

AIN'T ETHIOPIA

by

Michael Bettencourt

67 Highwood Terrace #2
Weehawken, NJ 07086
201-770-0550 • m.bett@verizon.net
<http://www.m-bettencourt.com>

FADE IN:

SUPER: PLACARD: "HARLEM, 1936"

EXT. HARLEM STREET - AFTERNOON

A BLACK-SKINNED SPEAKER on a soapbox holds pamphlets and a megaphone. A hundred or so AFRICAN AMERICANS -- dirty, tired, hungry, restless -- gather around the SPEAKER.

POLICEMEN hang around the edge of the CROWD.

SPEAKER'S SOAPBOX

SPEAKER

Brothers and sisters, the fascists have
taken over democratic Spain!

CROWD

JESSE COLTON, barely 21, African American, slinks through the crowd. A dirty gash cuts his left temple.

SPEAKER (O.S.)

Mussolini, who raped our people in Ethiopia
--

Jesse's eyes dart everywhere, his hands twitch in his coat pockets -- a man at the end of his tether.

SPEAKER (O.S.)

And Hitler, with his ideas about the
supremacy of white people --

A MAN next to Jesse pipes up.

MAN

Man, why should I give a fuck about Spain?
About white people?

The WOMAN next to him slaps his arm.

BACK OF THE MAN

Jesse spies what looks like a dollar poking out of the man's back pocket -- but he can't tell for sure, his vision is so blurred.

MAN (O.C.)

Don't you be whacking me!

Jesse's eyes dart right, then left. He moves his hand towards the man's pocket, fingers twitching.

SPEAKER (O.S.)

If we don't stop the fascists in Spain --

WOMAN (O.C.)

(to man)

Just keep a clean tongue in --

Closer, closer, almost there --

MAN (O.C.)

Keep them ham-hocks in your own --

SPEAKER (O.S.)

Brother, sister -- please --

MAN'S POCKET

Jesse's just about to close in when another hand -- huge, tendoned, black -- clamps down over his.

SPEAKER (O.S.)

We need to fight the fascists, not between ourselves --

JESSE'S HAND

Jesse's hand is dragged away, and Jesse follows.

EDGE OF CROWD

Jesse follows the arm up to the face of OLIVER LUMET, 36, dark coffee complexion, a scar across his left cheek.

FROM JESSE'S POV

Around him Jesse can see the police start to wade into the crowd -- but they all look like a blue blur to him.

EDGE OF CROWD

Still holding onto the Jesse, Oliver lets out a shrill whistle. The speaker looks toward Oliver.

Oliver raises his arm and circles it, points to the police. The speaker notes the police, gives Oliver a thumbs-up.

SPEAKER'S SOAPBOX

SPEAKER

Watch your backs, my friends -- we got our own fascists coming in --

CROWD

The police, batons at chest-height, herd the crowd.

SPEAKER'S SOAPBOX

A policeman comes level to the speaker. The speaker hands him a pamphlet, then jumps off the soap box and melts into the crowd.

EDGE OF CROWD

Oliver sees the speaker run away. He turns his attention to Jesse, whose hand is still firmly in Oliver's grasp. Oliver pulls him away.

INT. GREASY SPOON - DAY

At their table, Oliver faces the window and watches Jesse wolf down the last of eggs and home fries, then finish mopping his plate with toast until it gleams.

JESSE

Thanks.

Jesse gets up, ready to flee.

JESSE

Gotta go.

OLIVER

I lied.

JESSE

What?

OLIVER

You do have to pay me something.

JESSE

I got no money. I got nothing.

OLIVER

You have a name?

JESSE

Everyone's got a name.

OLIVER

So tell me your name. And I'll tell you
who just fed a brother.

JESSE

That's it?

Oliver leans forward.

OLIVER

Sit down.

Jesse sits down.

Oliver reaches into his back pocket, and he notices that Jesse
winces at the sudden movement. More slowly, Oliver draws out a
small blue booklet and slides it across.

Jesse picks it up, but as if it were a burning coal, he flings it
onto table, his body suddenly racked with shivers.

JESSE

That says Communist Party!

OLIVER

(retrieving card)

Harlem Division.

JESSE

Shit shit shit shit --

Jesse's leg pumps so hard it rattles the flatware. Oliver lays a
calm hand on his forearm, but Jesse snaps it away.

OLIVER

Tell me your name.

JESSE

(strained)

Jesse Colton.

OLIVER

Mississippi in that voice -- right?

JESSE

Maybe.

OLIVER

Texas myself. Jesse Colton, how'd you end up in New York city ready to steal from a brother?

Jesse hesitates, then pulls out an envelope and slams it down.

Oliver slides out the creased photo of Jesse and a dark-skinned YOUNG WOMAN.

Jesse stares hard at the white disk of his empty plate.

SUPER: PLACARD: "MISSISSIPPI, 1936"

EXT. TOWN SQUARE

A CROWD JEERS as a YOUNG WHITE MAN stands on the cab of his truck and cuts through a rope holding the hanged body of the young African American woman in the photo.

Her hands are tied behind her, her face swollen and beaten, her body riddled with bullets.

MAN IN CROWD

Cut that nigger Communist down!

The body falls to the ground like a stone.

SECOND MAN

Better dead than Red.

REAR BUMPER

The young man ties the rope to the bumper.

His thick leather workboots TROMP back to the cab. Then the ROAR of the truck's engine, the GRIND of the gears, the SQUEAL of rubber as he PEELS OUT, the body dragged behind.

EXT. BURNING HOUSE -- NIGHT

The crowd gathers around a burning house, the flame-light slashing their twisted faces.

People pass around bottles and food, like a picnic.

EXT. BLIND

Jesse cowers behind a blind of kudzu and creepers, watching the destruction, his face a mask of terror and pain.

EXT. ROAD

The young man pulls up in a pick-up truck, and a huge CHEER goes up from the crowd.

The young man jumps out of the cab, and his heavy workboots raise a cloud of dust.

He walks to the back of the truck.

FROM GROUND LEVEL

Each footfall raises a small cloud of dust until the workboots stop by the shattered body of the young woman.

REAR BUMPER

The young man unties the rope.

FROM GROUND LEVEL

The dragged body slices through the dust.

CROWD

The crowd CHEERS as the young man drags the body into view.

THE BLIND

Jesse sees the crushed woman and his body writhes as if flames are eating away at him. Tears streak his face.

He watches several MEN grab the body and fling into the flames. A CHEER goes up at the body catches fire.

Jesse flattens himself to the ground, gulps air, trembles, and stares at an almost-crumpled photo that shows him and a young woman. He stares and stares and stares at it.

FLAMES

The body is barely recognizable as a human body.

CROWD

In the heat-shimmering air, the crowd dances like devils.

FADE OUT TO WHITENESS

FADE IN:

They sit in SILENCE while the BANGING of the diner swirls around them. Oliver slides the picture across the table.

OLIVER

I'm sorry for your loss, Jesse.

A few more moments of silence between them.

OLIVER

If you're interested, I can give you a chance to fight the bastards.

Jesse doesn't answer because he stares at the picture. He picks it up, delicately slips it back into the envelope, slide the envelope into his coat. His body slumps.

OLIVER

But first things first. You need a place to stay.

(pointing to temple)

That needs to be cleaned. Let's go.

Oliver stands, but Jesse stays seated. He fumbles with the salt shaker.

OLIVER

(to Jesse)

Let's go.

JESSE

They said she was a Communist just because she asked for some work relief. I didn't do nothing to stop 'em. I just ran. I just ran and ran and ran and I end up here and --

Jesse's words run out. Oliver looks down at him.

OLIVER

At some point, Jesse, whether you gotta go pee or they shut the door on you, you are going to have to get up from this table and figure out something to do with the rest of your life.

Jesse still hesitates, his nervous hands spilling the salt. Oliver throws a pinch of it over Jesse's left shoulder.

OLIVER

Now you're protected. Come on.

EXT. BUILDING - LATE AFTERNOON

Oliver and Jesse stand outside a non-descript warehouse. Oliver knocks in a secret code on a small metal door.

The door opens, and Jesse stares into the ragged face of TOM MILOCSZ, white, 30s, a black eye-patch over his left eye. On the eye-patch is painted a red hammer-and-sickle.

Tom fixes his one eye on Oliver, then on Jesse, jerks his head for them to enter.

INT. FLOPHOUSE

Warehouse with rows of cots. Tom stands behind a desk with a single light bulb hanging over it. On the desk, pages face down, is an open copy of the Communist Manifesto.

OLIVER

This is Tom.

TOM

I'm the three-headed dog.

Tom looks down at a chart on the desk.

TOM

Fifth row, ninth one in --

He fixes his one eye on Jesse.

TOM

'Sgot your name on it, chum.

OLIVER

The name is Jesse Colton.

Oliver moves to the door.

JESSE

(suddenly fearful)

When am I gonna see you --

Oliver walks back to Jesse, takes out a card.

OLIVER

Tomorrow, 10 AM, if you want.

Oliver hands Jesse the card, turns to go.

JESSE

Wait! Wait!

Tom and Oliver look at him.

JESSE

None of you knows me from Adam's off ox.

Oliver flashes Tom a look, then focuses on Jesse.

OLIVER

We already know you.

JESSE

No you don't.

TOM

Know all about you and your kind.

OLIVER

Besides, why do we have to know you to do something for you?

JESSE

I wouldn't. I never did.

TOM

(harsh laugh)

Don't'cha just love 'em when they're raw and fresh?

Oliver, looking at Tom again, points to his own left temple, nods at Jesse, then flashes a smile as he leaves.

Jesse and Tom stare at each other in the sudden silence.

Tom points at the book on the desk.

TOM
Ever read the Communist Manifesto?

JESSE
No.

TOM
You can read, right?

JESSE
Yeah.

Tom reaches over to a bookcase filled with copies of the Communist Manifesto. He tosses one to Jesse, who catches it like it was hot metal. Tom points to his missing eye.

TOM
This is what reading the Manifesto got me.

JESSE
Why would I read it, then?

TOM
What's an eye for the truth? Sit down.

Jesse sits. Tom reaches into a drawer, pulls out gauze and a bottle of alcohol, gestures for Jesse to lean in.

Jesse leans in, and Tom cleans his temple. Jesse winces but says nothing. Tom closes the bottle and throws away the gauze.

He jerks his thumb over his shoulder.

TOM
Now leave me alone.

INT. FLOPHOUSE - JESSE'S COT - LATER

The air rings with SNORES, FARTS, CREAKINGS, SHUFFLINGS. Jesse lays on his cot, eyes wide-open, clutching the Manifesto.

He sits up, sees Tom at the desk. He looks at the horizontal shadows, all sleeping together peacefully. He lies back down and closes his eyes.

EXT. STREET - NEXT MORNING

Jesse moves through the Depression crowd. The Manifesto peeps out of the pocket of a new if second-hand coat.

EXT. BUILDING - MORNING

Somewhere on 125th Street. Jesse looks into the dark doorway, once to the left, once to the right, enters.

INT. BUILDING - STAIRWELL

Jesse slowly climbs. At each landing, behind the closed doors he hears SHOUTS, RADIOS, a heavy THUD, crockery BREAKING, a SLAP -- a full human symphony.

FIFTH FLOOR LANDING

The only door. He KNOCKS, waits. No response.

KNOCKS again -- no response.

KNOCKS once more, HEAVILY. The door swings open. There, like a guard dog, stands Oliver.

OLIVER

He has arrived. Come on in.

INT. OFFICE

Jesse comes into a small cluttered office, but cluttered in an organized way, with boxes of pamphlets, a mimeograph, typewriter, filing cabinets, desks, chairs. It is clearly the office of the Harlem Division of the Communist Party.

On the walls are posters, some in Spanish, about coming to fight for Spain against Franco and for the democratically elected government.

OLIVER

Grab a chair.

He goes over to a table that has an electric coffee pot and a paper bag with grease spots.

OLIVER

Coffee? All we got is black.

Jesse nods yes. Oliver pours him a cup.

OLIVER

Doughnuts are a day old, but I think you can still chew them.

JESSE

Yeah -- sure. Thanks.

Oliver brings Jesse coffee and a doughnut. Jesse tries not to wolf but he eats the entire doughnut in almost one gulp.

OLIVER

Another?

Jesse nods. Oliver brings him a second doughnut. This time Jesse eats it a bit more slowly.

Oliver grabs a chair, straddles it backwards.

OLIVER

That demonstration yesterday -- know what it was about?

JESSE

I couldn't hardly hear my own breathing yesterday.

Oliver gestures to the posters on the wall.

OLIVER

It was about Spain. We -- Communists -- organized it, to raise support. That word bother you -- Communists?

JESSE

No. You've been nice. Don't know Spain, neither -- never left Mississippi till now.

OLIVER

And the Mississippi's never left you, either, huh?

Oliver gets out of his chair and starts pacing.

OLIVER

The democratic government in Spain, a government elected by the people, has been attacked by a general named Franco.

JESSE

Can I have another doughnut?

OLIVER

Third one you get on your own.

Jesse goes to the bag, pulls out a doughnut, starts eating.

OLIVER

Franco's connected to the church and the big landowners, who want it the way it was in the middle ages.

Oliver taps the posters with his finger as he talks.

OLIVER

These "middle ages" have got everything to do with you.

JESSE

Don't even know where Spain is.

OLIVER

Yes you do.

Oliver perches on the edge of a table.

JESSE

No I don't. And why would I care --

OLIVER

Franco is the "massah" -- know that word?

JESSE

Course.

OLIVER

Franco and his fellow "massahs" want to keep the plantation just the way it's always been -- that sound familiar?

JESSE

As common as a cat.

Oliver straddles the chair again.

OLIVER

And what have you ever done about "massah"?

JESSE

Cain't do nothing about "massah."

OLIVER

You do, they hang you, right?

JESSE

Beat you, burn you, cut your balls off --

OLIVER

Make you less than a man.

JESSE

To them, you less than a man before you're born.

Oliver gives Jesse a sharp but affectionate look.

OLIVER

You're not stupid.

JESSE

I wasn't always like this.

OLIVER

If you could fight back -- you'd fight back?

Jesse looks into the bottom of his coffee cup.

JESSE

Like to think I would.

OLIVER

Me, too. That's why I went in the Army for six years -- thought I could fight my way up and out that way. But black buck private in comes a black buck private out.

Oliver gets out of his chair, and his powerful frame throws a long shadow across the room.

OLIVER

(suddenly fierce)

In my dream, Jesse, I take all the motherfuckin' "massahs" in the world, man and woman and even child, and wipe the place clean of 'em. Give the rest of us a goddamn break. You want to know me in a nutshell -- why "Communist" -- that's what I want.

Just as quickly, Oliver slides back into his genial self.

OLIVER

You up for some honest work today, now that you've had three of my doughnuts and coffee?

Jesse nods yes. Oliver goes to a table, picks up a bundle of pamphlets tied with string. He tosses it to Jesse. Jesse reads the cover.

JESSE
What's "fask" -- "faskism" --

OLIVER
(pronouncing correctly)
Fascism.

JESSE
Fascism.

Oliver picks up a bundle.

OLIVER
Just a fancy word for what happened to your wife. You got any lungs on you?

JESSE
For what?

OLIVER
For yelling. Let me hear 'em loud.

JESSE
You crazy?

OLIVER
Don't work with light-weights out there.
Yell it.

Jesse turns the bundle over and over.

OLIVER
Last chance.

JESSE
(not that strong)
Fascism.

OLIVER
Cat makes more noise spitting up a hairball.

JESSE
(a little louder)
Fascism.

OLIVER

The guy downstairs beats up his wife with more style. "Like to think I'd fight back," I heard you say. Then say the fucking word.

JESSE

(booming)

Fascism.

Then over and over and over again, as if the word opens up a floodgate in Jesse. Again and again and again until Jesse finds himself dissolved in tears.

Oliver comes to Jesse and simply holds him.

EXT. STREET - HARLEM

Jesse stands with Oliver, both of them with the folded pamphlets in their hands. Oliver's booming VOICE cuts through the street noise and hustle.

OLIVER

Fight against fascism! Couldn't do it in Ethiopia, but we can do it in Spain. Join us in our fight.

Oliver hands out pamphlets right and left, throwing out "Thank you, ma'am" and "Thank you, sir" as he does. Jesse hangs back.

OLIVER

(to Jesse)

Just jump, man!

Taking a deep breath, Jesse lets out a BELLOW that catches everyone on the street by surprise. Oliver LAUGHS.

OLIVER

Just don't break their ears.

Jesse, smiling, starts handing out the pamphlets and thanks people. He hands out a pamphlet to a MAN, who takes it and without reading it throws it away. Jesse runs up to him, another one held out to him.

JESSE

You dropped this.

MAN

Get that trash away from me.

JESSE

It's really important --

FROM OLIVER'S POV

Oliver watches Jesse while he still hands out pamphlets.

STREET

MAN

Get that trash away me, you fucking --

JESSE

Look, man, this is all about the plantation
-- see, fascism, that's what it's all about
-- all about the "massah" -- we know all
about this, you and me --

Without warning the man roundhouses Jesse to the pavement. The crowd, with barely a pause, shifts around them.

MAN

Don't be calling me a nigger!

Jesse slowly gets up from sidewalk, nursing his face.

JESSE

(without rancor)

Mister, I been told -- and I'm telling you
-- we'll all stay niggers if these guys
win.

The man gives Jesse a shove back. Jesse calmly hands him a pamphlet. He grabs it out of Jesse's hands and walks down the street. Jesse looks at the people looking at him as he starts to hawk his wares.

JESSE

Help us fight fascism, just like him. Get
the master off the plantation.

Jesse looks at Oliver, who smiles at him. Jesse smiles back, wiggles his jaw back and forth to show he's okay.

INT. FLOPHOUSE - NIGHT

Jesse lies on his back. Surrounding him are the BREATHS, FARTS, MURMURINGS, SNORES of common humanity. He gets up.

TOM'S DESK

Tom reads under the single lightbulb. He looks up as Jesse approaches. Jesse holds up his book.

JESSE

Mind? Can't sleep.

Tom nods yes. Jesse pulls up the chair, takes out his copy of the Manifesto, reads. They read together.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - HARLEM - 1936 - NIGHT

Oliver stands next to JOSE LUIS ALONSO, who wears a red bandana, and to the right of a hanging white sheet. The Minister stands on the other side of the sheet.

The room is jammed with black people of all ages, Jesse among them. Sidewalk-level windows are open for air.

Tom runs a projector that throws up gruesome pictures from Franco's attack on Spain.

JOSE LUIS

(narrating, Spanish accent)

Francisco Franco rapes our country -- has taken away our government, elected by the people. People like you. And Benito Mussolini is now doing in Spain what he did to your people in Ethiopia.

MURMURING in the audience. Footage of the Moors fighting with Franco come on the screen.

JOSE LUIS

And, like you can see, Franco uses Africans to kill our people -- the Army of Africa, it is called.

A few moments of silent images, MURMURS from the audience, then the film runs out. Tom switches off the projector, switches on the lights.

VOICE

Amen, brother.

Jose Luis gives a confused look to Oliver.

OLIVER

That's a good thing.

JOSE LUIS

Ah. Amen, comrade, to you, too. I am

touched you listen to what is happening to my country. We need people who love freedom to fight for us.

OLIVER

Hundreds of volunteers, folks, from the world over, have been coming to Spain to fight the plantation mentality.

JOSE LUIS

Your government will not help us --

OLIVER

Our government actually supports Hitler and Mussolini --

JOSE LUIS

But we know the people are not the same as the government. I know your hearts love freedom -- that is why I am here -- to ask you to stand shoulder to shoulder with us.

VERNON, an old man, raises his hand.

VERNON

Oliver?

OLIVER

Brother Vernon?

VERNON

He means fight for white people?

OLIVER

He means fight for freedom -- bigger than white, bigger than black, bigger than any one of us.

Oliver shakes his hand.

OLIVER

Thank you, Jose Luis.

There is applause, polite but not enthusiastic.

OLIVER

This man's come a long stretch to talk to you -- and his cause is good. I love his cause. I truly do.

(points to Vernon)
But what you say is true, Vernon. Spain's
a long way from 125th Street. Why fight
there when we got our own battle out there?

VERNON
That's what I'm saying, Oliver.

Oliver gestures to the Minister.

OLIVER
Reverend, if you don't mind, I have one
more to testify.

EXT. CHURCH

Police officers gather along with paddy wagons and cars.

INT. BASEMENT

OLIVER
(pointing)
Jesse Colton.

Jesse slowly stands, looking at the people looking at him.

EXT. CHURCH

The officers space themselves on the sidewalk.

INT. BASEMENT

Jesse makes his way to the front of the room.

OLIVER
This is Jesse Colton, newly come to us. He
has a story to tell you. About his former
life in Mississippi.
(to Jesse)
You got the lungs for this?

Jesse smiles, nods yes. His face seems to shine.

OLIVER
Any of you here from Mississippi?

Several hands go up.

OLIVER
Then you'll know his story.

Oliver steps back. Jesse scans the crowd.

MINISTER

Give him an amen.

They give him an amen.

JESSE

My name is Jesse Colton.

SEVERAL PEOPLE

Welcome, Jesse.

JESSE

My story, plain and simple. They hung my wife from a streetlamp in front of the town hall.

Jesse lets this image settle into the crowd.

JESSE

They shot her, dragged her behind a truck, threw her body into a fire -- a fire made from our house.

He lets these images settle into the crowd as well.

VERNON

I know what he speaks of.

JESSE

Not much different than the pictures our friend Jose Luis brought us.

MINISTER

Amen.

CROWD

Amen.

EXT. CHURCH

The light from the basement windows falls on pair after pair of the scuffed leather boots worn by the police.

The SOUND of "amen" floats up from the basement.

INT. BASEMENT

Oliver watches Jesse closely, how his breathing races, his body tenses, as he leans in to connect with the people.

JESSE

Just like the way Mussolini lynched
Ethiopia. Just like this Franco --

Jesse's right arm shoots outward in a "Heil."

JESSE

"Il Duce" and the "Generalissimo" -- they
ain't nothing but the masters on the
plantation -- ain't they? They ain't
nothing but "the boss."

Jesse breathes heavily, his eyes ablaze.

EXT. CHURCH

A POLICE CAPTAIN lights a cigarette, tosses the match.

The SOUND of "Say it" floats out the window.

INT. BASEMENT

JESSE

My old thinking? The white people killed
my wife. But here's my new thinking. I
don't think it's white or black, white
against black. I think it's about those
that got wanting those who ain't got to
never get anything. And how's that gonna
stop? Because it's gotta stop.

Jesse pauses to catch his breath.

JESSE

It's gonna stop when we say it's gonna
stop. When "we" say it --

EXT. CHURCH

The Captain takes a few drags. His SERGEANT waits.

The Captain flicks away the butt, a disgusted look on his face.
He gives a slight nod to the Sergeant, who raises his baton to
signal everyone to move in.

CAPTAIN

(muttering)

I hate this shit.

INT. BASEMENT

A MAN looks up at the windows and notices the row of boots.

MAN

Don't mean to interrupt, but --

He points up to the windows. Everyone turns, and just as they do, they see the boots move.

The Minister rips down the white sheet. Tom grabs the projector and shoves it underneath the table.

MINISTER

(to Oliver, Tom, Jesse,
Jose Luis)

Get in the back room!

Oliver and Tom guide Jose Luis to the back of the basement, where the man holds a door open. Tom and Jose Luis go inside the room. Jesse remains. Oliver remains.

MINISTER

(to them both)

You, too.

JESSE

I'm not sitting it out for no one.

OLIVER

(smiling)

Gotta protect my witness.

Several heavy THUDS on the basement door. The man closes the door to the back room.

MINISTER

(to Jesse)

Then you're my deacon. Shut up and look holy.

(to Oliver)

Get 'em singing. "Down By The Riverside."

(to man)

Open it.

The man opens the door. Oliver, in a deep baritone, begins singing as he walks to the front of the room.

OLIVER

(booming)

"Gonna lay down my sword and shield"

PEOPLE

"Down by the riverside -- "

The police pile into the room. The people continue singing, Jesse singing the loudest.

PEOPLE

"Down by the riverside, down by the riverside -- "

OLIVER

"Gonna lay down my sword and shield"

SERGEANT

Everyone shut up!

But the people don't shut up. Jesse shakes with anger.

PEOPLE

"Down by the riverside -- "

SERGEANT

I said shut up!

PEOPLE

"Ain't gonna study war no more -- "

The Minister holds up his hand, and the people fall silent.

MINISTER

Amen.

PEOPLE

Amen.

MINISTER

(all innocence)

Sergeant?

The tired Captain scans the crowd as the police fill the room.

CAPTAIN

Tell me where they are. The reds. The Communists. We know you have 'em here.

INT. BACK ROOM

Tom and Jose Luis huddle, scarcely breathing.

BASEMENT

MINISTER

In the Lord's house, nothing is hidden.

OLD MAN

Let's offer up Psalm 90.

The people speak as one.

PEOPLE

Who considers the power of your anger?

CAPTAIN

(to Minister, quietly)

Tell them to be quiet.

The Minister says nothing. The police look very nervous.

PEOPLE

So teach us to count our days that we may
gain a wise heart.

CAPTAIN

(with low menace)

Tell them to shut up.

JESSE

They just want to pray.

MINISTER

(warning)

Deacon --

PEOPLE

Turn, O LORD!

SERGEANT

(to Jesse)

Button it!

PEOPLE

How long?

JESSE

We're just praying for you!

The Minister puts a hand on Jesse, but Jesse leans forward.

PEOPLE

Have compassion on your servants!

SERGEANT

Back off!

JESSE

Just wasted on you, though --

Without hesitation the Sergeant cracks his baton against Jesse's head, and Jesse drops to the floor like a stone.

Immediate silence. No one moves. Oliver and the Minister exchange a quick look.

INT. BACK ROOM

In the sudden silence, Tom and Jose Luis breathe thinly.

BASEMENT

The Captain lets out a long disgusted sigh as he peers down at the bleeding unconscious Jesse.

He scans the black faces looking directly back at him. He sucks his teeth, then nods to the Sergeant. The Sergeant gestures, and the police THUNDER out the door.

The Captain gives the Minister a sharp direct look, then follows the Sergeant out.

Immediately Oliver goes to Jesse. The Minister nods, and the Man opens the door to the back room. They emerge.

TOM

(to Jose Luis)

Welcome to America.

INT. MINISTER'S OFFICE - SIDE ROOM - NIGHT

Jesse's eyes open, but he doesn't move. The room is dark, but a light shines from under the door.

He touches his forehead and feels the bandage.

In the next room ANGRY VOICES fill the air with arguments.

VOICE (O.S.)

Handing out those pamphlets is bullshit.

VOICE (O.S.)

You got an army you ain't telling us about,
'cause if you do --

VOICE (O.S.)

I'm so goddamn tired of --

Jesse finds that he has Jose Luis' red bandana in his hand.

VOICE (O.S.)

We got to keep the work going --

Jesse swings his legs off the sofa, sits up, grabs his head in pain, sways, but manages to stand up and stay up.

MINISTER (O.S.)

You cannot meet anger with anger --

Jesse walks to the door, opens it to a flood of light.

INT. MINISTER'S OFFICE

All VOICES fall silent. The Minister, Oliver, Tom, the Man, and several men and women from the congregation stare at Jesse. Jesse holds up the red bandana.

OLIVER

We took him back to his group. He gave you that and an amen.

MAN

He called you "el toro."

WOMAN

Yeah, the bull in the china shop. Leading with his head.

MAN

That's the part least likely to get hurt.

Small laughter. Jesse clutches the door jamb to steady himself. Then, with shaky but determined hands, he tries to tie the red bandana around his neck. Oliver helps him, pats it down flat. Jesse admires it around his neck.

JESSE

You told me once I had to figure out something good to do with my life.

(to others)

Spain ain't Ethiopia - but it'll do.

(to Oliver)

Can you get me there?

Oliver squeezes Jesse's shoulder, looks into Jesse's eyes.

OLIVER

Can't let you do that, Jesse.

JESSE

Why not? Why not?

OLIVER

Because with you gone I'd be stuck with the one-eyed jack over there.

TOM

I'm thinking I prefer being called "one-eyed jack."

OLIVER

You've wanted to run the show, right?

TOM

Yeah.

OLIVER

It's yours to run. We'll get the Committee to turn it over to you.

(to Jesse)

It ain't Ethiopia, like the young bull says -- but it'll do.

SUPER: PLACARD: "FEBRUARY 1937 - JARAMA VALLEY"

EXT. OUTSIDE CHINCHON - DAYBREAK

Forty-five trucks with headlights off drive along a narrow road under a sky tinged with the rising sun, then stop.

EXT. TRUCK BED

Fifteen men in thick woolen coats and blankets huddle together. Their warm breath condenses in the cold air. Jesse sits across from Oliver.

FROM JESSE'S POV

People's faces glow ghostly in the dark morning light. The only black face he sees is Oliver's. Everyone shivers. Everyone stares. No one talks.

TRUCK BED

A runner hammers the truck side, startling everyone.

RUNNER

Afuera! Afuera! [Out! Out!]

Jesse hears the retreating footsteps, the rap on the next truck, the voice shouting "Afuera!", and on down the line.

The men jump off the truck.

EXT. ROAD

Jesse can just make out the four hundred men of the convoy. Overhead, the sky bursts with stars, but the orange/red light in the east is already snuffing them out.

Coming down the line Jesse sees CAPTAIN MERRIMAN, a tall man wearing wire-rim glasses. At their truck, he gestures to Oliver.

OLIVER

Yes, Captain Merriman?

MERRIMAN

Bring them to the supply trucks. Make it quick -- keep 'em warm.

(to the group)

Stay quiet.

Merriman passes to the next truck. Oliver turns to his group.

OLIVER

Come on, folks -- hot time in the old town tonight.

Without hesitation, the dozen or so white men, commanded by a black man, move along in a quick trot. Jesse falls in.

EXT. SUPPLY TRUCKS

As they arrive, Jesse sees open crates and guns being handed out. Oliver brings them to one truck where the DRIVER, a SPANIARD wearing a black beret, hands out the guns with a terse "aquí." Oliver gives the driver a hand.

A gun appears in Jesse's hands.

JESSE

(to Oliver)

I ain't ever held a real gun.

OLIVER

Most here haven't. Grip it -- here, take this! -- like it's a very dangerous woman.

Jesse stares at the gun. Oliver keeps handing them out.

JESSE

That's crazy.

OLIVER

Exactly what you'll need, Jesse.

Jesse walks away, his gun upright, squeezed to his body as if embracing it.

EXT. FIELD - DAWN

Merriman stands on the hood of a truck, the 450 men of the battalion around him. The sky now glows bright enough for everyone to see him.

VOICES

Listen to the Captain. Listen up.

Everyone quiets. Somewhere, birds SING. Merriman's VOICE is clear in the cold air, the sun glinting off his glasses.

MERRIMAN

Here's how it lays out. Franco's troops -- about five to six miles that way. If they move forward, they will cut the Madrid-Valencia road -- and Madrid's gone. Your job? Stop Franco. That's it. That's why we're here.

Merriman waits. The birds SING.

MERRIMAN

I have permission from General Gal to test your guns -- five shots a man.

Merriman waits again. The birds SING.

MERRIMAN

No brave words. Just this: I am proud of you, very proud of this Abraham Lincoln Battalion -- I couldn't think of a better name for it.

(seems lost for words)

Group leaders -- organize your ranks.

SIDE OF THE HILL

The dirt kicks up as bullet after bullet rams the hillside.

JESSE'S RANK

Jesse fires, and the recoil almost levels him. He fires again -- the recoil less violent. By shot five, he stands firm.

EXT. SUICIDE HILL - SEVERAL HOURS LATER

The semi-darkness of a grey dawn. Rain clouds overhead.

EDGE OF TRENCH

In the bruised light a long row of soldiers' faces peer over the parapet of a trench.

IN THE TRENCH

A RUNNER scurries.

RUNNER

(hoarse whisper)

Get ready, get ready, get ready, get ready

--

The runner disappears, his voice trailing off: "Get ready, get ready, get ready, get ready -- "

Up and down the line Jesse sees men crouching low, their breath rising in plumes in the cold air.

Oliver scuttles up to them, carrying a field telephone, followed by a runner keeping the phone line untangled.

Just as he reaches them, Franco's artillery begins its savage barrage. Planes fly low, strafing the ground.

Oliver waits for a brief lull, then quickly stands up.

FROM OLIVER'S POV

On the right he can just make out the Spanish 24th Brigade. Bullets jump around him.

TRENCH

Oliver drops, rings the phone. The artillery SLAMS.

OLIVER

(shouting)

Captain Merriman, the 24th hasn't moved a fucking inch!

Oliver listens, then jumps up again.

FROM OLIVER'S POINT OF VIEW

On the right, the 24th pours out of the trench and men are cut down almost immediately.

The ones not cut down advance at most 20 or 30 yards, then pull back to the trench.

TRENCH

Oliver grabs the phone from the runner.

OLIVER

I don't care what the colonel said,
Captain, the 24th ain't moving up!

Oliver listens.

OLIVER

What about our artillery?

Oliver listens, a troubled look on his face.

OLIVER

And our planes?

His face is still troubled as he hears the answer.

OLIVER

All right, Captain -- yes. Understood.

Oliver hands the phone back to the runner, who coils the wire as he scuttles to the rear.

Oliver, crouching, moves down the line speaking to his men.

OLIVER

(pointing)

That's where we're headed. Pingarrón Hill.
Say the word -- Pingarrón -- get it in your
mouth, guys. Pingarrón.

Oliver can hear Spanish vowels bastardized into a dozen different American accents.

OLIVER

We command that, we control the road. It's
that simple. That's our job.

Oliver checks his watch.

FROM OLIVER'S POV

The second hand sweeps the watch face.

TRENCH

Oliver looks up. Overhead, the clouds break and sun suddenly floods the land.

As if this were a sign...

OLIVER
(shouting)

Let's go!

With with a RAGGED SHOUT, the four hundred untrained men of the Battalion pour over the parapet into a hail of bullets.

EXT. PINGARRÓN HILL - THE BATTLE

From the account of the battle from Robert Rosenstone's Crusade of the Left:

"Elsewhere on the rolling hills of the battlefield, in the dips of earth and through groves of trees, the men of the Lincoln Battalion were slowly and painfully moving upon Pingarron. They were going forward into a curtain of steel as the blue sky of Spain sang with death.

"As they went, hidden machine guns high on the right opened with a deadly crossfire.

"Still they blundered on, the enemy's guns piling up a heavy toll as man after man slumped to earth, some dead before they hit the ground, some almost sliced in two by the intense fire.

"Those with bodies shredded by machine gun bullets writhed on the ground and screamed for the first aid men who could not reach them through the barrage.

"Those who were still untouched deafened their ears to their comrades' cries as they pressed forward, advancing in little rushes from mound to olive tree to fold of earth, moving toward the enemy with an audacity later called 'insane.'

"The bravest and luckiest of them even reached the naked approaches to the crest of Pingarron."

Jesse and SEVERAL OTHERS, following Oliver, make for a clump of stunted trees. Right and left Jesse sees men sawn in half by machine-gun fire, limbs shattered by sniper bullets.

They make the shelter of the trees, even though the constant curtain of fire shreds their ragged bark and thin trunks.

OLIVER

(pointing)

We can't bunch up. Jesse, over there. You three, over there. Move it, move it, move it, move it!

Jesse bolts for a fold of ground. Several bullets rip through his coat. He sees the others make for a boulder. Oliver cuts between them towards another mound of dirt.

Jesse looks to his left, see another MAN pounding his gun with his fist, crying. Jesse crawls toward him.

MAN

(pounding it)

Fucking thing's jammed, fucking thing's --

Jesse goes to take the gun, but the man grabs it back.

MAN

Mine! Mine!

JESSE

Gonna help you --

MAN

Keep away from me, nigger!

The two glare at each other, the air around them shaking with the THUD of explosions and the CRACK of rifle fire.

The man, sudden realization in his face, hands Jesse the rifle. Jesse knocks the bolt loose and digs out the jammed shell. He hands it back.

JESSE

There you go, cracker.

The man, hyperventilating, takes the gun, cackles at Jesse's "cracker." Jesse laughs, too, barely able to breathe steadily.

JESSE

Gotta go.

MAN

Yeah, yeah --

Jesse rolls to his right, then scuttles forward, hugging the ground, jamming his face into the dirt as a fierce swarm of bullets cut the air just above him.

FROM JESSE'S POV

His breath kicks up a small puff of dust as he looks directly at a small, withered, yet definitely yellow flower, no larger than a dime. And crawling up a blade of dead grass is an ant calmly going about its business.

As he stares, the SCREAM of bullets and CRASH of artillery muffle into a distant roar, like waves on a beach.

JESSE

(to ant and flower)

Gotta go. Sorry. Gotta go.

Almost immediately, the air SNAPS back into focus with the SHRIEKS of dying men, the HOWLING WHINE of incoming shells.

JESSE

Gotta go, gotta go --

Jesse's face lifts from the dirt, leaving a small dent. The ant makes its way down into the impression.

APPROACH TO PINGARRÓN

Jesse dodges, zig-zags, rolls, dives, fires, scuttles, scampers, fires again. At one point, pitching himself to the ground, he finds that the only cover is a corpse -- the man whose gun had jammed.

He pulls it close to him, rests his gun on the unresisting shoulder, and fires.

BASE OF PINGARRÓN

Overhead, rain clouds cover the blue sky. A gray pall falls over everything.

Jesse looks up the hill. He spies the enemy. To his right and left he sees corpses splayed on their backs, cut into pieces. Those still alive fire again and again.

Off further to his left he can see Oliver lead five men along the base of a small cliff.

Without warning, the skies open and heavy rain spills down. For a moment the firing ceases and there is nothing but the RUSH of water turning the dry ground to mud.

Jesse sees the men pull back. He sees Oliver lead his men away from the cliff base back towards the trenches. Jesse pulls back. The bullets begin CUTTING the air again.

ON THE WAY TO THE TRENCH

Jesse, completely soaked, running low to the ground, comes across a WOUNDED MAN, his left leg a bloody pulp. Bullets kick up mud, but the density of the firing is much less. The wounded man holds out a hand for help.

Jesse drops to the ground.

JESSE

Get on my back.

The wounded man rolls himself on top of Jesse, and Jesse dragging his gun, slithers his way toward the trench.

EDGE OF THE TRENCH

Jesse, the wounded man on his back, can just see the heads of the FIRST AID MEN in the trench. He slithers up to the edge of the trench and rolls the wounded man off his back.

IN THE TRENCH

Two First Aid men catch the wounded man and hustle him away. Jesse's body follows, falling into the mud.

Jesse gets to his hands and knees, then rises stiffly. He pats himself all over to see that everything is intact.

He unbuttons his pants and pisses into the mud.

Then, with slow heavy steps, he makes his way to the rear.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD MEDICAL UNIT

A cluster of makeshift tents and shelters. Men lie everywhere SCREAMING, CURSING, CRYING, LAUGHING.

The DOCTORS work without anesthetic, the AIDES bandaging, splinting, carrying off body parts, piling up corpses.

FROM JESSE'S POV

Jesse's fatigue blur his eyes and ears so that everything looks and sounds as if he is in the middle of a nightmare.

REAR OF THE TENTS

Ambulances and trucks carry off the wounded to the hospitals.

Jesse sees Merriman being loaded into an ambulance, his left arm splinted, his undershirt bloody and torn. Jesse rushes up to him.

JESSE

Sir?

The aides continue loading the wounded into the ambulance, knocking Jesse out of the way to get past him.

JESSE

Sir?

Merriman, his glasses fogged, turns what look like blind eyes to Jesse. Jesse takes off the glasses, and using Merriman's tee-shirt, cleans them and puts them back on.

MERRIMAN

Sorry, I don't know your --

JESSE

Colton. Jesse. From Mississippi.

MERRIMAN

Mississippi to Madrid.

JESSE

Yes sir. Your arm --

MERRIMAN

Bullet in the left shoulder -- bone just pfft. You?

JESSE

Still one piece.

The aides finish loading the ambulance. They go to close the rear doors. Jesse stops them.

JESSE

Sir -- yes or no?

MERRIMAN

It's still our road, Jesse.

The doors close and the ambulance, belching blue smoke, pulls away. Jesse watches it pitch back and forth over the rough ground, then make the road and disappear.

From behind, Oliver's VOICE.

OLIVER (O.C.)

Jesse Colton.

Jesse spins around and sees Oliver. Jesse walks to him. Oliver hands him a rough cloth. Jesse wipes off his face, leaving a smear of blood and dirt.

Oliver fingers through the filthy ragged clothes Jesse wears and uncovers, under the tee-shirt, the red bandana stained with sweat. Oliver laughs.

OLIVER

Let's get you something to eat.

JESSE

How many dead?

OLIVER

Almost everybody's dead, Jesse. They almost wiped us out.

Jesse folds the cloth, hands it back to Oliver.

OLIVER

Come on.

Jesse, holding his gun, his coat soaked, his boots muddy, his breath steaming, simply starts to cry.

Oliver doesn't move, doesn't touch, doesn't urge Jesse along.

A man SCREAMS. The rain falls. The mayhem continues.

EXT. ALBACETE - A FEW DAYS LATER - DAY

Sunlight fills the plaza.

Jesse, wearing clean ragged clothes, sits on a fountain, soaks the red bandana, wipes his face, then ties it around his neck.

People crowd the plaza, vehicles of all kinds race through. Jesse sees new VOLUNTEERS wash through on their way to the training camps outside the city.

He gets up and walks. A small leather pouch hangs from his shoulder. Several OLD WOMEN point at him.

OLD WOMAN

Gracias, gracias, Señor. [Thank you, thank you.]

Jesse, smiling, nods, does a little bow. They LAUGH.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Jesse hears what sounds like a concert, with SHOUTS and WHISTLES and STOMPING. He follows the sound up the street.

EXT. THEATRE - DAY

Peeking through the front doors, Jesse sees PEOPLE of all ages, sizes, colors. They pass around food and drink, and the air HUMS with energy. He moves inside.

INT. THEATRE

On stage Jesse sees DANCERS and SINGERS, a GUITARIST. The dancers move in stylized, foot-stomping movements, the singers wail, and the guitarist's fingers fly.

EDGE OF STAGE

A very TALL LEAN WOMAN, head wound in a kerchief, wiry frame sheathed in a black dress, scans over the heads of the audience and sees Jesse standing in the doorway.

The lean woman whispers to her COMPANIONS, who also look and see Jesse. She says something to them. They say something back to her. She nods decisively.

ON THE STAGE

The performers comes to a crashing stop, and the CROWD erupts in APPLAUSE and WHISTLES and SHOUTS.

Immediately, the lean woman climbs onto the stage. She holds up her hands to speak, and everyone quiets down.

VOICE

Doña Ibárruri, hablemos [speak to us].

BY THE DOOR

Behind him Jesse hears a FEMALE VOICE in accented English.

VOICE

Do you know what she is going to say?

Jesse turns and stares into the high-cheekboned dark-eyed face of LUZ BAROJA Y NESSI, 20s, wearing a white cotton blouse, simple skirt, flat-heeled shoes, and a black shawl.

LUZ

I'll translate for you.

STAGE

Doña Ibárruri takes a stance, and the place hushes.

DOÑA IBÁRRURI

¡Madres! ¡Mujeres! ¡Hombres! ¡Niños!
Cuando tengamos otra vez un presente de
libertad, de paz y de bienestar, igualmente
sentido por todos los españoles, entonces
den le gracias. [Mothers! Women! Men!
Children! When we have once again a
present of freedom, love and well-being,
felt equally by all Spaniards, then give
thanks to him.]

With that, she points at Jesse, and as one the crowd turns to look at him leaning over, Luz whispering into his ear. Doña Ibárruri motions for Jesse to come to her.

DOÑA IBÁRRURI

Venga, mi amigo -- por favor. [Come,
friend -- please.]

BY THE DOOR

JESSE

(whispering)

You better come with me.

Luz takes him by the arm and laughs, leads him forward.

THROUGH THE CROWD

As they walk, the crowd APPLAUDS and CHEERS. The guitarist begins a wild piece, the singers wail. Jesse clings to Luz, who guides him onto the stage. Doña Ibárruri greets him and faces the AUDIENCE. Someone begins singing.

CROWD

Si los curas y fieles supieran la paliza que van a llevar, estarían todo el día gritando:

"Libertad, libertad, libertad" [If the priests and the faithful knew the beating they will get, they would be shouting all day long, "Freedom, freedom, freedom"]

Si los reyes de España supieran lo poquito que iban a durar, subirían al trono gritando:

"Libertad, libertad, libertad." [If the king and queen of Spain knew how short they'd last, they would raise to the throne shouting, "Freedom, freedom, freedom"]

Yo me cago en la manzanilla que bebió Queipo de Llano.

En la madre y el hermano de Franco y en Franco mismo. [I shit on the manzanilla that Queipo de Llano drunk. And I shit on the mother and the brother and on Franco himself.]

Yo me cago en el reinado de Juan Carlos de Borbón, en la iglesia disoluta y en los cien mil hijos de puta que adoran la religión. [I shit on the kingdom of Juan Carlos de Borbón, on the dissipated Church and the one hundred thousand sons of bitches that adore religion.]

Si los curas y fieles supieran la paliza que van a llevar, estarían todo el día gritando:

"Libertad, libertad, libertad" [If the priests and the faithful knew the beating they will get, they would be shouting all day long, "Freedom, freedom, freedom"]

Si los reyes de España supieran lo poquito que iban a durar, subirían al trono gritando:

"Libertad, libertad, libertad." [If the king and queen of Spain knew how short they'd last, they would raise to the throne shouting, "Freedom, freedom, freedom"]

After singing, the AUDIENCE, as one says to Jesse...

AUDIENCE

Gracias por todo. [Thank you for everything.]

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY

Jesse and Luz sip coffee.

Luz stares off into the distance. Jesse gives her shy glances. His leg jitters.

JESSE

That was real nice what they did at the theatre --

LUZ

What are you doing here?

JESSE

(keeping it light)

Having cof[fee] --

LUZ

(with more force)

What are you doing here?

(jabs table with finger)

Here? In this God-forsaken --

JESSE

I'm fighting to keep your government alive.

Luz arches an eyebrow at him.

LUZ

Bad as all the others. Next you will say "fascism."

JESSE

I am fighting against fascism --

LUZ

See -- I told you. Fascism -- a noun. A word. A gobble-gobble-gobble like a turkey. And this "word" -- this is why you were put on this earth? To come save a government full of tired depressed old men, like my father, the diplomat --

She makes a dismissive gesture.

LUZ

You will go off and be killed for old bones
and rusted nails --

Her eyes linger on Jesse, then look off, her face sour.

Jesse digs his Communist Party card and his picture of his wife
out his pouch, slides both across the table.

JESSE

It's not just your "government," Luz Baroja
y Nessi --

He taps the Party card with his finger.

JESSE

It's bigger than just "government" -- it's
about a whole world --

Luz picks up the photo and studies it.

LUZ

(refers to photo)

And another whole world?

JESSE

My wife -- she's dead -- murdered -- by
people where I come from --

PICTURE

Luz's finger traces the outline of Jesse and Marley.

JESSE (O.C.)

-- who don't have a dime's worth of
difference between themselves and this
Hitler or Mussolini --

TABLE

Luz puts the photo on top of the Party card and slides them back
across the table to Jesse, her face mixed with tenderness and
disgust.

LUZ

Sssh.

Jesse puts away the Party card and photo.

JESSE

Maybe why I'm on this earth is to ask you

why you're on this earth.

LUZ

You know what we say about Communists?

She hawks up a gob of spit and expertly lobs it into the street. This takes Jesse completely by surprise. She smiles at him.

LUZ

Spit anywhere around here, you hit a Communist.

JESSE

(pointing to gob)

Glad it went there --

LUZ

Only the anarchists ever really know what's what.

Jesse looks at the gob of spit, still fascinated. Luz gives him a direct playful Cheshire Cat half-smile.

LUZ

I have many other such anarchist skills.

JESSE

And I'm supposed to hate anarchists.

LUZ

All anarchists?

JESSE

Maybe it's not a good idea to hate anarchists at all.

Luz puts her hand on his forearm, pats it, rests her hand there. Jesse looks at the hand, then at Luz.

Luz gestures to him to lean towards her. Hesitantly, Jesse leans toward her. She touches his hair.

LUZ

Hair -- the mind underneath it --

She winds a piece of Jesse's hair around her finger.

LUZ

It's so --

JESSE

Nappy -- it's called nappy --

LUZ

(laughing)

Nappy!

(softer)

Nappy.

Luz hesitates, then strokes his cheek, his nose.

LUZ

Not only about ideals, Jesse Colton.

Jesse leans into her touch, then pulls slowly away.

JESSE

Maybe the ideals come out as stupid to you
--

LUZ

No --

JESSE

But in the time I been here -- I felt more
like a man than ever. That, Luz Baroja y
Nessi, is not nothing.

Luz lays her hand on the table, wiggles her fingers to get Jesse
to give her his hand -- which he does.

LUZ

When do you have to leave?

JESSE

Soon -- we start our training --

LUZ

Can I show you something?

Luz gets up, holding on to Jesse's hand.

LUZ

Come with me.

EXT. NARROW STREET

A dozen PEOPLE ring a porch on which sits an OLD POET reciting.

On the porch, half a dozen OLD MEN sit nodding to the words.

END OF STREET

Jesse and Luz walk up the street. They can hear the THICK
RESONANT VOICE of the old poet reciting.

Heads turn to look at them, then back to the old poet.

CROWD AT VERANDAH

They laugh at something the old poet says.

His VOICE continues behind their conversation.

LUZ

(whispering)

They call him El Caballero -- the Knight,
the Gentleman.

ON THE VERANDAH

The old poet's face, glowing, though his eyes are white marbles,
clouded over, blind.

CROWD

Jesse points to his own eyes, and Luz nods yes.

LUZ

(whispering)

He's reciting Don Quijote de la Mancha.
Our Bible. By heart. When the fever comes
upon him, he just has to speak it out to us
-- Look around you --

Jesse scans the crowd and among them he not only sees other
volunteer soldiers from other countries but a full mix of
humanity, and everyone's face is fixed on the old poet.

LUZ

(whispering)

Isn't this beautiful? All at once
listening to this beautiful old man -- at
peace --

She pulls Jesse around to face her directly.

LUZ

(whispering)

This is why I was put on this earth. This
is why.

INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

Sunlight shines through the slatted shutters. Luz slowly unties Jesse's red bandana, slides it off, lays it down.

She unbuttons Jesse's shirt, puts her hands on his chest. He touches her face. She leans forward to kiss him, but as her lips touch his, Jesse starts crying without restraint.

She sits. Jesse kneels and lays his head in her lap, his tears staining her skirt.

JESSE

I'm sorry.

LUZ

Sssh.

She strokes his back and lullabies him.

LUZ

Sssh. Sssh. Porque el del vicio de la virtud, angosto y trabajoso, acaba en vida, y no en vida que se acaba, sino en la que no tendrá fin...

Her voice SOOTHING him, her hand stroking his hair.

LUZ

For the narrow and exhausting road of virtue, Jesse Colton, ends in life, and not momentary life, but in life which has no end... Sssh, El Caballero.

She strokes his nappy hair.

EXT. PLAZA

A convoy truck waits, belching blue smoke. MEN climb in.

Oliver, by the truck, spies Jesse with Luz.

MAN IN TRUCK

Somebody got lucky.

Oliver starts out across the plaza.

SIDE OF THE PLAZA

Luz and Jesse stand close to each other. She takes something out of her own bag: a statue of Don Quixote made out of old house

keys. She hands it to Jesse. She touches his hair, then puts her hand on his shoulder and, with soft pressure, turns him and gently pushes him toward the truck -- and right into Oliver. Luz LAUGHS.

LUZ
(to Jesse)

Your brother?

JESSE
(sheepish)
Oliver, Luz Baroja y Nessi.

Oliver shakes Luz's hand.

OLIVER
His Spanish is better already. But I have to steal him from you.

LUZ
Adios, Caballero.

Jesse reaches back to touch her cheek but hesitates. She grabs his hand and lays it against her face, then lets it go. She turns and leaves without looking back.

Oliver looks at Jesse watching the figure of Luz disappear.

EXT. TRAINING GROUND - NIGHT

The Battalion at dinner in a large barn. A rough hearty meal in front of each man.

Jesse sits next to DAVID SMITH, 20s, longshoreman. Smith shows him his Victorinox knife's multiple blades and tools.

SMITH
The wife sent me this.

Smith opens out the various tools.

SMITH
With this I can cut bandages, open wounds, dig out shrapnel without having to leave the patient --

JESSE
(to the others)
If I get plugged --
(to Smith)
-- you're coming to me.

From somewhere the RINGING OF A BELL.

FRONT OF BARN

A SOLDIER rings a school bell to get everyone's attention.

With Oliver's help, Merriman, his left arm plaster-casted, stands on the table. The light glints off his glasses. He gestures for Oliver to join him. The men quiet down.

MERRIMAN

Pardon my broken wing here.

Everyone LAUGHS, then quiets down.

MERRIMAN

First -- and always -- I am proud of you.
No deep speeches -- you each know your own
private devils. I am just glad I'm with
you. Oliver --

Oliver steps forward.

MERRIMAN

Tonight I'm making official what most of
you already know -- I'm getting kicked
upstairs as chief of staff. It bothers me
to leave you, but you're going to be in
good hands.

Merriman turns to Oliver and shakes his hand.

MERRIMAN

Oliver, the command of the Abraham Lincoln
Battalion is now yours.

The men stand and cheer.

JESSE'S SEAT

Jesse climbs on the table and waves his arms for silence.

JESSE

Hold up! Hold up!

The men see Jesse and quiet down. Jesse gestures to Smith to hand him a bottle of wine. Jesse raises the bottle.

JESSE

Grab sumpin, y'all, and give up an "amen."

The men grab what is near and send up an "amen." They all raise up what's in their hands.

JESSE

To Oliver Lumet -- not just because he's a goddamn good soldier who's saved our asses, which needed a lot of saving.

MAN

The fucking truth.

JESSE

Do y'all realize what is happening here? Captain Merriman, do you know?

(addressing Oliver)

Oliver Lumet, you are the first black man in our history who gets to tell white soldiers what to do -- and they gotta do it. We all gotta do it.

The barn fills with silence as the men ponder this.

JESSE

(indicating all of them)

We -- we -- are the real American army. As mongrel as mongrel can get.

(raises bottle)

To Oliver. Because of you, Franco is gonna kiss our saved asses and whatever else he finds down there.

Everyone LAUGHS, then downs whatever they're holding. Jesse and Oliver toast each other from across the room.

SUPER: PLACARD: "JULY 1937, BRUNETE"

EXT. MOSQUITO HILL - DAY

The Battalion spreads out at the base of the hill. Along the ridge enemy troops are dug in. Heinkels and Savoias strafe the Battalion and artillery shells SCREAM overhead. The grass is burned brown and anything moving raises a veil of dust. The sun blazes overhead.

Behind the Battalion, the MEDICS wait.

Oliver, behind a small tree, scans the line of his troops. At his feet Jesse, wearing his red bandana, and a RUNNER crouch, waiting. Oliver leans down to them and shouts.

OLIVER

Tell everyone to watch for when I move.
When I move, everyone moves. Go!

Oliver watches Jesse and the runner scuttle away, separate, and pass the word.

He checks his watch, looks overhead, picks off a piece of bark. A bullet slams into the tree, but he doesn't flinch.

He looks closely at the bark, fingers it, then sticks it in his shirt pocket.

He waves his arms to the right, and then to the left.

LINE OF TROOPS

The men grab their guns. Sweat streaks their filthy faces, their BREATHING rasps. All eyes forward, all mouths set.

TREE

Oliver turns, still shielding himself against the tree, then steps out of his cover and starts moving up the hill.

LINE OF TROOPS

As one, the men run.

Immediately, the air CRACKS with rifle fire. SCREAMS of pain, bodies ripped apart.

HILL

Jesse sprints to catch up with Oliver, who encourages his men to keep moving forward.

And they move, finding shelter in a fold of ground, behind a corpse or a sharp rock.

BY OLIVER

Jesse reaches Oliver, and Oliver gives him one of his big grins. Just as Oliver turns, a bullet slams into Oliver's chest, knocking him back into and over Jesse.

TREE

They both roll down the hill until Oliver slams into the tree he had just hidden behind. Jesse crawls up to Oliver, sees the gaping bubbling wound in his chest.

FROM NEARBY

Smith and a SECOND MAN attend a wounded man.

JESSE (O.S.)

Smith! Smith!

Smith sees Jesse shouting while cradling Oliver.

SMITH

(to second man)

Move him back.

BY OLIVER

Smith scuttles over. Using his knife, he cuts away the shirt. He inspects the wound, pulls a compress out of his bag, applies it to the chest.

Smith whistles two sharp blasts and then a long one, and two MEN appear carrying a stretcher. They scramble forward. Jesse and Smith roll Oliver onto the stretcher.

Crouched, they half-carry, half-drag Oliver to the rear.

SUNKEN ROAD

To get to the road, the four slide down a four-foot drop. As they do, a SNIPER opens up on them.

Jesse automatically drops his end of the stretcher, swings his gun up, and gets off several rounds.

In the momentary lull, Smith and the two men, lifting the stretcher, scamper away while Jesse covers them.

BATTLEFIELD MEDICAL UNIT

A butcher shop, full of blood and dust. Smith, Jesse, and the two men rush in, set the stretcher down.

SMITH

We gotta go back.

They run out.

JESSE

David! David!

Smith turns. Jesse tosses him his rifle and ammunition. Smith salutes Jesse, then turns and leaves.

A DOCTOR hustles over, his rubber apron blood-spattered, specks of blood on one lens of his glasses.

JESSE

(indicating stretcher)

It's the battalion commander.

The doctor and Jesse kneel. The doctor lifts the bandage, and they both see the blood pool and not bubble.

The doctor pulls out a piece of tree bark, throws it away.

Jesse looks at the doctor, then back at the lifeless Oliver.

The doctor signals to two aides, who come over and take Oliver off the stretcher.

FROM JESSE'S POV

The aides put Oliver's body with other corpses gathered under a tent, then move away.

A haze of flies already gathers over and onto the bodies.

ON OLIVER'S FACE

A fly walks across Oliver's cheek, just below his open eye.

BATTLEFIELD UNIT

Jesse turns back to the doctor.

DOCTOR

(apologetic)

I have to --

Jesse gestures to the doctor to wait. He unties the bandana, takes the doctor's glasses and wipes the glasses clean. He hands them back, re-ties the bandana.

Jesse turns to leave.

DOCTOR

We could use you here.

Jesse, not looking back, shakes his head no. He finds a SOLDIER lying on the ground, his gun by his side, smoking a cigarette. Jesse walks up to him, kneels.

JESSE
(indicating gun)

Needing that?

SOLIDER
(British accent)

Not with that shot off.

Jesse sees the soldier's shattered foot. He grabs the gun and the ammunition pack, then stands.

SOLDIER

Wait!

The soldier hands his bayonet to Jesse.

Jesse takes it, slips it into his belt loop, then turns and walks into the blazing sun.

EXT. WOODS BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

Jesse weaves through the trees, stops, then steps, stops, moves, stops, until he hears what he wants: a long EXHALE. He can just make out the sniper sitting in his perch.

Jesse moves to his right to get a clearer shot, then levels his rifle and pulls off a round.

The CRASH of the falling sniper SHATTERS the thick hot air.

BY THE SNIPER

Jesse stares into the terrified dark sweating face of a Moor from the Army of Africa. He wears the red and yellow of Franco's army pinned above his heart. His legs twist underneath him, his head cocked at a grotesque angle.

Nothing moves in the thick air. Then Jesse grips the bayonet, kneels by the sniper. The sniper's eyes widen.

SNIPER
(hoarsely)

Mi cuello! Está roto! [My neck. It's broken.]

Jesse touches the point of the bayonet to the palms of the sniper's hands -- no response. He touches the bayonet to the sniper's neck, moves the head just slightly, sees the swollen lump of the broken neck, lets the head roll back.

SNIPER

Negro. Negro. Hermano. [Black. Black.
Brother.]

The insects BUZZ, the battle RUMBLES, the leaves RUSTLE as Jesse places the bayonet tip against the colors over the sniper's breast and rams the bayonet through the heart.

A look of utter surprise fills the sniper's face as he lets out a sharp EXHALE before the life flames out of his eyes.

Jesse stares at the open dead eyes. As he does, it seems the woods around him erupt with BUZZING and CHIRPING and SAWING, louder and louder and louder and louder.

Suddenly, frantically, he starts slapping all his pockets until he hits the leather pouch attached to his belt.

He rips it open, takes out the battered white envelope, takes out the picture of him with his wife, and stares and stares at it. As he does, his BREATHING slows down, his hands stop shaking, the HIGH-PITCHED SIZZLING fades away to the SILENCE of the hot windless woods.

He puts the picture away. He takes the sniper's knife, hooks it to his belt, walks off.

THROUGH THE WOODS

Jesse wanders through the woods, dragging the rifle by the barrel. His face is empty; his eyes hold no light.

EXT. TOWN OF BRUNETE

Jesse reaches a ridge that overlooks Brunete. Artillery and aerial bombing has leveled the town.

Jesse looks west, where the sun hovers just above the horizon. He looks east and can see the coming night.

Making no effort to hide himself, he starts down the ridge.

EXT. STREETS OF BRUNETE - DUSK

Townspeople fleeing, troops running through, the incoming shells, the sniper fire -- none of this touches Jesse as he wanders through the town, his face empty and body slack, the butt of the rifle bumping behind him on the street.

CEMETERY

At the entrance to the cemetery, Jesse can see the blue/red/yellow flag of the Republic hanging motionless from a pole stuck into the dirt of a new grave.

All around him Republican troops hide themselves behind gravestones and mausoleums.

From the surrounding woods and hills Jesse catches sight of Franco's troops firing into the cemetery.

A bullet CRACKS into the wall next to him, and instinct drops Jesse to the ground. The SHRIEKS of incoming artillery cut the air, and almost at the same moment he hears them, the shells THUD into the grave-filled earth.

Bones, bodies, caskets, all fly through air, the dead showering the living.

FROM JESSE'S POV

As if looking through gauze, Jesse thinks he sees a grand waltz.

The soliders and corpses and skeletons dancing stately and macabre. The shells explode like shooting stars, and the bullets become butterflies.

Jesse slides low along the wall, batting away the butterflies, avoiding the dancers who invite him to join them. More and more they grab at him, and more and more he pushes them away until he throws himself into a corner made by the wall and fence and SCREAMS and SCREAMS and SCREAMS.

CEMETERY - EARLY EVENING

Jesse's SCREAMS blend with the incoming shells as the vision rips away. He rolls himself over the wall, then scuttles into the lee of the building away from the cemetery.

EXT. HILLSIDE - BRUNETE - DUSK

Jesse looks back at the town and the fighting, then turns and makes his way up the hillside.

Jesse never looks for the HOWL of the incoming shell and so takes no cover when it SLAMS home. The concussion pitches him into a tree, knocking him breathless.

Gasping for air, he touches his ribs.

JESSE'S RIB

Jesse's finger touches the sharp point of a piece of shrapnel.
His hand comes away bloody.

COPSE OF TREES

Three Nationalist SOLDIERS step out, guns raised, and stop him.
But they see his black face and lower their guns.

SOLDIER 1

¡Moro hijo de puta! [Fucking Moor.]

SOLDIER 2

La lucha es pro allá, follón. [The
fighting's that way, coward.]

Jesse grins stupidly, shows them his bloody hand.

SOLDIER 3

Vale, que en mi vida he visto un mono
sangrando. [I didn't know monkeys could
bleed.]

Soldier 1 comes over, looks at Jesse's side, sees the tip of the
shrapnel. He reaches into his bag and comes up with a pair of
pliers. He grabs the tip of the shrapnel and pulls it out, then
drops it into Jesse's hand.

SOLDIER 1

Cógela, mono, llévatela a tu aldea
mugrienta. [Hey, monkey, take it back to
your filthy little village.]

(to others)

Vamos. [Come on.]

They leave Jesse and move toward the battle.

Jesse takes the bandana and stuffs it into his shirt to cover the
wound, puts the shrapnel in his pocket, moves away from the
battle.

ROCKY HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Thirsty, completely lost, Jesse stumbles along. The EXPLOSIONS
sound very far away.

REAR OF THE ENEMY LINES

Jesse sees a field flooded with light and hears the SHARP BARKS
of commands.

TO HIS LEFT

A SENTRY scrambles toward him. Jesse drops to the dirt.

FROM JESSE'S POV

Less than a yard from Jesse's face, Jesse can see the sentry's boot heel touch the ground first, the foot rock forward, and then the toe kick dirt as the sentry pushes off.

BLIND OF ROCKS

Jesse pulls himself into a tumble of rocks. Between them he can see the field.

FIELD

Generators on the backs of trucks power arclights, and their white light illuminates 400 captured Republicans. Franco's soldiers surround them, all of this overseen by an OFFICER standing on the hood of a truck.

At the officer's signal, several dozen more soldiers come forward holding axes.

BLIND OF ROCKS

Jesse watches the soldiers with the axes proceed to hack off the legs of the Republicans until 400 mutilated men bleed their life away.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

Jesse wanders even farther away. His body sags, his mouth swells with thirst, everything appears in a fog.

TO HIS RIGHT

Jesse catches a glimpse of a moving shadow.

TO HIS LEFT

Another shadow slips through the darkness.

Ahead of him, an impossible sound: Jesse hears water.

A SPRING

Jesse's hand scoops water from a stone basin encased in a grotto, on top of which stands a statue of the Virgin Mary.

As soon as he drinks, Jesse is overcome by his exhaustion, his wound, his trauma, and he falls backward.

FROM JESSE'S POV

Overhead, the stars wheel. And then they congeal into one face, then another, then several more peering down at him. As if from some great distance Jesse hears VOICES.

SPRING

Shadowed figures holding guns hover over Jesse. RIFLE FIRE from the darkness suddenly disperses them.

FROM JESSE'S POV

The faces disappear, and then, an even wilder vision: a TALL THIN MAN with white hair on a horse looks down at him.

JESSE

Don Quijote?

The last thing Jesse hears before he blacks out is LAUGHTER and the CRACK of gunfire.

FADE TO BLACKNESS

FADE IN

INT. TENT - A DAY LATER

Jesse opens his eyes to the shadows of leaves on canvas.

He tries to rise, but the pain in his left side stops him. Outside he can hear VOICES LAUGHING and ARGUING.

An effort gets him onto an elbow. Another effort, and on his hands and knees, breathing deeply. He crawls to the opening and pops his head through. The stained red bandana hangs from his neck.

EXT. TENT - DAY

FIVE PEOPLE around a fire see the head pop through and immediately fall silent.

OPENING OF THE TENT

Jesse sees four white men and one black woman staring..

FROM THE FIRE

JAMES, 40s, rough-hewn, speaks in his thick Irish accent.

JAMES

Like a babe from his mama's twat.

LAUGHTER, then silence. Another VOICE, with a Spanish accent, from his right and out of his line of vision.

VOICE (O.C.)

A niño, yes -- he wants to fight to protect the government.

TENT

The five make a semi-circle facing Jesse. PIERRE, 20s, speaks.

PIERRE

You know him?

TENT OPENING

Jesse looks to his right, but the sun blinds him until the PERSON moves to block it. He sees LUZ.

LUZ

(to Jesse)

Hey, nappy. I told you it was a new world.

(to the others)

He's American.

The black woman, AWAGU, 20s, spits into the dust.

AWAGU

Another American?

Pierre looks around.

PIERRE

Where is our young Hemingway?

Pierre looks at ROMULO and REMO, twin brothers, 20s.

PIERRE

Donde está el Hemingway? [Where is our Hemingway?]

ROMULO AND REMO

(shrugging)

No sabemos. [We don't know.]

A SHOUT. Instantly, they grab their weapons and disperse.

Walking into view, a dead rabbit in each hand, a triumphant smile on his face is DEWEY MARLOWE, 20s, a rifle slung across his shoulder and a battered fedora on his head.

He looks completely and utterly happy.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - LATER

Rabbit meat on plates, boiled potato, bread. The trees around the eight throw down their shade.

Marlowe drops his plate, pulls a notebook and a pencil from his kit bag. He flips pages, looks at his notes, licks his pencil tip.

PIERRE

Oop, here he goes.

MARLOWE

(to Pierre)

Careful -- mind at work here. Now you guys save this black man's bacon from the Franco-ites -- Franco-ists --

JAMES

(smiling, to Jesse)

This white man just called you a pig part.

MARLOWE

Did not.

PIERRE

(enunciating)

He-ming-way.

MARLOWE

Told you, "Dewey Marlowe"'s gonna be bigger on Broadway. Now --

LUZ

(to Marlowe)

Local Falange -- Carlistos --

MARLOWE

(writing)

Falange -- right --

LUZ

(to Jesse)

They wait for Franco the Savior.

ROMULO

(spitting)

Falange -- viboras. [Falange -- snakes.]

RAMO

(spitting)

Viboras, sí. [Snakes, yes.]

MARLOWE

(finishing writing)

Carlistos -- great. Now, Brunete --

Jesse meets the seven faces looking at him. As he speaks, Luz translates for Romulo and Remo.

JESSE

Brunete. My best friend Oliver Lumet had his heart blown open running up Mosquito Hill.

LUZ

The one I met.

JESSE

The one you met. For your government.

Jesse wipes his plate with the bread, chews the bread.

JESSE

(directly at Marlowe)

A sniper pinned us down when we took Oliver for medical help.

Jesse chews some more. Everyone waits for him to speak.

JESSE

I went back for him. I shot him, he fell -- broke his neck. No danger to anyone. But I took a bayonet and I shoved it through a defenseless man's heart.

Everyone stays silent. Marlowe scribbles in his pad.

JAMES

He was the enemy you came to fight.

AWAGU

The thing that was the right thing to do.

Jesse nods his head, finishes his bread.

JESSE

(looking at Luz)

Then why do I feel like an animal?

SOUND of a GALLOPING HORSE, and weapons leap into everyone's hands, including Jesse's. An OLD MAN, white hair streaming, rides up on his emaciated nag.

OLD MAN

Soldados. [Soldiers.]

PIERRE

Plan B, as you Americans say.

Almost instantly they break camp.

EXT. FIELD

Jesse finds himself moving off at a trot with the others across the open field. He grips his side in pain. Marlowe comes over, takes Jesse's gun off his shoulder and slings it over his own, takes the camp equipment Jesse carries.

MARLOWE

You can pay me like they pay me -- you can give me stories.

JESSE

(gasping)

I don't have to give you nothing.

MARLOWE

(hitching up his load)

Who said anything about "have to," man?
We're all about liberty around here -- even
if it kills us. Come on.

Jesse moves painfully forward. Marlowe follows, CLANKING like a tinker's wagon.

FROM JESSE'S POV

From a quick glance over his shoulder, Jesse sees the white-haired old man stay behind, keeping watch. Then he rides away in the opposite direction, waving his battered hat and yelling.

EXT. HILLTOP OVERLOOKING VILLAGE

They all skid to a stop in a cloud of dust.

Below them is a cluster of houses and fields, dominated by a church. In the distance they can hear GUNSHOTS. Luz points.

EXT. VILLAGE

Villagers, guns in hand, surround the church tower, from which a Nationalist sniper fires on the crowd.

EXT. HILLTOP

JAMES

Well, me hearties, what say you all?

Down the hill they go.

EXT. VILLAGE - BUILDING

An OLD MAN sees the ragtag group moving toward him. He shoulders an old Mauser and SHOUTS at them.

OLD MAN

Anarchista, comunista, o socialista?
[Anarchist, communist, or socialist?]

Luz approaches with hand raised, black bandana in her hand.

LUZ

Somos anarquistas. [We are anarchists.]

MARLOWE

(whispering)

You sure you want to tell him --

The old man points at Jesse, at his bandana.

LUZ

(to Jesse)

Take it off.

She hands him her black bandana. Jesse takes off the red, stuffs it into his pocket, puts on the black. The old man lowers his gun.

OLD MAN

Buena respuesta. Necesitamos su ayuda.
[Good answer. We need your help.]

LUZ

La tiene, señor. [You have it, sir.]

Luz signals, and they neatly pile up all their equipment except their guns. Luz confers with the old man.

BY THE EQUIPMENT

Jesse sees Marlowe take out a Leica.

MARLOWE

(grinning)

I'm gunning for Robert Capa, too.

PIERRE

His huevos are bigger than his brain.

JAMES

That wouldn't be hard.

ROMULO AND REMO

(grabbing their crotches)

Huevos! [Balls!]

Luz walks up to the group.

LUZ

He's the mayor. Sniper up there. Soldiers in the bakery -- they have the baker's family. Other soldiers spread out in different houses.

AWAGU

They got cut off.

PIERRE

Nothing to lose.

JAMES

All right.

(to Romulo and Remo)

Sígame. Vamos a buscar el pan. [Follow me -- we are going to get some bread.]

(to the others)

See you for dinner.

James, Romulo, and Remo speak briefly to the Mayor, then move out. Luz turns to Jesse, and they survey the steeple. Marlowe hovers around them, camera in hand, camera bag slung over his shoulder.

JESSE

I'll have to get inside.

Jesse looks directly at Luz.

JESSE

And why am I going to do this?

Luz leans in to whisper in Jesse's ear.

LUZ'S MOUTH

LUZ

(smiling)

You have been re-born -- you have found me again -- you're fighting for something real now -- don't let Oliver die for nothing -- how much better do you want life to be?

BY THE EQUIPMENT

Luz and Jesse share a look. Then Jesse reaches into the equipment to get himself ready.

MARLOWE

I want in on this.

JESSE

You have a gun?

Marlowe holds up his camera.

MARLOWE

I have to go with you.

JESSE

(pointing to camera)

Got any dead bodies in it?

MARLOWE

Not up close.

JESSE

(shaking his head)

Christ.

(to Luz)

Tell the Alcalde -- on my signal, have everyone pour fire up there for cover.

Luz leaves to speak to the Mayor. Jesse watches, a soft look on his face he tries to hide. He turns to Marlowe.

JESSE

Get in my way, I will shoot you.

MARLOWE

No you won't -- you need me. You don't know it yet, but you need me.

JESSE

Just stay out of my way, white boy.

MARLOWE

You're so full of shit.

Jesse raises his hand and then drops it. Gunfire erupts.

EXT. BACK OF THE CHURCH - DAY

Jesse sprints along the wall, looking for an opening. Marlowe trots behind him.

He stops at a window with wooden shutters.

Across the seam he sees a wooden bar holding the shutters closed.

He slips out his knife and slides the blade into the crack.

EXT. BAKERY

James, Romulo, and Remo skirt the back of the building.

UNDER OPEN WINDOW

Romulo pops his head over the sill, then pops it down. He holds up four fingers.

ROMULO

Soldados. [Soldiers.]

Remo pops up and down. Five fingers.

REMO

La familia. [The family.]

James scuttles to the back door, tries the latch. To his surprise it lifts. He cracks the door. He grins at Romulo and Remo and cocks his head as if to say, "Let's go, mates."

EXT. FANCY HOUSE

Luz, Awagu, and Pierre, followed by three VILLAGERS carrying hand scythes, slip around the corner. Luz runs her hand over the fancy tile work on the outside.

They flatten along the wall as a SOLDIER'S STEPS move along the roof -- but because of the eave, he can't see them.

One villager flinches, and the scythe rattles against the wall. The FOOTSTEPS stop, then move toward the roof edge.

FROM LUZ'S POV

The soldier's face appears over the eave, upside-down. She quickly raises her gun and fires.

INT. CHURCH

Jesse and Marlowe creep towards the tower stairs.

TOP OF THE STAIRS

Jesse's eyes rise above the level of the top stair.

FROM JESSE'S POV

Dark sweat on the sniper's jacket runs the length of his spine, with dark wet half-moons under his arms.

A hail of bullets eat at the stone of the tower, and he drops to the floor for protection. As he does, his eyes catch Jesse's eyes, and he jerks his rifle up, fires.

TOWER

The shot misses. Jesse, his gun aimed, climbs the stairs, Marlowe behind, his camera up. Jesse shakes his head "no" at the sniper as he oozes forward. The sniper, his face twisted by terror, puts his gun down, raises his hands.

Without preamble, Jesse shoots him in the head.

MARLOWE

No!

A frozen moment between the two of them, their eyes locked. Marlowe looks at Jesse with a mixture of fear and disgust.

MARLOWE
(hoarsely)

You bastard...

Jesse, hard-faced, but also with a look of sudden doubt, nods toward the corpse.

Marlowe lifts his camera, takes four shots, each from a different angle.

Jesse steps to the parapet, waves.

EXT. VILLAGE

The Mayor and the people, seeing Jesse wave, CHEER.

INT. TOWER

Jesse puts his gun down, takes the sniper by the lapels of his uniform, and slides him up the wall.

MARLOWE

What're you doing?

Jesse now has the body almost over the parapet.

MARLOWE

You can't do that! You can't do that!

Jesse gives him a dead-eyed stare.

The effort of lifting the body causes Jesse's rib wound to open -
- a flower of blood blooms on his shirt.

Marlowe caps the lens, then stuffs the camera into his bag. He walks over to the body and grabs it by the lapels, right next to Jesse's hands. He jerks it out of Jesse's hands and heaves the body over his shoulder.

MARLOWE

He was somebody's son. He's still a
goddamn human being.

Marlowe TROMPS down the stairs, carrying the corpse.

FROM JESSE'S POV

Jesse watches Marlowe lug the body down the stairs.

MARLOWE

(muttering)

Fucking guys all talk about their fucking
ideals --

Marlowe and the body disappear.

Nothing but dust motes dance in the sunlight.

EXT. TOWER

Marlowe appears with the sniper's body. The CROWD rushes forward and drags the body off Marlowe and away through the dust, hacking at it as they do.

Marlowe, breathing heavily, watches the butchery. Jesse comes up behind. Jesse lays a hand on Marlowe's shoulder, squeezes it, then walks toward the crowd. Marlowe follows.

EXT. BAKERY

James, Romulo, and Remo bring out the baker's family. The baker carries a cleaver and a soldier's severed head.

INT. BAKERY

The four Nationalist soldiers, one beheaded, lay on the bakery floor, their blood mixing with the white flour.

EXT. FANCY HOUSE - INTERIOR COURTYARD

Luz, Awagu, and Pierre hold several soldiers at bay.

The three villagers escort the oligarch, his wife, and their daughter out of the house. The soldiers then follow.

EXT. VILLAGE PLAZA

Jesse and Marlowe arrive at the plaza just as James, Romulo, and Remo arrive with the baker's family.

The baker holds up the severed head, and the CROWD cheers.

Luz, Awagu, and Pierre march the soldiers into the plaza along with the oligarch's family.

In a sudden frenzy, the villagers rush forward and grab the soldiers and the family.

They put them up against a wall, and summarily execute them, the Mayor giving the order to fire.

Marlowe takes pictures of everything.

Jesse, Luz, and the others watch, exchange looks.

EXT. INTERIOR COURTYARD

The villagers crowd into the courtyard, some open-mouthed at the luxury they see. The Mayor commandeers a large table and its

chairs from inside the house. The Mayor sits, the elders sit, and the rest gather around.

The baker puts the severed head in the middle of the table.

Jesse, Luz, Marlowe, and the others hang to the outside. Luz translates for Jesse. Marlowe takes his notes.

MAYOR

No más la cabeza de la Hidra. ¡La cortamos y así se queda! [The head of the hydra is gone -- we cut it off, it stays off!]

Laughter and smiles all around.

MAYOR

¡Bótala! [Get rid of it!]

The baker grabs it by the hair and tosses it high over the roof. A stain of blood remains on the table. The Mayor BANGS the table to get everyone's attention.

MAYOR

¡Oigan todos! El cura está bien muerto, Don Valera está bien muerto, pero la tierra está aquí. ¿Qué quieren que hagamos con ella? [All right -- here are my words. The priest is gone, Don Valera is gone, but the land is still here. What do we do?]

Everyone falls silent, no one meeting anyone's eyes.

BY THE WALL

Jesse leans down to Luz to whisper. Marlowe, overhearing, leans into them both.

MARLOWE

(exaggerated Southern drawl)

They're breakin' up the plantation, boy.

Jesse looks at Marlowe, then Luz. Luz nods yes. Marlowe nods yes.

Jesse looks back at the villagers, his face softening for the first time in a long time.

TABLE

Finally, LARGO, wearing a vest, raises his hand.

MAYOR

Largo, ¡hombre, que no te quedes mudo!
[Largo, don't hold your tongue.]

LARGO

La tierra del patrón...por qué no la
dividimos... [The patrón's land -- we
could divide it up --]

General MURMURS of agreement.

LARGO

(encouraged)

Le damos una parcela a Francisco, otra a
Juan... [And give a piece to Francisco
over there, and Juan --]

BELARMINO, 50s, eye-patch, grizzled, HISSES in disgust.

BELARMINO

(points to patch)

Este me lo gané en Asturias, en 1934, y me
da derecho a llamarte follón. [I got this
in Asturias, in 1934, and it gives me the
right to call you a shit!]

The crowd is shocked and pleased by the confrontation.

LARGO

(appealing to Mayor)

Alcalde --

BELARMINO

(appealing to CROWD)

Por supuesto Largo quiere dividir la tierra
y darsela a los que ya tienen campos porque
lo que siempre ha querido es ser un señor
siempre con esas ínfulas. [Of course Largo
wants to chop it up and give it out to
everyone who's already got land because he
really wants to be a Don himself. Always
with his airs --]

ISABEL, 50s, kerchiefed, stout, slams her hand down.

ISABEL

Joder, que ustedes nunca agotan sus
querellas. [And always a goddamn pissing
contest between you two.]

LARGO

¡Tengo derecho a mi tierra y ganarme más campos si puedes! [I have the right to keep my land and get more if it if I can!]

ISABEL

(pointing her finger)

¡Nunca más! [Not any more.]

(to the crowd)

Oiganlo ustedes, también. Nunca más se harán las cosas de esa manera. [And you all know it, too. Not doing it that way any more.]

The crowd settles down, thinking, nodding yes or no, whispering among themselves.

ISABEL

La decision es tan simple y evidente como los pelos de sus narices. [The choice is as plain as the hairs in your noses.]

LARGO

¿Qué decision? [What choice?]

ISABEL

O bien hacemos las cosas a la antigua o cambiamos el rumbo. [We either do it the old way or we don't.]

LARGO

Estoy de acuerdo...nuevos rumbos me seducen. [I don't disagree -- new ways are good.]

ISOBEL

¡Bórralo todo! [Wipe it all away.]

LARGO

Gente, como nosotros con lo que tenemos podríamos hacerlo más eficiente. [But people like me, owning what we own, we can be more efficient --]

ISABEL

Y ganar más dinero -- eso es todo lo que tu, y Francisco, y Juan... [And make more money -- that's all you and Francisco and Juan --]

LARGO

Que tiene de malo -- [What's wrong with -
-]

ISABEL

-- y los de vuestra calaña desean -- [--
and the ones like you want --]

LARGO

Que tiene de malo ganar -- [What's wrong
with making --]

ISABEL

(sarcastic)

"Ganar más dinero" -- hay cosas mejores en
esta vida. Trabajar juntos por un ideal --
["Make more money" -- there are better
things in life. There is working together
for the greater good --]

VOICE

¡Ya se subió al pùlpito! [Oop, now she's
in her pulpit!]

ISABEL

¡Buen piropo para una atea! [A nasty thing
to say to an atheist!]

Everyone LAUGHS.

BELARMINO

¡Oigan todos! [Pay attention!]

Belarmino points to beyond.

BELARMINO

¡Creen que a la mierda de Franco y su
caterva les preocupan los detalles? Lo que
quieren es restauron el viejo orden y no
les importaría aniquilarnos para
conseguirlo. Yo digo que la tierra de
patrón nos pertenece a todos. Siempre nos
ha pertencido porque la hicimos rica con
nuestro sudor y sangre. Y digo más --
[You think Franco's shits care about fine
points? They want the old ways, and
they'll kill us to bring them back. I say
this: the patrón's land belongs to all of
us. It always belonged to all of us
because it was our sweat that made it rich.
And I say this, too --]

(pointing to Largo)
-- tu tierra también nos pertenece.
[-- your land belongs to us.]
(to Juan and Francisco)
Y la tuya, también ¡No más propiedad
privada -- colectivizar! [And yours, too.
No more private property -- collectivize!]

LARGO
¡Eso no está bien! [That's not right!]
(appealing to Mayor)
¡Eso no va! [That's not right!]

Everyone talks at once, Largo appealing, Isobel and Bellarmino also making their points.

The Mayor POUNDS on the table again and again until a tense silence falls.

The Mayor turns to Jesse, Luz, and the others. He points to Jesse as he speaks to the crowd.

MAYOR
Este hombre fue un esclavo en su patria y
vino a luchar con nosotros, por nuestra
causa. [This man was a slave in his own
country and he comes to fight for us.]
(to Jesse)
¿Que opinas tu? [What you do think we
should do?]

Luz translates the Mayor's words. Marlowe writes.

FROM JESSE'S POV

The rough faces of the villagers peer at him. He notes the richness of the house.

BY THE WALL

Jesse, sheepish, steps forward into the silence. Luz translates for him.

JESSE
I don't think I have the right to say
anything here.

MAYOR
(to Luz)
Luchó por nosotros y eso lo hace uno de los
nuestros. [He defended us -- that makes

him one of us.]

JESSE

Let me tell you a story, then -- you can do what you want with it. Once I had four uncles -- cuatro tios -- with my father they owned land together. They shared everything -- good, bad, money, sorrow -- everything.

As Luz finishes translating the sentence, Jesse scans the experienced faces turned up to listen to him.

JESSE

All I can tell you is that it was the happiest time of my life. Not easy. They fought like dogs about everything. But nobody was at the mercy. Nobody was alone. Nobody went hungry.

BELARMINO

¿Qué les sucedió? [What happened to them?]

JESSE

Our own fascists took the land from them. It's an old story in my country.

The Mayor points to the rest of the crew.

MAYOR

¿Qué va con el resto de ustedes? [What about the rest of you?]

James, laughing, gives the anarchist salute, and Pierre, Romulo, Remo, and Awagu give the salute as well. Luz, looking at Jesse, also gives the salute.

Many in the crowd also give the salute. The Mayor, SLAMMING the table again, stands.

MAYOR

¡Vale! La hora ha llegado. Votamos, eh?
¿Tierra y libertad, o tierra y dinero?
[All right -- the time has come. We vote,
eh? Land and freedom, or land and money.]

LARGO

¡No eso justo! [That's not fair!]

MAYOR

(ignoring him)

¿Tierra y libertad? [Land and freedom?]

Almost all the hands shoot up.

MAYOR

¿Tierra y dinero? [Land and money?]

Largo and a few others raise their hands, defeated.

MAYOR

¡Colectivizar! [We collectivize!]

APPLAUSE, SHOUTS of approval. Jesse looks at Luz, and she smiles as if completely satisfied.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Jesse, James, Luz, Awagu, and Pierre stare into the fire. Romulo and Remo, curled around each other, sleep. A wineskin passes. Marlowe wears his fedora, scribbles in his notebook.

Overhead, at a great height, they hear planes.

JAMES

Heinkels. Not good.

(to Jesse)

So that's what your fellow communists, your comrade Stalinists, are doing.

LUZ

James --

JESSE

That's not true.

JAMES

The man does not even know himself.

LUZ

Leave him alone.

JAMES

They're killing off the anarchists, chum -- they're cutting the balls off the socialists, and even cannibalizing themselves --

JESSE

You're wrong.

JAMES

And they're killing off the revolution.

JESSE

That can't be true.

JAMES

Then let it not be true for you.

(to Marlowe)

Hey, Hemingway --

MARLOWE

(without looking up)

Marlowe --

JAMES

Who in the land of pig-faced capitalism is gonna want to read about a bunch of anarchists? They shoot anarchists there, too!

An embarrassed moment. James looks hard at Jesse.

JAMES

I got the wine in my tongue --

AWAGU

And your head.

JAMES

-- but it's still true. You watch --

(pointing to them all)

You know we're on the chopping block. We are all alone out here.

James takes the wineskin but doesn't drink.

JAMES

It's hard when you love something so much -
- an idea you'll die for -- then to have
these fucking "comrades" --

AWAGU

I just want to kill Italians for Ethiopia.

PIERRE

Germans for me.

JAMES

(laughing)

For me -- they're all Brit wankers from
northern Ireland.

(to Jesse)

And you? Who are these guys to you?

Jesse stares into the fire, then looks at them all. Luz puts a
gentle hand on his arm.

JESSE

White people hung my wife from a tree and
burned her to ashes.

Marlowe closes his notebook.

MARLOWE

That's why they're not going to want to
know about any of you suckers. A Negro
whose wife was lynched fighting for freedom
in a foreign land against white folks --
that is prime stuff.

Abruptly, Jesse gets up and walks off into the darkness.

JAMES

Your bedside manner's a fucking marvel.

MARLOWE

I learned everything from you.

The silence broken by the CRACKLING of the fire, the SNORES of
Romulo and Remo.

Luz follows Jesse.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Jesse looks at the stars. He sees Luz approach but looks back to
the stars. Luz stands next to him, puts her arm through his.

JESSE

Is James telling the truth?

She sits, pats the ground for Jesse to sit beside her.

LUZ

Yes. Jailing and killing all the
anarchists they can get their hands on --
orders from Stalin -- militia units like
ours either have to join the army or we get

no weapons, ammunition, supplies -- I'm not supposed to even be carrying a gun -- yes, me! -- women are being turned back into maids --

Jesse stares into the darkness.

JESSE

I am so far from home.

They both look up as Marlowe comes up to them.

MARLOWE

Mind if I join you?

LUZ

You're already here.

Marlowe sits.

MARLOWE

The world out there thinks "the war for ideals." "The war of poets." There's no revolution here -- the Communists have choked that off.

LUZ

Not all of it.

MARLOWE

(pointing to village)

How long do you think they'll last, Luz? Franco could spit on us, he's so close. And the Communists will be coming from Valencia soon enough.

JESSE

Enough!

He turns an angry face to them. Luz puts a hand on him, then gets up, brushes off her pants, and walks back to the fire. Marlowe watches her walk back.

MARLOWE

I wrote about a lynching once --

Jesse does not look at him.

MARLOWE

Yeah. I am really sorry about your wife, Jesse. What a country, huh?

Marlowe gets up, starts to walk away, then turns back.

MARLOWE

Today -- up in the tower --

But he sees Jesse's shoulders shake. Marlowe squats in front of Jesse and sees that Jesse is crying.

Marlowe pulls down his shirt sleeve and uses the end of it to wipe Jesse's face. Jesse moves Marlowe's hand away.

Marlowe gets up to leave.

JESSE

You write all this down. Everything. All of it.

Marlowe squats back down in front of Jesse.

MARLOWE

I'm gonna write the truths that people tell me. I'm hoping that covers it.

Marlowe gets up.

MARLOWE

Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable -- that's me.

Marlowe walks away. Jesse's tears catch the firelight.

EXT. ROAD

A convoy of trucks GRUMBLES along.

EXT. FIELD

The GROWL of the trucks comes on the air. Jesse quickly stands.

FIRE

As they hear the trucks, everyone becomes instantly alert. Pierre shakes Romulo and Remo awake.

FIELD

Jesse races until he can see the line of trucks move inexorably toward the village.

FIRE

Jesse runs up just as James is dumping dirt on the embers. Already the lead trucks are moving into the village, and they can see the soldiers pour off the trucks.

JAMES
The fascists have arrived.

MARLOWE
But they're coming from Valencia.

EXT. VILLAGE

Under the harsh headlights, the SOLIDERS start moving through the village rousting people from their homes.

EXT. FIELD

They now hear GUNFIRE and SCREAMS.

JAMES
We can't stay here.

They move into the darkness. Jesse lingers, Marlowe by his side. They see the flames of the first house set on fire.

EXT. ROAD - DAWN

HOOFBEATS behind them. The white-haired old man comes flying down the road and disappears around the bend. Immediately on his heels they hear the convoy. They melt into the field.

FROM THE FIELD

From various trucks and tanks they see the flag of the Republic, not the flag of the Nationalists.

They rise up out of the field and walk toward the convoy. The convoy comes to a halt.

INT. LEAD TRUCK

A COLONEL, his military cap bearing a red star, sees the rag-tag group wearing their black bandanas moving through the field. He gets out of the truck.

EXT. ROAD

The colonel, now joined by his AIDE, watches them walk through the field. He gestures to the soldiers in the truck behind him.

Half a dozen leap from the truck and seize the eight of them.
All the soldiers sport the red star on their uniforms.

FIELD

The soldiers strip the eight of their weapons and frog-march them
to the colonel.

ROAD

The eight stand in front of the colonel, who looks them over with
a cold eye. He spits into the dust.

COLONEL
Anarquistas. [Anarchists.]

He looks back along the line of his trucks and tanks.

LUZ
(fierce whisper to Marlowe)
Say something or you'll die with us.

COLONEL
(to Luz)
Cállete. [Shut up.]

Luz steps forward.

LUZ
¿Qué piensas hacer con nosotros? [What are
you going to do with us?]

Without hesitation, the colonel pulls his pistol and shoots Luz
through the eye. Luz's body drops like a stone.

COLONEL
Mátalos a todos. [Kill them all.]

MARLOWE
I'm a journalist! Periodisto! I'm a
journalist! From the United States! ¡Los
Estados Unidos!

He holds up his camera bag and notebook. The colonel gives him a
long slow look.

COLONEL
(in English)
You know Paul Robeson?

MARLOWE

Not personally. But I've heard him sing.

COLONEL

He sang to us -- he's a good Communist.
You American, too?

JESSE

Yes.

COLONEL

You look just like Jesse Owen -- a very
fast man -- I love jazz. Harlem.

The colonel's aide whispers in his ear. The colonel points to
Marlowe and Jesse.

COLONEL

Put them in the truck.

Two soldiers wrestle Marlowe and Jesse toward a truck.

MARLOWE

(shouting)

Colonel, Colonel, they all work with me --
they're my assistants --

But before Marlowe finishes speaking, James, Pierre, Awagu,
Romulo, and Remo have been executed.

FROM THE TRUCK

Marlowe and Jesse stare at the corpses of their friends.

The passing convoy covers them with dust.

EXT. ROAD - HOUR LATER

The convoy halts. A soldier indicates to Jesse and Marlowe to
get off the truck and follow him.

BY THE LEAD TRUCK

The colonel leans out his window.

COLONEL

The base for the International Brigades --
that way. You should reach it without much
trouble. Say hello to Paul Robeson for me.

The colonel's truck moves on, followed by the other trucks in the convoy, until they all pass out of sight.

In the heat and silence, Jesse and Marlowe stand very still.

Jesse takes off his black bandana, kneels, scoops a handful of rough rocky dirt into it, then ties it up and puts it in his pocket.

Jesse starts walking down the road.

Marlowe hitches up his gear and starts out after Jesse.

Jesse takes Marlowe's camera bag off Marlowe's shoulder and slings it over his own shoulder.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

Jesse and Marlowe sit on hard benches, rocked by the rough travel, surrounded by Spaniards of all ages and classes.

EXT. CUSTOMS HOUSE - BORDER - DAY

French soldiers rifle through their belongings, frisk them. One opens the bandana of dirt. He looks at Jesse, then carefully reties the bandana and puts it in Jesse's hand.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

The French countryside flows by. Jesse and Marlowe sit knee-to-knee, Jesse staring, Marlowe writing, occasionally looking up at Jesse's blank and impassive face.

EXT. DECK OF SHIP - DAY

Jesse at the rail, looking out over the Atlantic. Marlowe stands next to him, holding onto his fedora. The wind whips over them.

INT. STEERAGE CABIN - EVENING

A cramped space, with metal bunkbeds bolted to one wall and a small table and chair. A lightbulb glares. Jesse lies on the lower bunk while Marlowe sits at the desk and writes. Marlowe throws down his pencil, pounds his fist.

MARLOWE

I can't get it to work!

Rifles through papers.

MARLOWE

Notes, impressions, but it's like --
(rubbing his face)
Hemingway's just churning it out --

FROM JESSE'S POV

Jesse stares at the metal netting of the upper bunk, the dirty mattress ticking.

JESSE

You want a real story 'bout Spain?

CABIN

Jesse swings his legs over the side of the bunk, and he and Marlowe are barely a foot apart.

MARLOWE

I could use a real story.

JESSE

I'm going back.

MARLOWE

Back?

JESSE

To Mississippi.

MARLOWE

No you're not.

He searches Jesse's face.

MARLOWE

No you're not!

JESSE

I went all the way to there just to fight
the people who live in my town.

MARLOWE

No you didn't! That's crazy! What -- bang
bang? They ain't like the guy in the
tower!

JESSE

No.

Marlowe and Jesse lock eyes. Marlowe searches Jesse's face.

MARLOWE
(realizing)

No, you're not.

JESSE
I'll need a friendly witness.

The words hang in the air. In the silence the ship CREAKS.

JESSE
Think about it --

MARLOWE
You're just using me.

JESSE
-- front page -- all American --

MARLOWE
You're just using me.

JESSE
-- yet strange, too, you know -- love and
death -- you got it all --

Marlowe looks at him straight in the eye, then LAUGHS.

MARLOWE
You can't -- you can't -- it'd be like --

JESSE
They've killed, and I've killed, and it
ain't done anything for either of us.

MARLOWE
You could go anywhere -- Paris -- the
women'll love your ass to death there.

JESSE
Uh-huh.

MARLOWE
Africa -- South America -- Caribbean --

JESSE
But I want to go home. I want to go home
to Marley.

Jesse smiles.

JESSE

You said, afflict the comfortable, comfort
the afflicted, not me --

MARLOWE

I didn't say yes.

Marlowe turns back to his writing.

MARLOWE

I didn't say yes!

But Marlowe doesn't write. He stares at the paper.

EXT. TRAIN - DUSK

Jesse and Marlowe, wearing knapsacks, trot alongside a boxcar,
then heave themselves through the open door.

INT. BOXCAR

Faces look up at them when they crawl in, then look away.

JESSE

Bulls been here?

HOBO

Kicked a nigger off.

JESSE

I'm his replacement.

HOBO

Dining car's closed for the night.

Jesse and Marlowe sit down. Jesse watches the HOBOS pitch back
and forth as the train plows through the night.

EXT. TOWN LIMITS - DAY

A sign announces "Entering _____."

EXT. GROVE OF TREES

Jesse and Marlowe take cover.

JESSE

There's a boarding house near the town hall
-- you can get a room there. Woman named
Swanson runs it -- her son is the Mayor.

MARLOWE

And I'm just a young writer on a journey
through the South.

JESSE

Wouldn't want to lie, would you?

Jesse reaches into his knapsack and pulls out a leather pouch
that he opens. Inside is the envelope with the picture of Jesse
and Marley, along with papers, clippings, a Mass card, and Luz's
statue of Don Quixote. He hands it all to Marlowe.

Marlowe puts them away. They look at each other.

JESSE

Ten o'clock.

MARLOWE

And I don't know who you are.

They hold the look. Then Jesse gets up.

JESSE

Okay.

Marlowe gets up.

MARLOWE

This man of words ain't got any words.

Jesse walks away from Marlowe, then turns and comes back. He
holds out his hand. Marlowe shakes it. Then Jesse leaves.

EXT. RUINS OF JESSE'S HOUSE - DAY

Kudzu has grown over the charred remains. Jesse unhitches his
bedroll and tent, sets them up.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

Marlowe knocks, and while waiting for a response, inspects the
small dusty square in front of the town hall. He stares at the
streetlight from which they had hung Marley.

DOOR

MRS. SWANSON, 50s, doughy, wall-eyed, stands in the doorway.

MARLOWE
(with great charm)

Good day.

SWANSON
(suspiciously)

Yeah?

MARLOWE
Mrs. Swanson?

SWANSON
You ain't got a voice from around here.

MARLOWE
I was told you have the nicest rooms in town.

SWANSON
That may be true.

MARLOWE
I'd like a chance to find out.

SWANSON
You a communist? You a "nigger-ist"?

MARLOWE
I'm not any kind of "ist." Just a writer.
Working on a book. A "writer-ist," I guess.

He flashes Swanson his biggest falsest smile.

SWANSON
I got a nice room for a writer.

EXT. JESSE'S PROPERTY - DAY

A YOUNG BOY, four or five years old, ragged, underfed, looks at Jesse. Jesse crouches to get to his eye-level, gestures for him to come over. The boy comes over.

JESSE
You have a name?

The boy shakes his head no. Jesse pulls the black bandana from his knapsack and opens it, picks a rock from the dirt.

JESSE
Then I'm going to call you Oliver.

(hands him the rock)
And this is a magic rock. It's got a name,
too -- Spain. Can you say Spain?

The boy shakes his head no. Then he SPEAKS.

BOY
Spain.

Jesse puts his hand tenderly on the boy's head.

JESSE
Go home now.

The boy runs away. Jesse adds a handful of Mississippi dirt to
the pile, re-ties the bandana, puts it away.

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

Jesse stares into a small fire. The barest breeze RUSTLES the
leaves.

Suddenly, Jesse sits bolt upright -- PEOPLE move out of the
darkness into the fire's glow.

FROM JESSE'S POV

The dark faces at first look like apparitions.

CAMPFIRE

Jesse's face hardens in fear.

But then his features soften as the faces become solid and
recognizable -- the next-door-neighbor, the little boy again, the
woman from across the road.

A DOZEN PEOPLE drift in to sit around the fire, their dark faces
staring at Jesse.

VOICE 1
Really you, Jesse Colton?

VOICE 2
You really back?

Jesse nods yes.

VOICE 3
Where you been?

VOICE 4

You been a dead man, we heard.

The little boy walks up to Jesse and sits next to him. Jesse pulls him closer.

JESSE

I been dead, yeah.

The fire CRACKS and SNAPS.

JESSE

I also come a long way back to being alive.

VOICE 4

But you're a dead man here again if they see you.

JESSE

You all think that's so?

They all ponder this question.

VOICE 11

Yeah.

SEVERAL VOICES

Yeah.

VOICE 10

They got a hate longer than God's tapeworm.

JESSE

Where is my Marley?

They all share looks, except the little boy, who leans his head against Jesse's knee and closes his eyes.

VOICE 1

We don't know.

VOICE 5

No one knows.

Jesse nods slowly, rests his hand on the little boy's head.

JESSE

Doesn't matter.

VOICE 6

Jesse, we couldn't've --

Voice 9 puts a hand on Voice 6 to stop the words.

The fire CRACKLES in the silence.

FROM JESSE'S POV

Jesse stares at the boy's nappy hair, sees a louse crawling through the roots, picks it out, crushes it, tosses it.

CAMPFIRE

JESSE

I wanta tell you a story about "stopping."

VOICE 4

Nothing's stopped --

JESSE

(gently ignoring)

Anybody know where Spain is?

Silence as they think.

VOICE 7

Near Biloxi, maybe?

Jesse LAUGHS.

VOICE 8

(to Voice 7)

Ain't no Spain near Biloxi, knucklehead.

JESSE

Not so hard -- he ain't that far off. It's a country, not a county --

Jesse's VOICE fills the air with tales of Spain.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Marlowe, edge of his bed, sweating. A CLANKING fan stirs the muggy air. Notebook open, covered in writing. Beside him is his camera and lenses, with a cleaning cloth and brushes and rolls of film.

EXT. TENT - MORNING

Jesse crawls out of the tent. A wind moves through the trees. He stretches, shakes some water out of his canteen, washes his face, arranges his clothes, shoulders his knapsack, and walks toward the town.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

As Jesse walks down the road, the people from the night before plus others appear on their porches and stoops, in their yards, leaning out of windows. They all watch him. No one SPEAKS.

He sees the boy to whom he had given the rock. He sees that the boy holds the rock in his right hand.

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

Jesse stands at the foot of the town hall steps. White people with business in the town hall pass by him, give him a curious look: where have they seen him before?

Sweat beads on his face, stains his shirt. He keeps his vigil.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

Marlowe watches Jesse. Swanson stands behind him.

SWANSON

You gonna need the room another night?

MARLOWE

I don't know just yet.

(pointing)

Who's that?

Swanson moves onto the porch, catches sight of Jesse. She casts her wall-eye at Marlowe.

SWANSON

He's supposed to be a dead man.

INT. TOWN HALL - MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The Mayor is at his desk. The Sheriff walks in.

SHERIFF

Might want to look out your front window.

The Mayor goes to the window, sees what is there, turns a troubled face back to the Sheriff.

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

A small crowd has gathered around Jesse, including Marlowe. The Mayor and the Sheriff come out to face him.

Marlowe makes his way slowly to the front of the crowd.

MAYOR

What the [fuck] --

He catches himself.

MAYOR

What are you doing here?

JESSE

I live here.

MAYOR

You lived here. Now get the f[uck] --
(catches himself again)
Just get out of here.

JESSE

I come to see my wife's grave. Where'd you
bury her, Mayor? Sheriff?

More white people have gathered. Marlowe is at the front.

JESSE

That's all right -- I'll save you the
trouble of lying. I'll bet her bones've
been buried by every dog in town. That's
okay, too -- don't blame dogs for being
dogs. But I won't be leaving until I find
every bone.

He reaches into his back pocket.

JESSE

One more thing.

He pulls out his blue Communist Party membership card. He
gestures to Marlowe.

JESSE

Sir -- help me out?

Marlowe steps forward. The eyes of everyone draw to him. Jesse
hands him the card.

JESSE

Would you take that up so as the Mayor can
read it?

Marlowe walks up the steps, hands the Mayor the card. The Mayor reads it, hands it to the Sheriff, who reads it, then rips it half and drops it. Marlowe picks it up, puts it into the leather pouch.

JESSE

Just so you know you have a real one this
time.

Jesse turns to leave and begins SINGING the Internationale. As he does so, he does a little cake-walk dance, his smile wide and taunting.

JESSE

Arise ye workers from your slumbers
Arise ye prisoners of want
For reason in revolt now thunders
And at last ends the age of cant.

His voice trails away.

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

Jesse sits next to a small fire. Down the road he sees headlights in a boiling cloud of dust coming closer and closer. A truck pulls up in front of him. He stands.

FROM JESSE'S POV

He sees dark silhouettes get out of the trucks and cars.

FROM CROWD'S POV

Dust swirls. Headlights outline Jesse in a stark light.

TENT

Jesse can see Marlowe's terrified face bobbing in the crowd as the crowd moves toward him.

A lasso SNAPS out of the darkness and tightens around Jesse's throat, pulling him to his knees. A MAN behind Jesse plants a foot on his back and pushes Jesse forward.

At the same moment, other MEN take Jesse's hands off the rope around his neck and pull them behind Jesse's back.

A man hands Marlowe a short length of rope for hog-typing.

MAN

(to Marlowe)

Loop it around his wrist -- be good for
that book of yours.

Marlowe loops it around one wrist, his face a mask of fear. He
fumbles so badly that the man takes it out of his hands.

MAN

(to others)

S'got the twitches.

The man wraps Jesse's hands in a quick tight figure-eight.

MAN

(to Marlowe)

Proper way to tie a hog. You write that
down.

BACK OF TRUCK

Marlowe sits among the sweaty men as the truck pulls out. He
watches Jesse's body cut the dust as the truck drags him along
the road, the lights of the truck behind them slicing through the
dust and shadowing the dead Jesse.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

FROM DESK'S POV

A neatly typed manuscript lands with a THUD on a desk filled with
papers, photos, food wrappers, and so on.

The creased photo of Jesse and Marley sits on top of an 8x10
photo of a hanged and burned corpse, both photos sitting on top
of the manuscript.

Hands picks up the photos and manuscript.

CHAIR

Marlowe sits in a wooden chair, his hands nested in his lap. A
worn leather knapsack leans against the chair leg.

Through the open window come blaring CAR HORNS and the SIZZLE of
rubber tires on hot asphalt.

The RUSTLE of pages as the EDITOR reads it through.

MARLOWE

It's been rejected by some of the best.
Polite, but --

EDITOR (O.C.)

You're pissing uphill on this one.

Marlowe looks down at his hands, then back at the editor.

EDITOR (O.C.)

Gavagan's anti-lynching bill's going
nowhere -- Roosevelt needs the Southern
Senators for his Court scheme, so --

Marlowe becomes increasingly agitated but manages to hold his
tongue. The THUMP of the manuscript hitting the desk.

EDITOR (O.C.)

But I don't mind a piss or two uphill. I
can't pay you -- much at least.

MARLOWE

Doesn't matter.

EDITOR (O.C.)

And we ain't among "some of the best."

MARLOWE

Doesn't matter.

Marlowe, close to tears, nods yes, looks relieved and sad all at
the same time.

EXT. UNION SQUARE - DAY

A rally for Spain.

Marlowe mixes with the crowd, peers into the faces of the people
listening to a WOMAN ask for money to bring medicine and
ambulances to the Republicans.

BENCH

Marlowe opens his knapsack and takes out Jesse's black bandana
and unties it. The breeze comes along and the dry Spanish and
Mississippi soil slowly blows across the park.

Marlowe dusts off the bandana. A VOICE barks behind him.

VOICE (O.C.)

Gonna use that?

Marlowe turns and catches the eyes of a BUM wearing a worn-out suit and vest, loafers without socks, a cock-eyed derby, and a grimy bow-tie.

BUM

You gonna use that?

He slips his fingers in and out of the breast pocket.

BUM

Could use a handkerchief to complete my ensemble. What say?

MARLOWE

(half-smile)

You take this, you're going to have to fight for justice, you know.

BUM

Mister, just as soon as I get a meal.

Marlowe hands him the bandana. While the bum folds it neatly and puts it in his breast pocket, Marlowe digs out two dollar bills. He holds up one.

MARLOWE

Your meal.

The bum goes to take it, but Marlowe pulls it away. He holds up the other dollar bill.

MARLOWE

Find someone as bad off or worse than you.

BUM

Give it away?

MARLOWE

Give it away.

The bum stares at the two bills, then holds out his two hands. Marlowe hands the bills over.

MARLOWE

Don't mess with your promise.

BUM

I wasn't always like this.

The bum leaves.

Marlowe watches the crowd listen to the speaker as the tears he has not shed all this time finally come.

FADE OUT