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SHANE

Adapted from Jack Schaefer's novella by Kenneth Robbins

Cast of Characters:

BOBBY, 10 years old	JOE STARRETT, homesteader
SHANE, a wanderer	MARIAN, his wife
WILLIAM MCCAIN, a farmer	SARAH MCCAIN, his wife
JAKE LEDYARD, a peddler	LUKE FLETCHER, a rancher
MORGAN, Fletcher's brother	LEW JOHNSON, homesteader
FRANK TORREY	HENRY SHIPSTEAD
JAMES LEWIS	ERNIE WRIGHT
ED HOWELLS	CHRIS, a cowboy
RED MARLIN, a cowboy	A COWBOY
WILL ATLEY, bartender	MR. WEIR, a banker

(Some doubling is possible.)

TIME: Summer, 1889

PLACE: A small settlement in Wyoming

ACT I

AT RISE: We see a vast plain, and in its midst a three-wire barbed fence. A FARMER (WILLIAM MCCAIN) rushes down the hill, pursued by five cowboys on horseback, each with a bandana across the lower portion of his face. They are "having a bit of fun," chasing poor WILLIAM, taunting him with jibes and threatening him with ropes and pistols. WILLIAM trips and tumbles in the dirt. It is at this point that we hear a scream from the hillside where we see, SARAH, WILLIAM's pregnant wife, watching the taunting and terrified for the life of her husband. The leader of the cowboys, MORGAN FLETCHER, pulls his horse up, towering over the cowering WILLIAM. He threatens with his pistol, which he uses to wave the other cowboys away. He

stops his horse a few feet away from WILLIAM who lies in the dirt, puts his pistol away, and removes the bandana from his face.

MORGAN

Do you know me, William McCain?

WILLIAM

Ye be Morgan Fletcher.

MORGAN

I be more than Morgan Fletcher, William McCain. I be the fella what's gonna put you six feet under. You and that pretty little wife of yours. You want me to do that to you, William McCain?

WILLIAM

No, sir, I most surely do not.

MORGAN

Then get the hell off me and me brother's land!
 (He turns his horse and gallops away, followed by the rest of the cowboys. SARAH rushes to her husband and helps him to his feet. As they go, they see a dark stranger on the hill overlooking the scene. They stare at him for a moment, then run off the way they have come. The stranger holds still until the two have gone, then he rides his horse down the hill and out of sight. Lights change. The revolve turns, revealing the interior of the Starrett homestead. Outside is a corral, an open dirt yard, a small barn, a vegetable garden, a water trough, and a large stump from an ancient cottonwood tree. As the lights rise on this romantic scene, we see JOE STARRETT chopping at the roots of the old stump near the cabin.)

ADULT BOB

He rode into our valley in the summer of '89. I was a kid then.

(BOBBY rushes in, carrying his toy rifle. He climbs the rail fence of the corral and strains to see, gazing into the distance.)

BOBBY

Pa? Somebody's coming! Pa!

ADULT BOB

There seemed nothing remarkable about the stranger riding into our valley, just another stray horseman riding up the road. He rode easily, relaxed in the saddle, leaning his

weight into the stirrups. Even in his easiness, I remember a tension. It was the easiness of a coiled spring, a trap set.

BOBBY

Pa!

JOE

(Coming from the stump, sweaty and tired.)

I know, son. Been watching him for the past half hour myself.

BOBBY

Know who he is?

JOE

Now how would I know a thing like that, Bob? You suspect I'm a soothsayer? Lord help us.

(SHANE enters, silence as he takes everything in, nods to JOE who nods back. His eyes stop on BOBBY's toy gun.)

Howdydo, stranger.

SHANE

I'd appreciate some water from your trough.

JOE

Use all the water you want, stranger.

(SHANE drinks from the trough, washes his hands and arms, flings them dry, then leads his horse to the trough to let him drink. Long silence as the two men size each other up. When he has refreshed himself and his horse, SHANE turns to his saddle.)

SHANE

Thank you.

JOE

Any time.

(BOBBY slips the bolt of his toy gun. SHANE whirls, his hand going instinctively to his side where his revolver would normally be. Only now he is unarmed. BOBBY nearly topples from the railing in fright. SHANE relaxes and turns back to mount his horse. JOE steps forward.)

BOB

Sorry, mister, I didn't mean--

JOE

Right jumpy, ain't you, mister.

(SHANE is silent. He is obviously embarrassed by his over reaction to the sound.)

SHANE

Beg pardon.

JOE

No harm done. Where you headed?

SHANE

Some place I ain't been before.

JOE

Where you coming from?

SHANE

Other side of yonder.

JOE

'Scuse my nosing in, but we don't see many passers-through these days. You seem in an all-fired hurry to get to this place you're heading. No need to be in such a rush, is there, Bobby?

BOB

No, sir.

JOE

Any good news from where you're coming from?

SHANE

Not that I'd call it good, but they made the Dakotas into states.

JOE

That right. I suspect Wyoming'll be next, don't you think?

SHANE

Be a shame if it is.

(He is heading off.)

JOE

I said, don't be in such a hurry. Not much sun left in this day. Food will be on the table soon and you can bed down here tonight.

SHANE

You don't know me. Why would you make an offer like that?

JOE

Hungry, I guess you might say, for some adult conversation.

SHANE

I'm not much of a talker.

JOE

Just so long as you listen, that's all I ask. What do you say? My woman can set you a place at the table.

SHANE

That's mighty thoughtful of you.

JOE

My name's Starrett. Joe Starrett. This here is Robert MacPherson Starrett. Too much name for a boy. I make it Bobby for short.

SHANE

Call me Shane.

(They shake hands. SHANE turns to BOBBY.)

Bob it is. You was watching me for quite a spell, coming up the road.

BOBBY

Yes. . . yes, guess I was.

SHANE

I like that. A man who watches what's going on around him'll make his mark.

(MARIAN enters from house.)

MARIAN

I saw you through the window.

JOE

Marian, meet Mr. Shane.

SHANE

(With a slight bow.)

Good evening, ma'am.

MARIAN

(Obviously pleased with his good manners.)

And a good evening to you, Mr. Shane. If Joe hadn't invited you to supper, I would have done it myself. You'd never find a decent meal up the valley.

SHANE

I would be delighted to share supper with you. . . Marian.
 (MARIAN flushes as the lights fade. Lights rise in the saloon as the five cowboys, MORGAN still in the lead, enter and hitch their horses to the rail. MORGAN is met at the door to the saloon by his brother, LUKE FLETCHER, as the rest of the men enter the establishment and order drinks.)

FLETCHER

Well?

MORGAN

I'm thirsty.

FLETCHER

I sent you on an errand.

MORGAN

And I done your errand. The McCain's're as good as gone. Scared from here to Ireland and back.

FLETCHER

Just to Ireland will do. You didn't hurt him.

MORGAN

You gotta trust me, brother Luke. You want something done, I do it. You want the range back the way it was, I get you the range back the way it was. It's easy, brother, easy as pulling up fence posts. And I'm still thirsty. You gonna buy me a drink?

FLETCHER

Help yourself. I just don't want you to do nothing stupid, Morgan, that's all. McCain. He didn't recognize you did he?

MORGAN

Sure he did. After I told him who I was.
 (He enters the saloon.)

FLETCHER

(Following, as the lights change.)
 Now, that's exactly what I'm talking about, Morgan, being stupid!
 (Lights fade to the farm.)

ADULT BOB

He must have been riding many days, for he was full of news from towns along his back trail as far as Cheyenne and even Denver and others beyond I had never heard of before. But he had no news about himself. His past was fenced as tightly as our pasture. All we could learn was that he was riding through, taking each day as it came, with nothing in particular in mind except maybe seeing a part of the country, our little bit of Wyoming, he had not been in before.

(When lights return, it is twilight and JOE and SHANE enter from the cabin, picking their teeth and enjoying each other's company. BOBBY can be seen leaning out one of the side windows, watching everything the men do.)

JOE

Yes, Shane, the boys I used to ride with don't see it yet. They will some day. The open range can't last forever. The fence lines are closing in. Running cattle in big lots is good business only for the top ranchers and it's really a poor business at that. Poor in terms of the resources going into it. Too much space for too little results. It's certain to be crowded out.

SHANE

I've been hearing the same quite a lot lately and from men with pretty clear heads. Maybe there's something to it.

JOE

By Godfrey, there's plenty to it. Listen to me, Shane. The thing to do is pick your spot, get your land, your own land. Put in enough crops to carry you and make your efforts pay with a small herd, not all horns and bone, but bred for meat and fenced in and fed right. I haven't been at it long, but already I've raised stock that averages three hundred pounds more than that long-legged stuff Fletcher runs on the other side of the river and it's better beef, and that's only a beginning.

(He is up, pacing.)

Sure, his outfit sprawls over most of this valley and it looks big. But he's got range rights on a lot more acres than he has cows and he won't even have those acres as more homesteaders move in. His way is wasteful. Too much land for what he gets out of it. He can't see that. He thinks we small fellows are nothing but nuisances.

SHANE

You are.

(JOE gives him a look.)

From his point of view, you are.

JOE

Yes, I guess you're right. I'll have to admit that. Those of us here now would make it tough for him if he wanted to use the range behind us on this side of the river as he used to. Altogether we cut some pretty good slices out of it. There must be ten families to homestead so far. Worse still, we block off part of the river, shut the range off from water. He's been grumbling about that off and on ever since we've been here. He's worried that more of us will keep coming and settle on the other side too, and then he will be in a fix.

SHANE

So will you, I imagine.

JOE

Maybe so, maybe so. Sometimes, his cowhands get rambunctious. He pushes us some, but for the most part, he leaves us be.

(MARIAN stands in the doorway, a dish cloth in her hand.)

MARIAN

Joe. Somebody's coming. It looks like William McCain and his wife, Sarah.

JOE

Poor Wee Willie McCain. All he knows is potato farming, and I swear, Shane, this land ain't fixed for that sort of crop.

MARIAN

Their first child's on the way. Did you know that?

JOE

How can you not know. Prouder than a peacock at a state fair that Wee Willie McCain. From the way he behaves, you'd think he'd invented the process of baby-making.

MARIAN

Oh, leave him alone. They're young. He's got a right to crow if he wants.

SHANE

They live near by?

JOE

Far end of the valley. You probably rode right by their place. Worst site possible for a farm. No neighbors and rocks the size of a house in every direction. I wonder what brings them this way so late in the day?

MARIAN

Invite them in.

JOE

(Going.)

I will, I will. Come on, Bobby, let's act neighborly.
(SHANE and MARIAN are alone. There is an awkward pause before SHANE rises to leave.)

MARIAN

No. Please stay.

(Another awkward pause.)

I feel I must apologize for my husband. He's blunt sometimes about things he doesn't understand.

SHANE

Not necessary. I appreciate your hospitality.

MARIAN

When we settled here, we agreed: it would be our home, regardless. We settled first in the Black Hills, but there's no decent farm land around there. Then we tried around Laramie. And we got pushed out. Now we're here, Joe is determined to stay.

SHANE

I admire his determination.

MARIAN

Determination. That's my husband's middle name.

SHANE

Your husband's a mighty lucky man. . . A comfortable home, a healthy son . . . a beautiful wife.

(There is another awkward silence that MARIAN breaks with her embarrassment.)

MARIAN

And you, sir, must have kissed the Blarney Stone!

SHANE

Not yet, but I intend to one of these days.

(SHANE bows slightly in her direction.)

A most delicious dinner, Marian. I am beholden to you.

(JOE and BOBBY return, followed by WILLIAM and SARAH, the two frightened people from the opening scene.)

JOE

Marian, set another plate or two. We've got company.

WILLIAM

We can't stay. We've got to be getting on. Back to the old country. No more of this for the two of us.

BOBBY

They've got their wagon and it's loaded.

JOE

Sit, please.

WILLIAM

Me and me Sarah must be moving. Thank you kindly, though. You Mr. Starrett and that wife of yours have been exceeding kind to us and for that we're thankful.

(He glares at SHANE.)

JOE

William McCain and his wife, Sarah, meet Mr. Shane.

SHANE

Howdy.

WILLIAM

What the hell's he doing here?

SARAH

William.

MARIAN

Sarah, come with me. We'll leave the men folk to visit.

WILLIAM

No. We've cause to be heading out. They slaughtered my brood sow, Joe. Last night. They had no cause to do that. And here it is early Spring. We'll have dirt to eat come next January and nothing else. And just this morning, they
. . . .

JOE

Now, William.

WILLIAM

They run me through the weeds and swore to bury me along side Sarah here. Don't be trying to talk me out of it this

time. Two nights ago it was my fencing: they torn it all down and drove their cattle across my new plowed potato field. It's so we can't do much of anything but pack it in and head back to the homeland. Me wife's having a baby and we'll have naught to nurture it. No, we're finished here. We're going back to the old country where my son'll have him a decent future to look to.

SARAH

It's the baby we're thinking of. You understand, Mrs. Starrett?

MARIAN

Of course I do.

JOE

Well, I don't! You're giving in, Willie. And if that happens, there's no end to what we'll have to look forward to from Fletcher.

WILLIAM

Fletcher can have my stake. And welcome to it.

JOE

But --

SARAH

It's that Morgan Fletcher I can't abide. He will be the death of us all. We're going home, Mr. Starrett.

(There is a silence before WILLIAM speaks.)

WILLIAM

I'm sorry, Mr. Starrett.

(He and his wife leave. In a moment, SHANE goes into the yard, stands leaning against the fence. He wanders toward the large stump, surveying it.)

JOE

What do we do now, Marian?

MARIAN

Same as always. Hope that Fletcher'll leave us alone.

JOE

Not much possibility of that, not any longer. Some of the others may want to leave, too. Morgan's been cutting everybody's fencing of late.

MARIAN

And if they do?

JOE

I don't know. I just don't know.

MARIAN

(Watching SHANE through the window.)

Isn't it peculiar how he won't talk about himself?

JOE

Who? Shane?

MARIAN

Every thing about him is peculiar. I've never seen a man quite like him before.

JOE

That's not surprising, not where you come from. Willie could learn a lot from a man like that, give him half a chance. He's a special brand we sometimes get out here in the grass country. I've come across a few. A bad one's poison. A good one's straight grain clear through.

MARIAN

How can you be so sure about him? Why, he wouldn't even tell where he was reared.

JOE

Born back east a ways would be my guess. And pretty far south. Tennessee maybe. But he's been around plenty.

MARIAN

I like him. He's so nice and polite and sort of gentle. Not like most men I've met out here. But there's something about him. Something underneath the gentleness. . .
Something. . .

JOE

Mysterious?

MARIAN

Yes, of course. Mysterious. But more than that.
Dangerous.

JOE

He's a dangerous one all right. But not to us, my dear. In fact, I don't think you ever had a safer man in your house.
(Lights fade. Lights rise on the saloon where MORGAN is arm wrestling another cowboy. He wins, causing the cowboy embarrassment. The cowboy charges into MORGAN and they fight, being cheered on by onlookers. WILL,

the bartender, fires his shotgun in the air. Both combatants come to a stop and turn to WILL.)

WILL

You want to fight, take it outside. I'll not have my bar busted again this week.

(The two fighters look at one another, then nod and go through the door into the street where they resume their tussle. WEIR is strolling by with his wife on his arm. They merely glance at the fighters and continue their stroll, chatting quietly. As they near the bank, FLETCHER strides by and greets them.)

WEIR

That brother of yours is at it again, Mr. Fletcher. Seems a day can't end without his giving somebody a black eye or a busted lip.

FLETCHER

Evening Mrs. Weir, Mr. Weir. I'll put him on his leash.

WEIR

One of these days, Wyoming will become a state, and when that happens, we will see the end of ruffians. You can bank on that.

FLETCHER

You're quite right, Mr. Weir, you're quite right—about banking and all.

(The WEIRS enter the bank. FLETCHER ties his horse at the rail as Morgan succeeds in ramming his opponent into the dirt.)

You're a bully, Morgan.

MORGAN

Thank you kindly, brother Luke.

(Cowboys drag the defeated fighter into Grafton's store. FLETCHER enters the bar followed by MORGAN.)

What's got you in such a good mood?

FLETCHER

That cattle deal I told you about—it's come through. We're to deliver twenty five hundred head of cattle to Fort Laramie in August, thanks to the army's decision to prep this territory for statehood.

MORGAN

Hot damn! We're rich, brother.

FLETCHER

We just might be. If. . .

MORGAN

If?

FLETCHER

I'll need all my land back, Morgan. All.

MORGAN

(A smile on his face.)

You can leave that to me.

(Lights shift. We are now inside the kitchen where JOE and SHANE sit, eating, MARIAN at the stove, cooking.)

ADULT BOB

Our visitor slept late the night in the barn in the bunk father had built there for the hired man who had been with us for a few weeks in the spring. In the morning, I slept late and stumbled into the kitchen to find father and the stranger—Shane—working through piles of mother's flapjacks.

(BOBBY rushes in from his room. He sits at the table as MARIAN serves him his breakfast.)

JOE

'Bout time, sleepy head.

SHANE

Good morning, Bob. You'd better dig in fast or I'll put away your share, too.

MARIAN

There's plenty for all.

SHANE

Eat enough of these flannel cakes and you'll grow to be a bigger man than your father.

MARIAN

Flannel cakes! Did you hear that, Joe? You must be right. Tennessee or some such place. I never heard them called flannel cakes out here.

SHANE

A good guess, Ma'am. Mighty close to the mark.

MARIAN

So? Where is home?

SHANE

Home is where a man finds comfort and peace. My home's my saddle, Ma'am.

MARIAN

You know what I mean. Where were you reared?

JOE

Marian. It ain't polite--

SHANE

She's got a right to know. I'm sitting at her table, eating up a month's worth of grub. I'd want to know myself. My folks came out of the Carolinas and settled in Louisiana. Me, though--I was fiddle-footed and left home at fifteen. Haven't had anything worth being called a real flannel cake since. That is, Ma'am, 'til now.

MARIAN

If I'm any judge of men, that means you want more.
 (She places a stack of pancakes in front of SHANE.
 There is a rumble of thunder and a flash of lightning followed by more thunder and the sound of a rising wind.)

JOE

Summer storm's coming up.

SHANE

You must help me with these, Bob, else I'll need a wheel barrow to get from here to the barn.

BOBBY

Are you going to stay on with us, Mister Shane?

MARIAN

Bobby--

JOE

You leave the boy alone, Marian. He's asking the question I was wanting to ask, but was afraid to.

SHANE

I suspect I should be moving on.
 (Pause. Lightning, thunder. Sound of rain on the roof.)

MARIAN

You'll not be traveling in any such weather. Wait a bit and it'll clear. These rains don't last long, and I've another pot of coffee on the stove.

SHANE

Your hospitality is overflowing.

JOE

Marian's right. Only she doesn't go far enough. These rains are short, but they sure mess up a road. It's new. Hasn't settled much yet. Mighty soggy when wet. Won't be fit for traveling 'til it drains. You better stay over 'til tomorrow.

SHANE

That's mighty kind of you--

JOE

That horse of yours was pretty much beat last night. If I was a horse doctor, I'd order a days rest right off.

SHANE

You're a horse doctor now?

JOE

Damned if I don't think the same prescription would do me good, too. You stick here the day and I'll follow it. I'd like to take you around, show you what I'm doing with the place.

MARIAN

You'd be doing us a favor, Mr. Shane. We don't get many visitors from outside the valley.

SHANE

Bob, they're ganging up on me here!

BOBBY

It'd be real nice to have you stay, Mr. Shane.

MARIAN

And besides--I've been waiting for an excuse to try a deep-dish apple pie I've heard tell of. It would just be wasted on these other two. They eat everything in sight and don't rightly know good from poor.

SHANE

Mighty nice of you, but--

MARIAN

And another thing. I'm fair bubbling with questions about what the women are wearing back in civilization.

JOE

They're wearing dungarees under their hoop skirts.

MARIAN

Oh, you. I'm talking about hats and such. Mr. Shane, you're the kind of man would notice such things.

SHANE

Ma'am, I'm not positive I appreciate how you've pegged me. No one else ever mistook me as an expert on ladies' millinery.

JOE

Ooh. Never knew anybody could use ten-penny words like that.

MARIAN

It's a perfectly legitimate word. And it wouldn't hurt you one bit, Joe Starrett, to learn what it means.

JOE

I know what it means!

MARIAN

More flannel cakes, Mr. Shane?

SHANE

I'm full. I'm starting in to conserve space for that pie.

JOE

You'd better! When Marian puts her mind to cooking, she makes a man forget he's got any limits to his appetite. Only don't you go giving her fancy notions of new hats so she'll be sending off to the mail-order house and throwing my money away on silly frippery. She's got a hat.

MARIAN

Not the kind that makes a woman feel special.

SHANE

I noticed down in Denver that the women were wearing wide floppy-brimmed bonnets with lots of flowers in front on top and slits in the brims for scarves to come through and be tied in bows under the chin.

MARIAN

Really? In bows?

SHANE

Bright and colorful.

(The storm has passed.)

JOE

Look, the sun's shining. Come on, Shane, I'll show you what this hop-sotch climate does to my alfalfa. Can almost see the stuff growing.

(The men rise from the table.)

SHANE

Ma'am. Come on, Bob, let's go watch some alfalfa grow.

(They exit the house. As they pass the stump, SHANE stops, staring at it.)

JOE

Yes, that's the millstone around my neck. That's the one fool thing about this place I haven't licked yet. But I will. There's no cottonwood ever grew can stand up to a man that's got strength and the will to keep hammering at it. You know, Shane, I've been feuding with this thing so long I've worked up a spot of affection for it. It's tough. I admire toughness. The right kind.

SHANE

Are you sure you know the difference?

JOE

I know enough to get by.

BOBBY

Pa! What's "millinery?"

(JOE gives his son a playful shove.)
Somebody's coming.

JOE

That's Jake Ledyard's outfit.

SHANE

Road's not fit for traveling?

JOE

Well. . .

SHANE

Starrett, you're poor shakes as a liar.

JOE

Dries fast in this country. Take more than a drizzle to keep old Ledyard from his rounds.

(LEDYARD driving his wagon enters. On it is a new cultivator.)

Well, Jake Ledyard, how you doing!

LEDYARD

Could be better, could be worse. Lousy weather for the peddling man.

(He glances at SHANE.)

It's here, Starrett, the beauty you said you wanted.

(He uncovers the cultivator.)

A cultivator that'll make a man a farming wing-ding whether he likes it or not. This is the best buy I've toted this haul.

JOE

That's what I've been wanting.

LEDYARD

Not a better cultivator this side of Kansas City.

JOE

Must be something wrong with it.

LEDYARD

The thing will turn twenty acres a day if your mule's up to it.

JOE

What's the tariff?

LEDYARD

Well, now. It cost me more than I figured when we was talking last time.

JOE

That right?

LEDYARD

You might think it a bit steep. I don't. Not for a new beauty like this here.

JOE

Give it to me straight.

LEDYARD

Might be a bit more than what we talked about before, but you'll make up the difference in no time with the work

LEDYARD (Continued)

you'll save with that. Handles so easy even the boy here will be using it before long.

JOE

Pin it down. I've asked you a question twice now. I don't intend asking again.

LEDYARD

Tell you what.

JOE

Here goes.

LEDYARD

Give me a chance here. I'll shave the price, take a loss to please a good customer.

JOE

You're trying my patience.

LEDYARD

I'll let you have it for a hundred and ten.

SHANE

Let you have it? I reckon he will. There was a cultivator like this one in a store in Cheyenne. List price was sixty dollars.

LEDYARD

Did anybody ask you to push in on this?

SHANE

No. I reckon no one did.

JOE

Sixty, you say?

LEDYARD

Forget what he says, Starrett. I've spotted him now. Heard of him half a dozen times along the road up here. No one knows him. No one can figure him out. Just a stray wandering through, probably chased out of some town and hunting cover. I'm surprised you'd let him hand around.

JOE

You might be surprised at a lot of things. Give it to me straight on the price.

LEDYARD

It's what I said. A hundred and ten. Heck, I'll be out money on the deal anyway, so I'll shave it to a hundred if that'll make you feel any better.

SHANE

Ha.

LEDYARD

Maybe he did see something in Cheyenne, but he's mixed up. Must have been one of those little makes--flimsy, and barely half the size. That might match his price.

(JOE stares at LEDYARD, a stern, penetrating stare.)
Starrett, are you going to stand there and let that--that tramp nobody knows about call me a liar? Are you going to take his word over mine?

JOE

Yes, Ledyard, I'm taking his word.

LEDYARD

Look at him! Look at his clothes! He's just a cheap tinhorn--

(SHANE with clenched fists takes a step forward.)

JOE

He's my guest. He's here at my invitation.

LEDYARD

Takes all kinds, I guess.

JOE

I can figure men for myself. I'll take his word on anything he wants to say any day of God's whole year.

LEDYARD

But. . .

JOE

Sixty is the price.

LEDYARD

But. . .

JOE

Add ten for a fair profit, even though you probably got it wholesale.

LEDYARD

Maybe, but. . .

JOE

Another ten for hauling it here. That tallies to eighty.
Take that or leave it.

LEDYARD

Now see here, Starrett--

JOE

Whatever you do, snap to it and get off my land.

LEDYARD

Where's your money?

(JOE goes into the house. SHANE circles LEDYARD,
making the peddler feel uncomfortable.)

SHANE

Tin-horn?

LEDYARD

Just a figure of speech.

SHANE

Cheap?

LEDYARD

Frugality is a virtue.

SHANE

And just what's wrong with my clothes?

LEDYARD

Nothing. Nothing whatsoever. All the rage in Denver these
days.

SHANE

Denver can keep you if they'll have you.

(JOE returns and counts money into LEDYARD's hand.)

JOE

You and Mr. Shane got things worked out?

LEDYARD

You betcha. Got us an understanding, Mr. Starrett.

JOE

Glad to hear it. Now, Ledyard, give me a hand and I'll free
my property from your wagon.

(They struggle with the machine. LEDYARD looks around,
but SHANE has disappeared into the barn.)

LEDYARD

Where do you suppose he went--

JOE

Some place up wind of you, I'm thinking.

(The cultivator is on the ground.)

There. Now, Jake, I suggest you get off my land as quick as you can before I get it into my head that I've been taken.

LEDYARD

Next time through--

JOE

--Come to me with a fair price, you swindler.

(LEDYARD exits with his wagon. SHANE comes from the barn. He carries an ax. Without pause, he begins chopping at the roots of the huge stump.)

Well, I'll be. . .

(He watches as the chips begin to fly. SHANE stops for a second.)

SHANE

A man has to pay his debts.

(And he is swinging again, chips flying from the stump.)

BOBBY

No, Mister, you don't owe us anything. Lots of times we have folks in for meals, and--

JOE

No, Bobby, he doesn't mean meals. . .

(As SHANE works at the stump, JOE disappears into the barn. In a moment, he returns with his ax. He joins SHANE who stops, acknowledges JOE's presence, then continues. They work side by side. Lights fade. Spot on the cliff where we see a cowboy watching the two men working at the stump. He exits quickly.)

ADULT BOB

It was worth seeing. When father worked on that old stump, that was worth seeing, too, but this was different. I watched the two of them and time passed over us.

(Lights return as MARIAN comes from the house, wearing her bonnet done up as SHANE had described it to her. She waits, but the men continue their sweaty work. JOE stops for a moment to wipe the sweat from his eyes.)

MARIAN

Well? Aren't you going to look at me?
 (Both stop, both stare at her. To SHANE.)
 Have I got it right? Is this the way they do it?

SHANE

Yes, Ma'am. About like that. Only their brims are wider.
 (He returns to his work.)

MARIAN

Joe Starrett, aren't you going to tell me whether you like me in this hat?

JOE

Look-a-here, Marian, you know darned well that whether you have a hat on or whether you don't have a hat on, you're the nicest thing to me that ever happened on God's green earth. Now, stop bothering us. Can't you see we're busy?

MARIAN

This is a funny sort of resting you're doing today.

JOE

Maybe it seems funny to you, Marian, but this is the best resting I've had for about as long as I can remember.
 (She watches the men for a moment, then pulls BOBBY aside.)

MARIAN

(To BOBBY.)

What went on out here? What's gotten into these two?

BOBBY

I don't know. Mr. Ledyard was here, sold us that new cultivator, and he said some nasty things about Mr. Shane's clothes, and that made Mr. Shane mad, really mad. It was scary. Then, they started doing what they're doing.

MARIAN

He frightened you?

BOBBY

Well, no, not me. I wasn't scared for me, but for Mr. Ledyard. I was scared of whatever it was that might have happened.

MARIAN

I think I understand. He's made me feel a little that way, too.

(They watch the men at work.)

MARIAN (Continued)

I hope Joe knows what he's doing. I declare, in some ways those two aren't even as old as you are, Bobby. Just the same, don't you dare tell them I said so. But there's something splendid in the battle they're giving that old stump.

(She takes off her bonnet, pulls the ribbon free.)
You think I'd learn. This isn't Denver. This isn't even a whistle stop. It's Joe Starrett's farm. It's where I'm proud to be.

(She goes into the cabin. The men continue working together at the stump. In a moment, she returns with a plate of biscuits. She approaches the men.)
Joe Starrett! Shane!

(They pause in their work.)
You're a pair of fools, but there's no law against me being a fool, too.

(She places the plate on the stump, returns to the cabin, slamming the door. JOE divides the biscuits equally into two piles, but there is one left. He places it on the stump and uses his ax to cut the lone biscuit in half. He places half the biscuit into SHANE's pile and the other in his own, and they eat. When finished eating, they push against the huge stump. It shifts but does not come free of the earth.)

JOE

Must be a taproot.

(SHANE readies with his ax as JOE pushes against the stump. SHANE hacks away at the hidden taproot. In a moment there is a loud crack and the stump moves an inch or more and SHANE drops his ax to help JOE push. BOBBY rushes to the cabin.)

BOBBY

Hurry! Ma. You've got to come! You've got to see this. They're getting it out!

(MARIAN comes from the cabin. The two men are struggling with the stump which is stubborn about coming free of the earth.)

MARIAN

Joe! Why don't you use some sense? Hitch up the team.

JOE

Horses!

MARIAN

They'll have it out in no time.

JOE

Great jumping Jehoshaphat! No! We started this with manpower, and by Godfrey we'll finish it with manpower!

(They strain against the stump. BOBBY joins them and pushes. There is another crack and the stump moves out of its hole and sits like a dead body on the ground. Both men are grinning. JOE leans against the side of the stump, patting it as if it was a dog. SHANE places a hand on BOBBY's head.)

SHANE

Thanks for the help, young man. Came at precisely the right time.

JOE

Marian, I'm rested now. I don't believe any man since the world began was ever more rested.

SHANE

Ma'm, I've learned something today. Being a farmer has more to it than I ever thought. Now, I'm about ready for some of that promised pie.

MARIAN

Oh, you men! You made me forget all about it. It's probably burnt by now!

(She rushes into the cabin, the two men, tired, lean against the uprooted stump. JOE offers SHANE his hand. They shake. And the lights fade. Lights rise in town as the spying cowboy rides up to the saloon and hitches his horse to the rail. He rushes into the saloon and whispers something to FLETCHER who is playing cards with MORGAN, CHRIS, and a fourth cowboy. He gives the cowboy a dollar who takes it to the bar and orders a bottle of whiskey. FLETCHER pushes away from the table and stands in the door of the saloon. MORGAN and CHRIS follow.)

FLETCHER

It appears that Starrett has himself a new hired hand. That fool idiot refuses to learn.

(He goes out of the saloon and strolls toward Grafton's store, lighting a cigarette as he goes. MORGAN to CHRIS.)

MORGAN

What was that last one's name?

CHRIS

Marley. Or Morley, something like that.

MORGAN

Yeah. This new fella comes to town, you know what to do.

CHRIS

I'll enjoy it.

(Lights fade as MORGAN follows FLETCHER. When lights return, JOE and SHANE sit at the table, in the cabin, finishing breakfast as MARIAN washes dishes.)

ADULT BOB

The sun was already well up in the sky when I awakened the next morning. I lay in my bed thinking of our visitor out in the bunk in the barn, thinking of the effect he had on father and mother. They were more alive, like they wanted to show more what they were, when they were with him. I understood that. I felt the same way myself. But it puzzled me that a man so deep and vital in his own being, should be riding a lone trail out of a closed and guarded past.

(BOBBY bursts into the room. He stands dazed, staring at SHANE who sits at the table.)

MARIAN

My heavens.

JOE

Good morning, Buckaroo!

MARIAN

You came in here like something was after you. What's the matter?

BOBBY

I just thought that maybe. . .

JOE

Thought what, boy?

BOBBY

That Mr. Shane. . . he had ridden off and forgotten me.

SHANE

I wouldn't forget you, Bob. And I won't forget your mother's cooking. If you begin having a special lot of people passing by at mealtimes, that'll be because a grateful man has been boasting of your flannel cakes all along the road.

JOE

Now there's an idea. We'll turn the place into a boarding house. Marian'll fill folks full of her meals and I'll fill my pockets with their money. That hits me as a mighty convenient arrangement.

MARIAN

Yes, and who is it you think that's going to peel all those potatoes and wash all those dishes. Not me, that's for certain.

JOE

Bobby's the best potato peeler this side of Cheyenne.

BOBBY

Ah, Pa--

JOE

And once he washes a plate, it never needs washing again! His dropping it on the floor sees to that.

MARIAN

Don't embarrass the boy, Joe.

BOBBY

I can peel potatoes.

MARIAN

And you can slice off a finger or two doing it.
(SHANE stands.)

JOE

You certainly are a man for being in a hurry. Sit down, Shane. I've a question for you.

SHANE

(Sitting.)

So long as it don't need much of an answer.

JOE

A yes or no will do. Are you running away from anything?
(A pause.)

MARIAN

Joe--you shouldn't--

SHANE

No. I'm not running away from anything. Not in the way you mean.

JOE

Good.

(He sits forward.)

Look, Shane. I'm not a rancher. Now you've seen my place, you know that I'm a farmer. That's what I decided to be when I quit punching cattle for another man's money and took myself a bride. That's what I want to be and I'm proud of it.

SHANE

As you should be.

JOE

I've made a fair start. This outfit isn't as big as I hope to have it some day. But there's more work here already than one man can handle if it's to be done right. The young fellow I had ran out on me after he tangled with a couple of Fletcher's boys in town.

BOBBY

Knocked his front teeth out!

MARIAN

Bobby!

BOBBY

It's the truth, ain't it, Pa.

JOE

That's pretty much what happened, sorry to say.

SHANE

What had he done?

JOE

Working for me was enough of a reason. He was just a kid, turned eighteen.

SHANE

How did they do it?

JOE

Set him up. Got him drunk. You know how these things work.

SHANE

It's always the same. The old ways die hard.

(He nods.)

So. Fletcher's crowding you.

JOE

I don't crowd easy. Not like Wee Willie McCain. It'd take more than a week of roughhousing and a puny threat from Morgan Fletcher to ride me out of this country.

MARIAN

Joe. Remember what the Good Book says about pride.

JOE

Good Book be--

(MARIAN's cut of eyes towards BOBBY stops him.)

Well, Bobby's got to hear it someday. I won't be around for ever, you know.

MARIAN

No need to talk morbid, either.

JOE

Bottom line is I've got a job to do here and it's too big for one man, even for me. And none of the strays that drift up this way are worth a darn.

SHANE

Yes?

JOE

You know what I mean. Will you stick here awhile and help me get things in shape for the winter?

SHANE

(Standing.)

I never figured to be a farmer, Starrett.

JOE

I'm not asking--

SHANE

I know what you're asking.

(A pause as SHANE looks at the three STARRETTs.)

A month or so, help you get things under control. I can understand that.

JOE

I pay good wages.

SHANE

I don't know much about gardening.

JOE

We'll leave that sort of thing to Marian. I need your help with the stock.

(Pause as SHANE is actually contemplating the offer.)

SHANE

I would have laughed at the notion a few days ago.

JOE

And me right along with you. But this isn't a joke. I'm dead serious. I need your help.

SHANE

Well, looks like you've hired yourself a hand.

(Pause as what he has said sinks in. He turns to MARIAN.)

And I'll rate your cooking, Ma'am, as wages enough.

(There is an awkward moment between her and SHANE. She turns away in embarrassment. JOE slaps his knees and reaches for SHANE's hand.)

JOE

You'll get good wages, and you'll earn them.

BOBBY

You're staying?

SHANE

For a while at least.

JOE

First off, now, why don't you drop into town and get some work clothes. Try Sam Grafton's store. And tell him to put it on my bill.

SHANE

(Going to the door.)

I'll buy my own, thank you.

JOE

Word of advice, Shane. Don't mess with Fletcher's boys. They ran my other hand off easy as pie. And they'll be aiming for you. Running off McCain has made them cocky. So, your best bet is ignore them. Don't let them shove you around, but ignore them if you can. That's sound advice, if you want to stay in this valley any length of time.

SHANE

You're the boss.

(He leaves. The STARRETT's look at one another, BOBBY is exuberant, MARIAN puzzled.)

JOE

Marian, the sun's shining mighty bright at last. We got ourselves a hired hand.

MARIAN

But Joe, are you sure about what you're doing?

JOE

I've never been surer of anything in my life.

MARIAN

What kind of work can a man like that do?

JOE

Why, Marian, you saw--

MARIAN

Oh, I know he stood right up to you with that stump. But that was something special.

JOE

By Godfrey it was special!

MARIAN

He's been used to good living and plenty of money. You can tell that. He said himself he doesn't know anything about farming.

JOE

Neither did I when I started here.

MARIAN

I know, but. . .

JOE

What a man knows isn't important. It's what he's got inside that counts. I'll bet you that one was a cowpuncher when he was younger and a top hand, too.

MARIAN

I fear you may be wrong about that.

JOE

What does it matter? He's handy. Anything he does will be done right. You watch. In a week he'll be making even me hump or he'll be bossing the place.

MARIAN

Perhaps.

JOE

No perhapsing about it. Did you notice how he took it when I told him about Fletcher's boys and young Morley?

MARIAN

He knew exactly what had happened and why. He knows. . .

JOE

That's what fetched him. He knows I'm in a spot and he's not the man to leave me there. Nobody'll scare him away. He's my kind of a man.

MARIAN

Why, Joe Starrett. He isn't like you at all. He looks different and his clothes are different and he talks different. I know he's lived different.

JOE

I wasn't talking about things like that. Before long, he'll be a farmer, just like Bobby and me. Ain't that right, Bobby boy!

BOBBY

Could you beat Shane? In a fight, I mean.

MARIAN

Bobby, such a question!

JOE

Son, where did that come from?

BOBBY

Could you?

JOE

If I had to, I might do it. But by Godfrey, I'd hate to try it.

BOBBY

Why?

JOE

Well, son, some men just plain have dynamite inside them, and he's one. I'll tell you, though, I've never met a man I'd rather have more on my side in any kind of trouble.

MARIAN

Trouble?

JOE

Fletcher's wanting the range back. His range as he calls it. His range.

(He stands at the door looking in the direction SHANE has gone. Quietly, more to himself than to his son.)
Shane is like a -- a--

MARIAN

A slow-burning fuse.

JOE

Yes.

MARIAN

Quiet and no sputtering.

JOE

So quiet you forget it's been lit. And it sets off one heck of a blow when it touches powder. That's Shane. There's one big powder barrel in this valley, and it's been asking for trouble for a long time.

MARIAN

And that is what frightens me most.

BOBBY

Pa? Do you know what Shane has rolled up in his blanket?

JOE

Probably a gun.

BOBBY

How did you know? Have you seen it?

JOE

No. That's what he would have.

BOBBY

Well, why doesn't he ever carry it? Do you suppose maybe it's because he doesn't know how to use it good enough?

JOE

Son, I wouldn't be surprised if he could take that gun and shoot the buttons off your shirt with you wearing it and all you'd feel would be a breeze.

MARIAN

I don't like having guns on our land.

JOE

Neither do I.

BOBBY

Why does he keep it hidden in the barn?

JOE

That's one question I'll never ask him. And don't you ever say anything to him about it. There are some things you don't ask a man, not if you respect him. He's entitled to stake his claim to what he considers private to himself alone. But you can take my word for it, Bobby, that when a man like Shane doesn't want to tote a gun, you can bet your shirt, buttons and all, he's got a mighty good reason.

(JOE leaves. MARIAN pulls her son to her.)

MARIAN

Bobby.

BOBBY

Yes, mother.

MARIAN

Don't get to liking Shane too much.

BOBBY

Why not? Is there something wrong with him?

MARIAN

Nooooo. There's nothing wrong about Shane. Nothing you could put that way. There's more right about him than most any man you're likely to meet--except your father. But. . . he'll be moving on one of these days and then you'll be all upset if you get to liking him too much.

(Lights change as BOBBY fastens a toy gun and holster to his side, letting the pistol trail to his knee. He leaves the cabin. In the yard, he stalks imaginary foes and blasts away making sounds with his mouth.)

ADULT BOB

I think that was the happiest summer of my life. With each passing day, I wanted more and more to be like Shane, like the man I imagined he was in the past, fenced off. I had to imagine most of it. He would never speak of it, not in any way at all. Even his name remained mysterious. Just Shane.

(A spot finds SHANE, now dressed in dungarees and a blue work shirt, newly bought from Grafton's store in town.)

SHANE

Call me. . . Shane.

ADULT BOB

Nothing else. We never knew whether that was his first name or last, or any name that really belonged to him. I conjured up all manner of adventures for him, not tied to any particular time or place, seeing him as a slim and dark and dashing figure coolly passing through perils that would overcome a lesser man. And he was my teacher. Like the time I was playing with a gun Mr. Grafton gave me, an old frontier style colt with a cracked barrel somebody had turned in at the store.

(BOBBY whirls, shoots, and sees SHANE watching him.)

SHANE

How many you knocked over so far, Bob?

BOBBY

(Drawing, shooting.)

That makes seven.

SHANE

Rattlesnakes or timber wolves?

BOBBY

Outlaws. Mean ones.

SHANE

Better leave a few for the other lawmen. It wouldn't do to make them jealous. And look here, Bob, you're not doing that quite right.

BOBBY

What.

SHANE

Your holster's too low. Don't let it drag full arm's length. Have it just below the hip, so the grip is about halfway between your wrist and elbow when the arm's hanging limp. You can take the gun then as your hand's coming up and there's room to clear the holster without having to lift the gun too high.

(MARIAN has entered, and watches without the two noticing her.)

BOBBY

Gosh a-gorry! Is that the way real gunfighters do?

SHANE

No. Not all of them. Most have their own tricks. One likes a shoulder holster; another packs his gun in his pants belt. Some carry two guns, but that's a show-off stunt and a waste of weight. One's enough, if you know how to use it. I've even seen a man have a tight holster with an open end and fastened on a little swivel to the belt. He didn't have to pull the gun, then. Just swung up the barrel and blazed away from the hip. That's mighty fast for close work and a big target. But it's not certain past ten or fifteen paces and no good at all for putting your shot right where you want it. The way I'm telling you is as good as any and better than most. And another thing--

(SHANE takes the no-good gun, tosses it lightly, using it with the grace of an expert.)

If it's speed you're after, Bob, don't split the move into parts. Don't pull, cock, aim, and fire. Make it all one. Slip back the hammer as you bring the gun up and squeeze the trigger the second it's up level.

BOBBY

How do you aim it, then? How do you get a sight on it?

SHANE

No need to. Learn to hold it so the barrel's right in line with the fingers if they were out straight. You won't have to waste time bringing it high to take a sight. Just point it, low and quick and easy, like pointing a finger.

BOBBY

Like pointing a finger. Gosh a-gorry. Will you show me?

SHANE

Sure, except this old gun won't shoot.

BOBBY

With your gun.

(Pause.)

I saw it the other day. I touched it.

SHANE

Bob, there are certain things that are to be left alone.

BOBBY

Is it loaded?

SHANE

Of course.

BOBBY

Gosh a-gorry. Won't you shoot it, please?

SHANE

(After a pause.)

You stay here.

(He goes into the barn. BOBBY draws on imaginary outlaws and shoots time and again until SHANE returns. He has strapped on his revolver. He ties the holster to his leg.)

BOBBY

Gosh. That's a beauty of a gun. Where'd you get it?

SHANE

From the getting place. What do you want me to shoot?

BOBBY

Just a minute.

(He takes a can and rushes across the yard, placing it on a fence post. He runs back to SHANE.)

Think you can hit that?

SHANE

I don't know. It's an awful long way away. And it's so small.

BOBBY

Maybe you can hit it if--

(SHANE draws and fires. The can is thrown from the post. BOBBY's eyes are gigantic. He whistles through his teeth.)

SHANE

Remember, it's all one. It happens as one single motion--

MARIAN

Shane. Go in the house, Bobby.

BOBBY

But mother--

MARIAN

I'll not have guns on my property.

BOBBY

But it's an old broke up thing, not real.

MARIAN

Don't sass, do as I say.

BOBBY

Ah, ma. . .

(He goes, shooting imaginary foes.)

SHANE

A gun is just a tool, Marian. No better and no worse than any other tool. A shovel. An ax. A saddle or a stove or anything. A gun is as good--or as bad--as the man who carries it.

MARIAN

I don't want my son using a gun.

SHANE

I understand and beg your pardon.

(They stare at one another for a moment. He bows slightly, turns and leaves. MARIAN watches him as he goes.)

JOE

(Entering and giving his wife a hug.)

What was all the shooting about?

MARIAN

Shane was demonstrating.

JOE

Is that right. Is he good?

MARIAN

Joseph Starrett, it's not a matter of good or bad. It's a matter of guns! How do you expect this country to ever get civilized if everybody insists on toting guns. It's enough to make you weep.

JOE

I'm sorry, Marian. I'll have a talk with him.

MARIAN

And he seems so gentle.

JOE

How do you mean?

MARIAN

When he strapped on his gun, he became somebody else. He became cold, calculating. He became somehow brutal. . .

JOE

I said I'll have a talk with him.

(He goes, leaving his wife. Lights slowly change, rising in the saloon where cowboys lounge, playing cards, drinking. Outside, SHANE approaches followed by BOBBY.)

BOBBY

You're not going in, are you?

SHANE

Didn't you say you wanted a soda pop?

BOBBY

But father's at the blacksmith. You shouldn't go in there alone.

SHANE

What's there to be afraid of, Bob?

BOBBY

I don't know. You just shouldn't.

SHANE

Wait here. I'll be right back.

(SHANE enters the saloon and goes to the bar, waits for WILL ATLEY to serve him.)

CHRIS

(From his table, to COWBOY.)

What the--

COWBOY

Deal me out.

CHRIS

Huh? I don't get you.

COWBOY

I'm leaving. Now. For good.

CHRIS

Hey, listen. Do you know the guy?

COWBOY

I didn't say that. There ain't nobody can claim I said that. I'm leaving, that's all. You can tell Fletcher. This is a heck of a country up here anyhow.

CHRIS

I might have known. Scared, eh? Yellow?

COWBOY

You can call it what you want. I call it superstition myself.

(COWBOY leaves.)

CHRIS

Well. I'll brace him myself.

(As CHRIS approaches the bar, BOBBY rushes into the saloon, stands by SHANE.)

BOBBY

Shane?

SHANE

I thought I told you to wait outside.

BOBBY

But Shane--

SHANE

Don't make me wish you'd stayed home, Bob.

(BOBBY moves to the side but does not leave. CHRIS orders a whiskey which he drinks. SHANE waits for WILL ATLEY to serve him, but this doesn't happen.)

CHRIS

Hello, farmer.

SHANE

Speaking to me?

CHRIS

Heck, there ain't nobody else standing there. Here, have a drink of this.

(CHRIS tosses whiskey on SHANE's shirt. HE doesn't respond.)

I'll be damned. So you do drink whiskey.

SHANE

I've had better.

CHRIS

Did you hear that, Will? This farmer drinks whiskey. I didn't think these plow-pushing dirt-grubbers drank anything stronger than sarsaparilla.

SHANE

Some of us do.

(To WILL.)

Do you have any soda pop? I'd like a bottle.

(CHRIS guffaws as WILL gives SHANE a bottle of soda pop.)

CHRIS

Hey, Will! What's been happening in here? It smells. That ain't no clean cattleman smell. That's plain dirty barnyard. You, farmer. What are you and Starrett raising out there? Pigs?

(The saloon is totally quiet. SHANE stares at CHRIS for a moment, then walks past him and out into the street.)

You saw it Will. He walked out on me. With a bottle of soda pop, too!

WILL

I would never have guessed a man like him for a play like that.

CHRIS

He was afraid, Will.

WILL

I would've guessed he could take you, Chris.

(CHRIS merely laughs as he drinks his whiskey.)

There's trouble ahead, friend. The worst trouble we've ever had.

CHRIS

(Yelling through the door to no one in particular.)

Yellow! Through and through!!

(Slow fade to black.)

ADULT BOB

Luke Fletcher was talking in town that he would need the whole range again, that the homesteaders would have to go.

FLETCHER

(In a spot.)

I'm a reasonable man. I'll pay a fair price for whatever improvements you've put on any of your places.

ADULT BOB

We knew what Luke Fletcher would not call a fair price, so we had no intention of leaving. The land was ours by right of settlement, guaranteed by the government.

FLETCHER

I'm a reasonable man.

(His spot out as we hear MORGAN's laugh behind him.)

ADULT BOB

We also knew how far away the government was, how far from our valley way up there in the Territory. If we had had a sheriff back then, he would have been Fletcher's man. Fletcher was the power in the valley in those days. And he wasn't about to let anybody forget it.

(Lights rise on the inside of the STARRETT cabin where a hastily called meeting of the homesteaders is taking place. Present are JOE, SHANE, LEW JOHNSON, HENRY SHIPSTEAD, JAMES LEWIS, FRANK TORREY, and ERNIE WRIGHT.)

JOHNSON

Grafton says Fletcher means business this time.

TORREY

What can he do? The land's ours as long as we live on it and we get title in three years. Some of you fellows have already proved up.

LEWIS

He won't really make trouble. Fletcher's never been the shooting kind. He's a good talker, but talk can't hurt us.

SHIPSTEAD

True. That is true.

JOHNSON

Fletcher's a reasonable man. Don't you think, Joe?

JOE

Fletcher's never let his boys get careless that way. Not yet. That ain't saying he wouldn't, if there wasn't any other way. There's a hard streak in him. But he won't get real tough for a while. I don't figure he'll start moving cattle in now 'til spring. My guess is he'll try putting pressure on us this fall and winter, see if he can wear us down. He'll probably start right here. He doesn't like any of us. But he doesn't like me most.

JOHNSON

How do you figure he'll go about it?

JOE

My guess is that he'll begin by trying to convince Shane here that it ain't healthy to be working with me.

WRIGHT

You mean, the way he did with young Morley.

JOHNSON

From what I've been hearing, it won't take much to decide Shane's mind for him.

TORREY

That's what I heard, too.

JOE

What're you talking about, Lew?

JOHNSON

Nothing, 'cept after Shane went into Grafton's the other day, Fletcher's boys have taken to calling all of us pig farmers.

LEWIS

They rode by my place the other day shouting as how they can't see our hogs but they sure do smell them. And you know as good as me, Joe Starrett, I can't afford a brace of hog.

WRIGHT

I can't stomach much more. You know the trouble I've had with those blasted cowboys cutting my fence. Today a couple of them rode over and helped me repair a piece. Helped me! Waited till we were through, then said Fletcher didn't want any of my pigs getting loose and mixing with his cattle. My pigs! There ain't a pig in this whole valley except for Will McCain's and they know it. I'm sick of the word.

JOE

(Chuckling.)

Sounds like one of Morgan's ideas. He's smart. Mean, but--

SHIPSTEAD

This is nothing to laugh at, Joe. You least of all. Darn it, man, I'm beginning to doubt your judgment. None of us can keep our heads up around here any more. Just a while ago, I was in Grafton's and Chris was there blowing high

that your Shane must be thirsty because he's so scared he hadn't been in town lately for his soda pop.

(SHANE stands. Silence. He faces the men, one at a time, then turns and exits.)

JOE

That's all we need to hear on the subject. Shane was only doing what I'd told him to do. Avoid trouble and hang the cost.

WRIGHT

You can't dodge it, Joe. Your man's responsible. You can try explaining all night, but you can't change the facts. Chris braced him for a fight and he ducked out, left us stuck with those stinking pigs.

SHIPSTEAD

You know as well as I do what Fletcher's doing. He's pushing us with this and he won't let up till one of us gets enough and makes a fool play and starts something so he can move in and finish it.

WRIGHT

Fool play or not. I've had all I can take. The next time one of those--

(SOUND of a horse near at hand galloping away. JOE goes to the door, stands, looking out.)

TORREY

Who was that?

JOHNSON

Shhhh.

(The men glare into the night.)

JOE

(In a soft whisper.)

Shane. . .

(Lights rise at the saloon. In the bar are several cowboys including CHRIS. Also present is the banker, MR. WEIR. WILL is behind the bar, CHRIS, RED, and two other cowboys are at a table playing poker. HOWELLS is at the bar but moves away when SHANE enters. He goes to the bar and leans against it, waiting.)

ADULT BOB

Ed Howells was at Grafton's when it happened. He saw it all. When he told us, he seemed a little dazed, as if he

didn't believe what he had witnessed. He said Shane entered the bar, cool and easy as if he was the only customer there.

CHRIS

(With a soft chuckle.)

I swear but I feel a mite hungry all of a sudden, Red. Must be the smell of bacon.

RED

Leave me out of this.

SHANE

(To WILL.)

Two bottles of soda pop.

(WILL places two bottles on the bar.)

CHRIS

You're not drinking that in here.

SHANE

Last time I was in here, you bought me a drink. Now it's my turn.

(SHANE goes to the table and places one of the bottles in front of Chris.)

CHRIS

I told you, you're not drinking that in here.

(He hurls the bottle at SHANE's head, but SHANE ducks, seizes CHRIS by the shirtfront and hauls him out of his chair and over the table. Chris struggles to get his feet under him, but SHANE slaps him three times, his hand flicking back and forth so quick you can hardly see it, the slaps sounding like pistol shots. CHRIS steps back, stunned, then he plunges in with flailing arms and little regard for the man before him. SHANE slips inside CHRIS' barrage and lands a blow low in CHRIS' stomach. CHRIS gasps, his head coming down. SHANE brings his right hand up, open, and the heel catches CHRIS full on the mouth, slapping his head back and raking up over the nose and eyes. The force of the blow knocks CHRIS off balance and he staggers badly, but he drives in again. SHANE ducks, catches one of CHRIS' wrists, twists the arm to lock it and keep it from bending, and swings his shoulder into CHRIS' armpit. He yanks hard on the wrist and CHRIS goes over him. As the body hurls over, SHANE keeps hold of the arm and wrenches it sideways. The sound of the bone in CHRIS' arm breaking is like that of a tree branch in an ice storm. CHRIS crashes to the floor and lies still. SILENCE. SHANE turns to RED.)

SHANE

Perhaps you have something to say about soda pop or pigs.
 (RED doesn't answer. SHANE goes to the unconscious CHRIS, lifts his body, carries it to a table, and leaves him there. He checks the broken arm. He goes to WILL, gets a rag, returns to CHRIS and wipes the blood from his face. He speaks to RED.)

You'd better tote him home and get that arm fixed. Take right good care of him. He has the making of a good man.
 (To CHRIS who is moaning.)

There's only one thing really wrong with you. You're young. That's the one thing time can always cure.

(He leaves followed by HOWELLS. Silence in the bar except for the groans coming from a half-conscious CHRIS. Lights change as the bar disappears and the farm yard appears. JOE is on the porch when SHANE enters with HOWELLS not too far behind. SHANE stops, the two exchange a look, then SHANE continues toward the barn.)

JOE

Shane? What happened?

SHANE

I've been burying pigs.

(He exits into the barn. MARIAN and BOBBY appear behind JOE. HOWELLS goes to JOE.)

HOWELLS

I never saw anything like it, Starrett.

JOE

What happened?

HOWELLS

You know Chris? The young hot head working for Fletcher? Well Shane sought him out and well he did it. Just did it. The whole business didn't take less than a minute. And now Chris has a busted face, a broken arm, and a headache to last him till Sunday. It was thirty seconds from the time he grabbed hold of Chris till Chris was out cold on the floor. In my opinion, that Shane is the most dangerous man I've ever seen. I'm glad he's working for you and not for Fletcher.

(HOWELLS leaves, shaking his head.)

MARIAN

Where's Shane?

JOE

Out in the barn. Sleeping I would guess.

MARIAN

Did he say anything to you about what happened?

JOE

Something about burying pigs. What's the matter?

MARIAN

Oh, nothing.

JOE

No, Marian, I know you. Something is troubling you and I won't have any peace until I know what it is.

MARIAN

Howells is right. Shane is such a dangerous man, Joe.

JOE

I don't happen to agree.

MARIAN

Oh, Joe, that man doesn't belong here. He belongs anywhere else in the world, but not here. Especially not as your hired hand.

JOE

(Slightly angry.)

So I've made a mistake have I?

MARIAN

A bad mistake. The worst possible mistake.

JOE

Marian, what's got into you?

MARIAN

Look what you've done just because you got him to stay on here and get mixed up in this trouble with Fletcher.

JOE

Women never do understand these things. Look-a-here, Marian, Chris will be all right. He's young and he's healthy. Soon as that arm is mended, he'll be in as good shape as he ever was.

MARIAN

Oh, Joe, can't you see what I'm talking about? I don't mean what you've done to Chris. I mean what you've done to Shane.

(She and JOE leave. BOBBY approaches the barn. He opens the top half of the Dutch door. There stands SHANE. He turns to BOBBY.)

BOBBY

Hey, Shane.

SHANE

Bob.

BOBBY

I heard Mr. Howells tell about what went on down at Grafton's.

SHANE

That's not something for a boy like you.

BOBBY

Could you teach me to throw someone the way you threw Chris?

SHANE

(A pause.)

A man doesn't learn things like that. You know them and that's all. I tried. You can see that, can't you, Bob? I let him ride me and I gave him a chance. A man can keep his self-respect without having to cram it down another man's throat. Surely you can see that, Bob?

BOBBY

Uh uh.

SHANE

I left it up to him. He didn't have to jump me that second time. He could have called it off without crawling. He could have if he was man enough. Can't you see that, Bob?

BOBBY

Uh huh.

(MARIAN comes into the yard. There is an awkward pause between her and SHANE.)

MARIAN

It's your bedtime, Bobby. Don't dawdle.

(BOBBY goes inside leaving the two alone. Silence.)
Shane? Don't just stand there. It's bedtime.

(SHANE goes into the barn, leaving MARIAN alone, confused. Lights begin to fade slowly. Fade to black.)

End of Act I

ACT II

AT RISE: We see SHANE at the stump. There beside him is MARIAN. Their eyes meet and she turns away. Behind them and out of their sight is BOBBY.

ADULT BOB

My mother was right when she said things had happened. Shane was changed. He tried to keep things as they had been with us and on the surface nothing was different. But he had lost the serenity that had seeped into him through the summer. He was restless with some far hidden desperation.

MARIAN

I've been wanting to talk to you when Joe wasn't around.

SHANE

Yes, Marian.

MARIAN

(Uneasy.)

You use my Christian name. . .

SHANE

Shouldn't I?

MARIAN

You use it as if you mean something more than you say.

SHANE

Do I?

MARIAN

Do you?

SHANE

I will call you Mrs. Starrett if you wish.

MARIAN

I don't wish. No, I don't.

SHANE

Something is bothering you, Marian?

MARIAN

Yes. You. You've been thinking about moving on, haven't you.

SHANE

The thought has occurred to me.

MARIAN

It's this Fletcher business, isn't it.

SHANE

He does pose a problem.

MARIAN

You thought it would just be a case of not letting him scare you away and of helping us through a hard time. You didn't know it would come to what it has. And now you're worried about what you might do if there's any more fighting.

SHANE

You're a discerning woman, Marian.

MARIAN

You've been worried about something else, too.

SHANE

You're a mighty discerning woman, Marian.

MARIAN

You're thinking that to leave might be a way to make things normal again.

SHANE

And how do you know that?

MARIAN

Because it's what you ought to do. For your own sake. And mine. But I'm asking you not to leave.

(She touches his arm.)

Don't leave, Shane. Joe needs you. More than ever now. More than he would ever admit.

SHANE

And you?

MARIAN

Yes, it's only fair to say it. I need you too.

SHANE

Do you know what you're saying, Marian?
(He has taken her hand.)

MARIAN

I know. And I know that you're the kind of man who won't take advantage of another's weakness.
(He releases her hand.)

SHANE

You are too discerning.

MARIAN

In some ways it would be easier for me, too, if you rode out of this valley and never came back. But we can't let Joe down. I'm counting on you not ever to make me do that. Because you've got to stay, Shane, no matter how hard it is for us. Joe can't keep this place without you. He can't buck Fletcher alone.

(A pause as SHANE looks away.)

SHANE

Fletcher will make it difficult.

MARIAN

Perhaps. This I know for certain: it would just about kill Joe to lose this place. He's too old to start in again somewhere else. Oh, we would get along and might even do real well. After all he's Joe Starrett. He's all man and he can do what has to be done.

SHANE

There is no man better.

MARIAN

I thought that . . . once not so long ago. Now, I'm not sure.

SHANE

Marian--

MARIAN

Let me speak. Joe promised me this place when we were married. He had it in his mind for all the years. He did two men's work to get the extra money for the things we would need. When Bobby was big enough to walk and help some and he could leave us, he came on here and filed his claim and built this house with his own hands, and when he brought us here it was home.

(A beat.)

Nothing else would ever be the same.

SHANE

Joe should be proud of a wife like you. Don't fret any more, Marian. You'll not lose this place. Nor will you lose your man.

MARIAN

But Fletcher is mean and unpredictable. You're sure it will work out all right?

SHANE

Joe made you promise and he's kept it. I promise you won't lose this place.

(He strides off as the lights change and the bar appears.)

ADULT BOB

Saturday evenings all of us would pile into the light work wagon, father and mother on the seat, Shane and me swinging our legs at the rear, and go into town. It was the break in the routine we looked forward to all week. Father would place his orders from Grafton's catalogs and mother would ogle the new fangled gadgets that found their way west. Shane strolled to the saloon. He took in the whole room in his easy, alert way. And I followed.

(We see SHANE go to the bar, the few cowboys in the room giving way, making room for him so that he drinks alone. One of the cowboys exits hurriedly, gets on his horse and rides away. As the scene progresses, the cowboy returns with the rest of Fletcher's hired hands.)

SHANE

A whisky, Will, thank you kindly.

WILL

Nice weather for harvesting, ain't it?

SHANE

Nice weather for just about anything.

WILL

I've been thinking of getting me an acre or two, planting a little garden. What do you think?

SHANE

There are worse ways to spend one's time.

(BOBBY rushes up to SHANE, tugs at his shirt.)

And you, Mr. Weir. You're building yourself quite a little town out here in this wilderness.

WEIR

Pretty soon we'll even have us a church. A house of worship is all we need to make this land civilized.

SHANE

Ah, yes, civilization. I've been there, done that. Nothing's better at ruining things than good old civilization.

(BOBBY tugs again.)

What are you doing in here, Bob?

BOBBY

It's Fletcher's men. They're out front, coming this way.

SHANE

And why shouldn't they, Bob? This is a public bar, open to all. Even the uncivilized.

BOBBY

But, Shane--

SHANE

Open to all but the young. Now, back into the general store with you. This is no place for--

(RED MARLIN, MORGAN, and several other cowboys enter followed by CHRIS with his arm in a sling. There is a long pause as the men circle SHANE.)

MORGAN

Will, I thought we told you--no pig farmers allowed in here. It stinks the place up.

SHANE

Get out of here, Bob, now.

(MORGAN and his men leave SHANE nowhere to go.)

BOBBY

There's too many, Shane.

SHANE

You wouldn't have me run away, would you, Bob?

BOBBY

But there's too many.

SHANE

Get out of here, son. This isn't going to be pretty.

(Silence as MORGAN faces SHANE, sizing him up.)

WILL

(Placing a double barrel shotgun on the bar.)
There will be no gunplay, gentleman, and all damages will be paid for. Mr. Weir here will be my witness to that.

WEIR

I suggest you settle your differences in a civilized-

MORGAN

This don't concern you, mister banker.

WEIR

What this town needs is a sheriff-

MORGAN

What this town needs is a less nosy banker, butting in where he's got no business.

SHANE

Bob, please leave now.

MORGAN

(To CHRIS.)

This the one?

(CHRIS nods.)

Nobody messes with one of my boys and gets away with it. We're riding you out of this valley on a rail, Shane. We're going to rough you up a bit and ride you out and you'll stay out.

(Spits.)

SHANE

So you have it all planned.

FLETCHER

(Speaking from the doorway.)

Not so fast, Morgan. Let's give Shane a chance. I'm a reasonable man, and you're the kind of help I could use. It's just that you're working for the wrong person right now, but we can fix that.

(FLETCHER has entered, crossed to the bar and behind it, shoving WILL aside.)

How much is Starrett paying you? I'll double it.

SHANE

I work for Starrett.

FLETCHER

You don't seem to me to be the kind of man built to follow a mule around a field. Plows. They are an abomination to the west and you know it. Whatever Starrett's paying, I'll triple it.

SHANE

I work for Starrett.

FLETCHER

If it's not money, what is it?

MORGAN

Pretty little woman Joe Starrett's got him, ain't it.

SHANE

You low down filthy--

MORGAN

Nobody talks to me that way.

SHANE

I'm talking to you that way.

FLETCHER

(Backing away.)

He's had his chance, Morgan.

(SHANE tosses a glass of whisky in MORGAN's face. As MORGAN's hands come up, SHANE grabs his wrists, flings himself backward to the floor, pulling MORGAN with him. SHANE's feet get MORGAN in the stomach just below the belt and hurl him over in a tangle of chairs and tables. SHANE is on his feet as the other cowboys charge him. He takes blows in order to get close and brings his knee into a cowboy's groin. The cowboy howls and doubles up falling to the floor. SHANE lands a well placed blow and another cowboy staggers. MORGAN is on his feet. RED charges from one side as another cowboy jumps high in the air, lashing at SHANE with his boots aimed at SHANE's head. SHANE grabs the man's leg and brings him to the floor in a crash, twisting the leg and throwing his weight into it. The cowboy crawls away, the fight taken out of him. RED grabs SHANE's arms from the rear and pins him. Another cowboy is there to help hold SHANE as MORGAN moves in.)

MORGAN

Hold him.

(SHANE stomps RED's foot causing him to lose his hold. SHANE flings the other cowboy away as MORGAN brings a

whisky bottle down on SHANE's head. This knocks SHANE to his knees. Again RED grabs SHANE's arms, pinning him.)

FLETCHER

Don't kill him.

MORGAN

Mind your own business.

(MORGAN smashes SHANE's face with his fist. He is readying for another blow when JOE is there and brings a chair down on MORGAN's head. JOE then grabs RED and lifts him over his head and hurls him onto a table, the table collapsing under RED's weight. SHANE pounds a cowboy and knocks him over the bar. JOE crashes a barrel into FLETCHER. SHANE is after RED who has had enough and races from the saloon, passing MARIAN who is watching from the entrance. JOE is closing in on MORGAN who is slightly dazed and backing away.)

SHANE

Wait, Joe. The man's mine. You better get them out of here. (He is referring to BOBBY and MARIAN who are at the entry.)

JOE

Morgan's more my size.

(But he sees SHANE's determination. JOE speaks to all in the room.)

This is Shane's play. If a one of you tries to interfere, he'll have me to reckon with.

(He goes quickly to the entry as SHANE and MORGAN size one another up.)

You wait out at the wagon, Marian. Morgan's had this coming to him for quite a long time now and it's not for a woman to see.

MARIAN

No, Joe. Shane's one of us. I'll see this through.

(SHANE advances toward MORGAN who rushes SHANE who steps aside and lands quick blows to MORGAN's midsection and jaw. Time and again MORGAN charges but SHANE counters with quick decisive blows. MORGAN gets SHANE in a bear hug and squeezes, lifting SHANE from the floor. SHANE brings his fist down hard on MORGAN's throat several times until the larger man staggers back, dropping SHANE to the floor. He moves forward again. SHANE catches MORGAN with his feet and hurls him back against the bar. SHANE is up and on him instantly. Before MORGAN can grasp a whisky bottle, SHANE pounds

him until MORGAN rolls to the floor, beaten. SHANE straightens, turns to FLETCHER.)

SHANE

Anything else you got to say to me?

FLETCHER

The next time we talk, it'll be with guns.

SHANE

I wouldn't advise it.

(SHANE sways. JOE rushes to him.)

I'm all right, Joe.

(He staggers toward the entry. When he reaches the entry, it's as if all his strength leaves him. JOE catches SHANE and cradles him like he would a child.)

JOE

I'd consider it a favor, Will, if you'd figure the damage and put in on my bill.

WILL

I'm marking this to Fletcher's account. I'll see that he pays.

WEIR

Listen to me, Starrett. It's about time this town worked up a little pride. Maybe it's time, too, we got to be more neighborly with you homesteaders. I'll take a collection to cover this. I've been ashamed of myself ever since it started tonight, standing here and letting five of them jump that man of yours.

JOE

That's mighty nice of you, Weir, but this ain't your fight. Matter of fact, I'd say the odds tonight, without me butting in, too, was mighty close to even. Fletcher ain't getting in on this with a nickel. I'm paying. No, by Godfrey! We're paying. Me and Shane.

(Lights change as JOE leaves, carrying SHANE, followed by MARIAN and BOBBY. The saloon is empty except for FLETCHER and WILL. FLETCHER writes a message and hands it to WILL with a silver dollar.)

FLETCHER

Here, Will. Go down to the telegraph office and send this for me. Here's a dollar for your trouble. There's more than one way to skin a polecat.

WILL

(Reading the message.)

Who's this Wilson fella?

FLETCHER

Just do what you're told and you'll live a whole lot longer.

(WILL exits as the bar disappears as the cabin comes into view.)

ADULT BOB

We returned home, Mother and me perched on the back of the wagon. It was right that he have the seat next to father for, after all, he was Shane.

SHANE

(As lights rise in the cabin where MARIAN is washing blood from SHANE's face.)

What did you do with the redheaded one, Joe? I was busy with the thick one.

JOE

Oh, I just kind of tucked him out of the way.

MARIAN

He picked him up like a bag of potatoes and threw him clear across the room. This is going to hurt.

BOBBY

Nothing can hurt Shane.

SHANE

(As MARIAN puts iodine on a cut.)

Ow.

BOBBY

Gosh a-gorry.

SHANE

(Stopping her from putting a bandage on his cut.)

The air is the best medicine.

BOBBY

We won, didn't we? The stuff with Fletcher is finished after tonight, isn't it?

SHANE

Finished? Bob, my boy, it's only begun.

JOE

That's right. Fletcher's gone too far to back out now.

MARIAN

The both of you were wonderful. He knows he can't lick you now.

SHANE

He knows the old ways can't lick us. There are other ways.

BOBBY

What other ways?

JOE

It's time you were in bed, son.

BOBBY

Ah, pa--

JOE

No arguing with me! To bed!!

BOBBY

Night, Ma. Night, Pa. Night Shane.

SHANE

Good night, Bob. Sleep well.

MARIAN

(After the boy is gone.)

What other ways?

JOE

It's a case of now or never with him. If he can make us run like William and Sarah, he'll be sitting pretty for a long stretch. If he can't, it'll be only a matter o' time before he's moved smack out of this valley.

SHANE

Which is an option he's not about to accept.

JOE

He may not have a choice. There's three or four of the men who looked through here last year ready right now to sharpen stakes and move in soon as they think it's safe. I'll bet Fletcher feels he got a-holt of a bear by the tail and it'd be nice to be able to let go.

BOBBY

(From the door to his room.)

Seems to me he'll need to do something right quick.

JOE

Seems to you, eh? Seems to me you're mighty young to be doing much seemsing. Don't you worry, son. Fletcher is fixing to do something. The grass that grows under his feet won't feed any cow. I'd be easier in mind if I knew what he'll be trying next.

MARIAN

I thought we sent you to bed, Bobby.

SHANE

Just a minute, Marian. You see, Bob, by talking big and playing it rough, Fletcher has made this a straight win or lose deal. It's the same as if he'd kicked loose a stone that starts a rock slide and all he can do is hope to ride it down and hit bottom safe. Maybe he doesn't realize that yet. I think he does. And don't let things like tonight fool you. After a big blow up like tonight is when you have to be most careful.

MARIAN

And now to bed, son, no arguing.

BOBBY

Mother? Will you tuck me in?

MARIAN

Of course.

(She goes into BOBBY's room.)

JOE

So tonight wasn't the end of it.

SHANE

It's only just begun.

(They sit in silence. From BOBBY's room, we hear:)

BOBBY (OS)

Mother? Can I tell you a secret?

MARIAN (OS)

Of course, dear.

BOBBY (OS)

I just love Shane.

MARIAN (OS)

I know you do, dear. We all do.

(JOE sits without moving as MARIAN returns.)

JOE

I suppose you're right, Shane. There won't be anymore fighting like tonight.

SHANE

Not like tonight. He knows better because he knows it won't work. If he's the man I think he is, he's known that since the first time he sicced Chris on me. I doubt that tonight was his move. It was Morgan's. Fletcher'll be watching for some way that has more finesse and will be more final.

JOE

Some legal trick you think?

SHANE

Could be. If he can find one. If not--There are other ways. You can't call a man like Fletcher on things like that. Depends on how far he's willing to go. But whatever he does, once he's ready, he'll do it speedy and sure.

JOE

Now you put it that-a-way, I see you're right. That's Fletcher's way. Bet you've bumped into someone like him before. Wish I could be as patient as you, but I don't like waiting.

MARIAN

Get that shirt off, Joe. It's torn down the back. Let me see what I can do with it. No. We'll keep it just like it is. To remember tonight by. You were magnificent, Joe, tearing that man away and--

JOE

Shucks. I was just peeved. Him holding Shane so Morgan could pound him.

MARIAN

And you, Shane. You were magnificent, too. Morgan was so big and terrible and yet he didn't have even a chance. You were so cool and quick and--and dangerous and--

SHANE

A woman shouldn't have to see things like that.

MARIAN

You think I shouldn't because it's brutal and nasty and not just fighting to see who is better at it, but mean and vicious and to win by any way, but to win. Of course it is. But you didn't start it. You didn't want to do it, not until they made you anyway. You did it because you had to.

(She is near tears. She places a hand on JOE then on SHANE.)

Did ever a woman have two such men. . .

(She sits at the table, weeping. JOE is confused. SHANE goes to her, places a comforting hand on her head, smooths her hair. Then, embarrassed by the look that passes between them, he rises, goes to the door, waits as if to speak, but says nothing. He goes into the night.)

MARIAN

(After a moment of confusion.)

Joe.

JOE

Do you think I don't know, Marian?

MARIAN

But you don't. Not really. You can't. Because I don't know myself.

JOE

Don't fret yourself, Marian. I'm man enough to know a better when his trail meets mine. Whatever happens will be all right.

MARIAN

Oh, Joe. . . Joe! Kiss me. Hold me tight and don't ever let go.

ADULT BOB

What happened in our kitchen that night was beyond me in those days. But it did not worry me because father had said it would be all right, and how could anyone, knowing him, doubt that he would make it so. Except Fletcher, as Shane and father predicted, was not finished. Lew Johnson and Frank Torrey brought us the news.

(Lights change. In a spot we see a tall stranger, dressed in black. FLETCHER comes from the bar and greets the stranger. They enter the bar together and sit at a table with MORGAN. At the cabin, JOE and SHANE meet JOHNSON, LEWIS, HOWELLS, and TORREY.)

JOHNSON

Morgan Fletcher's crowing all over about how him and his brother's gonna run every sodbuster between here and Cheyenne back to Missouri.

TORREY

There's a man with him. Tall, broad in the shoulders, and walks with a swagger.

JOHNSON

He dresses like a dude.

TORREY

Only dude I've ever seen with two guns strapped to his waist.

SHANE

Two guns you say?

TORREY

Forty fives. He a friend of yours?

SHANE

How does he wear them?

JOHNSON

The holsters are hung low and pegged down at the tips by thin straps fastened around his legs. I heard Fletcher refer to him as Wilson.

SHANE

Wilson.

JOHNSON

Do you know him?

SHANE

I've heard of a man called Wilson. He's fast. Fast on the draw.

JOHNSON

When I told Weir about this, he couldn't believe it. What's a man like him doing here, Weir kept saying. Will says this Wilson fellow is a bad one, a killer, a gunfighter said to be just as good with either hand and as fast as the best of them. Will says he's got a reputation a mile long, killed three men last month in Cheyenne.

SHANE

When did he hit town?

TORREY

Johnson was there, I wasn't.

JOHNSON

Last night.

SHANE

And you waited till now to tell it! You're a farmer all right, Johnson. That's all you ever will be. Quick, Joe. Which one of the homesteaders has the hottest head? Which one's the easiest to prod to be a fool? Shipstead? Wright?

JOE

Ernie Wright. Why?

SHANE

Get moving, Johnson. Get out there on your horse and make it to Wright's in a hurry. Bring him here. Pick up Shipstead, too, but get Wright first.

TORREY

He'll have to go to town for that. We passed Ernie and Shipstead down the road riding in.

(SHANE is visibly upset.)

Heck, man, what's your hurry? We told them about Wilson. They'll stop by here on their way back.

(Lights rise on the bar. ERNIE is entering, followed by SHIPSTEAD.)

WRIGHT

Not going to buffalo me.

(He is at the bar.)

A whisky, Will. A double.

(FLETCHER approaches him.)

FLETCHER

Howdy, Mr. Wright.

WRIGHT

I've no business with you, Fletcher.

FLETCHER

But I may have some with you. I'm sorry but I really need the land you've filed on. It's the right place to put up winter wind shelters for the herd I'm bringing in soon. I know you ain't proved up on the land yet, but just the same, I'm a reasonable man. I'll give you a fair price.

WRIGHT

Not interested.

FLETCHER

Well, that's because you haven't heard me yet. I'll give you three hundred dollars and that's more than the lumber in your buildings will be worth to me.

WRIGHT

No. I'm not selling. Not now. Not ever.

FLETCHER

Why can't we be reasonable about this, Ernie?

WRIGHT

Leave me alone.

(FLETCHER shrugs as if he has done all he can.)

SHIPSTEAD

Let's go, Ernie.

WILSON

I'd change my mind if I were you. That is, if you have a mind to change.

WRIGHT

Keep out of this. It's none of your business.

WILSON

I see you haven't heard. I'm Mr. Fletcher's new business agent. I'm handling his business affairs for him. His business with stubborn jackasses like you. You're a fool, Wright. But what can you expect from a breed.

WRIGHT

That's a lie. My mother wasn't an Indian.

SHIPSTEAD

Ernie, please, let's get out of here.

WILSON

Why you crossbred squatter. Are you telling me I'm wrong?

WRIGHT

I'm telling you you're a no good East coast liar.

WILSON

Soooo. You'll back that, Wright, or crawl out of here on your belly.

(WRIGHT goes for his gun. Before his hand can clear his holster, WILSON has his gun out, leveled at WRIGHT's chest. WRIGHT freezes. Wilson fires one shot. WRIGHT falls to the ground, dead. WILSON turns to SHIPSTEAD.)

Too bad, isn't it mister that Wright didn't change his mind. Now how about you, farmer-man. Are you next?

(SHIPSTEAD backs away, then turns and runs. We hear his cries echoing as he calls, "Ernie is dead. One shot and Ernie is dead. . ." In a moment, he rides up to the Starrett ranch, still yelling, "Ernie is dead.")

SHIPSTEAD

(Breathless and terrified.)

One shot. One shot and Ernie was dead.

JOE

So that's it. We'll have to face it. We sell and at his price or he slips the leash on his hired killer. Did Wilson make a move toward you, Shipstead?

SHIPSTEAD

He looked at me. He looked at me and said, "Too bad, isn't it, mister, that Wright didn't change his mind?"

JOE

Then what?

SHIPSTEAD

I got out of there quick as I could and came here.

LEWIS

But darn it, Joe, a man can't just go around shooting people.

JOE

Shut up, Jim. Don't you see the setup? Wilson badgered Ernie into getting himself in a spot where he had to go for his gun. Wilson can claim he shot in self-defense. He'll try the same thing on each of us.

JOHNSON

That's right, Jim. Even if we tried to get a marshal in here, he couldn't hold Wilson. It was an even break and the faster man won is the way most people will figure it and plenty of them saw it. A marshal couldn't get here in time anyway.

LEWIS

But we've got to stop it! What chance have any of us got against Wilson? We're not gunmen. We're just a bunch of old cowhands and farmers. Call it anything you want. I call it murder.

TORREY

Yes!

SHANE

Yes. It's murder. Trick it out as self-defense or with fancy words about an even break for a fair draw and it's still murder.

(There is a pause as he stares at each of the men in the room.)

LEWIS

You seem to know a good bit about it.

SHANE

And well I should. You can crawl back in your burrows. You don't have to worry--yet. If the time comes, you can always sell and run. Fletcher won't bother with the likes of you now. He's going the limit and he knows the game. He picked Wright to make the play plain. That's done. Now he'll head straight for the one real man in this valley, the man who's held you here and will go on trying to hold you and keep for you what's yours as long as there's life in him. He's standing between you and Fletcher and Wilson this minute and you ought to be thankful that once in a while this country turns out a man like Joe Starrett.

MARIAN

(In a whisper.)

And a man like Shane.

HOWELLS

You seem to know too much about that kind of dirty business.

SHANE

I admit I do.

JOE

Maybe it's a lucky break for the rest of us that Shane here has been around a bit. He can call the cards for us plain. Ernie might still be alive, Johnson, if you had had the sense to tell us about Wilson right off. It's a good thing Ernie wasn't a family man.

(To SHANE.)

How do you rate Fletcher now he's shown his hand?

SHANE

He'll move in on Wright's place first thing tomorrow. He'll have a lot of men busy on this side of the river from now on, probably push some cattle around behind the homesteads, to keep the pressure plain on all of you. How quick he'll try you, Joe, depends on how he reads you. If he thinks you might crack, he'll wait and let knowing what happened to Wright work on you. If he really knows you, he'll not wait more than a day or two to make sure you've had time to think it over and then he'll grab the first chance to throw Wilson at you. He'll want it, like with Wright, in a public place where there'll be plenty of witnesses. If you don't give him a chance, he'll try to make one.

JOE

I was sure you'd give it to me straight and that strikes me as just about right.

JOHNSON

So what do we do?

JOE

I reckon this will be a matter of waiting for the next few days. There's no immediate danger right off anyway. We can meet in town in the morning to fix Ernie a funeral. After that, we'd better stay out of town and stick close to home as much as possible. I'd suggest you all study on this and drop in again tomorrow night. Maybe we can figure out something. I'd like to see how the town's taking it before I make up my mind about anything. Now, go on home, all of you. You have families who need you.

(Goodnights are said as the men file into the night.

Remaining are JOE, SHANE, BOBBY and MARIAN.)

Somebody will have to go to Ernie's place tomorrow and gather up his things. He's got relatives somewhere in the Dakotas.

SHANE

No. You'll not go near the place. Fletcher might be counting on that. Grafton can do it.

JOE

But Ernie was my friend.

SHANE

Ernie's past friendship. Your debt is to the living.

JOE

But--

MARIAN

Don't you see, Joe? If you can stay away from any place where you might meet Fletcher and -- and that Wilson, things will work out. He can't keep a man like Wilson in this little valley forever.

JOE

No, Marian. A man can't crawl into a hole somewhere and hide like a rabbit. Not if he has any pride.

MARIAN

All right then. But can't you keep quiet and not let him ride you and drive you into any fight?

JOE

That won't work either. A man can stand for a lot of pushing if he has to. 'Specially when he has his reasons. But there are some things a man can't take. Not if he's to go on living with himself.

(SHANE turns and exits into the night. JOE is pacing.)
That's the one thing I can't stand, Marian. What we're doing to him (pointing after Shane). What happens to me doesn't matter too much. I talk big and I don't belittle myself. But my weight in any kind of a scale won't match his and I know it. If I understood him then as I do now, I'd never have got him to stay here. But I didn't figure Fletcher would go this far. Shane won his fight before ever he came riding into this valley. It's been tough enough on him already. Should we let him lose just because of us? Fletcher can have his way. We'll sell out and move on.

BOBBY

Pa! Shane wouldn't run away! He wouldn't run away from anything!

MARIAN

Bobby's right, Joe. We can't let Shane down. He'd never forgive us if we ran away from this. That's what we'd be doing. This isn't just a case of bucking Fletcher any more. It isn't just a case of keeping a piece of ground Fletcher wants for his range. We've got to be the kind of people Shane thinks we are. Bobby's right. He wouldn't run away from anything like that. And that's the reason we can't.

JOE

Look-a-here, Marian. You don't think I want to do any running. No. You know me better than that. It'd go against everything in me. But what's my fool pride and this place and any plans we've had alongside a man like that?

MARIAN

I know, Joe, but you don't see far enough. I can't really explain it, but I just know that we're bound up in something bigger than any one of us, and that running away is the one thing that would be worse than whatever might happen to us. There wouldn't be anything real ahead for us, any of us, maybe even for Bobby, all the rest of our lives.

JOE

Torrey could do it. And Johnson. All the rest of them. And it wouldn't bother them too much.

MARIAN

Joe! Joe Starrett! Are you trying to make me mad? I'm not talking about them. I'm talking about us.

JOE

The salt would be gone. There just wouldn't be any flavor. There wouldn't be much meaning left.

MARIAN

Oh, Joe! Joe! That's what I've been trying to say. And I know this will work out some way. I don't know how. But it will, if we face it and stand up to it and have faith in each other. It'll work out. Because it's got to.

JOE

But if it doesn't. . .
(Lights change.)

ADULT BOB

The other homesteaders were ready to leave everything to father. They were decent folk and good neighbors. But not a one of them, were the decision his alone, would have stood up to Fletcher now. They would stay as long as father was there. With him gone, Fletcher would have things his way. That was how they felt that morning as they gathered on Boot Hill, laying poor Ernie Wright to rest.

(The homesteaders have gathered during the above, bringing in a coffin. The women hum a hymn as they prepare for the burial.)

SHIPSTEAD

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

(There is the sound of a harmonica playing "Amazing Grace." The funeral is dissolving into tight knots of

men who wander off. The buckboard continues back down the street as MORGAN FLETCHER chuckles softly and pats WILSON on the back. WILSON shrugs his hand off as lights rise on the farm yard. On the porch, MARIAN waits for JOE, BOBBY and SHANE to enter.)

MARIAN

How was the funeral? . . .

JOE

Unfortunate. It should have never been needed. Lewis is leaving. He's packing up his family tonight and heading to Denver.

MARIAN

Couldn't you stop him?

JOE

Can you blame him? He's got three daughters to think of, and his wife. I can't blame him. Shipstead'll be next. And then Johnson. . .

(Off is heard the approach of several horses. BOBBY dashes to the window, looks out.)

SHANE

That will be Fletcher, Joe. He's heard how the town is taking this and knows he has to move fast. You take it easy. He's playing against time now, but he won't push anything here.

(JOE goes to the door, and taking his rifle, moves through the door to the outside. SHANE follows. FLETCHER, WILSON, and several cowboys enter the yard. WILSON keeps off to himself. During the following, SHANE eyes WILSON, even offers him a drink from the trough, which WILSON accepts, never taking his eyes off SHANE. In dumb show the two are performing something akin to a cock dance prior to battle.)

FLETCHER

Sorry to bother you, Starrett, so soon after that unfortunate affair last night. I wish it could have been avoided. I really do. Shooting is so unnecessary in these things, if only people would show sense. But Wright never should have called Mr. Wilson here a liar. That was a mistake.

JOE

It was. But then Ernie always did believe in telling the truth.

(WILSON stiffens at this.)

Speak your piece, Fletcher, and get off my land.

FLETCHER

There's no call for us to quarrel, Starrett. What's done is done. Let's hope there's no need for anything like it to be done again. You've worked cattle on a big ranch and you can understand my position. I'll be wanting all the range I can get from now on. Even without that, I can't let a bunch of nesters keep coming in here and choking me off from my water rights.

JOE

We've been over that before. You know where I stand. If you have more to say, speak up and be done with it.

FLETCHER

All right Starrett. Here's my proposition. I like the way you do things. You've got some queer notions about the cattle business. But when you tackle a job, you take hold and do it thoroughly. You and that man of yours are a combination I could use. I want you on my side of the fence. I'm getting rid of Morgan and I want you to take over as foreman. From what I hear your man would make one heck of a driving trail boss. The spot's his. Since you've proved up on this place, I'll buy it from you. If you want to go on living here, that can be arranged. If you want to play around with that little herd of yours, that can be arranged, too. But I want you working for me.

JOE

(Pause as this offer wasn't what he had expected.)

Can I call the turn for you, Shane?

SHANE

Yes, Joe.

JOE

And the others. Shipstead, Johnson, and the rest. What about them?

FLETCHER

They'll have to go.

JOE

No.

FLETCHER

I'll give you a thousand dollars for this place as it stands and that's my top offer.

JOE

No.

FLETCHER

There's no percentage in being hasty, Starrett. I'll boost the ante to twelve hundred. That's a lot better than what might happen if you stick to being stubborn. I'll not take an answer now. I'll give you till tonight to think it over. I'll be waiting at Grafton's to hear you talk sense.

(He turns and leaves, followed by all but WILSON who stops in front of JOE.)

WILSON

Yes, Starrett. Think it over. You wouldn't like somebody else to be enjoying this. . . place. . . of yours--and that pretty little woman there.

(JOE starts up with his rifle. SHANE is to him immediately.)

SHANE

(To WILSON.)

You talk like a man because of that flashy hardware you're wearing. Strip it away and you'd shrivel down to boy size.

JOE

Shane, this isn't about you!

WILSON

You do need someone to look after you.
(WILSON turns and leaves.)

JOE

That was foolish, Shane. The only foolish thing I've seen you do.

SHANE

He'd have shot you before you could blink an eye.

JOE

But you, you crazy fool. You'd have made him plug you just so I'd have a chance to get him.

MARIAN

And both of you would have acted like fools just because he said that about me. I'll have you two know that if it's got to be done, I can take being insulted just as much as you.

JOE

But, Marian, what better reason could a man have?

SHANE

Yes. What better reason?
 (Long silence .)

BOBBY

Pa, what are you going to tell Fletcher tonight?
 (Pause. JOE returns to the porch and sits on the steps. BOBBY follows and sits beside him.)

JOE

This is tough on you, Bobby. I can't see the full finish. But I can see this. Wilson down and there's an end to it. Fletcher'll be done. The town will see to that. I can't beat Wilson on the draw. But there's strength enough in this clumsy body of mine to keep me on my feet 'til. . . well, 'til what's done is done.

(MARIAN drops a dish inside the cabin.)

Things could be worse. It helps a man to know that if anything happens to him, his family will be in better hands than his own.

(SHANE storms past the two on the steps and into the barn. MARIAN dashes after him, but stops in the middle of the yard. She turns back to JOE who has risen.)

No supper for me now, Marian. A cup of coffee is all I want.

(He goes into the cabin. Long pause and MARIAN is caught between the two men, alone in her yard. Finally she goes into the cabin and out of sight. BOBBY wanders toward the barn. He opens the door and discovers SHANE, changed to the clothing he first wore, and strapping on his gun. SHANE turns to BOBBY.)

SHANE

Skip into the house, Bob. Put on a smile. Everything is going to be all right.

(BOBBY dashes to the house, finds his father sitting at the table.)

BOBBY

Pa! Pa, Shane's got his gun!
 (MARIAN returns from her room. JOE stands. By then, SHANE, as he appeared in the opening scene, stands in front of them. He is smiling. He is relaxed.)

SHANE

A fine pair of parents you are. Haven't even fed Bob yet. Stack him full of a good supper. Yourselves, too. I have a little business to tend to in town.

JOE

No, Shane. It won't do. Even your thinking of it is the finest thing any man ever did for me. But I won't let you.

SHANE

I'm not asking your permission.

JOE

It's my stand. Fletcher's making his play against me. There's no dodging. It's my business.

SHANE

There's where you're wrong, Joe. This is my business.

JOE

I won't have it.

SHANE

I've had fun trying to be a farmer. You've shown me new meaning in the word, and I'm proud that for a while maybe I qualified. But there are a few things a farmer can't handle.

JOE

Shane, be sensible. Don't make it harder for me. You can't do this.

SHANE

It's done. There's no changing it now.

JOE

I won't let you.

SHANE

From where I stand, you no longer have a say in this.

JOE

All right. Suppose you do put Wilson out of the way. That won't finish anything. It'll only even the score and swing things back worse than ever. Think what it'll mean to you. And where will it leave me? I couldn't hold my head up around here anymore. They'd say I ducked out, let another man do my fighting for me, and they'd be right. You can't do it and that's that.

SHANE

There's no man living can tell me what I can and can't do. Not even you, Joe. You forget there is still a way.

JOE

It's not the way I want.

SHANE

Neither do I.

(JOE charges into SHANE and the two of them fly through the door and into the yard. They are clenched in a life and death struggle, throwing one another with vicious force. JOE is the stronger. He is obviously winning in the struggle when SHANE's gun comes out of his holster.)

MARIAN

(As the two struggle.)

Stop this. You two fools, stop it, do you hear me? It's not worth it, please!! This place isn't worth any of this. Stop it!!

(Then she sees SHANE's gun leave its holster.)

No!!!

(SHANE brings the barrel of the gun into JOE's head, knocking him out. JOE rolls to the ground. SHANE reholsters his gun and collects his hat. Then he tends to JOE who has both MARIAN and BOBBY at his side.)

SHANE

I was afraid he'd take it this way. He couldn't do otherwise and be Joe Starrett.

MARIAN

I know.

BOBBY

You hit him with your gun!

(SHANE reaches out to the boy, but BOBBY pulls away.)

I hate you, Shane.

SHANE

(To MARIAN.)

He'll rest easy and come out maybe a little groggy but all right. Tell him, Marian. Tell him no man need be ashamed of being beat by Shane.

MARIAN

I know. I don't need to tell him. He knows, too. But there is something else I must know. We have battened down words that might have been spoken between us and that was as it should be. But I have a right to know now. I am part of this, too. And what I do depends on what you tell me now. Are you doing this just for me?

SHANE

No, Marian.

(She is so vulnerable, and he wants to embrace her.
After an awkward moment.)

No. Could I separate you in my mind and afterwards be a man?

(He leaves. JOE moans but MARIAN turns to BOBBY.)

MARIAN

Do you, Bobby, hate Shane?

BOBBY

Yes. He cheated.

MARIAN

He saved your father's life.

BOBBY

But. . .

(Long pause before he turns to the direction SHANE has
gone.)

I have to tell him. He can't leave without my telling him--

MARIAN

Telling him what, son?

BOBBY

That I . . . love him.

(BOBBY dashes out as JOE slowly comes to his senses.)

MARIAN

And I love you, Joe Starrett, you big foolish man.

(Lights change.)

ADULT BOB

He was tall and terrible there in the road, looming up, him and his horse, gigantic in the mystic half-light. He was the man I saw that first day, a stranger, dark and forbidding, forging his lone way out of an unknown past in the utter loneliness of his own immovable and instinctive defiance. He was the symbol of all the dim, formless imaginings of danger and terror in the untested realm of human potentialities beyond my understanding. The impact of the menace that marked him was like a physical blow.

(Lights rise on GRAFTON's saloon. SHANE pauses before entering as BOBBY rushes to him, breathless.)

BOBBY

Shane!

SHANE

Bob, what are you doing here?

BOBBY

I had to tell you.

SHANE

It's no time for you to be out. Skip along home and help your mother. I told you everything would be all right.

BOBBY

Mother wants you home. Where you belong.

SHANE

And you?

BOBBY

Pa, too. Mother said to tell you to come home.

SHANE

And you?

BOBBY

Me, too.

SHANE

(Referring to the moon.)

Look at it, Bob. A good place to be a boy and grow up straight inside as a man should. Now run on home and take care of them both.

(He turns and enters the bar. BOBBY ducks inside the main entrance where he waits. SHANE moves to the bar. The place is nearly empty except for WILL and WILSON. FLETCHER is not there.)

Where's Fletcher?

(WILL is silent.)

Where's Fletcher.

WILL

I don't know. He was here awhile ago.

SHANE

(To WILSON.)

Where's Fletcher?

WILSON

Where's Starrett?

(They square off with each other. After a long pause.)

SHANE

I had a few things to say to Fletcher. They can wait, I guess.

WILSON

It was supposed to be Starrett. But you'll do as an appetizer.

SHANE

More like the main meal, cause I'm all you're going to get.

WILSON

There's not enough in you to satisfy a flea. Why don't you drag back to that shack and hide with the women and children.

SHANE

You're a pushy man, Wilson, so I reckon I had better accommodate you.

WILSON

I've no quarrel with you, even if you are Starrett's man. Walk out of here without any fuss and I'll let you go. It's Starrett I want.

SHANE

What you want, Wilson, and what you'll get are two different things. Your killing days are done.

WILSON

Is that so?

SHANE

That is so.

(Silence from WILSON.)

I'm waiting, Wilson. Do I have to crowd you into slapping leather? You're nothing more than a mangy dog, not worth the kick it takes to get you out of the road.

(It happens. WILSON draws. SHANE draws. Both guns explode. WILSON falters momentarily then collapses onto the card table and falls to the floor. SHANE stands tall, dangerous. He reholsters his gun, smoothly, deftly.)

I gave him his chance.

(There is sudden movement on the balcony behind the bar.)

BOBBY

Shane! Look out!!

(SHANE whirls, draws and fires, as FLETCHER discharges his rifle. FLETCHER flinches then falls through the balcony railing to the floor below in a cloud of smoke and dust. Again SHANE is left standing. He returns his gun to its holster. He turns to WILL who is still cowering behind his bar.)

SHANE

I'll be riding on now. And there's not to be anyone following me.

(He leaves the bar. BOBBY rushes after him.)

BOBBY

Shane! Oh, Shane.

SHANE

Bobby, boy, I told you to run back home. What are you doing here?

BOBBY

You've got to tell me. Was that Wilson fast--

SHANE

Wilson was mighty fast. As fast as I've ever seen.

BOBBY

I don't care. I don't care if he was the fastest that ever was. He'd never have been able to shoot, would he. You'd have got him straight, wouldn't you--if you had been in practice?

SHANE

Sure. Sure, Bob. He'd never even have cleared the holster.

BOBBY

You're hurt.

SHANE

Bob.

BOBBY

Yes, Shane?

SHANE

A man is what he is, Bob. And there's no breaking the mold. I tried that and I've lost. But I reckon it was in the cards from the moment I saw a freckled kid on a rail up the road there and a real man behind him, the kind that could back him for the chance another kid never had.

BOBBY

But Shane -- you bleeding --

SHANE

There's no going back from a killing, Bob. Right or wrong, the brand sticks and there's no going back. It's up to you now. Go home to your mother and father. Grow strong and straight and take care of them. Both of them.

BOBBY

Yes, Shane.

SHANE

There's only one thing more I can do for them now.
(He strides away, disappearing into the night.)

BOBBY

Shane? Come back. Mother wants you. I want you. Shane? Shane!!

(MR. WEIR comes behind him and gently leads him into the light change.)

ADULT BOB

I stumbled back to the farm and fell on the steps, my head in my arms to hide the tears. The voices of the men around me were meaningless noises in a bleak and empty world. It was Mr. Weir who took me home.

(The interior of the cabin appears. JOE and MARIAN are with MR. WEIR and BOBBY.)

WEIR

Your troubles are over, Starrett.

JOE

You've come to tell me that he killed Wilson before they got him. I know. He was Shane.

WEIR

Wilson. And Fletcher.

JOE

Fletcher, too? By Godfrey, yes. He would do it right. He let me know this was one thing he wanted to handle himself. I tell you, Weir, waiting here's the hardest job I ever had.

WEIR

I thought so. Listen, Starrett. There's not a man in town doesn't know you didn't stay here of your own will. And there's darn few that aren't glad it was Shane came into the saloon tonight.

BOBBY

You should have seen him. He was--he was--beautiful, father. And Wilson wouldn't even have hit him if he'd been in practice. He told me so.

JOE

He told you! My God, man! Why didn't you say something. He's alive?

WEIR

Yes, he's alive all right. Wilson got to him. But no bullet can kill that man. Sometimes I wonder whether anything ever could.

MARIAN

Where is he?

WEIR

He's gone. He's gone, alone and unfollowed as he wanted it. Out of the valley and no one knows where.

(CHRIS is in the doorway with a bottle of soda pop.)

CHRIS

I brought this for Bob. I'm a poor substitute, Starrett. But as soon as this arm's healed, I'm asking you to let me work for you.

MARIAN

Shane would like that, Chris.

(She guides BOBBY to the steps, sits, and waits as BOBBY takes a drink from the soda bottle.)

Now--Bob--tell me everything. Just as you saw it happen.

ADULT BOB

I told her, and when I was through, all she said to me was.

MARIAN

Thank you.

(JOE joins the two on the steps. He sits beside them.)

JOE

Marian, I'm sick of the sight of this valley and all that's in it.

MARIAN

Me, too.

BOBBY

Me, too.

JOE

If I tried to stay here now, my heart wouldn't be in it any more. I know it's hard on you and the boy, but we'll have to pull up stakes and move on. Montana, maybe.

MARIAN

Montana?

JOE

I've heard there's good land for the claiming up that way.

MARIAN

But, Joe! You'd run out on Shane just when he's really here to stay?

JOE

Marian. You don't understand. He's gone.

MARIAN

He's not gone. He's here, in this place, in this place he gave us. He's all around us. He's all around us and in us, and he always will be.

(The three sit in silence as the lights slowly fade out.)

ADULT BOB

I guess that is all there is to tell. The folks in town and the kids at school liked to talk about Shane, to spin tales and speculate about him. I never did. Those nights at Grafton's became legends in the valley and countless details were added as they grew and spread just as the town, too, grew and spread up the river banks. But I never bothered, no matter how strange the tales became in the constant retelling. He belonged to me, to father and mother and me, and nothing could ever spoil that. For mother was right. He was there. I could close my eyes and he would be with me and I would see him plain and hear again that gentle voice.

SHANE

(In a spot.)

Call me. . . Shane.

(He disappears.)

ADULT BOB

And when I would hear the men in town talking among themselves and trying to pin him down to a definite past, I would smile quietly to myself. For a time they inclined to the notion, spurred by the talk of a passing stranger, that he was a certain Shannon who was famous as a gunman and

ADULT BOB (Continued)

gambler way down in Arkansas and Texas and dropped from sight without anyone knowing why or where. When that notion dwindled, others followed, pieced together in turn from scraps of information gleaned from stray travelers. But when they talked like that, I simply smiled because I knew he could have been none of those. He was the man who rode into our little valley out of the heart of the great glowing west and when his work was done rode back whence he had come and he was Shane.

(Blackout.)

End of Play

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