

# DAMNATION

Pilot: "Sam Riley's Body"

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1/6/2016

**TEASER**

**EXT. DIRT ROAD, IOWA - DAY (SUMMER, 1931)**

Milk spills onto a dusty road. Gallons and gallons of it. As it eddies, swirls, and darkens, we hear a PREACHER speaking in VOICE-OVER.

PREACHER'S VOICE (V.O.)  
These bodies are not made of dust.  
They're no mere vessels.

We pull back to see that a FARM TRUCK has been stopped by a dozen gaunt and armed FARMERS who have blockaded the road with hay bales and railroad ties.

A FARM BOY (7) is on the side of the road holding a sign that reads "DON'T SELL, DON'T BUY. STRIKE!"

A few of the farmers are in the back of the truck, pouring out cisterns of milk on the dusty road.

PREACHER'S VOICE (V.O.)  
Our bodies are weapons. And their  
ammunition is the Lord's anger and  
His love.

In the cab, a pissed-off DRIVER is held by three ARMED MEN while his payload is getting dumped.

**EXT. SMALL CHAPEL - DAY**

SETH DAVENPORT preaches before his congregation, which consists of EIGHT WOMEN (50-65) and FOUR MEN (old farmers). Seth's dress and manner make him appear to be the troubled younger brother of the great 18th century New England preacher Jonathan Edwards.

SETH DAVENPORT  
So we are making this town into a  
weapon. Banding together. Fighting  
together. Bleeding together. That  
is how we get close to God.

Seth glances at his wife, AMELIA DAVENPORT, who looks on, supportive. Meanwhile, the congregation regard the pro-union pamphlets sitting among the pews. Bold headlines: "Fight for a Living Wage!" "Enough Suffering -- Now Revolt!" Etc.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

Keep up your blockades. Keep all your produce, meat, milk, and goods away from this town. And until these goddamn devils pay you a decent price for your goods, let them go hungry. Let them know your anger. Let them feel your God.

**EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY**

A different farmer, PETE COLLINGSWORTH (40s), is driving a different farm truck, a 1929 REO MODEL, down a dirt road. His payload of milk is covered by a TARP in the large bed. Pete is nervous, chain-smoking. He drives around a bend...

SETH DAVENPORT (V.O.)

Because when I picture God, I don't see some old bearded man. Some sinless babe. What I see is this town. Holden, Iowa. Transformed. I see neighbor defending neighbor.

We now see, down the road, about TWENTY FARMERS blocking his way. It's another blockade. These farmers hold BILLY JACKS, PIPES, CLUBS. Some have SHOTGUNS.

SETH DAVENPORT (V.O.)

I see sisters carrying brothers, children lifting parents. I see conflict. I see sacrifice. I see justice and I see truth.

Pete stops his farm truck about five hundred yards from the blockade. He takes a moment to compose himself, then begins driving slowly toward the swarm.

SETH DAVENPORT (V.O.)

And I see righteous blood being shed for a righteous cause.

The swarm attacks Pete's slow moving truck. The blockade leader, SAM RILEY (40s), leaps onto the farm truck's running board. A frightened Pete keeps driving. Sam takes out his BILLY CLUB and strikes the driver's side window, shattering it. The truck comes to a stop. Sam pulls out Pete and shoves him against the truck.

SAM

Damn it, Pete. We're on strike. You can't take this milk to town.

PETE

Pam's real sick. I'm broke.

SAM

We're all broke. That's why we're doing this.

PETE

(emotional)

Please. Just let me go. Tell everyone to turn back. I'm begging you.

SAM

Too late for that.

He pushes Pete to some of the other striking farmers.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hold him.

Sam goes around to the back of the farm truck.

SAM (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Toss me that Winchester.

A farmer tosses a WINCHESTER .410 SHOTGUN. A couple of the gathered hands start untying the truck's tarp.

PETE

Sam, please...don't!

SAM

(raising shotgun)

Sam Jr, help 'em pull back that tarp. This truck's about to shit out its entire load of milk.

Sam aims his gun as his tall teenage son SAM JR (16, toothpick in lips) helps pull back the tarp. But just as Sam Riley's about to pull the trigger...

SAM (CONT'D)

(to himself, amazed)

By God.

GUNSHOT! Sam stands there a moment, stunned. Blood dribbles down from beneath his hat. Then gushes down his face. Sam Riley drops dead onto the dirt road, his Winchester still gripped in his hand. Blood mingles with dust.

A man named CREELEY TURNER, swaggering cowboy cool, steps down from the back of the farm truck.

He wipes the dust from his shirt, then grabs his Stetson hat from the bed of the truck and puts it on.

The stunned swarm collects around Sam's body. Calls go out: murder! animal! But when Creeley lifts and fires his REVOLVER into the air, the crowd goes silent.

CREELEY

I shot this man in self-defense. Or  
am I incorrect to say that he aimed  
his Winchester right at my person?

No answer. Creeley walks over to Sam's body. The swarm instinctively steps back from him.

Only Sam Jr, with his toothpick clenched in his teeth, doesn't budge. He stares in shock at his dead father.

Creeley picks up Sam's lifeless body and carries it to the farm truck. Creeley sets it in the bed, then turns to the farmers who still hold Pete.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

All right. Let Pete go, boys. He's  
got milk to sell in town.

They reluctantly let go of Pete, who gets back into the truck's cab. Sam Jr. glares at the Winchester, laying there in the dirt road next to the puddle of his father's blood. Creeley has his back turned to the teen boy as he ties the dead Sam Riley to the bed of the farm truck.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Unless you wish to join this man up  
yonder, I suggest you remove your  
gaze from that weapon.

Sam Jr stares a beat, then averts his gaze. Sam Jr now stares with hatred at Creeley, who picks up the shotgun.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

(to all)

Go home. Eat. Rest. The strike is  
over. Tomorrow, you sell your goods  
in town.

Creeley climbs into the bed of the farm truck and pounds the side. Pete puts it into gear. The swarm of striking farmers parts to let the truck drive past them and towards town.

**EXT. BACK OF PETE'S FARM TRUCK, ON THE MOVE - CONTINUOUS**

As the farm truck drives away from the disbanding swarm, Creeley sits in the back of the truck. He turns away from Sam's nearby body and takes in the stark beauty of the Iowa countryside passing him by.

In the near distance, Creeley sees an odd sight: two MEN in BLACK ROBES and HOODS on HORSEBACK in the middle of a field. They watch the farm truck and Creeley drive past. (These men are members of the local BLACK LEGION vigilante group, having rode out at the sound of gunplay.)

Creeley takes in these two masked men, then glances behind him. Back on the dirt road, the swarm of striking farmers now disperses.

All other than Sam Jr., who stands alone in the middle of the dirt road, watching his father's body being driven away.

**END OF TEASER**

ACT ONE**INT. CHAPEL - DAY**

The congregation exits the small chapel. Preacher Seth is picking up pamphlets. He's approached by a scandalized GLORIA CALHOUN (50s).

GLORIA CALHOUN

This chapel used to be packed with believers. Now look at it. It's a disgrace.

Seth doesn't stop picking up pamphlets.

SETH DAVENPORT

Yes, if Christian history has taught us anything, it's that a church with twelve or so followers is doomed to irrelevance.

GLORIA CALHOUN

I can tell you one thing. My husband never used the pulpit to push politics. And he never would've used foul language while preaching the word of God, either. The late Reverend Layton Calhoun--

AMELIA DAVENPORT

(interrupting)

--was beaten to death by some angry husbands after he slept with half the women in this town.

Gloria turns, surprised to see that Amelia, the preacher's wife, has joined them.

AMELIA DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

The late Reverend's reputation will outlive us all. But it's a comfort to know he had a spotless vocabulary.

Amused, Seth keeps picking up pamphlets. Gloria Calhoun stares at the couple a beat.

GLORIA CALHOUN

You're both fiends.

She leaves. Amelia watches the woman exit the chapel, then joins her husband in picking up the pamphlets.

AMELIA DAVENPORT

She has a point. Do you ever think about packing up and moving to the next town?

SETH DAVENPORT

I think about it around this time every Sunday of the past year.

They continue the pick-up.

MAN'S VOICE

Preacher Seth!

Seth and Amelia turn to see COLBY (one of the farmers helping Sam Riley with the blockade before Creeley shot and killed him) rushing in, breathless.

COLBY

A strikebreaker just shot Sam Riley, in front of God and everyone. Claimed self-defense. Killed Sam right in front of his own son...

This hits Seth and Amelia like a freight train.

**EXT. HOLDEN TOWN SQUARE - DAY**

Creeley rides in the back of the truck as it pulls into the town square: HOLDEN BANK, HOLDEN TRIBUNE, HOLDEN DRY FOODS, etc. Sam Riley's corpse jostles as the truck comes to a stop. CITIZENS gawk.

Creeley hops out the back of the truck and flings Sam Riley's corpse onto his shoulder. Corpse perched, Creeley walks up to the cab, where Pete sits behind the wheel.

CREELEY

Here, buy yourself a shot.

Creeley reaches into his pocket and pulls out some coins.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Wash those stains from your pretty conscience.

Farmer Pete looks at the money, then spits out the window.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

When these vermin come after your blood, you'll kiss the ass bottoms of my boots. Remember that.

Farmer Pete puts the truck into gear and drives off. Creeley watches him a beat, then turns to walk toward the Holden town square with Sam Riley's corpse still on his shoulder.

**INT. HOLDEN DRY GOODS STORE - DAY**

Creeley enters the Holden Dry Goods Store while still carrying Sam Riley's corpse. He carries Sam through until he reaches a back door. Creeley opens it and enters...

**INT. SPEAKEASY - CONTINUOUS**

...a hidden SPEAKEASY. This is still Prohibition era America, so drinking and carousing must be hidden. When Creeley enters with the dead Sam Riley perched on his shoulder, the DRINKERS get hushed.

Creeley sets Sam Riley's corpse down in a chair at an empty table. Blood dribbles to the floor. Creeley takes a seat at the same table. He stretches out and looks around the place. He's met by the blank, silent faces of MEN whose lives reside in that dull spot on the other side of fear: despair. Creeley's gaze goes from man to man, measuring each.

CREELEY

Let's all have a drink.

Creeley turns to PEP ADEN, the friendly-looking bartender.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Whiskeys for all my friends. On me.

PEP ADEN

You bet.

Pep starts pouring whiskey shots in a line on the bar. The patrons all stand still and silent.

CREELEY

My father always claimed I was high-strung and easily offended. But if any of you feel that you're too good to drink my hard earned whiskey, we can settle matters right now in the traditional Wyoming fashion...

The men hesitantly move to the bar to pick up their shots. Creeley eyes each of the men. He stands.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

I propose a toast.

Creeley gestures to Sam Riley's corpse, now slack-jawed and bloodied in its chair. The gathered men don't risk showing any reaction.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

To the life of Sam Riley. A vermin brave enough to step forth from his silent, suffering vermin herd. A vermin courageous enough to organize his fellow vermin in brave opposition.

Creeley raises his shot glass.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

To the great vermin, Sam Riley. He was too good, truly, for this goddamn dump.

Creeley downs his shot and eyes the other men. There's a sense that this statement (that Sam Riley was too good for the world) was not, in fact, made in jest. Under Creeley's gaze, the other men drink.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Now, who among you can also speak to Sam Riley's character? Surely there must be a brother among you. Or a father. Holden, Iowa is a small, lonely town. Little to do, I imagine, but farm, fart, and fornicate. So Sam Riley must have at least a cousin.

One of the men subtly looks toward another man, a drunk named PRESTON RILEY. Creeley catches this.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

What's your name, friend?

PRESTON RILEY

Preston.

CREELEY

Preston what?

PRESTON RILEY

Riley.

Creeley smiles.

CREELEY

(to all)

Another round on me.

Pep starts lining up another round of whiskeys. Creeley eyes the nervous Preston, then pulls out an empty chair between himself and Sam Riley's seated corpse.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

(to Preston)

Here, cousin Preston. Let's have ourselves a little talk.

Terrified, Preston heads that way.

**INT. STUDY ROOM, CHAPEL - DAY**

Seth paces inside his study, which abuts the main room of the small chapel. The bookshelves are lined with books of history, philosophy, poetry. He's processing the news of Sam Riley's death. Amelia stands at the doorway.

AMELIA DAVENPORT

Sam was a good leader. But he knew the risks, leading a strike...

Seth approaches a window and glances out. Hungry LOCALS are lining up at a table on the front lawn for a hot meal.

SETH DAVENPORT

Maybe we've had more success than we thought. If a strikebreaker was sent here to kill Sam, then the word is getting out.

AMELIA DAVENPORT

If a strikebreaker was sent to kill Sam, he might've been sent to kill you as well.

SETH DAVENPORT

You don't have to worry about that.

Amelia steps forward to join Seth at the window.

AMELIA DAVENPORT

Sometimes I feel like the church itself. Married to a mystery.

Seth looks at her.

SETH DAVENPORT

Someone just shot Sam Riley. And all I can think is, this might be just the opportunity we've been waiting for.

Amelia considers this. She then nods at the hungry locals outside the window.

AMELIA DAVENPORT

They look hungry. I should get to work.

Amelia exits, leaving a meditative Seth. Seth watches her leave, then glances at the NEWSPAPER sitting on his desk. He picks it up.

**INT. SPEAKEASY - DAY**

Creeley downs a whiskey shot and raises the empty glass.

CREELEY

(calling to bar)  
Again!

Creeley slams down his shot glass, which takes its place next to numerous empty ones. The speakeasy has mostly emptied out. Bartender Pep comes over with two shot glasses.

PEP ADEN

You bet.

Creeley still seems sober. Preston Riley, however, is drunk and terrified. He sits before his full shot glass.

CREELEY

Bottoms up, comrade.

Preston goes to lift his shot, then...

PRESTON RILEY

Comrade?

CREELEY

Is it true what they say? That all the Iowa Rileys bleed communist red?

Creeley gestures to the dead Sam Riley, now on the floor beside them, his blood staining the floor.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

That's what Sam was doing out here, wasn't it? Organizin' and agitatin' a commie revolt.

PRESTON RILEY

Sam's my second cousin. We weren't that close.

CREELEY

I see. So you're saying your cousin  
deserved to be shot dead in the  
road like a stray dog...

A flash of instinctual anger from Preston.

PRESTON RILEY

I didn't say that...  
(beat)  
...not exactly.

CREELEY

No, not exactly.

Creeley downs his shot and gazes at Preston's shot, awaiting  
him on the table.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

So, as you were saying, family and  
loyalty are of utmost importance  
here in Holden.

Preston stares at the full shot, unsure how to answer.

PRESTON RILEY

Family and loyalty...are among our  
desired virtues.

Creeley nods at this.

CREELEY

Which leads to my final question.

The word "final" hangs heavy before Preston.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Preston, I can see that you're a  
reasonable man. So you must  
realize, as a reasonable man would,  
that under unfortunate  
circumstances this morning, I was  
forced to fire on Sam Riley in an  
act of self defense.

PRESTON RILEY

Yes...that sounds...

CREELEY

Reasonable.

PRESTON RILEY

Rather reasonable.

CREELEY

So what I want to know now are the names of anyone who might react to these unfortunate events in an unreasonable manner.

(beat)

I understand that it's an important moment. Take your time.

Preston's inner battle -- to name names or not -- externalizes in a cold sweat. Creeley pushes a final shot to Preston and raises his own glass for a toast. Preston, fearful and drunk, does likewise.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

To family and loyalty.

PRESTON RILEY

To family and loyalty.

Creeley holds Preston's unsteady gaze. He gives a wink.

CREELEY

In moderation.

PRESTON RILEY

(beat)

In moderation.

Creeley downs his shot. Preston does likewise.

CREELEY

Now, tell me, who would seek revenge for Sam Riley's death?

Preston holds his reserve.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

You held out longer than any of these other vermin would.

Creeley takes his revolver from his holster and drops it on the table, letting its heft and deadliness register. At this, Preston fights tears. After a long beat...

PRESTON RILEY

His son, Sam Jr.

CREELEY

With the toothpick?

PRESTON RILEY

...yes...

CREELEY

Who else?

Preston stares at the gun.

PRESTON RILEY

(fighting tears)

That's it. The rest of us are  
all...

CREELEY

Yes?

PRESTON RILEY

...afraid...

Creeley takes his gun, stands, and goes to the door now that he has the desired information. Preston watches him leave...

PRESTON RILEY (CONT'D)

What about Sam?

Creeley looks back at the corpse of Sam Riley, still laying out on the tavern floor near his cousin's feet.

CREELEY

Sam Riley's your family, not mine.  
I'm sure you'll do right by him.

Creeley exits, leaving a devastated Preston Riley.

**END OF ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO****INT. CHAPEL - DAY**

Seth steps up to his pulpit. He reaches behind his back. From his waistband, he produces a notched PISTOL. He opens and checks its chamber, then puts it back in his waistband. He then opens the Bible laying before him. Seth takes a BUTTERFLY KNIFE from his pocket and sets it inside its pages, and then walks out of the chapel.

**EXT. CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS**

Amelia looks up from handing out food to the THIRTY or so LOCALS. She sees Seth exit the chapel. She gives him a questioning look.

SETH DAVENPORT

It's a beautiful day for spreading  
the Word of God.

Seth walks down the road, away from the chapel. Amelia watches him a beat, accepting that her husband remains mostly a mystery to her. She sets some stew and a piece of bread in a HARD SCRABBLE MAN'S bowl. She also hands him a pro-strike pamphlet. He takes it and his food and sits at a nearby table. He opens the pamphlet and starts reading as he eats.

Amelia looks over the thirty-plus townspeople, all eating the food. Some read the pamphlets. Others are in deep discussion. She's pleased.

**EXT. FIELD NEAR DIRT ROAD - DAY**

TWO CHILDREN, ages 7 and 9, fight in the middle of a field. The two boys look to be brothers. They're really going at it, with full on punches.

Suddenly, they see Preacher Seth Davenport walking on the dirt road toward town. In his old fashioned preacher suit, Seth cuts a dashing figure on these barren plains.

The two boys stop fighting out of fear of Seth's authority. Seth doesn't break stride.

SETH DAVENPORT

(calling to them)  
Go for the eyes first, then the  
throat.

The two boys stare at Seth. Whoa, preacher dude.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)  
                  (calling to them as he  
                  walks)  
                  It's called commitment, boys.

He keeps striding toward town. The two brothers stare at each other, unsure how to react.

**INT. HOLDEN BANK/EXT. HOLDEN TOWN SQUARE - DAY**

GARY LUNDEEN (40s, well-dressed), the manager of the local bank, glances out the window of his office. He sees Seth striding onto the town square.

Seth walks past the HOLDEN BANK and in front of the offices of the HOLDEN TRIBUNE. Seth stops a moment to take in his reflection. He certainly looks like a man of God. Seth heads into the newspaper office.

Seeing this, a suspicious Gary Lundeen picks up the nearby dial telephone and begins dialing...

**INT. HOLDEN TRIBUNE OFFICE - DAY**

Seth enters the newspaper office to the sound of a phone ringing. BURT BABBAGE (50s), the editor, picks up the phone.

Seth walks over and sits across from the desk of D.L. SULLIVAN (20s). D.L. is like a young Orson Welles: dapper and pretentious with his suit and pipe. Three or four other ELDERLY REPORTERS and EDITORS work at their nearby desks. D.L. doesn't look up from his typewriter.

                  D.L. DAVENPORT  
                  (as he types)  
                  Hello, Preacher. Do you have some  
                  kind of church event you'd like us  
                  to cover?

                  SETH DAVENPORT  
                  No, not at the moment. I'm still  
                  trying to get a sense of the  
                  landscape here...

                  D.L. SULLIVAN  
                  (still typing)  
                  I can help you with that. The  
                  landscape is predominantly flat.

                  SETH DAVENPORT  
                  I noticed that. Pretty goddamn  
                  flat.

This startles D.L. to attention. He looks up. For the first time, he really takes in this preacher.

D.L. SULLIVAN

Yes, it is.

SETH DAVENPORT

But it's not the physical landscape I'm concerned with, D.L. Sullivan. My eye is on the metaphysical one. Sam Riley, the leader of the farmer's revolt, was just shot in cold blood. Will your paper report it?

D.L. SULLIVAN

I'm sure the appropriate words will be found.

SETH DAVENPORT

A man's language is a map of his soul. His contours and contradictions. All traced out in his words.

D.L. SULLIVAN

Perhaps.

SETH DAVENPORT

The Holden Tribune is the word of public record here.

D.L. looks around: the other reporters and editors are dead-eyed men in their 60s and 70s.

D.L. SULLIVAN

For better or worse.

SETH DAVENPORT

So, for better or worse, it's also the map of this town's soul. And yet it refuses to report on the collective revolt of its local farmers.

D.L. looks around and makes sure his editor, Burt Babbage, isn't listening in. Babbage isn't: he's still on the phone, though he eyes Seth.

D.L. SULLIVAN

(quietly)

Be careful, preacher man. Collective. Revolt. Those are dangerous words around here.

SETH DAVENPORT

And we must girlishly beware all  
dangerous little cocksucking words,  
musn't we?

Befuddled, D.L. stares at this new preacher. Seth grabs a nearby newspaper and looks it over.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

(reading)

"Here stands the proud proprietor  
Archibald Weems. As we can see, the  
only emperor is the emperor of ice  
cream..."

(holds up paper)

Is this your work?

D.L. SULLIVAN

Yes.

SETH DAVENPORT

D.L. Sullivan, you are presently in  
the brief interval of your only  
life. Is this how you're going to  
spend it? Doting on ice cream  
vendors and weather reports?

D.L. SULLIVAN

It's a living.

SETH DAVENPORT

It's your soul. Sentence by  
sentence. Word by word. To write  
banal thoughts is to construct a  
banal spirit. Are you a banal man?

D.L. SULLIVAN

(pointed)

No.

Burt Babbage comes over. Babbage is a sturdy man of easy authority.

BURT BABBAGE

Is there something we can help you  
with, Preacher?

SETH DAVENPORT

(reciting to D.L.)

'Let be be the finale of seem. The  
only emperor is the emperor of ice  
cream.'

BURT BABBAGE

Excuse me?

D.L. SULLIVAN

(amazed)

It's from a poem by Wallace Stevens.

BURT BABBAGE

Never heard of him.

D.L. SULLIVAN

Almost no one has.

BURT BABBAGE

Well, as much as I enjoy this Parisian salon talk, we do have a paper to write.

SETH DAVENPORT

Yes, the battle between God and Mammon is often disguised as a mere matter of words.

(to D.L.)

Your talent is a gift from God. It'd be a sin to waste it on the devil's behalf.

Seth exits. Babbage and Sullivan watch him go.

**INT. SHERIFF STATION - DAY**

SHERIFF DON TANEY (60s, avuncular) and a drunken Preston Riley look down. They are staring at Sam Riley's bloodied corpse, which lays on a table.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

You say it was self-defense?

PRESTON RILEY

That's what the cowboy claimed.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

What cowboy?

PRESTON RILEY

The cowboy from Wyoming.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

Did the cowboy from Wyoming have a name?

PRESTON RILEY  
Never gave it.

MAN'S VOICE  
Uncle Sheriff Don?

Sheriff Taney turns his attention to DEPUTY RAYMOND TANEY (30s, gawky good ol' boy), his nephew, who stands near the cell holding a plate of food.

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
Yes, Raymond?

DEPUTY RAYMOND TANEY  
Your mongrel drunkard still refuses to eat.

Deputy Raymond gestures to BROWN-SKINNED PRISONER with a black eye sitting on a cot.

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
Not even the cream corn and mashed potatoes? Well, his loss. Hand it over.

Deputy Raymond brings over the plate of food. Sheriff Taney begins eating at the food as they converse.

SHERIFF DON TANEY (CONT'D)  
Describe this cowboy.

PRESTON RILEY  
He...he was tall. Wore a Stetson. He talked about communist agitation.

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
Somewhat disconcerting. My condolences to your family.

PRESTON RILEY  
Yeah...my family...

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
I'll make sure Sam's body is delivered to his home right away.

Preston nods and exits, crossing paths with both bank manager Gary Lundeen and newspaper editor Burt Babbage.

BURT BABBAGE  
That preacher just walked into our office reciting poetry to DL Sullivan, one of my reporters.

GARY LUNDEEN  
He's trouble. The kind we don't  
need.

Sheriff Taney, unflappable, keeps eating his grub.

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
Which one's Sullivan?

BURT BABBAGE  
The young ambitious one.

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
Ah. Don't like him already.

Gary Lundeen now notices the body of Sam Riley spread out on  
a table.

GARY LUNDEEN  
Is that Sam Riley?

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
A cowboy from Wyoming just shot  
him. Another out-of-towner. Cited  
Sam Riley's agitatin' ways.

Gary Lundeen and Burt Babbage share a concerned look.

BURT BABBAGE  
You will take care of this.

Nonplussed, Sheriff Taney keeps eating his food.

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
Of course I will. I'm the sheriff.  
(to Deputy Taney)  
Find this cowboy.

DEPUTY RAYMOND TANEY  
Sure thing, Uncle Sheriff Don.

Deputy Taney hustles out. Sheriff Taney turns to the nervous  
Babbage and Lundeen.

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
Easy enough.  
(lifting plate)  
Hungry?

Babbage and Lundeen shake their heads: no.

**INT. OFFICE, DELLA'S BROTHEL - DAY**

The madame of the local brothel, DELLA (50s), sits on a stool, just inches from the floor. Her head is at a male customer's waist. This customer is JUDGE ALVIN VAN HOOF (50s). Della dresses and behaves a bit like a man. A lit cigarette dangles from her lips.

DELLA

Okay, Judge, drop 'em.

JUDGE ALVIN VAN HOOF

Is this really necessary?

DELLA

Strict rules make for an elegant cootch. If the great humanitarian Herbert Hoover himself walked through these doors, I'd be checking his cock and balls for sores as well. Drop 'em.

Judge Van Hoof undoes his belt and pants, which fall to his feet. He's just in his underwear now.

DELLA (CONT'D)

Don't be bashful, your honor. Let's see what you got.

Judge Van Hoof pulls down his underwear. Della continues puffing her cigarette as she lifts and prods.

DELLA (CONT'D)

(as she inspects)

Oh yes, very intimidating. Impressive girth and length. Reminds me of my girlish stable days. A bit tumescent at the tip and base...but no obvious signs of infection...ah, and I see that we're a bit of a grower...

Della pauses her inspection and looks up.

DELLA (CONT'D)

Try to slow down your excitement, Valentino. I know I'm a pretty little flower, but you'll need to save something for the girls.

Della grabs a decanter of bourbon-colored liquid, gives a sniff, then pours some on the judge's privates.

JUDGE ALVIN VAN HOOF  
What the hell was that?!

DELLA  
Did it burn?

JUDGE ALVIN VAN HOOF  
No.

DELLA  
Then you can saddle up.

She glances at the decanter.

DELLA (CONT'D)  
(re: decanter)  
Lysol.

The door opens. A WOMAN pokes her head in.

BROTHEL WOMAN  
Della, you're gonna want to come  
out here.

The woman rubs her fingers together, signifying: money.

**INT. PARLOR ROOM, DELLA'S BROTHEL - DAY**

A line of SIX PLAIN, WHITE PROSTITUTES sit around in night gowns. They are joined by a LIGHT-SKINNED BLACK WOMAN. Della introduces them to Creeley, who cuts a striking figure with his Stetson, boots and Colt.

DELLA  
We've got every type of girl here.  
We've got your farmer's daughter,  
your farmer's wife, your farmer's  
sister, your farmer's half-breed  
bastard girl, and your farmer's  
widow. You pay for the girl and for  
the room.

Creeley studies the girls. He also notes Judge Van Hoof crossing the other side of the parlor with his own PROSTITUTE and heading up the stairs.

CREELEY  
Charge by the act or by the hour?

DELLA  
What'd you have in mind?

CREELEY

I pay to not discuss it.

DELLA

Seven dollars an hour.

CREELEY

For a week?

DELLA

That depends. Will she still be able to walk right by the end of it?

CREELEY

If she stays on my good side.

The girls sit and pose with more energy now, intrigued by the money and mystery. Della considers.

DELLA

Five hundred for a week.

CREELEY

Four hundred. Room and board included.

DELLA

Let's grit our teeth and call that a deal.

Creeley reaches into his pants and takes out a stack of hundred dollar bills. He gives four of them to Della. He takes out four more and shows them to the prostitutes.

CREELEY

This is another four hundred dollars. Your preemptive tip.

BOLD PROSTITUTE

(suggestive)

For what?

CREELEY

First off, for not asking any goddamn questions.

The bold prostitute recoils from this. The other prostitutes push their best assets forward. Creeley studies them, then pulls out a sheet of paper. He unfolds it and holds it before the prostitutes. We don't yet see what it says.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Take a look at this and tell me  
what you think.

The first prostitutes look at the sheet of paper and smile blankly at Creeley. We now see what the paper says:

"Can't you even read, you rancid cunt?"

Creeley holds out the paper before the next prostitutes. They also smile and pose blankly for Creeley. So far, all the prostitutes clearly cannot read the revolting misogyny scrawled before them.

Creeley keeps moving through the illiterate girls until, finally, he reaches the last and most attractive prostitute, BESSIE (mixed race). When Bessie reads the sentence, her face contorts with disgust. At this, Creeley smiles. He holds out the four hundred dollar bills.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Yours.

BESSIE

No. I want five hundred.

CREELEY

And why would I pay you five  
hundred dollars to be my whore?

BESSIE

It appears you're looking for a  
reader. And I'm the only one you're  
gonna find in this place. Supply  
and demand, cocksucker.

Creeley smirks, intrigued by this young, intelligent, bi-racial hooker in the middle of Iowa.

**END OF ACT TWO**

ACT THREE**EXT. DIRT ROAD - EVENING**

As the sun settles, Seth walks down a dirt road toward a FARMHOUSE, his knife-laced Bible under his arm.

**INT. RILEY FARMHOUSE - AT SAME TIME**

A resolute, unexpressive MARTHA RILEY cleans the corpse of her husband Sam Riley. Near her stands the silently enraged Sam Jr, gnawing on his toothpick. Other FAMILY MEMBERS surround them for support. An increasingly drunken Preston Riley is among these family members. His guilt and concern about giving Sam Jr's name to Creeley overwhelm him...

PRESTON RILEY  
(quietly to Martha)  
Maybe Sam Jr should think about  
heading out of town for a spell.  
Until things settle down...

Martha matter-of-factly wipes the blood from her husband's face.

MARTHA RILEY  
Sam Jr's needed here at home.

PRESTON RILEY  
What if this cowboy fella who shot  
Sam wants to come after Sam Jr too?

SAM JR  
Why would you think that?

Preston's startled to see that Sam Jr has snuck up on him.

PRESTON RILEY  
These are unreasonable times.  
Strange occurrences...

Preston walks off, drunkenly muttering. Martha keeps working.

MARTHA RILEY  
Get Preston some coffee.

An OLDER WOMAN gets up to do that. A KNOCK at the door.

OLDER WOMAN  
(glancing out window)  
It's that new preacher. Should I  
turn him away?

MARTHA RILEY

This is my house. I'll do it.

Martha gets up goes to the door and opens it. Preacher Seth stands before her.

MARTHA RILEY (CONT'D)

We're not ready for any kind of comfort, preacher.

Martha goes to close the door. But Seth gets his foot in, blocking it.

SETH DAVENPORT

I'm not here to comfort you. I'm here to make sure you're angry enough to do something.

Martha is surprised by this.

**INT. RILEY FARMHOUSE - MINUTES LATER**

Seth sits with the mourning, skeptical Riley family. Guilt-ridden cousin Preston Riley sits apart, getting drunker.

SETH DAVENPORT

Describe the man who killed Sam.

SAM JR

He was a cowboy. Fired a Colt.  
(beat)  
He's some kind of marksman.

SETH DAVENPORT

Did he mention where he was from?

PRESTON RILEY

Wyoming.

This information inspires a flare of recognition for Seth. Meanwhile, the others look at Preston, questioning.

SAM JR

How do you know?

PRESTON RILEY

The cowboy brought Sam's body to Pep's speakeasy after shooting him. Bought everyone a round of drinks.

SAM JR

That son of a bitch. He won't get away with this...

SETH DAVENPORT

If this cowboy is who I think he is, he works on the behalf of money and power. It's his job to get away with it.

SAM JR

Then what do we do? Pray? Wait around until we get killed off too?

MARTHA RILEY

Sam's dead, Preacher. Our savings are gone. Prices keep dropping. Our mortgage is due. Even if we did stop the strike and sold off all our milk and cows, it wouldn't be enough. So unless you can call down some kind of miracle, we're going to lose this farm.

Seth takes in the grief-stricken Riley family members, who look at him expectantly. He looks down at the Bible in his hand. What can he offer them?

SAM JR

Preacher? Do you have anything to say?

SETH DAVENPORT

I say we call down a miracle.

MARTHA RILEY

How?

SETH DAVENPORT

I believe a miracle is nothing more than a moment of God's attention. Do you know the story of Martin Luther?

They look blankly at him. No.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

Hundreds of years ago, a man named Martin Luther wrote down 95 points of argument on a piece of paper. Then he nailed that paper to the door of a church. And a miracle happened. A new kind of church was born. A revolution. Some would say it was the words that Martin Luther wrote that got God's attention. But I think that's wrong.

(MORE)

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

I think what got God's attention was what always gets God's attention. It wasn't the words. It was the hammer. And the nail.

Seth looks at the gathered Riley family. He opens up his Bible and takes out the butterfly knife tucked inside it. He then produces the revolver tucked in his waistband. He sets them next to the Bible and before the grieving family.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

The time's come for another revolution. They fired the first shot today. Now it's up to us to return fire.

The Riley family leans in, intrigued.

**INT. ROOM 3, DELLA'S BROTHEL - NIGHT**

Inside one of the brothel rooms, Bessie sits on a bed with a puzzled expression. She has an ENVELOPE in her grip.

BESSIE

This is all you want?

Creeley sits in a chair across from her.

CREELEY

For now.

BESSIE

Why don't you just read it yourself? You can read, can't you?

CREELEY

Do you know why I hire whores to be my secretaries? Because women cannot be trusted. But whores can be bought. And, if a whore disappoints you, she can also be easily discarded.

Bessie now understands: Creeley is both illiterate and deadly.

BESSIE

I'll read the letter.

Bessie stands and goes to a nearby record player. She takes out a 78 record and puts it on. Skip James' "Devil Got My Woman" begins to play. Creeley gives her a look: what are you doing? Bessie nods at the door.

BESSIE (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
Privacy.

Bessie opens the envelope and takes out a letter.

BESSIE (CONT'D)  
(reading quietly)  
'Mr. DuPlessis agrees. Industrial  
efficiency and a prosperous social  
order. Our nation's survival  
depends on it.'

CREELEY  
Anything else?

BESSIE  
No.

Creeley takes a moment, digesting this. The Skip James song continues to play. A KNOCK at the door.

**INT. HALLWAY, DELLA'S BROTHEL - INTERCUT**

On the other side of the door stand Sheriff Don Taney with madame Della. They have their ears pressed to the door, trying to listen.

In the room, Creeley takes out his gun and points it at the door.

CREELEY  
(calling)  
Private room.

In the hallway, Sheriff Taney likewise has his gun drawn.

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
(calling)  
I need to talk to a cowboy from  
Wyoming. Are you him?

CREELEY  
Who wants to know?

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
Sheriff Don Taney.

In the room, Creeley cocks his gun.

CREELEY  
(quietly to Bessie)  
Get down.

But Bessie boldly steps toward the door.

BESSIE  
(calling)  
Hello, Sheriff.

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
(calling)  
Hello, Bess. I just need to talk to  
your cowboy friend.

Creeley looks at her: be careful.

BESSIE  
My cowboy friend's presently balls  
deep in quadron muff. Give us just  
a minute to finish up.

In the hallway, Sheriff Taney looks to Della, who shrugs.

SHERIFF DON TANEY  
(calling)  
Okay, one minute.

In the room, Bessie starts undressing. Creeley watches.

BESSIE  
(quiet)  
So are you gonna try to screw me  
with your clothes on?

CREELEY  
(quiet)  
What?

She gestures to the door.

BESSIE  
(quiet)  
Tick tock, law's waiting.

Bessie gets under the sheets. Creeley begins unbuckling.

In the hallway, Sheriff Taney listens with obvious discomfort as Creeley's escalating, astonished MOANS cry out for about thirty seconds from behind the door. Then suddenly stop. Sheriff Taney gives Della a look.

DELLA  
I told you, she's a natural.

Della takes a key and opens the door for the sheriff. Sheriff Taney walks into the room to find Creeley and Bessie under the covers. Creeley is sitting up on the headboard.

He has a look of post-coital stunned pleasure. Creeley's Stetson sits on the bedside table.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

You're new to town.

Creeley, stunned by the last sixty seconds, takes a moment to respond.

CREELEY

I am.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

(to Bessie)

Leave.

CREELEY

Ask.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

What?

CREELEY

You just told her to leave. You should have asked.

Sheriff Taney studies Creeley. Bessie lays there, naked and waiting.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

(to Bessie)

My dear Bessie, could you please give us a few minutes of privacy?

BESSIE

Of course, Sheriff. Very gentle of you to ask.

Bessie gathers her clothes and exits, leaving Creeley and Sheriff Taney alone in the room. Sheriff Taney sits, facing Creeley, who sits less than an arm's length from his Stetson.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

There was a shooting today. Here, in my county.

CREELEY

Uh huh.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

This is a quiet corner of the earth. We resolve our differences with words and laws here, not guns.

CREELEY

Words and laws...of course, neither means shit unless there's a gun behind 'em.

Creeley gets out of the bed. He's naked from the waist down. He stands and stretches in an alpha manner.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

I have this friend. He says we're all just a spit and a shine away from the jungle. Do you believe that?

SHERIFF DON TANEY

No.

CREELEY

I do. I think every second of every day we're about one half of an ant's dick away from all out warfare. We just don't realize it. A war to end all wars, Sheriff. It's coming our way. Weapons unlike those you and I could ever dream of are being devised by well-behaved men in suits and ties even as we speak.

Creeley reaches down and pulls on a long pubic hair.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Only the thinnest of threads saves us from extinction.

Sheriff Taney remains seated and unimpressed.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Besides, that farmer pointed his Winchester right at me today. I shot that cowfucker in self-defense.

Creeley steps over to the bedside table where his Stetson sits. Creeley puts his hand on the hat...but when he does...a CLICK. Sheriff Taney quickly has his gun drawn and cocked.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

So suspicious?

SHERIFF DON TANEY

I've been around.

Creeley slowly lifts his Stetson, revealing his revolver hidden beneath it on the bedside table.

CREELEY

Yes, it appears you have.

Creeley sets the hat back over the revolver. He picks up his underwear and pants from the floor and starts casually putting them on.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

I'm glad we've had this talk. I do fear that some local citizen will seek revenge for my act of self-defense today.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

Then leave town.

CREELEY

In time. First take out my wallet.

Sheriff Taney keeps his gun aimed at Creeley as he reaches into the man's back pocket and pulls out a wallet.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Open it.

Sheriff Taney does so, revealing a BADGE.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

(reading)

Pinkerton National Detective Agency.

Sheriff Taney looks up, stunned.

SHERIFF DON TANEY (CONT'D)

You're a Pinkerton?

CREELEY

Call me Creeley.

Creeley buttons up his shirt.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

You have friends in high places, Sheriff. Serious men with serious concerns who've been monitoring your situation. We can't have this farmer's revolt getting any bigger or louder. Industrial efficiency and a prosperous social order.

(MORE)

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Our nation's very survival depends  
on 'em.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

I can take care of those farmers  
myself.

CREELEY

If that were true, I would not have  
been sent. But we don't need to  
make this unpleasant. I'll conduct  
my affairs quickly and discreetly.  
And you can continue your usual  
business as well. Including taking  
your share of the profits from the  
speakeasy, the local stills, and  
this whorehouse.

Sheriff Taney regards the stranger with immediate loathing.  
Creeley, unaffected, grabs his Stetson and puts it on.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

We admire your spirit of American  
entrepreneurship, Sheriff.

Creeley grabs his revolver and exits the room, leaving a  
reeling Sheriff Taney.

**INT. BEDROOM, SETH AND AMELIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Amelia is asleep, alone in their bed. But through their  
bedroom window, a couple of TORCHES can be seen off in the  
outer dark. She continues to sleep, unaware.

**EXT. SETH AND AMELIA'S HOUSE - AT SAME TIME**

Two MEN in BLACK LEGION hoods and robes carry torches. Their  
parked MODEL T is about fifty yards behind them. They walk  
through a field, toward the preacher's small house. The  
TALLER LEGION MAN leads the way, with a SHORTER LEGION MAN  
following. They're about a hundred yards away from the house  
and a little drunk.

SHORTER LEGION MAN

We're just putting a little scare  
in 'em, right?

The Taller Legion Man turns back to the other.

TALLER LEGION MAN

Here.

He hands over a whiskey bottle.

TALLER LEGION MAN (CONT'D)

Down it. Then shut up and get to  
work earning that twenty dollars.

The Shorter Legion Man stops to drink more booze and boost his courage. He watches the Taller Legion Man move slowly toward the house with a torch. But when the Taller Legion Man gets within twenty yards of the house, he stops. And drops.

SHORTER LEGION MAN

What happened? You trip?

But then the Shorter Legion Man hears the Taller Legion Man's wounded MOAN. And he sees: there's a SECOND FIGURE who grabs the fallen Legion Man's torch and rushes toward the Shorter Legion Man.

It's Seth Davenport, looking murderous in his preacher clothes and holding a bloodied butterfly knife. He charges at the terrified Shorter Legion Man, who drops his torch and starts running toward the Model T parked on the road.

But Seth closes in on him and slashes the fleeing Shorter Legion Man across the back. The man collapses in pain as blood leaks from under his black robe. Seth kicks him viciously.

SETH DAVENPORT

Torch my house?! With my wife  
inside?!

SHORTER LEGION MAN

Please! Preacher! I'm sorry!

Seth is insane with anger. He punches the Legion Man in the face. The man cries in pain.

SETH DAVENPORT

Shut your mouth, you speck of shit.

Seth produces his revolver and places it between the hooded man's eyes.

SHORTER LEGION MAN

Oh God, please, no...spare me, I'm  
sorry Lord, I'm sorry...

Seth looks down at the hooded man with hatred and disgust. He rips off the hood. It's a YOUNG MAN, in his teens. Seth lowers himself and looks into the man's frightened eyes.

SETH DAVENPORT

If I see you again, I'm going to shoot you with this gun. First here.

Seth takes his knife and cuts an X in the Young Man's arm.  
The young man SCREAMS in pain.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

Then here.

Seth now cuts an X in the young man's other arm.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

Then here.

Seth cuts a third X on the young man's forehead. The blood runs into the man's eyes. Seth releases the hysterical Young Man, who runs to the parked car and flees.

Seth turns back toward his house, gripping the torch. As he walks, he picks up the dropped second torch. Illuminating the yard, Seth now sees that the Taller Legion Man has fled.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Come by this house again and I'll hunt you down and murder your wife and kids! I'll murder your goddamn pets! Then I'll rip you open with my teeth! Understand?

(beat, louder)

DO YOU UNDERSTAND?!

Seth stands there, gripping the torches, crazed with rage.

**END OF ACT THREE**

ACT FOUR**INT. BEDROOM, SETH AND AMELIA'S HOUSE - DAWN (DAY 2)**

Amelia wakes in bed, alone in the morning light. She gets up and walks...

**INT. KITCHEN, SETH AND AMELIA'S HOUSE - MORNING**

...into the kitchen. A showered and clean-shaven Seth is sitting calmly at the kitchen table in his preacher clothes. He's drinking coffee and reading his Bible. As if it's an ordinary morning. Amelia goes to the stove to fix breakfast.

AMELIA DAVENPORT

Were you drinking last night? I thought I heard yelling.

SETH DAVENPORT

I may have found myself moved by the spirit.

Amelia looks over at her mysterious husband as she cooks.

AMELIA DAVENPORT

You know, you don't have to hide anything from me. A little wildness doesn't scare me.

Seth considers this.

SETH DAVENPORT

I think I found out who shot Sam Riley.

AMELIA DAVENPORT

A strikebreaker.

SETH DAVENPORT

Not just any strikebreaker. A Pinkerton.

AMELIA DAVENPORT

(worried)

A Pinkerton?

SETH DAVENPORT

I think he's someone I knew out west, years ago. Before I'd found God. Or you. I was less refined then.

Amelia brings a plate of food. She sets it before her husband and kisses him on the head. When she does, she notes that the knuckles on his right hand are bruised.

AMELIA DAVENPORT  
(with love)  
Less refined. I see.

Amelia returns to the cook stove.

AMELIA DAVENPORT (CONT'D)  
Are you preaching today?

SETH DAVENPORT  
I'll be speaking at Sam Riley's wake. I think I'm going to discuss a passage in Matthew. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." What do you think?

AMELIA DAVENPORT  
I think...Christ is holy. God is good. And peace exists in finding the right war.

Seth takes in his wife, impressed.

SETH DAVENPORT  
I know I've kept a lot of who I am hidden from you. But sometimes I get the feeling...

AMELIA DAVENPORT  
That you're not the only one with secrets?

At this, Seth puts his Bible down and gets up. He comes up behind Amelia and puts his arms around her. She cleans up the stove as he kisses her neck.

SETH DAVENPORT  
I think we've found the right war. Here. With these farmers. We can organize them. Word will spread. Others will follow. Every revolution starts this way.

AMELIA DAVENPORT  
Then I'm at peace standing with you. In life and death.

SETH DAVENPORT  
I'd prefer life. For awhile,  
anyway.

Amelia takes scraps and puts them in a tin bucket.

AMELIA DAVENPORT  
'Life springs from Death, like  
water from a stone. We must carry  
that stone -- our own Death --  
within us as if it were our  
greatest weapon.'

SETH DAVENPORT  
William James?

Amelia's filled the bucket. She starts heading toward the  
back door to go outside.

AMELIA DAVENPORT  
No.

Seth follows her as she keeps walking.

SETH DAVENPORT  
Thoreau's diaries?

AMELIA DAVENPORT  
Close.

She goes out the back door and into their yard. Seth goes to  
the doorway and calls to her.

SETH DAVENPORT  
What's it from?

Amelia turns her head and smiles to him as she walks away.

AMELIA DAVENPORT  
Your third love letter to me.

Seth takes this in as Amelia walks on.

**INT. COLLINGSWORTH FARMHOUSE - MORNING**

Pete Collingsworth, the farmer who drove the original  
shipment of milk that Sam Riley was killed trying to block,  
is in his kitchen. Pete arranges food on a plate. He carries  
the plate into a nearby bedroom. Here, his sickly wife PAM  
COLLINGSWORTH rests in bed. She's barely conscious.

PETE

Scrambled eggs and blood sausage.  
Your favorites.

PAM

(weak)

I'm not hungry.

PETE

You need to eat, darling. Here, I  
got some red velvet cake with cream  
cheese frosting.

Pam's nearly out of it. Her husband's generosity and  
desperation aren't registering.

PAM

Maybe later, dear.

She starts coughing, then rolls over and falls back asleep.  
Frustrated, Pete takes the food back into the kitchen. He  
drops the full plate into the sink. All the compromises and  
sacrifices made on the road to selling his goods in order to  
provide for his sickly wife...it feels like it means nothing.

Pete takes out a cigarette and lights it. He goes out the  
front door...

#### **EXT. FRONT PORCH, COLLINGSWORTH FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

...and steps onto his front porch. He watches as the sun  
throws a thin light on the nearby CORN FIELD. Pete takes a  
deep drag on his smoke. Then...CRACK!...a bullet hole opens  
in Pete's forehead. He drops, dead.

In the nearby distance, perched behind Pete's truck, Creeley  
lowers a RIFLE. He locates a nearby CASING. He reaches into  
his pocket and drops something on the ground, then turns and  
walks away, disappearing into the neighboring corn field.

On the ground by Pete's truck, next to the spent casing, now  
lays a TOOTHPICK just like Sam Jr's.

As Creeley walks, he expresses neither joy nor sadness at  
having just killed another man. Just grim acceptance.

#### **INT. HOLDEN TRIBUNE OFFICE - DAY**

D.L. Sullivan is typing away. He pauses and puffs a moment on  
his pipe. He opens a nearby drawer, which is filled with  
contemporary poetry and fiction books: TS Eliot, DH Lawrence,  
Willa Cather, William Carlos Williams.

DL takes out Wallace Stevens' Harmonium and looks it over, then glances at his typewriter, where he's writing an article with the heading: "FOURTEEN STUDENTS COMPETE FOR FINAL SELECTION IN SPEECH CONTEST." DL considers the distance between his calling and his present work.

BURT BABBAGE (O.S.)

What the hell's going on?

Burt Babbage is staring out the window and pointing at the square where a DOZEN FARM TRUCKS are lined around the block. FARMERS and WOMEN and CHILDREN are packed into the backs of the trucks. Other TOWNSPEOPLE come out of BARBERSHOPS and the DRY FOODS STORE and climb into the trucks.

D.L. SULLIVAN

I don't know.

BURT BABBAGE

Then find out.

DL puts the book away and gets up to leave.

**INT. ROOM 3, DELLA'S BROTHEL - DAY**

Creeley enters Bessie's brothel room. He's got a package under his arm. Bessie lays under the sheets, reading a newspaper.

CREELEY

Whiskey.

Bessie reaches under the sheets and produces a bottle. She hands it to him, then pulls down the covers, revealing that she's naked.

BESSIE

Anything else?

Creeley looks at the offering of youth and beauty before him.

CREELEY

After you put on this.

He hands her the package. She opens it, revealing a modest house dress.

BESSIE

You want me to wear this?

CREELEY

No, I want you to squat over it and squeeze me out a turd.

Bessie looks at him. Such a request is not outside her realm of experiences.

CREELEY (CONT'D)

Yes, I want you to wear it.

Bessie starts putting it on.

BESSIE

So, did your mama wear a dress like this? Or was your dead wife wearing one the last time you saw her?

CREELEY

Just put it on.

Bessie finishes getting dressed.

BESSIE

Getting your money's worth?

She looks stunning, her carnal energy juxtaposing sensually with the wholesomeness of the dress. Creeley approaches her. He touches the dress.

CREELEY

Starting to.

They begin to kiss. It's primal. Raw. Bessie begins unbuckling Creeley's belt as they kiss. He lifts up the hem of her dress. Just as they're about to fuck, Bessie stops him.

BESSIE

Who am I being right now?

CREELEY

A good woman. How's it feel?

BESSIE

Unfamiliar.

CREELEY

Don't get too used to it.

He turns Bessie around, lifts the dress and enters her from behind...

**EXT. HALLWAY, DELLA'S BROTHEL - CONTINUOUS**

...as, outside in the hall, mannish madame Della is on her hands and knees with a SMALL MIRROR tilted under the doorway.

The deep MOANS and GRUNTS echo from the room as Bessie and Creeley fuck. Della watches, transfixed by the animalistic congress reflected in her little mirror.

**EXT. CHAPEL - DAY**

DOZENS of TRUCKS drive up the DIRT ROAD leading to the chapel. Seth stands in the grass behind the chapel, watching them approach. He grips his Bible. Nervous, he takes in the mild light and the slight breeze. He notes a hawk's shadow crossing his own. The HAWK lands on the branches of a nearby tree.

SETH DAVENPORT

(to the hawk)

You're the one who put me here.  
You're the one who gave me  
these...talents. Is this who I am?  
Is this some kind of sign?

He looks at the bird, as if awaiting a response. It shits, then flies off.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

You're not even there, are you?

Seth starts pacing. In the distance, more and more trucks and cars approach. Seth turns the corner of the chapel to find...a drunken Preston Riley leaning against the wall and sipping from a flask.

PRESTON RILEY

(slurring a little)

You know...one night, when I was a kid, I heard my Pa...rest his soul...I heard my Pa outside my window, out in his tomato garden. Stoned outta his mind. Out there talkin' with his Lord...except he was wonderin' why he got stuck with me instead of an upright young man like cousin Sam. My own Pa...

Seth takes in the drunken man and the arriving vehicles. Is this guy going to fuck things up?

SETH DAVENPORT

You should head home now. Sleep this off.

PRESTON RILEY

Not before I kill the cowboy who  
shot Sam. Somebody's gotta stop  
him.

Preston pulls out a SNUB NOSE PISTOL. Off-screen, the sound  
of families and children approaching the chapel.

SETH DAVENPORT

You know how to use that?

PRESTON RILEY

I know which end to grip, if that's  
what you mean.

SETH DAVENPORT

And you're going to kill this  
cowboy if he shows up?

PRESTON RILEY

Damn straight.

SETH DAVENPORT

And if he kills you first?

PRESTON RILEY

He won't.

SETH DAVENPORT

It's Preston, right?

PRESTON RILEY

Preston Lloyd Riley III.

Seth steps up close to Preston and speaks quietly.

SETH DAVENPORT

Preston, I want you to try and  
shoot me.

PRESTON RILEY

What?

SETH DAVENPORT

You heard me, you spineless,  
blubbering drunk. Unless you're as  
chickenshit as your old man figured  
you were.

PRESTON RILEY

Preacher...

SETH DAVENPORT

How disappointed he must've been.  
To leave his name to some  
chickenshit cooze like yourself. I  
bet with a real man like Sam as a  
son, your Pa might've had reason to  
keep livin'--

PRESTON RILEY

You son of a bitch--

Preston angrily goes to raise his gun...but before he can even take aim, Seth quickly grabs his arm and twists it, pulling the snub-nose pistol from his grip and placing it under Preston's chin.

PRESTON RILEY (CONT'D)

(ashamed)

Damn you, Preacher...

SETH DAVENPORT

If you try to draw aim on that  
cowboy, he won't disarm you. He'll  
put a bullet in your head.

PRESTON RILEY

He's gonna come after Sam Jr...

SETH DAVENPORT

Then I'll keep watch.

Seth still has the snub-nosed pistol under Preston's chin. Seth struggles to rein in his violent temper. He takes in the shamed, terrified man and makes a tentative effort at preacherly comfort.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

Forgive those who sin against you,  
Preston. And so Christ will forgive  
you. Amen.

Preston looks at the violent preacher and the pistol in his grip.

PRESTON RILEY

(bewildered)

Amen...

Seth lets go of Preston, who looks at the preacher as if at an alien species. Preston stumbles off, drunk and fearful. Seth watches him go. He opens up Preston's snub-nosed pistol and removes the bullets. He pockets them, then tosses the pistol onto the roof of the chapel, letting it slide into the gutter.

The back door of the chapel opens. It's Amelia. She takes in her agitated husband and the long line of vehicles coming up the road.

AMELIA DAVENPORT  
Are you ready?

Seth gestures at the vehicles coming up the road.

SETH DAVENPORT  
They've come.

AMELIA DAVENPORT  
They may only come once.

Seth nods, then walks into the chapel...

**INT. CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS**

As Seth enters, he pauses to take in the SCORES of mourning FARMERS, WOMEN and CHILDREN gathered inside the small chapel and outside the doorways.

SETH DAVENPORT  
(quietly)  
Half the goddamn town's here.

AMELIA DAVENPORT  
(quietly)  
Because you were sent to lead them.

Seth takes a breath and approaches the pulpit. Behind him is a WHITE SHEET that hangs from the ceiling. He takes in the huge crowd and steadies himself.

SETH DAVENPORT  
If God were to speak to us, what do you think He would sound like? Would He speak to us in our native tongue? Would He speak in tongues? Would His voice sound like the call of a hawk? Like the ocean in its mindless fury?

Seth looks over the faces. They are skeptical, distant, distrusting of this strange outsider. He sees D.L. Sullivan at the back of the chapel. Seth knows: he needs to rattle these people out of their complacency.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)  
Would the voice of God be mild and apologetic? Would the voice of God sound like this?

Seth pulls his pistol from his waistband, aims it at the ceiling and -- BAM! -- fires it. The sound echoes. A frightened silence spreads. He has their attention.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)  
Or would it sound more like the  
silence after?

Seth looks out at the frightened, confused faces. He sees Gloria Calhoun, the late reverend's widow, get up in an offended haste and leave. A few others follow her. Seth watches them go. As he puts his gun away...

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)  
The choice is ours. To either face  
the truth or turn a blind eye its  
way.

Seth turns from the pulpit and pulls away the sheet that had up to now been a background to his sermon. Behind him on a table is THE BODY OF SAM RILEY.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)  
Sam Riley is dead. The truth is, he  
died for fair prices on his goods  
and decent pay for his work. He  
died for his farm and his family.  
He died for his dignity and for the  
future of this town. Sam Riley has  
entered the great silence now. You  
owe it to him to listen to it.

A long beat of silence throughout the chapel. Seth steps forward. His bearing goes softer, more intimate. Now is when he needs to pull these people closer to him.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)  
These are hard times. And I know  
it's easy to be scared. But our  
Lord guides us in times like these.  
Matthew 10:34: "Think not that I am  
come to send peace on earth: I came  
not to send peace, but a sword."  
Not peace, my friends, but a sword.  
For peace, in this world, does not  
exist. Peace, in this world, is a  
mask the devil wears so he can do  
his business without being  
disturbed. By some trick, the devil  
has made us believe that the world  
belongs not to us, but to the rich.  
I am here to tell you that this  
world, this land, belongs to no one  
but you.

(MORE)

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)  
But you have to take it back. By  
force, if you must. Even by sword.

Seth returns to his pulpit.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)  
Before I came to your town, I  
preached in Bull Shoals, Arkansas.  
Men were building a dam nearby. As  
you know, dam-building is dangerous  
work. Some men were killed. Others  
maimed. None were being paid enough  
for their labor. These were good  
American men who the devil had  
taught to suffer in silence.

As Seth recounts, we CUT TO--

**EXT. OLD DANCE HALL -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK**

*A FLASHBACK to the recent past. Preacher Seth Davenport (without Amelia) greets dozens of BLACK and WHITE and IMMIGRANT WORKERS and their FAMILIES at an old dance hall. Snow falls. WHITE AND BLACK CHILDREN race into the dance hall.*

SETH DAVENPORT (V.O.)  
But when winter came, these men  
came together to strike. As one  
body, one soul. That Christmas Eve,  
my church threw a potluck for the  
workers at an old dance hall.

**INT. OLD DANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS - FLASHBACK**

*The children jump and clap when they see a large CHRISTMAS TREE surrounded by piles of CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.*

SETH DAVENPORT (V.O.)  
Gifts were donated for these men's  
children.

*Seth looks upon this, pleased.*

**INT. OLD DANCE HALL - HOURS LATER - FLASHBACK**

*Older children play with toys. Younger children sleep on the floor, gripping their treasures. Meanwhile, the adults drink and dance.*

SETH DAVENPORT (V.O.)

There were about two hundred of us  
in the building. We sang and danced  
and drank. It was a good night.

*Then an OLDER GIRL sees smoke spilling from between the dance  
hall's floorboards.*

SETH DAVENPORT (V.O.)

Then someone smelled smoke...

*Everyone runs to the doors...*

**INT. CHAPEL - BACK TO PRESENT**

Seth continues his story to the gathered.

SETH DAVENPORT

Afterwards, the sheriff's  
department and the local paper  
would both claim that the fire was  
a terrible accident. But in truth,  
strikebreakers had set fire to the  
building and barred the doors. We  
were all trapped. So we started  
lifting each other up and out of  
the windows. The children first.  
Then the women.

**INT. BURNING DANCE HALL - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

*Seth and OTHER MEN help an ELDERLY BLACK WOMAN through a  
window and to waiting arms of the younger women on the  
outside. After the older woman is safely out, Seth turns to a  
couple nearby MEN -- again, both black and white. The men run  
over to find a prone, coughing AMELIA (this is before Seth  
and Amelia's coupling) on the floor of the building. All  
three start lifting Amelia through the window. They lift her  
up and out.*

SETH DAVENPORT (V.O.)

The fire kept spreading.

*An OLDER WHITE MAN collapses from the smoke. Seth starts to  
go to help...but the men instead grab Seth and lift him up...*

SETH DAVENPORT (V.O.)

And though I tried to stop them,  
some of the men grabbed me and  
lifted me out of the window and to  
safety.

*Angered, Seth tries kicking and hitting them. But they subdue Seth and lift him up and out, through the window.*

**INT. CHAPEL - BACK TO PRESENT**

Seth continues.

SETH DAVENPORT

You might think it was horrible to have heard the screams of those men still caught inside the building as they burned to death. It was horrible. But it was nothing compared to what followed those screams.

**EXT. BURNED DOWN DANCE HALL - DAWN - FLASHBACK**

*Seth stands before the same building, hours later, after it has finished burning. Seth watches in horrified silence as CHARRED BODIES are carried out.*

SETH DAVENPORT (V.O.)

Silence. A roaring, furious, deafening silence.

*Seth looks over to see that Amelia is likewise silently watching this. She shivers, looking on and smoking a cigarette. Seth takes off his jacket and brings it over to her.*

**INT. CHAPEL - BACK TO PRESENT**

Seth addresses the gathered farmers in Holden.

SETH DAVENPORT

So when I bow my head in prayer, that is the silence that I hear. A holy silence. I hear it, again, now. For me, it's nothing less than the voice of God Himself.

Seth falls silent as he examines the gathered. They seem to be hanging on every word now.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

A strikebreaker has been sent here because there are rich and powerful men who are afraid of what we've begun.

(MORE)

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

They'll use their laws and their banks and their papers to try and stop us. And they won't stop until they're convinced we're too afraid to disturb the peace. And if you are too afraid, that is... understandable. But if you are, please come forward now and tell Sam's family, tell Sam yourself, that his death means nothing to you. That his murder provokes no response from you. But, if you think Sam's murder is an outrage, is a sin, then join us. In our blockades, in our strikes, in our revolt. "Not peace," the Lord said. "But a sword." Because, starting today, we are going to start taking this land back. We're going to start taking our lives back. And our country. And we're going begin by saving Sam Riley's farm.

He looks out at the silent, furious, grief-stricken faces.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

And now, if you are so moved, please join me as I bow my head and join Sam in silent prayer.

And at this, all of the gathered farmers close their eyes and bow their heads. All except for D.L. Sullivan, who takes it all in. Through the church's doorway, D.L. sees that Sheriff Taney and Deputy Taney are striding from their parked Packard and toward the chapel.

D.L. looks around. Everyone else has their eyes closed and heads bowed. So he covertly picks up a nearby hymnal and drops it on the floor. Preacher Seth and some others look up at this, catching sight of an armed Sheriff Taney and Deputy Taney walking in.

Seth instinctively grips and cocks his pistol, which he keeps hid behind the pulpit.

SETH DAVENPORT (CONT'D)

This is a peaceful assembly,  
Sheriff.

The others now all open their eyes as well.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

Where's Sam Jr?

SETH DAVENPORT

What do you want Sam Jr for?

Sheriff Taney holds out his hand: a casing and a toothpick.

SHERIFF DON TANEY

Sam Jr. shot and killed Pete  
Collingsworth in cold blood. I'm  
here to arrest him.

Seth looks over to where Sam Jr and the rest of the Riley family are seated and in shock. Sheriff Taney heads that way.

**EXT. CHAPEL - MINUTES LATER**

Seth and Amelia stand outside the chapel. The large crowd has come outside. All watch as Sheriff Taney leads a handcuffed Sam Jr to his Packard.

SETH DAVENPORT

The Pinkerton's behind this.

AMELIA DAVENPORT

Do you know where to find him?

SETH DAVENPORT

No. But I know his habits.

Seth walks towards a nearby MODEL A.

**INT. CAR - MINUTES LATER**

Seth recklessly drives that Model A down a dirt road at top speed. He pulls up to Della's brothel and gets out.

**INT. DELLA'S BROTHEL - DAY**

A furious Preacher Seth Davenport enters the brothel. He strides through the place until he sees madam Della, who is smoking and playing poker with a couple of her girls in the parlor. One of the prostitutes is on Della's lap. Seth approaches in his preacher suit.

SETH DAVENPORT

Stetson. Colt. Tell me where he is.

DELLA

Open legs and shut lips. Store  
policy.

(to partner)

Deal.

Seth shoves the seated prostitute aside, grabs Della by the neck and puts her against the nearby wall.

SETH DAVENPORT

Look me in the eyes. Do you want me  
to force this information out of  
you?

She studies Seth's wild eyes a beat. She sees the capacity  
for brutality and darkness within him.

DELLA

Room 3.

Seth lets go and heads toward the stairs.

**INT. ROOM 3, DELLA'S BROTHEL - AT SAME TIME**

A naked Bessie is curled up with Creeley in the bed, post-coital. But when the door is kicked open, Creeley instinctively tosses Bessie aside (to protect her) and reaches for his nearby Colt. In a split second, Creeley has it cocked and aimed at the intruder, whom he immediately recognizes: Seth. Creeley takes in Seth's preacher suit.

CREELEY

You look a little different than  
the last time I saw you.

Seth takes in the naked Creeley and Bessie.

SETH DAVENPORT

You don't.

On edge, Creeley eyes Seth as the preacher crosses the room. Even though Creeley has his gun pulled and Seth appears to be unarmed, Creeley seems to be the more hesitant one. Bessie is amazed to see this.

CREELEY

So am I next on your list?

Seth doesn't answer Creeley's question. He simply sits down across from the cowboy, who keeps his gun aimed. Years of bad history fill the air between the two men.

SETH DAVENPORT

You've killed two men in this town.

CREELEY

It appears the Lord works in  
mysterious ways.

SETH DAVENPORT  
Wanna try to make it three?

Creeley is matter-of-fact here -- not afraid, but cautious.

CREELEY  
I'm familiar with my limits.

SETH DAVENPORT  
And your appetites.

CREELEY  
I guess some of us don't go around  
pretending to be something we're  
not.

A long beat of silence. They hold each other's gaze.

CREELEY (CONT'D)  
You never answered my question. Did  
you come here to finish me off too?

SETH DAVENPORT  
Not before I save your soul.

And with that, Seth stands and exits the room. Creeley sits there, eyeing the door. Bessie moves closer.

BESSIE  
Who was that?

Creeley keeps his eyes on the doorway.

CREELEY  
My little brother.

Creeley gets up, closes the door, then bars it with a chair.  
MUSIC CUE: Black Heart Procession's "Wasteland" (which plays on until the end of the episode).

**INT. SHERIFF STATION - DAY - MONTAGE**

Sheriff Taney and Deputy Taney toss Sam Jr into the holding cell at the sheriff's station. They exit. When they do, Sam Jr makes hesitant eye contact with the "mongrel drunkard" prisoner who refuses to eat. The prisoner looks at the young teen then grins and runs his finger across his own throat.

**INT. SETH AND AMELIA'S HOME - NIGHT - MONTAGE**

Amelia sits up in her nightgown. She's smoking a cigarette and reading the Bible. She has a SHOTGUN at her side. Seth is nowhere to be seen.

**INT. ROOM 3, DELLA'S BROTHEL - NIGHT - MONTAGE**

Creeley and Bessie lay in bed together. Bessie is asleep. But Creeley is wide awake. He glances at the barred door, the Colt gripped in his hand.

**EXT. BARN, RILEY FARMHOUSE - NIGHT - MONTAGE**

Preston Riley is sitting in a truck, drinking and keeping guard at the Riley farmhouse. He sees Martha Riley exit the back door and walk toward the nearby BARN.

Preston gets out and walks that way. When he gets to the barn, he sees that Martha is weeping while beginning milking their dozens and dozens of cows. A troubled Preston puts down his bottle and joins her.

**EXT. NEAR HOLDEN TOWN SQUARE - MORNING (DAY 3) - MONTAGE**

Sunrise. D.L. Sullivan walks to work while puffing on his ever-present pipe. He reads Wallace Stevens' Harmonium as he goes. He walks onto the town square, on his way to the newspaper's office.

He looks up from his book to notice an unusually large and agitated CROWD on the square. A strange sight this early in the morning. D.L. pushes his way through the crowd, which seems to be shocked silent by some revelatory image.

D.L. finally catches sight of that image. It stops him in his tracks. What D.L. and the stunned crowd see...

SAM RILEY'S BODY IS CRUCIFIED ACROSS THE DOORWAY OF THE BANK.

Someone has propped up the dead farmer's body and driven nails through his hands, leaving him to dangle there Christ-like across the entryway to the local bank. Around Sam's neck hangs a SIGN:

"I died so you could save  
three cents on a loaf of bread."

D.L. takes this in with a look of horror and awe. He puts the poetry book under his arm, then reaches into his back pocket and takes out his reporter's pad. D.L. begins writing madly on its pages.

**INT. SETH AND AMELIA'S HOUSE - MORNING**

Amelia wakes in bed, as if from a dream. Sleepy, she gets up and walks out of the bedroom in her nightgown. She walks, searching, until she sees Seth standing in the middle of their kitchen. When Seth turns to face her, she sees that Seth has blood splatters on his face. A hammer in his hand.

SETH DAVENPORT

It is begun.

Seth's eyes are wild, crazed, divine.

**END OF PILOT**