Chinese. Each of the letters has a number (1, 2 or 3) in the message.

Camera focuses on the letter with the one (1), with the other letters partially exposed beneath it, showing the different names: Ben C on top, then Bryan C and then Greg H.

Meaning: Ladybird (mine), third corridor, column seven, hidden up high.



Location letter 09061700b.jpg

The translation on the screen is in two lines with the literal translation and the decoded meaning:

Bird	3	Tree	7	Cloud	Show	Ben	C
Ladybird (mine)	Third Corridor	Column	7	High	Show	Ben	C

The translation and decoding are highlighted in sequence with the characters on the letter.

Camera then moves over to the notice Austin is finishing. It is written in Miwok.

Camera focuses on the notice and the translation shows on the screen using the same highlight and decode method as for the letters:

Owl [messenger from afterlife = message] 1 [which letter (one) to deliver] tracks [directed to] to Dragon Fly [Austin's Miwok name for Chen Bai] White Squirrel [Austin's Miwok name] dead .

Camera pulls back. Austin folds the letters and rolls the notices. He then gathers his documents and begins to leave out the back door.

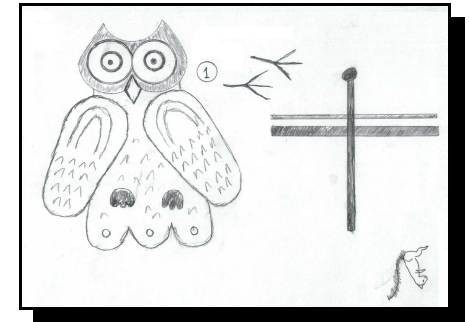
Austin: (Yelling into the printing room.) Thanks Mr. Fry!

Mr. Fry: (As Austin goes out the back door.) Any time, Austin.

Austin hurriedly continues out the door and up behind the buildings. He continues up the back street, dodging between cover, to a small shack home.

There, he taps on a window with the code: tap, tap, pause, tap, tap, pause tap. The window opens. Falling Leaf, a very attractive mixed race native American/white girl of about 12, sticks her head out. Austin hands her the letters. He makes a gesture of hand to chest and then point to Falling Leaf. As he leaves, he looks back to see Falling Leaf repeat the gesture to him.

He leaves around the corner. The window shuts. Camera does a 180, and goes to the main street. Camera proceeds down the main street to the council office. Someone in the office flips the sign from closed to open.



Notice 09061701b.jpg

Act IV, Scene 11

[Obviously, a Discrete Entrance]

Camera backs away from the office and proceeds down the street, around the corner, around the sign (Sign hides the secret door) to see Austin and Victoria sneak out the back door of the brothel. Austin has a satchel with him. Austin leads Victoria up the side of the building to the back street, then to the alleyway, across the street to the backside of the office buildings. He then leads her to the back door of the court room. He reaches up to the bell, quietly takes out the ringer, which is actually a key, opens the door and puts the key back. They enter the empty court room. He closes and locks the door. They cross to the corner. Austin puts his knife into a slot in the wall and pushes down the catch that opens a panel that leads to a small room in the council office. He closes the door behind him. Looks through a small hole in the opposite closet door to make sure no one is looking, then opens the door. He and Victoria enter the empty back office of the council. They move to the front of the office, through a curtain door, into the vestibule. He unlocks, then quickly opens and closes the front door of the office building to ring the bell attached above the door. He re-locks the door. Victoria looks at him puzzled by all the extra action. He then turns the sign back around to show closed to the outside. He slides the curtain open to the lit office area.

Bryan: Well that didn't take long. I only changed the sign about two minutes ago.

Greg: How'd you get in? I locked the door.

Austin: Um. I guess it wasn't closed all the way. Right, Victoria?

Victoria: (Still shocked by all the tricks Austin used to get around in the town.) Uh, yeah. Not closed all the way. (She looks at her brother amazed about his skills. In response, he just gives a little shrug.)

Chuck, the public recorder: Victoria, I presume. (Chuck stands and extends his hand to introduce himself. Austin quietly steps back and behind Victoria to limit his exposure to Chuck.) I'm Chuck Knowles the public recorder for this area. You're now a major property holder or, at least, will be, when we're finished. Only the railroad and Hank Wilson own more land in a thirty mile radius of here. Congratulations to the new land baroness.

Victoria: Thank you. But I'm . . . (She sees her dad motion to not say more.) I'm no baroness, just a regular person.

Chuck: Well, 'regular person' Victoria Creighton. You just need to sign and date these three transfers and complete this notation in the register and it'll all be final. (He points out places to sign.)

Victoria sits down and signs the documents. When she is finished, Ben stands up to shake Chuck's hand.

Ben: Thank you Mr. Knowles.

Chuck: Chuck.

Ben: Okay . . . (Correcting for the name change.) Thank you, Chuck. It was a pleasure working through this with you.

Chuck: Oh, no. The pleasure is all mine.

Chuck: (Turning to Greg who stands up.) Greg . . . (Shakes his hand.)

Chuck: (Turns to Bryan who is now standing.) Bryan . . . (Shakes his hand.)

Chuck: (Turns to Victoria who is also now standing.) Miss Creighton (Victoria offers her hand as a lady, Chuck politely holds her hand and gives a partial bow and releases her hand.)

Chuck: (Turns to Austin.) And your name is?

Most of Austin's games that he plays are in town, at night. There is a distinct separation of people in town - Day People and Night People. Austin uses an alias at night.

Austin: Peter, . . . Peter Blackwell. (Greg, Bryan and Bill glance at each other, quizzically. Victoria is not surprised; she knows his nighttime alias.) I was just helping Miss Creighton find this office.

Chuck: (Reaches out to shake Austin's hand.) Mr. Peter Blackwell. It was nice to make your acquaintance.

Austin: Likewise. (Shakes his hand.)

Chuck: I'm afraid it's time for me to get ready for supper. I hear that O'Brien's makes a wonderful brisket. If you'll excuse me.

Chuck picks up his recorder book, puts it in a large leather bag, puts on his hat, grabs his coat and, unlocking the door, exits to the street.

It is quiet in the office until after the bell on the front door rings as the door closes and Chuck is seen through the window walking on the boardwalk.

Ben: (Looking at Austin in disbelief.) Peter Blackwell? Where'd that come from?

Austin: (Lowering his head.) Sorry for lying, Dad. I thought that since this was a secret, the less he knew about me the better. (Looking up toward his father.) Should I go apologize to him? (Austin starts toward the door.)

Bryan: No. (Austin stops where he is. Bryan looks at Ben to indicate that he is about to explain why.) That was actually very good thinking. (Genuinely thinking it is a good idea that helps protect Austin.) Not that I support you lying. This time, I think it was the right thing to do. (Trying to relieve pressure on Austin and looking for support from Ben.) Right, Ben?

Ben: I don't like it, but I'll have to agree - *this time*. (Seriously.) But don't make a habit of it . . . (Lightening the mood.) Peter.

They all have a little laugh.

Greg: Let's go meet the women folk. I asked Gwen to meet us at O'Brien's for supper. My treat.

The three men start shuffling around the papers on the desk, trying to get organized.

Ben: Sounds good. But what about *Peter* here. Chuck probably shouldn't see him there with us tonight. That would invite too much attention.

Austin: (Seeing an opportunity, as if he planned it.) If you just have them make a couple plates for me in the back, I was hoping to eat with a friend today anyway. If that's okay?

Ben: Your mom will be disappointed, but, under the circumstances, I think it'll be alright. Who's the friend?

Austin: (Being the stealthy person he is, Austin tries to not release too many details of his activities around town. Besides, if he let's them know it includes a girl, he may never hear the end of it.) Can I tell you when all this is over? It should probably be a secret until then. (Quickly changing the topic.) Oh, almost forgot. Here are the notices. (Austin hands out the rolled notices. As he does, he looks at the messages for the number.) (#1) Dad, this is yours, (#2) Uncle Greg, and (#3) Uncle Bryan.

The men look at the message, then at each other quizzically, not understanding what is on the pages. They each put the messages in their respective saddle bags.

Ben: If I can trust you to secure the documents, I guess I can trust you to pick someone safe to eat with.

Austin: Thanks, Dad. I'll take the papers with me and stay out of sight.

Ben: We'll meet back with you at the train station in an hour. Be safe. (Ben hands Austin a portfolio of documents.)

Austin: I will. (He takes the papers, puts them in his satchel, and disappears behind the curtain.)

Bryan: (Looks around and picks up his papers making sure they are in order, then he starts heading for the door.) If 'Peter' has a special way out, maybe we should follow him.

Ben and Greg are getting their things together.

Victoria: Good luck with that. He's already gone.

Greg: Huh? (Looking behind the curtain and into the empty adjoining room.) How's that?

Victoria: Don't ask. I'm not even sure I can remember know how I got here. (She unlocks the front door. As she opens it the bell rings. Ben holds the door while Victoria, Greg and Bryan exit. Ben looks around into the empty adjoining room, then locks and closes the door.)

Act IV, Scene 12

[Dinner with Friends]

Camera at Falling Leaf's window. Tap, tap, pause, tap, tap, pause, tap. The window opens. Camera pulls back to reveal Austin holding two large plates of food. He tilts his head to the side toward the front door to tell Falling Leaf to let him in. He sneakily goes to the front door where Falling Leaf is waiting for him. He looks around to verify that he was not seen then enters the home. It is a small home with one room that incorporates the family room, dining room and the kitchen and a short hall that leads to two bedrooms.

After Austin is safely inside, Falling Leaf closes the door and stands beside him. Falling leaf looks at Austin in deep concern. Austin knows that Falling Leaf has the ability to sense hidden emotions and know things that are yet to happen. With that look, he realizes her question.

Austin: (Discretely) I can tell you next week.

Although, she feels as though she will never get an explanation, Falling Leaf accepts the answer with a slight nod.

In a half bow, he offers the dishes to Falling Leaf's mother, Yellow Feather. Yellow Feather has an amulet like Wac ih a'. Falling Leaf leaves the room through the hall. Yellow Feather crosses to the kitchen area of the room, to divide the food onto four plates, returning the two plates to Austin that he arrived with. He takes the plates and places them by the front door, along with his satchel. Falling Leaf returns with her father, Gus, following her. Gus approaches Austin, hand extended.

Gus: (While he and Austin grasp each other's wrist.) Austin. It is good to see you. Thank you for the gift.

Austin: It is good to see you, also. I am honored to share with my friends. Thank you for your hospitality.

They release their grip and sit around the table. One person on each side of a small square table. Falling Leaf sits to the right of Gus. Austin sits to the right of Falling Leaf and Yellow Feather sits to the left of Gus. Gus bows his head to pray. Austin instinctively reaches up and holds Falling Leaf's hand. Gus takes notice and looks at Austin. Austin feels the disapproval of the stare. Austin then reaches out and takes hold of Yellow Feather's hand. Gus smiles as his wife and daughter take hold of his hands.

Gus: (In a sincere manner.) Oh, God. We thank thee for thy bounty before us. Amen.

Austin, Falling Leaf and Yellow Feather: Amen.

As they release hands, Austin notices that he was given a much larger portion than Yellow Feather. He stands, exchanges plates with Yellow Feather and sits back down.

Austin: (Addressing Yellow Feather.) This is more than enough for me. Thank you.

Yellow Feather nods her head slightly in acceptance and appreciation of the increased portion, then reaches out and takes Austin's hand. She opens his hand, places a large coin in his palm and then rolls his fingers around the coin.

Yellow Feather: White Squirrel, you have shown us nothing but respect and kindness. Please keep this with you. It was a gift from ancient tribes to the south. It will keep you safe in your travels.

Austin: <Miwok> tef]kiju </Miwok> [Trans: > "Thank you"]

They begin to eat. Camera backs out of room, showing the two plates and satchel while ghosting through the door to outside. Fade to black.

Act IV, Scene 13

[Past Due]

Camera, at the back door of O'Brien's, goes forward through the kitchen and into the dining room, then to the table where Creighton family is gathered. The family is just finishing supper. Cody enters O'Brien's and the sound level of the restaurant drops suddenly. The sound of Cody's footsteps can be heard as he walks up to where Ben is seated. Cody hands Ben a note, turns and walks away. Ben opens the note. Camera zooms to the note. "Time's up". Camera zooms out from note, back into kitchen. Two soiled plates are on the counter.

Act IV, Scene 14

[Headed Home]

Camera: In O'Brien's kitchen. Camera goes out back door and follows footprints from the back door toward the end of the building where the foot prints become hoof prints that lead toward the train station.

Camera: Outside near the train station, looking away from town. It is now late afternoon. The sky is dark and the snow has started to become less flurry and more steady. Three riders pass the train station heading up the trail. A fourth rider approaches from the station and joins them. The four riders head up the trail away from town.

Act IV, Scene 15

[Eating Alone]

Sam is finishing up the dishes from a meal he made from things scrounged around the cabin. A couple of cans and jars are on the kitchen work table. Sam puts a few large chunks of wood in the stove. He opens a shutter, looks out the window and sees that it is getting dark and the snow is becoming steady; He closes it again. He places two buckets of water on the cook stove. He then glances at the tub in the ante room as he pours a cup of coffee that he takes with him to the front room. He feeds and stokes the heating stove and sits back in the rocking chair and gets comfortable. He notices a small tan journal, with a couple other books on the coffee table, that he doesn't recall from earlier. He picks it up and sees the cover that says *Wakefield's Western Farmer's Almanac 1877*.

Sam: Humph

He opens the front cover to see the print date of 1877.

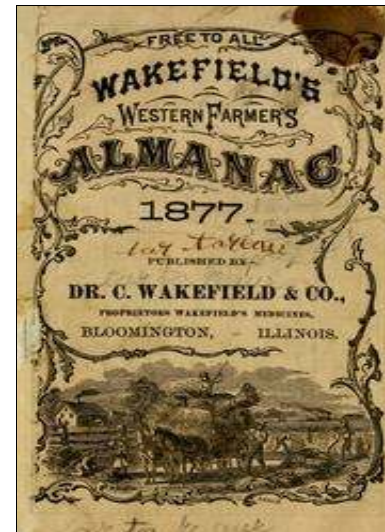
Sam: Wow! The real deal.

Sam starts paging through the book. Camera: New angle (time passes). Sam is still reading the almanac. Now he is about 3/4 of the way through the book. He gets up and goes to the kitchen. He takes the buckets of boiling water off the stove, goes to the tub and pours them in.

Sam: One more time ought to do it.

Sam goes to the hand pump and fills the buckets. He places them on the stove and returns to the chair and the book. Sam is starting to nod off.

Camera: Moves to boiling water in buckets on stove.



Camera pulls back from kitchen and pans to Sam. Sam is sleeping on the rocker. Camera blurs slightly. The book falls from Sam's grasp. Sound of book dropping to the floor. Fade to black.

End of Act IV

[To Act III](#)

[To Act V](#)