

"Cowboys and Aliens"

An Original Screenplay

by

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"COWBOYS AND ALIENS"

FADE IN ON SUPERTITLE:

"SILVER FORK, NEW MEXICO TERRITORY, 1873"

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

A PAIR OF COWBOY BOOTS NEGLIGENTLY CROSSED OVER A HITCH RAIL. Shabby boots caked with trail dust. A thick-fingered grimy hand reaches under one of them to scratch industriously.

CINCHED AROUND THE RAILING CLOSE BY, the bridles of two big horses, packed and trail-ready.

THE MAIN STREET ITSELF IS ALL EDDYING DUST and sun-cracked adobe. The Silver Rose hotel across the street has a raucous saloon on the ground floor. The drifting SOUNDS of honky-tonk piano and of men and women roaring drunkenly.

A WOODEN SIGN CREAKS IN THE HOT BREEZE off the desert:

"JAIL. FRANK W. WAINWRIGHT III - SHERIFF / MAGISTRATE."

THE JAILHOUSE DOOR SWINGS OPEN and sway-backed DEPUTY LEM JAPES appears -- a jackass in human form, with a monumental Adam's apple.

LEM STARES OVER AT THE SALOON, licking his dry lips. He starts to move, then stops, fingering the tin star. After a quick look around, he screws his courage and sneaks across.

The jailhouse door stands open.

THE STRANGER WITH THE SHABBY BOOTS SLOWLY RAISES HIMSELF

and saunters down toward the jailhouse. He's a big man with scraggly blond hair and fringed buckskins in a sorry state of disrepair.

THE STRANGER SLIPS INTO THE JAILHOUSE.

CUT TO:

INT. SILVER ROSE SALOON - NIGHT

A ROWDY CROWD OF SOUSED COWPOKES, whores and ne'er-do-wells.

LEM BELLIES UP TO THE BAR, orders a shot of hootch. Looks around.

A GRIZZLED PROSPECTOR (LESTER BUMP) HOLDING COURT, pouring drinks all around, from two bottles at once.

LEM LURCHES FORWARD to snag a snort from Lester's generous spigot.

LESTER

Boys, my lips is sealed. I tell yuh, I seen silver and I seen silver, but I never seen a lode like 'is. I swear on General Lee's grave... (extends his arm) the vein was y high.

LEM - taking it all in.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

A PAIR OF HANDS PICK EXPERTLY AT A LOCK near the lone cell. Inside, on a moth-eaten mattress, BILLY DICKERSON fights to hold the line against the demons of his unconscious.

THE STRANGER POKETS HIS LOCK PICK and floats to the side of Billy's cot, stopping momentarily to watch the young man sleep. The lad's going on 21 but looks all of 16, his cheeks barely in need of a shave.

THE STRANGER SHAKES BILLY VIOLENTLY and the young pup is instantly awake.

BILLY

Hey! What the hell-The Stranger's hand over his mouth stifles further oratory.

STRANGER

Billy Dickerson.

Terrified, Billy can only nod.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

WITH THE RUCKUS FROM THE SALOON as faint backdrop, SHERIFF FRANK WAINWRIGHT (30) saunters along, breathing in the clear night air with satisfaction.

Wainwright's an 1870s fashion plate, from the tips of his carefully polished boots to his newly waxed mustachios. The pair of pearl-handled Colts riding his hips are distinctly

not county issue. His silver badge fairly gleams in the moonlight.

WAINWRIGHT STOPS OPPOSITE THE JAIL and casts a wary glance across. He considers checking in, smiles at his own anxiety, continues on to the swinging doors of the saloon instead.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

THE STRANGER IS AT THE WINDOW as Billy struggles into his boots.

BILLY  
 (breathless)  
 I cant tell you how much I  
 'preciate this, mister, they had  
 that rope all picked out for me, I  
 just wish you coulda come down here  
 yesterday, afore--

The Stranger throws a withering glance in Billy's direction and he shuts up.

THE JAILBIRD STANDS and clomps across the small office.

STRANGER  
 Down the street, onto the horses,  
 out of town. Understand?

BILLY  
 No telling how long that dep'ty's  
 gonna stay in the saloon. Oughtn't  
 we to--

STRANGER  
 Slow and easy.

THE STRANGER OPENS THE DOOR and the boy takes one last look around and steps onto the porch. Then he double takes.

BILLY  
 Lord, my knife.

STRANGER  
 Hey!

BILLY DASHES BACK INTO THE OFFICE and looks around until he spots a big bowie knife in a buckskin scabbard. He cinches it around his waist as he rejoins The Stranger.

HE GRINS SHEEPISHLY as the older man closes the door behind them.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

BILLY AND THE STRANGER LEAVE THE JAILHOUSE and trot along the boardwalk to the waiting horses.

SHERIFF WAINWRIGHT EXPLODES through the swinging front doors of the saloon. He has a firm pinch hold on Lem Japes' ear.

LEM

Ooo, hey, please, Mr. Wainwright, I was goin' straight back-

WAINWRIGHT

You'd better pray that prisoner is still—

WAINWRIGHT STOPS DEAD in the middle of the street:

BILLY AND THE STRANGER ARE LEAPFROGGING onto their horses.

WAINWRIGHT SHOVES LEM AWAY. He draws both Colts with a flourish and blazes away -- a shooting style more theatrical than functional.

BILLY AND THE STRANGER RIDE HELL BENT as Wainwright's reckless gunfire crashes into signboards, storefronts, light poles -- almost anything but them.

CUT TO:

ONLY ONE SHOT EVEN COMES CLOSE: it dings off the Stranger's right spur.

THE RIDERS CHARGE ROUND THE CORNER out of sight.

WAINWRIGHT STANDS SEETHING as drunken men and women pour out of the saloon.

TOWNSPEOPLE

What's all that shootin' about?  
The Dickerson kid escaped, etc.

LEM

Aw, sheriff, I'm real sorry, I didn't mean nothin', I was thirsty, I--

WAINWRIGHT TURNS AND SLAP THE DEPUTY across the face several times. The end of Wainwright's index finger comes to rest against Lem's nose.

WAINWRIGHT

(stage whisper)

I entrust you with the most significant prisoner we have ever incarcerated, and you get thirsty?!

LEM

Honest, sheriff, I--

WAINWRIGHT

Shut. Up.

Lem squeeze his mouth tightly shut -- nods, shrugs.

Now somebody's SHOUTING at them:

CLEM

Hey, down there! Hey, sheriff!

DEPUTY CLEM JAPES AT THE BALCONY WINDOW above the saloon, pulling on his pants over fuzzy red long johns. Clem looks bigger and stronger but not much smarter than his brother.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Did my bonehead brother dis-grace his ancestors ag'in?

A HOOKER, ERNESTINE, in a bright red bustier joins Clem on the balcony, snakes her arms around his neck.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Aw, now, let loose Ernestine-

ERNESTINE

Clem, honey, you come on back to bed this instant.

Ernestine's hands disappear into Clem's long johns and his eyes cross. Ribald laughter from below, and falsetto cries: "Oh, Clem, honey!"

CLEM

Lem, you stay put right there. I want a piece a yer hide myself.

CLEM CHARGES INSIDE. Ernestine fumes.

WAINWRIGHT IS THINKING HARD. The booze-addled cowpokes in the crowd are turning ugly. One man, pot-bellied ROSCOE PORCH, is all saddled up and ready, brandishing a home-made hang rope.

ROSCOE  
 (plastered)  
 We'll he'p ya, sheriff, yesseree!

We'll ride out with ya right now!

TOWNSPEOPLE  
 Stretch his neck for 'im!  
 Everybody mount up!

WAINWRIGHT SILENCES THE CROWD INSTANTLY with a commanding gesture, like turning off a switch.

He turns to face the rabble rouser Roscoe Porch.

WAINWRIGHT  
 (on the stump)  
 Roscoe, I do appreciate the offer.  
 But cant ask you good citizens to  
 ride all night, hunting for this  
 blot on the escutcheon of humanity.  
 I urge you gentlemen to return to  
 the warmth and camaraderie of your  
 amusements and leave the collection  
 of human refuse to my capable  
 deputies and myself.

The "capable" deputy Clem Japes has pushed through the crowd and snagged a hank of his brother's hair.

CLEM  
 Lem, you pasture pie! You drug me  
 away from the best piece o' lily-  
 white ass west of the Pecos-ROSCOE  
 (to Wainwright)  
 We just figgered you might want a  
 little help, sheriff. Considerin'  
 it was proolly Marcus Hance busted  
 the kid out.

At the name, Wainwright freezes.

ROSCOE  
 Lewis Ingraham said he saw ol'  
 Hance settin' right over there by  
 Clara's less'n an hour ago.

Wainwright's glad his back is turned.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT TRAIL - NIGHT

IN THE BRIGHT MOONLIGHT THE STRANGER (MARCUS HANCE) seems hardly the type to inspire fear. He bus in his saddle, every now and then treating himself to a belch or a deep, satisfying scratch.

BILLY IS NERVOUS and glances continually behind them.

BILLY

Oughtn't we to be movin' a mite quicker?

Hance sees no point in responding.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Meanin' no disrespect, you understand. I am grateful to you, mister, but Sheriff Wainwright and them dep'ties are probably saddlin' up right now.

A MATCH FLARES. The coal of Hance's cigarette glows in the darkness.

HANCE

Patience, sprout. Trust me.

Billy eyeballs him up and down sarcastically: a less trustworthy type could scarcely be imagined. When he cranes around again he can almost feel the posse breathing down his neck.

BILLY

Oh, lordy.

CUT TO:

EXT. EDGE OF SILVER FORK - NIGHT

THE JAPES BROTHERS LOITER ON HORSEBACK as the posse mills around drunkenly in the b.g. Lem is drooping.

CLEM

Now, Lem, you just always gotta remember we're respectable fellers, these days. Like Mr. Wainwright says -- we're pillows of the community.

LEM  
 (brightening)  
 We are?  
 (frowning)  
 What's 'at mean, though, Clem --  
 pillows o' the damn community?

CLEM  
 It means we got jobs, now, we gotta  
 do 'em. Folks countin' on us.

WAINWRIGHT REINS IN beside them.

WAINWRIGHT  
 That's it exactly -- just as I'm  
 counting on you two tonight. These  
 drunks are so rope-crazy they can't  
 see straight.  
 (confidentially)  
 First chance we get we'll split off  
 on our own, just the three of us.

THE JAPES BROTHERS EXCHANGE A SELF-IMPORTANT GLANCE as  
 Wainwright turns to address the posse. Roscoe Porch front  
 and center.

ROSCOE  
 We're ready, sheriff, you just say  
 the word!

WAINWRIGHT  
 Thank you, Roscoe. Good evening,  
 gentlemen.  
 (pause)  
 Let's ride.

WAINWRIGHT LEADS THE POSSE into the wilderness.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANYON - NIGHT

ON THE HORIZON A SPECTACULAR DISPLAY OF LIGHT. Underlit  
 clouds, painted by sweeping multi-colored currents.

BILLY  
 What in tarnation's that?

HANCE PRONE ON A HIGH LIP OF SANDSTONE, glances  
 absentmindedly, then turns back. Their nickering horses are  
 tethered to a pinon nearby.

FIANCE  
 Heat lightning.

Hance's face: "the things I do for money."

Billy wants to accept this explanation, but can't quite.  
FINALLY:

BILLY  
(fidgeting)  
We can't be but five miles outta  
Silver Fork.

HANCE  
Can't you sit still for more'n  
three seconds at a stretch?  
(belching)  
I make it four and a half.

FIANCE'S ATTENTION SHIFTS and he stares intently at the trail far below. Gradually we hear the SOUND of horses.

HANCE (CONT'D)  
One thing you can count on with  
these small town sheriffs. They all  
think alike.

BILLY  
Huh?

THEIR P.O.V.

THE POSSE TROTS INTO THE CANYON, Sheriff Wainwright and the deputies at its head.

Wainwright peels off to one side and lets the group ride past him.

ABOVE THE CANYON

HANCE AND BILLY WATCH, the latter wide-eyed.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Well I'll be.

BILLY LEANS OVER TO GET A CLOSER LOOK and Hance yanks him back by the seat of his pants - but not before Billy knocks loose a clot of small pebbles, which clatter down the sheer face.

IN THE CANYON

WAINWRIGHT HEARS THE PEBBLES FALL. He looks up the escarpment, thinks, spurs his mount, canters back to the head of the posse. He leads the riders out of sight.

ABOVE THE CANYON

HANCE AND BILLY WATCH as the posse disappears. Hance counts a silent ten, puts a finger to his lips and motions for Billy to follow him to the horses.

IN THE CANYON

WAINWRIGHT WAITS until the group is well down the trail before he raises his hand.

WAINWRIGHT  
Whoa. . .whoa.

THE RIDERS FAN OUT around him.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)  
Gentlemen, I consider it imperative that we make more effective use of our resources. To that end I propose an immediate divergence.

LEM  
I reckon not.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRY WASH - DAY/DAWN

A FLAT ROCK DIGGING INTO THE SAND with methodical strokes. Stops. Digs. Finally: the earth turns dark, then moist, then wet. A puddle grows and deepens.

HANCE PUTS THE ROCK ASIDE and he and Billy bend to drink. Billy flops back. Hance squats on his haunches --"Indian style."

BILLY  
Oh, Lordy, I could sleep forever!

HANCE OPENS A SADDLE BAG and removes an oilcloth, unwrapping a strip of beef jerky. He tears off a hunk and chews laboriously. Billy eyes the meat with envy.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
How'd you know where to dig, Mister Hance?

HANCE HOLDS HIS CHEST, winces, breathes deeply.

HANCE  
Damn heartburn.

He glowers at the jerky, rolls it back up and sticks it in the saddle bag.

BILLY  
I don't get no heartburn m'self. I  
like that jerky.

A chesty grunt from Hance, hand-rolling a smoke from a leather pouch of fixings; Billy riveted upon his deft fingers.

Hance puts the fixings away.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Ain't this 'Pache country?  
(a suspicious glance)  
Well. You prolly got places to be  
on yer own behalf, and I know I do,  
so I guess I'll just be moseyin'  
along--

Hance looks him over and chuckles. He strikes a wooden match on his front teeth, ignites the cigarette.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
You think I ain't capable?

HANCE COUGHS VIOLENTLY as he puffs.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
I am. So I'll say thank you very  
kindly fer savin' my neck -- even  
if you won't say why — and I'll be  
on my--

JUST AS BILLY BEGINS TO MOVE, Hance places the business end of a Remington Long Barrel against the kid's skull.

HANCE  
I doubt it.

When Billy hesitates Hance loudly COCKS the pistol.

BILLY SLUMPS BACK, eyes wide.

HANCE (CONT'D)  
I'm takin' you to Winslow.

BILLY

Aw, no, listen, Mister Hance, I  
can't  
go back, I--  
(as it dawns on him)  
Yer nothin' but a damn bounty  
hunter! You only sprung me so you  
could drag me back for the re-  
ward.

Hance lets the hammer down.

HANCE

Hell, sprout, yuh should still  
thank me. Least y'won't hang now.

BILLY

I didn't kill that old Mess'can. I  
didn't! That thing in Winslow, I  
done that, maybe-

HANCE

Yuh think yuh did, maybe?

BILLY

(troubled)  
Lately, I.. I don't know, I-- This  
other thing is real peculiar. I was  
just walkin' along there...

EXT. SILVER FORK BACK ALLEY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

VERY DARK AND NARROW. Billy walking along cautiously.

BILLY (CONT'D)

takin' it kinda slow because I  
figgered they might have some paper  
out on me...

THE SOUNDS OF A VIOLENT STRUGGLE just ahead. Billy flattens  
himself against the wall, peers around a corner, sees:

TWO THUGS BEATING AN OLD MEXICAN MAN.

OLD MAN

*Conjos*. I'll never tell you where  
the *plata* is.  
(a blow, then weaker)  
Never.

A TALL DARK MAN, concealed in the shadows, watches  
everything.

THE HAMMER-BLOW OF A PISTOL BUTT against Billy's skull. He collapses...

BILLY

They musta thought I was out cold.

But I wasn't.

BILLY'S GROUND-LEVEL P.O.V.

THE DARK MAN brushes the thugs aside:

'Forget it.'

HE LOOKS AROUND, spots Billy.

SLIDES BILLY'S KNIFE out of its scabbard.

CALMLY INSERTS THE BLADE between the Mexican's ribs.

BLOOD SPURTS. THE BODY FALLS.

THE DARK MAN PULLS A THIN CIGAR FROM HIS VEST POCKET, bites the end, lights it with a wooden match. Studies the corpse as he savors the first puffs.

BILLY (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)

They musta kicked me in the head or somethin' on the way out--

A BOOT RUSHING INTO FRAME...

CUT TO:

EXT. DRY WASH - DAY

BILLY

--'cause I don't remember another thing. They found the body with my knife stickin' out of it, Sheriff Wainwright said there was no way I didn't do it--

(appealing to Hance)

But I didn't...

HANCE

Aw, hell, I know that! Jittery as you are, prolly couldn't stick a knife into your own damn body, much less--

BILLY

Aw, I could, too!

Billy fumes. Hance grins.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

A FAT CHUCKWALLA LIZARD SUNS ITSELF CONTENTEDLY on a rock. Its eyelids retract as a succulent beetle creeps past.

The lizard's sticky tongue reels in the doomed bug.

THE LIZARD RISES AND STRETCHES LANGUOROUSLY. Looks like another perfect day. Then:

A beam of red light, and SPLORFF! - the ex-lizard is a puff of protoplasm.

A TINY PILE OF GREY ASH REMAINS BEHIND.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE HOMESTEAD - DAY

HANCE AND BILLY ARE NEARLY ASLEEP IN THE SADDLE as they come up over a ridge, but what greets their eyes awakens them rudely:

THE REMAINS OF A SMOKING HOMESTEAD. The earth around the foundation is scorched. Pigs, chickens and a goat wander among the blackened beams.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

ELEANOR BOYLE (38), AND HER DAUGHTER KATE (17), pick among flame-scarred belongings: their faces grimy, their simple dresses filthy and torn.

ELEANOR IS A HANDSOME WOMAN with a countenance worn but not defeated. Kate is on the threshold of womanhood and shows signs of having inherited her mother's quiet strength.

KATE DIPS A RAG IN A BUCKET OF GREASY WATER and cleans off the blackened ribs of a rocking chair.

ELEANOR

Watch you don't use too much water.

Kate stops and tries not to meet her mother's gaze; they've had this discussion before. Kate looks up.

KATE

I been cleanin' this ol' thing for  
ten years.

ELEANOR

Well do it right then.

HANCE AND BILLY COME INTO VIEW. Eleanor picks up a huge  
shotgun and moves to Kate's side, but when Kate spots Billy  
she wriggles away from the motherly embrace.

THE MEN CLIMB DOWN FROM THEIR MOUNTS and Hance notes the  
striped pattern of burn marks, which extend well out from  
the foundation of the house. The Indian grass has been  
branded in almost perfect concentric circles.

HANCE

You ladies all right?

ELEANOR

(wary, but strong)  
We're alive.

HANCE

Any men folk?

ELEANOR

My boy Tommy and two hands. They  
put us down cellar when the 'Pache  
came in.

HANCE "HRMMPHS" AND WALKS INTO THE WRECKAGE. He spots a  
small corral and a lean-to under a stand of mesquite, both  
untouched, the four or five horses swatting flies  
complacently.

HANCE

'Pache don't leave horses.  
(he pauses for effect)  
And they sure as hell don't leave  
white women.

ELEANOR

I said we were down cellar.

HANCE

Yes you did. The 'Pache may live in  
a wickiup but he knows a house as  
good as you'r me.

Kate is incredulous and strides over to Hance.

KATE

Listen here mister, I don't know what you're meaning to say but you can just, you can just --

Hance is amused by her belligerence.

HANCE

I'm real sorry about your place. I just hate to see you go blaming the Apache. Most of the raiding in these parts is done by white men.

ELEANOR

They took my son. I heard him scream.

HANCE

Yeah, and he must have put up one hell of a fight.

(turning)

Billy, see if you can find a couple of saddles for the ladies.

(to Eleanor)

Unless you feel like waitin' around for a return visit.

ELEANOR

(icy)

We don't need your help, thank you just the same.

HANCE

We oughta be passing Fort Thompson on our way to Winslow.

(pause)

If your son is still alive, those troopers'll find him.

HE TURNS AWAY to join Billy at the corral.

ELEANOR

Eleanor Boyle. My daughter Kate.

Hance stops, turns halfway around, barely smiles.

HANCE

Name's Hance. Billy's in my custody.

As Hance walks on Eleanor follows him with her eyes a bit. But when she turns back she catches Kate staring openly -- almost defiantly -- at Billy.

ELEANOR

Ain't you got some cleaning up to do?

A SCOWLING KATE RETURNS TO HER TASKS. Eleanor fingers a locket around her neck. Turning from her daughter, she pops it open.

INSERT - A PHOTO OF A YOUNGER KATE and her smiling older brother, TOMMY.

ELEANOR SNAPS THE LOCKET shut and looks back toward Hance at the corral.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT TRAIL - DAY

A JACK RABBIT HOPPING peacefully along. A rustling SOUND startles it. It stops and sniffs at:

LEM JAPES, STRETCHED FLAT ON THE GROUND behind a huge Sharps .50 buffalo gun, sighting through the attached telescope.

LEM

Papaya con dios, fur-bawl!

KABLAMBO! --- no more bunny.

LEM CHORTLES BOORISHLY. Brother Clem joins in, then chokes on it: Sheriff Wainwright is charging toward them.

CLEM

(suddenly serious)

Lem, you turkey turd, stop a wastin' that ammer-nition!

LEM

I'm practicin'! Pretty soon I'll have ol' Marcus Hance in my sights and then I'll sque-e-e-ze 'at trigger-

WAINWRIGHT BOOTS DEPUTY CLEM in the backside.

LEM (CONT'D)

damn!

WAINWRIGHT

You're not hunting buffalo, now, you idiot. You can't just shoot anything that moves.

CLEM ADDS HIS OWN FOOT to Wainwright's second kick.

LEM  
Durnit, Clem, you all didn't have  
to kick me in venison!

CLEM  
Lem, you idjit!

LEM  
I ain't! I know somethin' you all  
don' t.

Wainwright and Clem look at him with skepticism.

LEM (CONT'D)  
01' Lester Bump, he was talkin'  
about a mess 'a silver, an' he said  
he ain't never seen anythin' so-

WAINWRIGHT  
(patience wearing thin) )  
Yes, yes, we've all heard about  
that mother lode. These prospectors  
spend half their time in the sun  
and the other half in the saloon.  
(pause)  
Get this straight. Hance and  
Dickerson are fugitives. We are  
lawmen. The whole point of this  
arrangement is to hang them all  
nice and legal at the taxpayer's  
expense.

LEM SCRAMBLES UP, humiliated again. The three peace officers  
jog back to their waiting horses.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOYLE HOMESTEAD - DAY

WAINWRIGHT, CLEM AND LEM RIDE BY THE RUIN. Lem's jaw hangs  
down at least a foot.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

CLEM KNEELS IN THE SAND, peering at a hoof print. He looks  
up knowingly at Wainwright.

CUT TO:

EXT. GLADE NEAR STREAM - DAY

HANCE AND BILLY ARE SPLAYED OUT against a cottonwood. In the b.g. we hear Eleanor's clear soprano singing "SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER, and an occasional SPLASH.

BILLY YEARNS TO CATCH A GLIMPSE, and squirms accordingly. Hance's hat is down but his radar is up.

HANCE  
Mind your manners, sprout.

BILLY  
(the innocent)  
I didn't do nothin'.

Hance exposes one eye.

HANCE  
Yeah, and I'm a jackleg preacher.

HANCE TIPS THE HAT BACK DOWN and Billy stares straight ahead. It's so nice and quiet under the trees.

BILLY  
(after awhile)  
Mister Hance?

HANCE  
Hmrn.

BILLY  
How'd you get to be a bounty hunter  
anyway?

No answer. Billy stares at the hat, fidgeting with his scabbard.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
(gingerly)  
Mister Hance?

HANCE  
I heard you.

Another long silence. Billy closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE STREAM - DAY

WAINWRIGHT LEADS THE JAPES BOYS up the hill. Suddenly the distant SOUND of singing.

Wainwright instantly holds his hand up for silence and dismounts carefully.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREAM - DAY

ELEANOR WASHES HER FACE and arms with care, then dips double handfuls of the cool water onto her hair and down the front of her dress.

FROM A HIDDEN VANTAGE POINT

THE JAPES' STARE HUNGRILY. Behind them Wainwright pays special attention to:

KATE, DANGLING HER FEET DEMURELY in the current.

WAINWRIGHT MOTIONS TO THE BROTHERS and they tear themselves away.

CUT TO:

EXT. GLADE - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE NEXT FEW SECONDS

KATE'S GIRLISH SHRIEK pierces the sylvan repose.

HANCE BOLTS AWAKE to a face full of Clem Japes' Sharps.

BILLY'S EYES POP OPEN to Lem's rifle in his face.

WAINWRIGHT HAS ALREADY TURNED toward Kate's cry.

ANOTHER SCREAM -- from Eleanor.

THE FOUR OTHERS SCRAMBLE to the stream, leaving Billy.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREAM - DAY

THE MEN THUNDER UP. An animal the size of a grizzly bear is sniffing the air near the women, who have backed away up the bank. The beast resembles an otter, with huge, liquid eyes. It is not outwardly threatening, but before Hance can stop him --

WAINWRIGHT HAS A PISTOL OUT, firing and winging the animal. Big mistake.

THE BEAST BELLOWS and rears up on its hind legs, towering over the terrified women and baring several rows of gleaming silver teeth. Something round near its neck glints in the sun.

IT CHARGES FORWARD before Clem can load his Sharps, and the group scatters.

HANCE PUSHES THE WOMEN BEHIND A TREE and pulls his Remington. He fires three times at point blank range, but the shells just disappear into the creature's thick fur. But not without notice, as --

THE ANIMAL LUNGES FOR HIM. He jumps aside and leaps on the beast's back, riding it like a bronco as Billy and the Japes' watch helplessly.

THE CREATURE REARS UP AGAIN and reaches around with a hairy claw to scrape Hance off. The razor-sharp points come within inches of his exposed flesh.

Finally Billy comes out of shock.

BILLY  
Mister Hance!

BILLY PULLS HIS KNIFE and flings it haft first. Hance catches it and brings it down with all his might into the base of the animals skull.

THE CREATURE FALLS DEAD with a heart-rending screech.

THE WOMEN ARE MUTE WITH HORROR as Hance climbs off its back. When he looks up Clem has again aimed the Sharps at his mid-section.

WAINWRIGHT  
(stepping forward)  
By the authority vested in me as  
Magistrate and Sheriff of Mescalero  
County you are hereby under arrest.  
Your crime: aiding and abetting the  
escape of a convicted felon. Mr.  
Japes, kindly divest the gentleman  
of his sidearm.

LEM TAKES A STEP FORWARD but Hance is quicker: his six-gun is cocked and pointed at Wainwright's head before anyone else can blink.

HANCE  
I doubt it.

CLEM RESPONDS BY JAMMING HIS SHARPS IN BILLY'S EAR.

WAINWRIGHT

I assure you, Mr. Hance, my deputy  
has little tolerance for  
unnecessary displays of heroism.

HANCE TAKES IT ALL IN: a terrified Billy, the sneering Clem,  
Wainwright's complacent calm.

HANCE LETS DOWN THE HAMMER OF HIS REMINGTON SLOWLY, flips it  
around to hold it by the barrel.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Lemuel?

LEM JUMPS FOR HANCE'S GUN and turns it on him, his fingers  
shaking just a bit.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)

I should have known a gutless  
vagrant like yourself would have no  
stomach for threats. At least you  
did not disappoint me, Mr. Hance. I  
can see now why they rode you out  
of Abilene on a rail.

ELEANOR TURNS AND STARES DAGGERS AT HANCE, but he just takes  
it. His eyes are locked on Wainwright's.

BILLY

(to Hance)

What was that you said about small  
town sheriffs?

Hance is tight-lipped.

THE SHERIFF TURNS HIS ATTENTION TO THE DEAD ANIMAL,  
hunkering down and removing something from around the  
animal's neck.

WAINWRIGHT STANDS AND DISPLAYS A PENDANT hanging from a  
chain-like collar. It is translucent, jewel-like, the size  
of a silver dollar.

WAINWRIGHT WALKS OVER TO KATE, whose eyes and mouth are  
perfect circles.

WAINWRIGHT

I think this belongs around the  
most graceful neck in the  
territory. May I?

BOTH WAINWRIGHT AND KATE LOOK TO ELEANOR FOR APPROVAL.

ELEANOR NODS WITH A LITTLE SMILE as the sheriff fastens the clasp so that the pendant rests on Kate's fair bosom. She's unnerved at Wainwright's touch, which lingers a little too long.

KATE FORCES HERSELF TO LOOK INTO WAINWRIGHT'S EYES as he smiles down at her.

KATE  
(nervous)  
Thank you.

KATE TURNS QUICKLY AND WALKS OFF. Billy does not like this business one bit.

HANCE STARES AT THE PENDANT and he squints. Something troubles him about it, but he doesn't quite know what. He squats down by the creature and pulls back its lips to reveal the silver fangs.

LEM  
Funniest lookin' grizzly I ever did see.

HANCE  
Ain't no bear.

BILLY  
If it ain't a grizzly., what is it?

HANCE REACHES FOR A PAW and slices down with Billy's knife, severing it. He fingers the silver nails, then pockets the claw. He coolly wipes dark blood from the knife blade and hands it back to Billy.

HANCE  
I thank you.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOHATCHI CANYON TRAIL - DAY

THE GROUP MOVES THROUGH A NARROW CANYON, just wide enough for two horses to pass abreast. Wainwright rides with Eleanor. Their exchange piques the interest of Hance, who is riding just behind them.

ELEANOR  
That's a right generous offer, Mr. Wainwright. I had no idea my little patch was worth all that.

WAINWRIGHT

Even the sorriest scraps of land in this part of the world are worth a great deal to a man of vision, Mrs. Boyle, a man with a mind to make something out of it. The West is the future of this country. I believe that firmly.

ELEANOR

I couldn't agree with you more. That's why my land means so much to me -- and to Kate.

Wainwright hadn't expected such stubbornness.

CUT TO:

EXT. FURTHER ALONG THE TRAIL - DAY

THE CANYON HAS NARROWED and the group rides single file.

BILLY TURNS IN THE SADDLE to steal a glance at Kate. But she's already watching him, her eyes accusing him. He can't hold her gaze and turns back.

ALL THE RIDERS PULL UP AND STOP. A moment of silence.

THEN A SOUND: The slow clip-clop of a single horse, echoing down the canyon toward them.

A RIDERLESS HORSE APPEARS, heading back the way they've come. The travelers have to squeeze sideways to let it pass.

CLEM

That's ol' Roscoe Porch's horse!

LEM

But then ... what happened to ol' Roscoe?

KATE CHOKES BACK AN INVOLUNTARY LAUGH: Roscoe's boots are still firmly planted in the stirrups, his empty pants still in the saddle.

Nothing else except a powdering of fine grey dust on the saddle and on the horse's flanks.

THEY MOVE ON cautiously up the canyon.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOHATCHI BOX CANYON - DAY

THE RIDERS EMERGE into a wider open section of the canyon, encircled by a rock fall, to the scene of carnage they were expecting:

HORSES MILLING AROUND, patches of scorched and smoking sand, a single tall cactus burning like a torch. No riders visible.

WAINWRIGHT

The entire posse. All those men.

HANCE AND WAINWRIGHT DISMOUNT and walk into the battle area, the others climbing down in the b.g.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE TWO MEN PASS:

A POWDERED CORPSE in a full suit of clothes.

A SINGLE EMPTY BOOT with smoke drifting out of it.

TWO HANDGUNS melted together into an object of found art.

THE OTHERS STEP NERVOUSLY into the battle area.

HANCE LOOKS UP FROM THE SCORCHED EARTH as a puzzling rhythmic HUM begins to rise. Wainwright doesn't hear a thing.

HANCE BEGINS WALKING BACK TOWARD THE OTHERS, then starts running as the pulse of the humming climbs steadily.

HANCE GETS TO KATE and reaches for the pendant around her neck -- which flashes red in sync with the hum. He almost pulls her off her feet as he grabs the pendant and tosses it away.

THE PENDANT LANDS IN THE SAND and begins to strobe. A NARROW BEAM OF LIGHT TOUCHES THE PENDANT, and --

AN ANTENNA SYSTEM PROTRUDES OVER THE RIM of the canyon -like the conning tower of a submarine - emitting the narrow beam.

THE ENTIRE VEHICLE ERUPTS OVER THE RIM: a flat platform resembling an airborne motorboat, carrying two BIPEDAL FIGURES swathed in silver, with enormous black "marsupial" eyes.

THE TRAVELERS ARE THUNDERSTRUCK as the aliens extend their arms and open their hands, projecting red beams from the centers of their palms.

HANCE GRABS HIS REMINGTON FROM LEM'S SADDLE as he and Billy leap off in opposite directions. The beam plows between two rocks, pulverizing both.

THE SKIMMER LOOPS BACK AND FORTH over the end of the canyon. Its three beams snake out independently, a laser on the deck and one each from the palms of the aliens.

THE JAPES BROTHERS SCREAM like twin sirens as they run. The beams anticipate their every move. Clem's boot heel is singed and he dives for cover trailing a thick plume of smoke, like a Roman candle.

WAINWRIGHT MAKES A GREAT SHOW of shielding Kate and Eleanor with his body as he hustles them (and himself) to the rock fall at the opposite end of the canyon.

HANCE GLARES AS HE WATCHES WAINWRIGHT -- then turns as the skimmer swoops low and blasts toward him from the opposite direction.

WAINWRIGHT JUMPS OUT OF HIS SKIN at the twin booms of Eleanor's shotgun. She looks up defiantly at the retreating skimmer.

WAINWRIGHT, SHAMED, SQUEEZES OFF SEVERAL SHOWY SHOTS.

HANCE JUMPS as one of Wainwright's wild shots careens off the rock next to him. He's just turning to glare when the skimmer roars past above his head. He turns to follow it:

ONE OF THE ALIENS IS STEERING ITS LASER TOWARD BILLY, who has charged into the open.

HANCE SHOUTS AND BILLY TURNS -- facing the on-rushing beam with only his knife.

HANCE FIRES TWICE AT THE RETREATING SKIMMER and one of the aliens jerks as the slugs go in. It tips and falls off the platform in a tangle of arms and legs.

BILLY STARES AT HIS USELESS KNIFE, as it dawns on him that he came that close.

CLEM JAPES HAS SPOTTED HIS BROTHER: Lem stands frozen, with his mouth wide open, watching the skimmer circle back and forth. Clem barely has time to stand up and scream before:

THE DECK-LASER SLICES LEM JAPES across the mid-section, nearly bisecting him.

CLEM SHUDDERS SPASMODICALLY at an unexpected surge of emotion. He SCREAMS his brother's name and strides angrily into the open.

THE BRIM OF CLEM'S HAT IS CLIPPED OFF by one of the beams, but he reaches his horse and yanks the big Sharps .50 from his saddle boot.

THE ALIEN SKIMMER TURNS and accelerates across the canyon toward him as Clem raises the enormous rifle and sights carefully.

-- the slug punches a deep dent in the side of the vehicle.

THE DAMAGED CRAFT DIPS WILDLY, narrowly avoiding collision with the canyon rim. It zips over the escarpment out of sight.

CLEM THROWS DOWN HIS RIFLE and runs toward his brother's corpse. He recoils from the horrid spectacle and begins to wail uncontrollably.

HANCE AND BILLY JOIN CLEM at his brother's side. Hance kneels beside the body as Billy moves awkwardly to comfort Clem.

CLEM  
(through his tears)  
All I ever did was pick on 'im.

HANCE PULLS BILLY AWAY. As they walk, Hance hands Billy one of Lem's enormous six-shooters.

HANCE  
Shouldn't try to do without this much longer. Like to get yourself kilt.

BILLY  
Is this fer me, I mean, I never had a real gun afore an' I-

HANCE  
You know how to use it, dontcha?

BILLY  
Sure, sure, I do, it's just that I-

HANCE  
Then shut up, sprout, willya please.

BILLY  
Ah, yes, yessir, Mister Hance, oh I sure will.

HANCE AND BILLY JOIN THE OTHERS, staring down at the alien; awed, solemn.

WAINWRIGHT

It's still alive.

HANCE CROUCHES FOR A CLOSER LOOK: the hairless alien is humanoid except for its huge eyes, which lock Hance into a hard stare. The alien raises its arm, nestles its chin into the palm, pushes down with its head to bend the wrist back - a laser beam pierces the alien's skull.

THE EARTHLINGS LUNGE BACK as the body slumps.

BILLY

He kilt himself!

HANCE LIFTS THE ALIEN'S LIMP ARM, turns it over to study the palm of the hand:

A MOUTH-LIKE FISSURE OPENS IN THE FLESH as it's bent backwards, further and further until--

-- the beam of the palm-laser burns a neat hole in Billy's Stetson. The kid jumps sky high.

WAINWRIGHT CROSSES HIMSELF INVOLUNTARILY, catches himself doing it, rubs his hands together.

ELEANOR

(quotes)

"The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath."

HANCE

It's flesh and blood. Or at least most of it is.

ELEANOR

Those things on its chest look like...

HANCE

Insignia.

HANCE TOUCHES THE SILVERY IMPLANT, a circular shape with a geometric design: puzzled, as if the emblem means something to him.

HANCE (CONT'D)

They're built right into the skin.

(to Billy)

Toss me that knife a second.

HANCE CATCHES THE KNIFE and uses it to dig at the alien's chest insignia. It begins to loosen--

-- the insignia pulls away from the surface, leaving behind an impression of itself. The flat silver object dangles from wires anchored in the creature's flesh.

BILLY

It's like a badge . . . only it's attached to him.

HANCE

And he had his weapon built into his arm.

WAINWRIGHT

"Black it stood as night, fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell, and shook a dreadful bolt."

ELEANOR

(looking up, troubled)  
That's not the good book.

WAINWRIGHT

No, m'am. Paradise Lost. A description of an unimaginable monster.

HANCE

Hell, I can imagine it. It's right in front of me!

WAINWRIGHT

Indeed. But what is it? If you're inclined to dismiss a theological interpretation--

HANCE

I'm inclined to dismiss any kind of interpretation -- as long as there's a chance there's more a them things out there.

(pause)

We should get on to Fort Thompson and we should take that thing with us so maybe they'll believe what we're tellin' 'em.

HANCE AND WAINWRIGHT STARE HARD, each assessing the other. Wainwright's eyes flicker nervously:

MARCUS AND BILLY BOTH HAVE SIDEARMS.

FINALLY:

WAINWRIGHT

Good advice from a knowledgeable man. I believe I'll act upon it. But I also want to send my deputies. . . my remaining deputy back to Silver Fork to check--

HANCE

We need every man with us.

A DISTRAUGHT CLEM JAPES JOINS THEM, hands dripping with his brother's blood.

CLEM

I can't go back! I gotta find them butchers! Kill 'em with my own two hands!

WAINWRIGHT

No. As an elected official I have a responsibility toward the citizens of Silver Fork. It's vital that one of my representatives be there, standing shoulder to shoulder with them in a time of crisis.

CLEM

But they cut my brother right in half!

WAINWRIGHT

And you'll see to it that he gets a decent church burial back there.  
(off his look)  
That's an order, Mr. Japes.

CLEM'S FACE IS A MASK OF MIXED EMOTIONS -- anger, defiance, frustration.

HANCE QUIETLY POKETS THE ALIEN IMPLANT -- as we

CUT TO:

EXT. PAINTED DESERT - DAY

THE GROUP AMBLES ALONG. Hance is slumped over in the saddle, half asleep.

WAINWRIGHT PULLS UP ALONGSIDE and they ride silently.

HANCE  
Wouldn't figure you for a god-  
fearing man, sheriff.

WAINWRIGHT  
I saw no reason to offend Mrs.  
Boyle.

HANCE  
Every vote counts.

WAINWRIGHT  
I suppose you have a better  
explanation?

HANCE  
I seen things today I don't even  
know how to talk about.

WAINWRIGHT  
Or think about.

They exchange a glance.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)  
Was it you who rode four hundred  
miles through Comanche country to  
fetch a prisoner back from Mexico -  
-for a bounty of twenty-five silver  
dollars?

HANCE  
Thirty-five.

WAINWRIGHT  
It is amazing what some people will  
do for money.

HANCE  
Boy never killed anybody. Any  
jackass could see that.

WAINWRIGHT  
So you're saying, you wouldn't have  
busted him out if you'd figured he  
was guilty?

Hance shrugs. Wainwright smirks as if he's won the point.

CUT TO:

EXT. VALLEY RIDGE - DAY

CLEM JAPES FROWNS as he stares down at:

A WAGON TRAIN STANDING MOTIONLESS in a spacious valley - wagons scattered, horses grazing, no people visible.

ONE OF THE WAGONS IS IN FLAMES, charred ribs exposed.

CLEM DRAWS THE SHARPS FROM ITS SCABBARD, rides cautiously down.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAINTED DESERT - DAY

THE FIVE TRAVELERS MOVE THROUGH A GULLY ringed by juniper and larkspur.

HANCE, RIDING WITH BILLY, SAVORING A SMOKE. He coughs once or twice.

SUDDENLY HE REINS UP HIS MOUNT and turns. When the others follow his upward gaze they see, strung out in a line across the top of a broad mesa, a dozen INDIANS riding silently.

ELEANOR GASPS AND PULLS HER SHOTGUN from her saddle scabbard. She draws a bead but Hance rides directly in front of the barrel.

ELEANOR

How dare you? That filth stole my son. I'd turn this on both of us before I'd let them near her.

HANCE

And usually you'd be right. But a 'Pache patrol'll never skyline itself on a ridge like that.

(pause)

They've got something else on their minds.

Eleanor lowers the shotgun.

THE RIDERS WATCH THE PONIES DISAPPEAR one by one over the ridge.

CUT TO:

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR - DAY

THE WAGONS STAND SILENT AND EMPTY as Clem rides among them, leading the horse that bears his brother's corpse. Drifting smoke from the burning wagon.

BATTLE SCARS ON SEVERAL WAGONS -- snaking burn marks that suggest laser fire.

CLEM'S BROW DARKENS. He holsters the Sharps, clucks at his horse, continues on toward Silver Fork.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABOVE FORT THOMPSON - DAY

THE FORT LIES IN RUINS BELOW, its walls pitted by ugly holes and most of its out-buildings razed. Horses from the ruined corral graze untended on the salt grass.

ELEANOR  
(stifling a cry)  
Oh my god. Tommy.

KATE MOVES TO COMFORT HER.

HANCE  
Billy, go and see.

BILLY  
(gulping)  
What, who, me, Mister Hance...  
gosh.

HANCE  
Get on.

BILLY GULPS, SPURS HIS HORSE and gallops down the bluff.

WAINWRIGHT  
Apache?

HANCE  
I doubt it.

WAINWRIGHT  
Think the boy can handle it?

Hance says nothing.

FURTHER DOWN THE SLOPE

BILLY RIDES ANXIOUSLY, holding his breath. As he nears the fort he passes the bodies of several aliens, pocked with gunshots.

HE REACHES THE STOCKADE and waves to the group above with his hat.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT THOMPSON - DAY

HANCE TROTS AHEAD to where Billy sits just outside the entrance to the stockade. The big gate is shattered and the logs are still smoldering. Up above, the stars and stripes in tatters.

HE WAITS FOR WAINWRIGHT and they move cautiously into the garrison.

CUT TO:

INT. FORT THOMPSON - DAY

A SHOT RINGS OUT OF THE SILENCE. The shell barely kicks up the dust ahead of Hance before he has the Remington out. Wainwright is only slightly less quick with one of his Colts.

HANCE WHIPS AROUND to face the source of the attack.

A MAN'S VOICE  
Hold it! Hold your fire!

FROM BEHIND A HALF-DESTROYED DOOR COMES A LARGE MAN in cavalry boots and breeches, SERGEANT STOCKER. He holds an older model Sharps carbine at port arms and squints at the group. His dirt-caked face betrays grief and exhaustion.

HANCE AND WAINWRIGHT CLIMB DOWN.

STOCKER  
Is that you, Mr. Wainwright?

HANCE TURNS TO WAINWRIGHT and cocks an eyebrow, but the sheriff takes the greeting in stride.

WAINWRIGHT  
Good to see you again, Sergeant Stocker, albeit under less than desirable circumstances.

TWO TERRIFIED PRIVATES, DERRICK AND DORT, PEER FROM INSIDE. When Stocker catches sight of the dead alien his lips curl into an angry snarl.

STOCKER  
Demon!

HE RAISES THE CARBINE but Hance steps in and deflects the barrel.

HANCE  
That's a waste o' good lead.

WAINWRIGHT

What happened, Sergeant?

STOCKER IS HALF IN SHOCK and Wainwright grabs him by his filthy collar, pulling him eye to eye.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Where are your men?

STOCKER

The Lord came to Earth, he showed us His holy light and claimed His lambs.

WAINWRIGHT

WHERE ARE THEY?

HANCE STEPS IN, pulling Wainwright's hand away.

HANCE

Leave him be.

Wainwright scowls and backs off. Hance pulls a canteen from his saddle bag and offers it to Stocker, who takes a long pull.

STOCKER

(recovering)

I was just coming out' the barracks for morning call. All of a quick there's a big turkey buzzard just floatin' over the stockade. It looked like a shadow made outta silver. Major Hinds.., he... he... just weren't there no more...

A SECOND MAN, LIEUTENANT HARRINGTON, STUMBLES OUT of a low building across the compound. He is tall and gaunt and covered with blood.

HARRINGTON

(weakly)

Sergeant...

HE FALLS TO HIS KNEES and passes out. Kate stifles a scream but Eleanor is off her horse instantly, running toward the lieutenant with Hance right behind.

ELEANOR

(to the privates)

Don't just stand there.

DERRICK AND DORT ALMOST FALL OVER EACH OTHER in their rush to obey Eleanor.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)  
 He needs a cot and water. And  
 bandages. Kate, come along.

KATE SLITHERS DOWN FROM HER MOUNT and joins her mother.

CUT TO:

EXT. SILVER FORK - DAY

CLEM JAPES RIDES INTO A TOWN that looks deserted.

THE STREET IS EMPTY except for a few horses. A hot breeze  
 blows a tumbleweed across.

CLEM SEES THE SALOON DOOR STANDING OPEN, licks his dry lips,  
 dismounts, steps into the saloon.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT THOMPSON - DAY

THE PRIVATES HAVE HARRINGTON BY HANDS AND FEET, with the  
 women trailing. Hance turns to where Stocker is eyeing the  
 body of the alien - from a safe distance. He seems to have  
 calmed down.

HANCE  
 Just the four of you left?

STOCKER  
 (nods, distracted)  
 Company's twenty-five. And we had a  
 Captain up from Fort McDowell and  
 two Indian scouts in camp.

HANCE  
 'Pache?

STOCKER  
 Navajo. Red Owl's.

HANCE  
 I didn't know he still had a tribe.

STOCKER  
 The tribe's still there all right,  
 but Red Owl ain't. They say he went  
 off to look for some kinda spirit  
 up above Winslow. They ain't seen  
 him for years.

HANCE  
 (to himself)  
 Dibentash.

STOCKER  
 Huh?

HANCE  
 (catches himself)  
 Oh, uh, that's the Sacred Mountain  
 of the North.

STOCKER  
 If he's dead all the better.

HANCE LOOKS INTO THE DISTANCE where the Chuska Mountains  
 rise out of the haze. Stocker eyes him suspiciously.

STOCKER (CONT'D)  
 The Devil took most of the men  
 alive.

HANCE  
 What do you mean?

STOCKER  
 (awed)  
 I saw half my troop rise right up  
 into the sky.

CUT TO:

INT. SALOON - DAY

CLEM STANDS JUST INSIDE THE SWINGING DOOR, cradling his  
 Texas Fifty.

THE PLACE IS A MESS: shot glasses and hands of cards  
 abandoned on the tables, whiskey bottles on the bar, the  
 player piano winding down the last bars of "SWEET BETSY FROM  
 PIKE" -- at half tempo.

CLEM IS DRAWN LIKE A MAGNET to the nearest bottle, knocks  
 back a quick couple of shots, then shrugs and chugs it all  
 down. He's reaching for another when he spots:

A PILE OF GREY DUST ON THE FLOOR. A six shooter beside it  
 that looks ... melted.

CLEM'S ABOUT TO POKE A FINGER INTO THE PILE when he hears a  
 humming SOUND outside. He hits the floor and jams the bottle  
 into his pocket, crawls to the window:

AN ALIEN SKIMMER SWOOPING IN for a feather-touch landing. From around the corner two aliens lead a group of townspeople strung out chain-gang fashion, linked at the neck by --

SHACKLES OF PURE LIGHT.

CLEM

(sotto)

Gol'.

(pause)

Lahk Mr. Wainwright says, truth is stranger than friction.

ERNESTINE, IN SIGNATURE RED, RUNS FOR ALL SHE'S WORTH, a laser beam from the skimmer nipping at her heels.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Ernestine! Aw, honey!

THE BEAM SCORCHES ACROSS THE FRONT OF A BUILDING, setting it on fire.

ONE ALIEN IS IN CHARGE, its modifications and silvery decorations more elaborate. At its side an otter creature strains at the end of a light leash.

THE ALIEN DIRECTS ANOTHER ALIEN TO HOLD OUT ITS ARM --and the arm extends in sections, ZUP ZUP ZUP, like a telescope. Each joint is hinged silver.

ERNESTINE IS GRIPPED AROUND THE NECK by the remote-control fingers and reeled in like a trout.

THE TOWNSPEOPLE ARE LEVITATED onto the broad deck of the skimmer.

THE BOSS ALIEN TURNS IN CLEM'S DIRECTION, surveys the now quiet street, reaches into a pouch at its belt, pulls out a dark wafer the size of a hockey puck.

THE BOSS ALIEN'S CATLIKE SILVER TEETH CHOMP DOWN on the wafer.

CLEM SHUDDERS WITH FEAR and stumbles against the window --  
-- and RATTLES it inadvertently.

THE EYES OF THE BOSS ALIEN REACT TO THE SOUND, and its ears - lying flat against its scalp, stiffen and extend forward, like antennae. It motions to two others, who break off and stride toward Clem's position.

CLEM SCUTTLES TOWARD THE BACK DOOR, changes his mind in sudden panic, turns to the stairs and takes them two at a time.

ON THE LANDING CLEM DUCKS AROUND A CORNER, turning his Sharps and an eagle eye on the bar below:

TWO ALIENS MOVE IN THROUGH THE SWINGING DOORS. Clem holds his breath, his finger twitching impatiently on the trigger.

ONE OF THE ALIENS PICKS UP A WHISKEY BOTTLE and raises it to quivering nostrils: a sinewy tendril emerges and descends into the bottle until it hits fluid. The alien jerks back as if burned and tosses the bottle away.

THE OTHER ALIEN LOOKS DIRECTLY AT CLEM but doesn't seem to spot him.

CLEM EXPELS HIS BREATH in a jagged gasp as the creatures turn and leave.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEHIND THE SALOON - DAY

CLEM MOSEYS OUT carefully, sneaks around the side of the building, up to the front corner, peeks into the street:

THE SKIMMER IS RISING UP AND UP, hovering over the street --  
-- and then it seems to sniff something, turns around.

A BROAD BEAM LOCKS ONTO THE BLANKET-SWATHED CORPSE of Lem Japes, and hoists it onto the skimmer.

CLEM'S EYES FILL WITH TEARS OF RAGE as the craft zips away.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. FORT THOMPSON COMPOUND/MAGAZINE - DAY

THE DENIZENS OF THE FORT PULL THINGS BACK TOGETHER:

PRIVATE DORT PLAYS A MOURNFUL "RED RIVER VALLEY" on the mouth organ.

PRIVATE DERRICK BREWS COFFEE over a cook fire.

KATE WATCHES AGHAST as her mother uses a lace handkerchief to dab at Lieutenant Harrington's bloody wounds.

HARRINGTON  
(feverish)  
My eyes... A flaming sword...

Eleanor and Kate exchange a glance: "He's a goner."

ACROSS THE COMPOUND

HANCE WORRIES HIS TEETH ABSENTMINDEDLY with the lock pick as he watches Eleanor and Kate. He sees Wainwright joining them, all oily charm and commiseration. Hance turns, frowning, to confer with Sergeant Stocker.

HANCE  
(indicating)  
What do y'know about him?

STOCKER  
He's comin' up for re-election soon.

HANCE  
He'll prolly get in too. He's the type people like to vote for.

STOCKER  
Major Hinds said he had friends in Washington.

HANCE  
Yer shittin' me.

STOCKER  
He's from some old fat-rich family back East. Only been here a coupl' a years, already owns mosta the land around, buyin' up homesteads and injun plots.

HANCE  
And he's the judge and the only lawman--

STOCKER  
--Which don't hurt none.

Hance and Stocker begin walking toward the magazine.

HANCE  
Dj'you manage to kill many of 'em?

STOCKER  
We got in a lucky shot or two. They're mighty tough to bring down, but they just come right up to you. Like they're beggin' for it.

HANCE

The parts that ain't silver are  
just like you 'n me.

STOCKER

We figgered that out pronto. Just  
don't get spooked and aim for the  
skin.

HANCE

Fanciest peg leg you ever seen.

STOCKER PULLS OUT A KEY RING and opens the door to the  
magazine.

HANCE (CONT'D)

Can we get a message out -- maybe  
get another company down here?

STOCKER

Major sent out a dispatch rider to  
Fort Grant as soon as the ruckus  
started. Don't expect he got far.

HANCE

So we'll have to get to the Western  
Union office in Winslow--

STOCKER

--But that'd be straight over flat  
ground, no place to hide at all --  
and then the mountains-

HANCE

We'll just have to move fast.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

CLEM MOVES ALONG THE BOARDWALK past open doorways and  
hitching posts. Flames and smoke from several burning  
buildings.

A BLACKENED CRATER IN THE GROUND -- THE REMAINS of a  
building. The structure next to it burning freely.

A WOODEN SIGN at the pit's edge: "WESTERN UNION".

A GRIM AND DETERMINED-LOOKING CLEM JAPES HEADS ACROSS into  
the jailhouse.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL - DAY

CLEM SPOTS AND GRABS BOXES OF AMMO, jams them into a saddle bag.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF SILVER FORK - DAY

CLEM RIDES OUT -- with most of the town now in flames behind him. He never looks back.

CUT TO:

INT. FORT THOMPSON MAGAZINE - DAY

HANCE AND STOCKER ENTER THE DARK ORDNANCE SUPPLY ROOM.

STOCKER

I'll tell you, I've faced a lotta things...

HANCE LIGHTS A MATCH ON HIS TEETH, then a hanging oil lamp.

HANCE

You'll do fine.

THEY LOOK AROUND: rifles, ammunition, the barrel of a shiny new Gatling gun.

HANCE (CONT'D)

I think they're bullies. They're not used to having people stand up to 'em.

HANCE SNAGS A FISTFUL OF DYNAMITE from a crate nearby, holds it up.

HANCE (CONT'D)

Y' got any more'a this?

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT THOMPSON COMPOUND - DAY

PRIVATE DERRICK POURS COFFEE for Billy.

DERRICK

Say when.

The cup fills rapidly.

BILLY

That's enough.

DERRICK

Say when.

The cup's full.

BILLY

Stop!

DERRICK

Say when!

BILLY

STOP!

DERRICK

SAY WHEN!

The cup overflows, and Billy yips as his hand is burned.

ON TOP OF THE STOCKADE

PRIVATE DORT STANDS GUARD HALFHEARTEDLY, blowing a riff on his mouth harp and not paying attention to much of anything else.

A FLUTTERING FROM THE DESERT DISTRACTS HIM and he puts down the instrument and raises his carbine.

A VULTURE TEARS VICIOUSLY AT THE BODY OF A DOWNED ALIEN.

Dort is fascinated. A moment later --

THE BIRD LOOKS UP, startled, and flaps its wings. It steps away from the corpse, staggers and falls flat. Stiff and dead.

ON THE PARADE GROUND

KATE SCOOPS OUT WATER FROM A BIG BARREL to wash the blood from the lace handkerchief. In the b.g., Wainwright leaves Eleanor with Lieutenant Harrington and walks over.

WAINWRIGHT

Do you need help with that, Miss Boyle?

KATE

What? Oh, no, all done-

KATE TURNS TO LEAVE. Wainwright takes her hand.

WAINWRIGHT

Wait, Kathleen. Your mother and I  
have been talking about the future.

KATE

(suspicious)  
Whose future?

WAINWRIGHT

(theatrical passion)  
The future! This whole territory is  
one great undifferentiated mass of  
possibility, just waiting for a man  
of vision to carve out a domain for  
himself!

(pause)  
It would all seem rather hollow,  
though, without...

WAINWRIGHT LEANS FORWARD, eyeing her hungrily. His intensity  
frightens Kate and she tries to pull her hand away.

KATE

Let go, Mr. Wainwright, please!

WAINWRIGHT

There are things I could teach you,  
Kathleen. Things most women only  
dream about.

KATE

I know what you're talkin' about.  
You let go!

BILLY IS NURSING HIS BURNED HAND when he hears Kate's  
protest. He sees red and goes charging off, spilling the  
coffee all over Derrick (who yelps).

A DESPERATE WAINWRIGHT IS TRYING TO SILENCE KATE when Billy  
comes to a staggering stop in front of them.

BILLY

Leave her be!

WAINWRIGHT

I don't think this is any of your  
business.

(pause)  
Junior.

DORT AND DERRICK HAVE COME OVER to investigate. In the b.g.  
Eleanor stands, starts over. Now Billy can't back down.

BILLY

I think you should let go of her.

WAINWRIGHT

Oh, you do, do you?

BILLY

She asked you to.

KATE

I can take care of myself.

WAINWRIGHT DROPS KATE'S HAND, as if forgetting her instantly, and confronts Billy.

BILLY HAS HIS DUKES UP, although he's scared shitless.

Wainwright chuckles contemptuously, half-turns away.

Billy growls and throws a wild punch.

WAINWRIGHT STEPS IN UNDER IT and slaps Billy across the face again and again. A trickle of blood comes out of one nostril.

HANCE AND STOCKER ARE LOADING SUPPLIES and the Gatling gun onto a longbed wagon. They turn when the soldiers shout...

WAINWRIGHT PEELS OFF HIS COAT AND VEST, folding them neatly and handing them to Private Dort. He rolls up his sleeves and assumes a bandy-legged 19th century boxing stance.

DERRICK

(sotto)

Two bucks on the kid.

DORT

That's twice what you owe me.

BILLY WADES IN, flailing like a windmill, and Wainwright dodges easily, tossing in a flurry of crisp shots as Billy staggers past.

AS BILLY TURNS AND LURCHES FORWARD, Wainwright steps back and bumps right into Hance.

HANCE

That's not the way a man fights.

WAINWRIGHT

That's the way an educated man fights.

BILLY

Don't help me, Mr. Hance  
 (a glance at Kate)  
 I can take care of myself.

HANCE GIVES THE KID A LOOK -- respectful if not resigned to his foolishness -- and steps away. Wainwright turns back to Billy and immediately throws a sucker punch.

BILLY FALLS ONTO HIS HANDS AND KNEES, bleeding from a split lip. He struggles halfway to his feet and Wainwright kicks him in the face.

BILLY CRASHES INTO THE BARREL -- muddy water everywhere.

BILLY HAULS HIMSELF UP out of the mess, dripping wet.

WAINWRIGHT

Don't drink it all, boy. Save some  
 for the rest of us.

BILLY HOWLS HIS FRUSTRATION AND CHARGES. Wainwright steps aside and sticks out a foot, tripping him.

BILLY SPRAWLS FACE FIRST.

WAINWRIGHT TURNS, brushing himself off as if the fight's finished, but Billy painfully hoists himself upright again, covered with mud and blood.

BILLY GROANS AND SHAKES HIS HEAD, begins staggering toward Wainwright.

THE OLDER MAN SHRUGS --

"If you insist." He steps up and methodically punches Billy in the face until he falls.

WAINWRIGHT

"When in disgrace with fortune and  
 men's eyes, I all alone bewep my  
 downcast state."

A SMUG WAINWRIGHT WALKS BACK TO PRIVATE DORT to retrieve his coat and vest.

DERRICK PULLS A GREENBACK OUT OF HIS COFFEE-STAINED POCKET and hands it over, but Dart pushes his hand back.

DORT

I don't win no money off'n  
 cheaters.

WAINWRIGHT OVERHEARS DORT and glares at him as he strides off.

HANCE CARRIES A BUCKET OF WATER to where Billy lies prostrate. Dumps it over him and Billy gasps and moans. Hance reaches an arm down and drags him to his feet.

HANCE HELPS BILLY TO A BENCH under an overhang, sits him down, joins him, pulls out his leather tobacco pouch and papers.

BILLY WATCHES HANCE ROLL HIS OWN and light a match on his tooth, all with the usual expertise. Hance sees him watching, pulls a paper and hands it and pouch to Billy. Billy looks at the makings with reverence. He rolls clumsily, trying to imitate his mentor but spilling most of the tobacco in his lap.

HANCE TURNS AWAY so Billy can't see his smile.

IN THE B.G., WAINWRIGHT PULLS A THIN CIGAR from his vest pocket, bites the end, lights it with a wooden match. Savors the first puffs.

CUT TO:

INT. FORT THOMPSON - NIGHT

KATE POURS WITCH HAZEL ON A CLOTH and applies it to Billy's cheek.

He's sitting up against the barracks.

BILLY

Ow!

KATE

(ironic)

My knight in shining armor.

The sarcasm isn't lost on Billy. He takes the next dose stoically.

BILLY

(sullen)

I wasn't fightin' for you.

KATE

Sure looked like it.

BILLY

That sheriff's nothin' but a bag 'o hot air.

KATE  
 (baiting him)  
 Maybe I think he's handsome.

BILLY  
 You would at that.

She smiles, enjoying the banter.

KATE  
 Did you really rob that bank in  
 Winslow?

BILLY  
 You bet. And I'd do it again.

KATE  
 If you think that impresses me  
 you're wrong. What about your  
 family? I'll bet they're real proud  
 of you.

BILLY  
 Family's dead.

KATE  
 I'm sorry.

BILLY  
 It don't matter, I don't even  
 remember 'em. They were nothin' but  
 a bunch of sodbusters.

KATE  
 If a person runs down his own  
 family, what's left? And what's  
 wrong with farmers anyway? Ma'n  
 me'll be goin' back to our farm  
 just as soon as we find Tommy.

BILLY WONDERS ABOUT THIS: he hates farming, but he sure  
 likes Kate.

ANOTHER PART OF THE PARADE GROUND

HANCE IS WATCHING THE YOUNG COUPLE from a distance. Eleanor  
 comes up behind him, but he pretends not to hear until she  
 rustles her clothes deliberately. Then he turns:

ELEANOR IS WEARING PANTS, boots, and suspenders over a plain  
 shirt.

ELEANOR

(defiant)

Well? You try riding hard all day  
in a heavy dress.

Hance looks her up and down.

HANCE

Suits you.

He turns away, suddenly uncomfortable She stands next to him watching the young people. Off in the distance Private Dort is playing a mournful TAPS.

ELEANOR

I almost hate to say it but they do  
look sweet together.

(pause)

I believe I owe you an apology, Mr.  
Hance. You and the boy.

HANCE

Easy done.

ELEANOR

Kate's father was murdered by the  
Apache. She and Tommy were all I've  
had and now the Lord's seen fit to  
take my son, too. But maybe you  
think more of these savages than  
you do of white people.

HANCE

You're not the first person to lose  
a family.

THIS ANGERS HER so much that she raises her hand to slap him  
- but he intercepts and holds it.

HANCE (CONT'D)

You think Indians are the only  
savages.

(wanting her to  
understand) )

After the war I went to Abilene,  
got a job as a sheriff. Some big  
men there were doing things they  
expected me to overlook -- buying  
up all the land, drivin' off decent  
people. They figured they could buy  
me just like they bought everything  
else, but I didn't like their  
tricks and I told 'em so.

(a look)

HANCE (CONT'D)

One night my barn burned to the ground.

Hance stops and turns away. In the b.g., Wainwright walks across the compound; the flare of a match as he lights a stogie.

HANCE (CONT'D)

Six months later I was out tracking a two-bit horse thief along the Republican. When I got back my wife and daughters were dead, the house burned with them inside it. Not one of my good neighbors heard a thing.

(pause)

That's when I figgered justice don't mean shit.

ELEANOR

Then they're in the hands of the good Lord now.

(pause)

Only He knows what those silver devils want with us.

HANCE

Now you know how the Indians felt when we came along.

WAINWRIGHT CROSSES THE PARADE GROUND in the b.g., still smoking quietly.

HANCE (CONT'D)

It was men like him killed my wife and my girls. Men just like him.

ELEANOR

It wasn't your fault.

HANCE

Yeah it was.

HE STRIDES AWAY.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

CARRYING HIS HORSE BLANKET, HANCE FINDS A DESERTED CORNER. He lights a lamp and spreads out the tattered relic.

ABOUT TO LIE DOWN, HE SUDDENLY LOOKS STRANGELY at the pattern of chevrons on the Indian fabric, and at a symbol in

its center. He brings the lamp closer, pulling the alien's insignia badge out of a pocket.

A COLD CHILL RUNS THROUGH HIM: the designs are roughly the same.

HE DIGESTS THIS A MOMENT, then turns and looks across the room, where the inert body of the alien lies on a table.

HE GOES TO THE BODY and his attention is drawn to a square device on its belt.

HE TOUCHES IT AND HIS HAND VIBRATES. Soon the whole corpse is trembling. He jumps back as:

THE CORPSE LIFTS OFF THE TABLE. Another touch and it settles down.

HANCE PULLS THE DEVICE OFF and attaches it to his own belt.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT THOMPSON COMPOUND - NIGHT

A SILENT SKY filled with stars. A deep muted SOUND.

PRIVATE DERRICK COMES HALF AWAKE, his eyes fluttering open. He looks up:

A CIRCULAR BLACK SHAPE CROSSES THE SKY, RUMBLING PAST, briefly blotting out the stars.

DERRICK FROWNS GROGGILY -- "Did I really see that?" And then his eyelids droop and a second later he's asleep again.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT THOMPSON PARADE GROUND - DAY/DAWN

PRIVATE DERRICK HAULING GRIMLY ON THE HALYARD, raising the garrison's tattered flag.

PRIVATE DORT BLOWING REVEILLE nearby as sickly Lieutenant Harrington struggles to stand upright as he salutes.

HANCE AND STOCKER OBSERVE THE BEDRAGGLED CEREMONY from a distance.

HANCE  
You don't salute?

STOCKER  
I used to.

They watch for a moment -- then look up suddenly as a tell-tale HUMMING begins.

STOCKER (CONT'D)  
Sweet Jesus, it's them again!

HANCE  
Get down fast and they might pass  
right over us!

ALL FIVE MEN RACE FOR COVER as the NOISE builds, Hance and Stocker toward the guard house, the soldiers toward the stockade -- but a sixth man is stumbling into the open at the same time:

HARRINGTON IS THE SIXTH MAN, feverish, pistol drawn.

TWO ALIEN SKIMMERS -- SMALLER MODELS with single riders who balance on them like surfers -- appear above the stockade. The vehicles seem about to pass harmlessly.

BILLY EMERGES FROM THE BARRACKS and runs to join Hance and Stocker behind the guard house.

STOCKER  
Get down, kid, Jesus!

HARRINGTON LIMPS ACROSS THE PARADE GROUND and turns just as a skimmer disappears over the stockade. He blasts away at the retreating craft.

THE SKIMMERS FREEZE in mid-air as their HUMMING tone rises threateningly.

THE ALIENS ON THE SKIMMERS swivel toward the fort. These are snazzier specimens, with many more glistening implants.

THE SKIMMERS BANK AND TURN BACK as Wainwright dashes to join Hance, Billy and Stocker behind the guardhouse. Hance grabs him.

WAINWRIGHT  
You gonna let those things fly off  
without a fight?

HANCE  
We can't fight those buzzards in  
here!

STOCKER  
Better do something--

A LASER BEAM SNAKES ACROSS THE PARADE GROUND, searing through the wall of the powder magazine.

INSIDE THE MAGAZINE

THE OIL LAMP IS HIT AND SHATTERS, spraying burning oil across the floor.

OUTSIDE

THE POWDER MAGAZINE BECOMES A FIREBALL. The entire fort is in flames.

STOCKER AND DERRICK RACE TO THE HEAVILY LADEN LONGBED WAGON. Stocker cracks the reins over the mule team. As the wagon rumbles across the stockade a tarp falls off the Gatling gun.

THE SKIMMER SWERVES ASIDE and its laser slices a chunk out of the flag pole.

HARRINGTON SEES THE FLAG POLE tip and begin to fall. He struggles to his feet, runs, staggers.

HANCE  
(under his breath)  
You damn fool...

HARRINGTON STUMBLES AND FALLS, only inches from the pole, worms himself forward--

A LASER TAKES OFF BOTH HIS LEGS!

HARRINGTON SCREAMS but manages to lurch forward far enough in his death throes to support the flag pole with his body.

THE HEM OF OLD GLORY HANGS a fraction of an inch above the earth.

DORT IS CAUGHT IN THE OPEN, firing in all directions, scared out of his wits. A skimmer swoops in low and he drops his Colt in terror.

THE ALIEN GRABS DORT AND PULLS HIM OFF HIS FEET, rising up, higher and higher. At a hundred feet or so it drops him unceremoniously to his death, then swoops down again.

BILLY IS NEXT TO HANCE, gulping at the body of Private Dort, struggling to cock Lem Japes' big pistol. He aims at the approaching skimmer.

HANCE (CONT'D)  
Shit, kid, fer chrissakes!

BILLY RAISES THE GUN AND SQUINTS as he holds it straight out in front of him with both hands:

-- the alien is blown off the skimmer and Billy is lifted off his feet and thrown backward by the recoil.

BILLY LANDS IN A PILE OF RUBBISH. Hance is there to help him up. Billy's sheepish.

HANCE (CONT'D)  
Hell, at least y' hit him. Now go get those women, get 'em onto some horses right away.

BILLY  
You want me to, urn...  
(off a no-nonsense  
glower)  
Oh! Alright, sure! Yes, sir!

BILLY SCRABBLES OFF and helps the women onto their mounts.

HANCE PICKS UP A ROCK. He walks boldly toward the long-bed and the skimmer hovering above it, arm cocked back.

HANCE  
Hey, foureyes, look at this!

THE ALIEN TURNS TO CONFRONT HANCE.

HANCE CHUCKS THE ROCK AND DIVES under the laser beam.

THE ROCK CLANGS off the alien's silver skull.

HANCE RACES TO THE WAGON. Exchanges a look with Stocker.

HANCE (CONT'D)  
Alright, then.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

THE RIDERS POUND ALONG. Behind them, Derrick urges on the mule team pulling the longbed.

STOCKER RAISES THE GATLING GUN and rattles off a furious salvo, the shells pinging harmlessly on the silver flank of the craft.

A CHUCKWALLA LIZARD TRIES TO SKITTER AWAY, when SPLORFF!: it's a cloud of corpuscles.

DERRICK SCREAMS AND LEAPS ONTO THE BACK OF ONE OF THE MULES and the beam severs the team neatly from the wagon, which rumbles to a quick stop.

SERGEANT STOCKER IS DEALING WITH A JAMMED GUN as the skimmer rises and hovers. He AD LIBS curses at God, the Devil and Dr. R. J. Gatling.

HANCE STOPS, TURNS, about to ride back. Wainwright sees him and grabs his arm.

WAINWRIGHT

The hell with him. Our only chance  
is the trees.

Hance realizes Wainwright is right, spurs his horse angrily.

PRIVATE DERRICK, HELL-BENT, cranes his head back at his beleaguered sergeant.

THE ALIEN IS WIDENING THE BORE OF THE DECK GUN. It paints back and forth, turning scrub and rock alike to dust.

DERRICK MAKES HIS DECISION and turns the mule, riding back to aid his commanding officer.

THE BEAM CATCHES DERRICK IN FULL GALLOP, vaporizing mule and man, then turns and eats up the ground on its way to Stocker.

THE GATLING JAMS AGAIN and Stocker reaches for his carbine, but he's out of time.

THE BEAM TRIMS AWAY CHUNKS OF LONGBED, Gatling gun and cavalryman. The former sergeant is now a neatly cauterized trio.

ELEANOR AND KATE ARE HORRIFIED, but Hance lashes out at the flanks of their horses.

THE GROUP GALLOPS FOR THE TREES as the skimmer hovers -as though undecided - over the smoking ruin of Sergeant Stocker.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT - DAY

THE FIRE CRACKLES SOFTLY AS BLACK SMOKE RISES from ruined buildings.

A BUZZARD LANDS IN THE STOCKADE, THEN ANOTHER. They waddle cautiously toward the body of Private Dort.

THEY CLUSTER AROUND HIM.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOOTHILLS - DAY

HANCE POINTS TOWARD the nearby slope.

HANCE  
Under the trees!

WAINWRIGHT ISN'T LISTENING. He's craning his neck to look fearfully back:

A BROAD SILVER BOOMERANG-SHAPED CRAFT, like a flying wing, with six aliens riding upright along its leading edge.

ALIENS AS SLEEK AS AIRSTREAM TRAILERS, sheets of silver covering their skulls, silver bands around their necks.

THE FLYING WING ROARS off after the riders.

WAINWRIGHT TURNS EYES FRONT and spurs his mount to fresh exertions, in his panic quickly passing Kate and Eleanor.

AT THE LAST MOMENT THE RIDERS PIERCE A CURTAIN OF BRUSH to reach the safety of the trees.

THE FLYING WING SEEMS ABOUT TO CRASH INTO THE TREES, when:

THE WING SEPARATES INTO SIX SECTIONS, like the personal skimmers that attacked the Fort. These "silver surfer" aliens peel off and float above the trees, the mounted earthlings flickeringly visible through the foliage.

A PULSE OF LASER FIRE CRASHES THROUGH THE BRANCHES and ignites a brush fire.

KATE'S HORSE BALKS AT THE BURNING BUSH, tossing her to the ground.

AN ANXIOUS HANCE looks up at an alien skimmer dogging him, flying directly overhead.

ABOVE THE WOODS

HANCE RIDING UNDER A TREE and emerging on the other side, riding under another and emerging, under and emerging -- until only the horse emerges, riderless.

THE ALIEN BRINGS ITS SKIMMER TO A SUDDEN STOP directly above the treetops, puzzled. A moment's silence, then:

HANCE FLOATS INTO VIEW BEHIND THE ALIEN -- suspended ten feet away with the anti-gravity device at his waist.

HANCE RAISES THE SPRINGFIELD and sights carefully.

HANCE (CONT'D)  
 Hey, baldy!

THE ALIEN'S HEAD SWIVELS ON ITS SILVER NECK JOINT -- 180 degrees until it's staring down the barrel.

HANCE (CONT'D)  
 Happy trails.

Hance pulls the trigger.

IN THE WOODS

KATE IS SCRAMBLING AFTER HER SKITTISH HORSE -- as an alien skimmer HISSES to a landing nearby.

NEARBY

ELEANOR MISSES KATE AND TURNS BACK to look for her.

IN THE WOODS

THE FEET OF THE ALIEN FLYER twist with a CLICK and withdraw from twin depressions in the floorboard -- spikes in the sockets plug into the creature's feet.

AS KATE TURNS THE ALIEN STOMPS TOWARD HER, stumbling over thick clumps of underbrush. It stops and looks down at its own legs:

THREE METALLIC JOINTS IN THE LEGS BEGIN TO STRETCH, extending in sections like a telescope, ZUP ZUP ZUP, until the creature stands ten feet tall.

KATE BACKS AWAY FRANTICALLY.

KATE  
 No ...get away from me!

WAINWRIGHT HEARS KATE'S CRIES and reins up his horse. He watches as the alien draws closer.

FROM A DISTANCE, HANCE WATCHES WAINWRIGHT HESITATE, spur his horse and flee.

HANCE  
 You chickenshit...

HANCE SPURS TOWARD THEM.

THE GANGLY ALIEN STEPS EASILY OVER THE BRUSH PILE, until a long stick is thrust between its legs. Down it goes.

ELEANOR STRIKES THE MONSTER'S HEAD again and again with the stick.

ELEANOR COMES TO HER SENSES AND LOOK UP -- and there's Hance, staring at her from horseback.

HANCE (CONT'D)  
Let's get moving before they come back.

THE WOMEN scramble for their horses.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST/MOUNTAINS - DAY

THE RIDERS EXPLODE FROM THE WOODS onto higher open ground. Rocky cliffs ahead.

HANCE  
There's a cave!

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE - DAY

THE GROUP SCAMPERS THROUGH THE FISSURE in the rock, the sunshine giving way to clammy gloom. Hance is the first to catch his breath. He peers out the cave opening.

WAINWRIGHT  
Did we lose 'em?

HANCE GRABS A HANDFUL OF WAINWRIGHT'S SHIRT.

HANCE  
You yellow piece of shit.

WAINWRIGHT  
I have no idea what you're referring to.

ELEANOR  
What is this!?

HANCE  
He knows.

Hance releases Wainwright and turns away.

ELEANOR  
Thank the Lord we're safe, anyway.

HANCE  
For the time being.

KATE  
Will they come back?

HANCE  
Maybe. Could be we scare them as  
much as they scare us.  
(pause)  
They're coming from somewhere  
around here.

WAINWRIGHT  
You don't know that.

HANCE  
(turning on him)  
Those two flying things were  
headin' over the mountains when  
they hit us, then that big wing  
came back the other way. They're  
just over this ridge.

WAINWRIGHT  
(realizes)  
I will not allow these women to  
risk their lives unnecessarily.

HE MOVES TO ELEANOR AND KATE and takes a proprietary stance.  
Hance rolls his eyes.

HANCE  
That's rich, Frank. You're gonna  
protect them.

KATE  
They're our lives and we'll risk  
'em if we want to.

Kate looks to Eleanor.

ELEANOR  
(to Wainwright)  
You heard her.

Kate notices that Billy has moved away.

KATE  
Billy?

Billy's eyes are bugged out of his head.

ALL TURN TO FOLLOW BILLY'S GAZE: an ancient INDIAN (RED OWL) sits calmly on the dusty floor half a dozen feet away. He looks at the group one by one.

WAINWRIGHT FLIPS UP HIS SPRINGFIELD.

HANCE

NO!

HANCE STEPS FORWARD and, much to the astonishment of the others, goes to one knee.

HANCE (CONT'D)

*L'tchi Ne'écsla.*

RED OWL

*Atsé Xacké.* Many seasons have passed.

HANCE

I've never forgotten.

RED OWL

My singing has not let you forget.

WAINWRIGHT

My God, do you know this savage?

Hance turns slowly to him, fighting back tears.

HANCE

He's my father.

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

A PAIR OF BRAUNY CHUCKWALLAS SIZZLE ON STICKS over a small fire. Stretched hides, an assortment of decorated baskets and a bow and quiver of arrows lie nearby.

WAINWRIGHT IS DISCOMFITED BY THE PRESENCE OF RED OWL. He sits near Eleanor and she eyes him uneasily. Billy and Kate are sitting as close as they can get without actually touching.

HANCE

I was a baby when a Sioux raiding party killed my folks. Red Owl and his tribe bartered for me... I guess because his squaws only gave him daughters. The Navajo were the only family I ever knew. Red Owl's a powerful Chanter - what we might

HANCE (CONT'D)  
 call a Medicine Man. He is the  
 center that receives power and  
 distributes it to those who need  
 it.

He turns to Red Owl, whose face betrays little emotion.

HANCE (CONT'D)  
 I figured I'd never see him again.

WAINWRIGHT  
 (with a derisive snort) )  
 What nonsense. Your Sioux, Navajo,  
 Comanche - they're all alike.  
 They'll never unite because they  
 have no central authority, no  
 concept of ownership. Our great  
 eastern cities thrive because men  
 can own property and be proud of  
 it. Why, half the land between here  
 and Silver Fork belongs to me and  
 before long, it all will. I protect  
 it and see that it becomes  
 productive. Your red man is content  
 to wander like the barbarian he is.

Hance's eyes flash but he holds his anger in check.

RED OWL  
 White man always want to own land.  
 Then they kill everything. We take  
 only what we need.

WAINWRIGHT  
 And where does it leave you? Living  
 in mud huts digging for roots.

HANCE  
 At least they don't throw people in  
 jail for crimes they never did.

WAINWRIGHT  
 Justice is a civilized concept. I  
 would hope you'd understand it even  
 if this monkey can't.

HANCE  
 (getting up)  
 Watch it.

WAINWRIGHT RISES TO MEET HIM and the two square off. But  
 Eleanor comes between them.

ELEANOR

Stop it. Stop it! I've had enough  
of this fighting!

Nose to nose, Hance backs down and Wainwright just snickers.

Red Owl has ignored the incipient brawl, and stares into the  
fire.

RED OWL

This is Dibéntash, the Sacred  
Mountain of the North. Darkness Boy  
and Darkness Girl live deep within,  
beyond the sound of thunder,  
fastened by rainbow. They protect  
Bulto, the Silver Worm.

HANCE

Are you sure? This is the great  
cave?

RED OWL

This is the home of the Ancestors,  
the place they guarded from harm.

WAINWRIGHT

(suddenly interested)  
What does he mean by the silver  
worm?

HANCE

The legend says that the silver  
trails of a giant worm lie deep in  
the sacred mountain. Only the Dine  
- the People - know where they can  
be found.

Red Owl looks at Hance with great sadness.

RED OWL

This is where the Ancestors met  
Wéitsoh.

HANCE

(to the others)  
The Great Monster.

WAINWRIGHT

Horseshit.

RED OWL

They drew his picture.

CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER PART OF THE CAVE - NIGHT

THE GROUP, CARRYING TORCHES, FOLLOWS RED OWL through a tunnel. The walls are dark but silver flecks glisten here and there.

Wainwright is the only one to notice this.

FINALLY THEY REACH A LARGE CHAMBER. In the center, a crude ladder descends into a hole.

HANCE

A Kiva.

ELEANOR

What?

HANCE

It's a place of ritual, a ceremonial chamber.

WAINWRIGHT

You're don't mean you're actually going down there...

CUT TO:

INT. KIVA - NIGHT

BILLY IS THE LAST TO DESCEND INTO THE GROTTO. He is amazed and delighted: the walls are completely covered with petroglyphs - crude figures painted onto the rock.

RED OWL GOES TO THE FAR WALL and uses his bow as a pointer.

RED OWL

Here is Wéitsoh. He comes from the Land-Beyond-The-Sky.

AS HANCE BRINGS THE TORCH FORWARD an entire tableau is revealed:

"GREAT MONSTER", a humanoid-shaped creature with wings and a pair of curved horns rising from its head.

GROUPS OF INDIANS hurling spears at the menace.

THE MONSTER SPLITTING ITSELF into many parts and pursuing the fleeing figures.

THE INDIANS RETREATING into their pueblos while overhead hovers a good likeness of a skimmer.

Hance is the first to make the connection but says nothing. Then Eleanor takes a closer look.

ELEANOR  
The Lord protect us.

WAINWRIGHT  
The savages knew all about those  
butchers out there.  
(to Red Owl)  
You told 'em right where we were,  
didn't you?

HANCE  
These pictures are old. Nobody but  
Red Owl even knows they're here.

RED OWL  
The Dine made the Kiva a hundred  
seasons before the white man. Many  
were killed by the tribe of  
Wéitsoh.

ELEANOR  
But why did they come here in the  
first place? And then why did they  
come back?

WAINWRIGHT  
There's something here they want.

BILLY  
Look at this.

THEY RUSH OVER.

ANOTHER SET OF PETROGRAPHS, MUCH MORE DETAILED. Some show figures reduced to piles of dust, but another group undergoes a more inscrutable fate: they are absorbed by a beam which looks like the laser but, instead of being vaporized, are reduced in size.

These new, smaller figures have boxes drawn around them.

HANCE  
Yer shittin' me.

RED OWL  
Land-Beyond-The-Sky is full of  
storms. Spotted Thunder and  
Whirlwinds make our people  
disappear.

HANCE

What the hell does that mean!

RED OWL

The great becomes small in the kingdom of Wéitsoh.

Hance throws up his hands in frustration.

HANCE

We've gotta get to Winslow and find a telegraph.

RED OWL

You will never defeat these Spirits, my son. The Birds-Without-Wings fly where they want. The Great Monster is their father. He is strong. He is patient.

WAINWRIGHT

I've had enough of this Mumbo-Jumbo.

WAINWRIGHT MOVES TO THE LADDER and starts to climb.

HANCE LOOKS AFTER HIM A MOMENT, then turns back to the wall. One drawing catches his eye and he brings his torch closer.

THE DRAWING SHOWS A FIGURE WITH A BOW AND ARROW, firing at one of the monsters, hitting it just under its chin. The creature falls dead.

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

KATE LIES ON A BLANKET near the fire. Carrying his bed roll, Billy shuffles close to her.

BILLY

Good-night, Kate.

KATE

Good-night, Billy.

HE WAITS A MOMENT MORE, looking around and pretending to stretch.

BILLY

About that job in Winslow.

She's listening - but not without suspicion.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Slim was my best friend an' I was a part of it. I shouldn't a listened to him. I was a dang fool.

KATE

Yeah, sounds like you were.

(pause)

Never met anybody who didn't make a mistake now and then.

BILLY

Sure was a whopper.

She smiles at him and he returns it.

KATE

I'm scared.

BILLY

You got every right to be, but if anybody's gonna get 'em Big Uglies it's Mister Hance... and me.

KATE

I hope so.

BILLY

I'd be proud if you'd allow me to protect you personally.

KATE

You mean it?

BILLY

You can count on it.

SUDDENLY ELEANOR IS STANDING BY HER DAUGHTER. Billy jumps up and averts his eyes.

BILLY (CONT'D)

G'night, m'am.

ELEANOR

Good night, Billy.

HE MOVES QUICKLY AWAY as Kate lies back and smiles. After a moment, so does her mother.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

THE HEADLESS BODY OF AN ALIEN LIES UNDER A TREE. After a moment it begins to twitch. Its hands separate from its arms and creep away.

VARIOUS LIMBS OF OTHER ALIEN BODIES DETACH THEMSELVES at silver joints and scuttle into the underbrush, heading for the mouth of the cave.

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

THE GROUP IS GATHERED AROUND THE DYING EMBERS, men on one side and women on the other, everybody sawing wood.

Everyone but Wainwright, that is. He cocks open an eye, then gets up silently, grabs a torch and steals off into the cave.

BILLY IS UP AS SOON AS WAINWRIGHT DISAPPEARS. He looks after the fleeting shadow, then down at Hance. Stretches a hand out to rouse him, thinks better of it. He hefts his pistol confidently, grabs a torch and follows Wainwright.

A SCRABBLING SOUND FROM BEHIND A ROCK, moving after Billy. Then another from the opposite side.

DEEPER IN THE CAVE

BILLY FOLLOWS WAINWRIGHT'S SHADOW down labyrinthine passageways. Flecks of silver glint from the walls. Is that the sound of rushing water ahead?

BILLY FEELS A LIGHT WIND ON HIS FACE as the passage turns and widens. Suddenly the wall to his right drops away and a cold blast of air ruffles his hair.

HIS FEET ALMOST SLIDE out from under him on a carpet of pebbles and dust and he drops his gun. It tumbles over the side of the dark cliff, into nothingness.

BILLY

(sotto)

Dang fool.

FROM FAR BELOW, the plop of weapon into water.

BILLY GATHERS HIS WITS AND JOGS ON, kneeling to get into a low passageway. Seams of silver run parallel to the ground on both sides.

SCUFFLING SOUNDS FOLLOW HIM.

AN ARCHWAY LIES AHEAD, formed entirely of silver. Billy passes under it into a silver tunnel. Ahead, he sees a bend with reflected torchlight coming from the other side.

BILLY PUTS DOWN HIS TORCH and creeps forward. He gets to the bend, takes a deep breath and enters --

A SILVER GROTTA

Like the Kiva, but larger. Walls, floor, ceiling, all gleam in the light of Wainwright's torch.

WAINWRIGHT IS STANDING DIRECTLY UNDER THE DOME. He pulls a thin cigar from his vest pocket, bites the end, lights it with the end of his torch. Studies the room as he savors the first puffs.

WAINWRIGHT

(without turning around)

You didn't believe the old fellow,  
did you Billy? I don't usually pay  
much mind to the ravings of these  
heathens. But now and then, they do  
make some sense.

The cigar, the turn of the hand, the half light: it fits together at last.

BILLY

You're the one kilt that old  
Mess'can.

WAINWRIGHT

The fool had it coming. He knew  
where all this was and he wouldn't  
tell me. You see Billy, it is the  
obligation of the white race to  
tame what's left of this  
wilderness. We have a duty to  
future generations which some,  
alas, fail to realize. The wealth  
which this mine represents... well,  
it'll go a long way toward  
fulfilling my duty.

BILLY

This here belongs to Red Owl's  
tribe.

Wainwright's expression is almost pitying.

INSERT - SOMETHING CREEPING ALONG THE WALL behind Wainwright, vaguely spider-shaped, about the size of a human hand.

Another item skitters along the floor: they're heading for Wainwright.

BILLY SPOTS THE MOVEMENT behind Wainwright's head.

WAINWRIGHT

Against my better judgment I was  
getting to like you, Billy. But you  
do stand in my way.

(pulling his Colt)

I'm almost sorry.

Billy looks around frantically.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)

I hate to cheat the hangman, but  
under the circumstances -

A SILVER-WRISTED ALIEN HAND CATAPULTS OFF A WALL onto Wainwright's face. He screams and drops his six-gun and Billy bolts.

WAINWRIGHT STRUGGLES WITH THE THING, which is bloodying one side of his face. He tears it off and throws it against the wall, reaching for his second Colt and blasting it to smithereens.

AT THE FIRE

HANCE IS AWAKE INSTANTLY at the distant sound of gunfire.

HANCE

(stopping Eleanor)  
Stay here.

ELEANOR

But we --

HANCE

(tossing her a pistol)  
Shoot anything that moves.

HE DASHES INTO THE DARKNESS.

DEEPER IN THE CAVE WAINWRIGHT, BLOODIED, SEARCHES FOR BILLY.

HANCE HAS HIS REMINGTON OUT as he ducks under the silver arch -- just as a SHOT ricochets off the rock above him. He dives for safety and returns fire.

HANCE ENTERS THE SILVER ROOM and even he is duly impressed.

WAINWRIGHT  
 (from behind)  
 Hard to keep a secret like this.

HANCE FREEZES, holsters his sidearm, turns. Wainwright at the entrance to the tunnel, hands well out from his body.

HANCE  
 Something tells me you don't cotton  
 much to secrets.

They're each watching the other's gun hands.

WAINWRIGHT  
 I aim to keep this secret to  
 myself.

HANCE  
 I doubt it.

WAINWRIGHT GOES FOR HIS GUN but Hance wings him in the shoulder. The sheriff's shot goes wild over Hance's head. Wainwright staggers back, then lunges for the tunnel entrance.

AT THE FIRE

ELEANOR HOLDS THE PISTOL and looks everywhere. She hears distant SHOTS and pulls Kate close.

RED OWL PULLS HIS LEGS UP and begins to chant.

A SCUTTLING SOUND - then another. The women gasp.

INSERT - A COUPLE OF ALIEN CAVE CREATURES: hands, ears, a pair of legs, each with a silvery mechanical component, all moving toward the fire.

ELEANOR STANDS AND FIRES into the darkness.

DEEPER IN THE CAVE

HANCE CHARGES AFTER WAINWRIGHT - and plows right into another man.

HE SNAPS UP HIS REMINGTON, barrel to blade against Billy's bowie.

BILLY  
 Hold it! It's me.

HANCE  
 Where'd that bastard get to?

BILLY

Mister Hance, wait! He's the one!  
He kilt that old Mess'can and tried  
to string me up for it!

HANCE TAKES OFF at a dead run.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hey! Wait up!

IN A CORRIDOR OF STONE

WAINWRIGHT GRIMACES IN PAIN as he runs up an incline.

HE REACHES A FORK IN THE TUNNEL and peers into the left side, gasping for breath. His hair rustles in a light BREEZE.

HE LIMPS FORWARD A FEW STEPS to a slope of broken rock.

One arm dangling uselessly, he follows the breeze to the top, to a small opening through which a steady wind WHISTLES. He pulls the rocks apart.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - DAY/DAWN

SOME BRANCHES RUSTLE AND BEND. A HAND pokes out between them, followed by the rest of Sheriff Frank Wainwright.

He scrambles out of the foliage and gets to his feet.

Only then does he look down the hill.

A SILVER GLOW COVERS HIS WHOLE BODY, and his eyes widen. He smiles and walks toward it.

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE - DAY/DAWN

A PAIR OF ALIEN HANDS MAKE A LUNGE FOR KATE and Eleanor blasts them with the six gun.

One splatters, the other skitters away into the darkness.

ANOTHER CREEPS UP BEHIND RED OWL, who is lost in his chant. Kate grabs a glowing ember and moves behind the Indian. She brings the red-hot wood down and the appendage SIZZLES and leaps about, running off into the cave trailing smoke.

DEEPER IN THE CAVE

HANCE AND BILLY BATTLE MORE CAVE CREATURES, who hop out from behind every nook as well as quite a few crannies.

HANCE AND BILLY SEE THE FIRELIGHT IN THE DISTANCE and hear Kate scream.

AT THE FIRE

THE WOMEN AND RED OWL ARE UP AGAINST A WALL. Eleanor is out of ammo, as a mechanized crawler moves toward them.

HANCE AND BILLY CHARGE UP, gun and knife drawn. Hance suddenly clutches his chest and gasps. He grabs a wall for support.

BILLY

Mister Hance? You all right?

THE CREATURE SCUTTLES FORWARD and Billy flings the knife, skewering it down the middle. It thumps once, and dies.

KATE RUNS TO BILLY and throws her arms around him. He is hugely but delightedly taken aback.

ONE OF THE ALIENS IS CARRYING the detached head of a comrade.

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE - DAY

HANCE PULLS ELEANOR AWAY FROM THE SIGHT.

HANCE

(to Red Owl)

Is there another entrance?

RED OWL

Deep within the worm's lair. Where darkness lies.

HANCE

(off the others' worried looks)

We ain't got much of a choice.

HANCE REMOVES SEVERAL STICKS OF DYNAMITE and a lariat from his saddlebag, jams them under his shirt and throws the bag down.

THE GROUP RETREATS from the light.

A MOMENT LATER

THE TWO ALIENS CLAMBER THROUGH THE FISSURE. Around them, various cave creatures scuttle from every corner to join them - a pair of legs, an arm, etc. - forming up and locking together.

In a moment, a complete torso. The two others place the spare head on top, snap it into place and voila: instant alien.

THESE THREE ALIENS REMOVE VARIOUS PARTS OF THEIR BODIES -

a pair of silver-clawed hands, ears, most of a head - and snap them together. An anti-gray pack is attached and, with the snapping hands functioning as a toothy mouth, we have an otherworldly Pac-Man.

IT TAKES OFF INTO THE DARKNESS with an ominous WHIR.

DEEPER IN THE CAVE

THE GROUP HURRIES PAST THE PLACE WHERE BILLY ALMOST FELL.

Hance takes note of the WATER rushing far below.

HURRIED FOOTFALLS FROM BEHIND. The group gets to the silver tunnel, the arch, and finally around the bend.

THEY ENTER THE SILVER GROTTO and the women gape in astonishment.

HANCE  
Come on, dammit.

HE GRABS ELEANOR'S ARM and pulls her, open-mouthed, out the other side. They continue in the direction Wainwright followed.

THE FLYING CREATURE WHIRS ALONG.

AT THE FORK HANCE STOPS and turns to Red Owl.

HANCE (CONT'D)  
Which way?

RED OWL  
(pointing the way  
Wainwright went)  
There. But we must not go that way,  
my son.

HANCE  
What do you mean?

RED OWL  
Wéitsoh waits beyond.

RED OWL SITS DOWN and begins to chant.

BILLY, HOLDING UP THE REAR, HEARS THE WHIR of the onrushing flyer, and the more distant FOOTSTEPS.

BILLY  
Mister Hance.

HANCE  
(exasperated, to Red Owl)  
Father!

BILLY  
Mister Hance!

HANCE  
(whips around)  
What!

BILLY  
I reckon we ought to be movin' on.

HANCE MAKES HIS DECISION: he grabs Red Owl under the arms and pulls him to his feet. Suddenly --

THE FLYING CREATURE ZIPS OUT OF NOWHERE and locks onto Eleanor, who screams.

HANCE GRABS THE CREATURE and pulls it off as blood gushes from Eleanor's shoulder.

THE CREATURE CIRCLES AROUND THEIR HEADS, snapping its jaws as Hance fires again and again.

ONE BULLET HITS A ROCK OVERHANG, which cracks in half.

The falling rock triggers a landslide, coming right at Eleanor.

KATE  
MOMMA!

ELEANOR SHIELDS HER FACE as the rocks shatter her legs, trapping her and blocking the left side of the tunnel.

THE FLYING CREATURE IS MENACING KATE and Billy steps up bravely, slicing the air with his knife and pulling Kate to safety.

HANCE PICKS UP A ROCK AND HOLDS IT BEHIND HIS BACK.

HANCE  
Hey, you, look at this!

THE FLYER WHIRS OVER TO ATTACK and Hance jams the stone into its snapping jaws. The weight of the rock jerks the creature to the ground. Hance delivers the coup de grace with his Remington.

ELEANOR  
(weak)  
Help me.

Tears in her eyes, Kate runs to embrace her mother. The SOUND of tramping feet grows louder.

HANCE GETS TO ONE KNEE and wipes the blood from Eleanor's forehead. She looks up into his eyes.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)  
(almost gone)  
Take care of my little girl.

KATE SOBS AGAINST HER MOTHER, and Billy pulls her away.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)  
My lock...

HANCE LEANS DOWN until her lips almost touch his ear.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)  
My locket.

HANCE PULLS A BOULDER OFF ELEANOR'S CHEST and exposes the locket. He undoes the chain and puts the little gold piece into Eleanor's good hand.

SHE FLIPS IT OPEN and smiles.

Hance stands awkwardly. The SOUNDS of footsteps grows steadily closer.

HANCE  
Let's go.

ELEANOR  
You save yourself, sweetheart.

KATE  
No, I won't leave you!

BILLY  
She wouldn't want them Ugliers to get you too.

BILLY PULLS A SOBBING KATE AWAY as Hance leads them down the other fork, into the darkness.

ELEANOR LOOKS DOWN AT THE PHOTO of Tommy and Kate. With tears in her eyes, and gasping for breath, she begins a barely audible chorus of "NOW WE GATHER AT THE RIVER".

TWO SHADOWS CROSS OVER HER. She clutches the locket and looks up.

A MOMENT LATER

HANCE LEADS THE GROUP along the twisting corridor. In the b.g. we hear the sickening SOUND of a laser blast.

KATE

NO!

SHE STRUGGLES TO TURN BACK but Billy has a tight grip around her shoulders.

THEY ARRIVE AT A DEAD END and Hance listens to the sound of the rushing water:

A RAGING UNDERGROUND RIVER, ROARING PAST and disappearing. A rainbow arches over the THUNDERING cataract.

HANCE TURNS AROUND and HEARS the approaching aliens.

HANCE

We got no choice.

BILLY

I can't swim.

KATE

It's okay. I can.

KATE GRABS BILLY'S ARM. He's terrified and tries to back away but Hance pushes them both into the water.

HANCE

Do you know where this leads?

RED OWL HAS NOTHING TO SAY. He puts his bow and quiver over his shoulder and leaps in. Hance takes a breath and jumps.

IN THE WATER

RED OWL'S HEAD IS KNOCKED AGAINST A ROCK. Hance grabs him just before he goes under. The four sail downstream, as above them the two aliens arrive at the bank.

THE FOUR DISAPPEAR UNDER A WALL OF ROCK. The aliens can only watch mutely: "Rats!"

CUT TO:

EXT. WATERFALL AND RIVER - DAY

A WATERFALL EMERGING FROM A CAVE high above the river. A chorus of shrieks as Hance, Billy, Kate and Red Owl come flying out.

THEY SPLASH INTO A DEEPLY ERODED POOL and paddle away from the base of the falls.

THE CURRENT CATCHES THEM and sweeps them downstream, over rolling rapids.

THEY CLAMBER ASHORE and flop back to dry in the hot sun.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

HANCE'S EYES FLY OPEN at the warning RUMBLE of an alien craft.

THE LARGE TRANSPORT SKIMMER PASSES HARMLESSLY, disappearing over a mesa just ahead.

HANCE AND RED OWL TRACK THE SKIMMER'S COURSE, then exchange a glance.

BILLY COMFORTS KATE, who still sobs convulsively. Red Owl's breath is ragged.

HANCE

Forget the telegraph. We have to follow them.

RED OWL

Take this. The sacred blade alone will destroy Wéitsoh.

RED OWL HANDS HANCE A HEAVY SILVER KNIFE and Hance is moved by the gesture.

HANCE

A gift I don't deserve.  
 (slipping the knife into  
 his belt)  
 You take good care of the young lady, now. Mr. Dickerson wouldn't take it kindly if anything was to happen to her.

BILLY LOOKS UP STARTLED: he's never been "Mr. Dickerson" before. He checks Hance for signs of sarcasm, but he can't spot any.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

RED OWL TENDING A LOW FIRE as Hance and Billy prepare for their expedition.

HANCE SHOULDERS RED OWL'S BOW AND ARROW, puts a hand on Billy's shoulder.

KATE

Please don't leave me here.

BILLY

You'll be safe with Red Owl.

KATE

Why do you have to go?

BILLY

I have to.  
(looks at Hance)  
We just do.

Billy tears himself away.

HANCE

Alright then.

HANCE AND BILLY DO THE "GUNFIGHTER WALK" along the river bank. Kate looks after them.

RED OWL BESIDE THE FIRE, UNFURLING HIS BEDROLL. Draping the blanket over the smoldering coals. Waiting. Then folding the blanket back.

A COMPACT PUFF OF SMOKE RISING INTO THE CLEAR SKY.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANYON RIM - DAY

HANCE AND BILLY HIDE BEHIND A BOULDER just above the canyon. Billy finishes the last flourish of a perfectly rolled cigarette and joins Hance in taking a huge drag as they peek over the edge:

Simultaneous wracking coughs they desperately try to stifle as --

THEIR P.O.V. - THE ALIEN ENCAMPMENT

ALIENS WALK TO AND FRO, assembling equipment. A couple of otter creatures patrol the perimeters. A skimmer rises and exits through the canyon's open end. In the center:

THE ALIEN MOTHER SHIP - ovoid and a hundred feet across, perched on metal struts, its mirror-smooth surface reflecting the red swirls of the surrounding rock.

ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE ABOVE - the half-concealed entrance Wainwright used to exit the cave.

SEVERAL ALIENS BLAST AWAY AT THE ROCK with lasers, creating piles of rubble.

A GROUP OF LIGHT-SHACKLED HUMANS (MINING SLAVES) LOAD THESE onto levitating platforms under the gaze of alien guards.

THE ROCKS ARE DUMPED INTO A PROCESSING MACHINE - and pure silver bars emerge from the other end.

ELSEWHERE - A SECOND PRODUCTION PROCESS:

ALIENS AND OTTERS HERD SHACKLED SILVER FORK TOWNSPEOPLE into an open area, to the Boss Alien.

THE BOSS WIELDS A DEVICE THAT SHRINKS HUMANS to the size of mice and encases each in a clear box. The boxes are stacked to form a larger cube. A second dose of the shrink-beam reduces the aggregate cube to palm size. An alien adds this new cube to a second larger cube assembled on a lev-platform.

ABOVE THE CAMP

HANCE AND BILLY EXCHANGE A GLANCE: "Is this some weird shit or what?" Hance checks the sticks of dynamite in his shirt.

HANCE

Time these fellas learned about the Fourth of Ju-ly.

HANCE PEERS OFF THE CLOSED END OF THE CANYON, where the wash disappears between walls of rock.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANYON - DAY

THE GLOWING END OF A HAND-ROLLED CIGARETTE is applied to the fuse of a stick of dynamite.

WHOOM! - an explosion.

THE BOSS ALIEN'S EARS STIFFEN and swivel toward the sound. A group of aliens run off.

AN ALIEN SNAPS ITS FEET INTO A PERSONAL SKIMMER and rises above its companions.

END OF CANYON (MAZE)

BILLY IS HIDDEN IN A NARROW CLEFT. Twisting pathways cut from walls of sandstone.

BILLY RUNS TOWARD HANCE, diving for cover just as an alien pops into view and opens up with its palm-laser.

HANCE PUSHES DOWN ON A HUNK OF IRONWOOD, which acts as a lever on a huge boulder.

THE ALIEN LOOKS UP AT THE BOULDER'S SHADOW. Too late.

ANOTHER ALIEN MOVES INTO A FISSURE. A moment of silence, then Billy emerges sheathing his knife: "No sweat."

ABOVE THE MAZE

THE ALIEN ON THE SKIMMER CRUISES ABOVE THE WASH. From out of nowhere a lariat drops around its neck. The skimmer keeps moving, the rope snaps taut, the head POPS off.

HANCE DARTS OUT AS THE HEAD FALLS, grabs the noxious noggin. Its eyes roll and focus on him!

THE HEADLESS BODY ON THE SKIMMER turns the controls, coming at Hance.

HANCE SMASHES THE SEVERED HEAD against a rock.

THE ALIEN TORSO TWITCHES AND THE SKIMMER SWERVES. Crash and burn.

IN THE MAZE

AN ALIEN SKULKING AROUND A CORNER, as:

BILLY HOVERS OVERHEAD WITH THE ANTI-GRAV PACK, holding his knife.

THE ALIEN LOOKS UP TO SEE BILLY DROPPING... its head is skewered like a ripe melon.

ABOVE THE CAMP

HANCE CROUCHED AND WAITING AT THE MAZE-EXIT, hearing a SOUND, whirling: it's Billy jogging into view.

BILLY  
They ain't so tough.

HANCE  
No, huh?

THE ALIENS ARE REGROUPING AROUND THE SHIP, going into battle mode. Those with retractable body armor or protective implants zip them into place.

BILLY  
Looks like an armadiller.

BILLY BEGINS HEAVING ROCKS from a neat pile. The rocks find their marks: aliens, equipment, the base of the ship, etc.

LASER BEAMS PAINT THE CANYON WALLS around Hance and Billy, spraying showers of rock and dirt.

HANCE  
Go!

HANCE STRIKES A MATCH ON HIS FRONT TEETH and lights the fuse of a stick of dynamite -- which is fastened to the end of one of Red Owl's arrows. He draws the bow and lets fly.

THE ARROW SIZZLES across the canyon.

AN ALIEN RISES AND SPOTS BILLY making a run for cover. It opens its palm-laser to fire, when:

-- the arrow skewers its palm, and WHOOMP! -- EXPLODES, taking out several aliens.

HANCE TRIPS AND FALLS AND DROPS THE BOW. He crawls to reach it but an alien steps in front of him. It bares its fangs and reaches for a laser pistol.

HANCE LOOKS AROUND FOR HELP:

nothing.

THE ALIEN AIMS AT HANCE'S HEAD, about to fire when --

KABLAMBO - a hole in the alien's chest!

ABOVE THE CAMP

CLEM JAPES PERCHED HIGH ABOVE HIM, his Sharps already reloaded and firing.

BELOW

THE BOSS ALIEN IS THE LAST SURVIVOR, hiding under the ship. It reaches up to touch a metal strut, and a door opens in the ship's belly. A large cube of "plastic" descends to the canyon floor. The Boss activates the shrinking beam -- in reverse.

THE LARGE CUBE SEPARATES INTO SMALLER CUBES. These expand into NEW ALIENS -- all a little disoriented at first.

NEARBY

HANCE (CONT'D)  
Aw, hell, that ain't fair.

BILLY  
We can take 'em. Lemme at 'em!

Before he can move Hance has him by the collar.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Hey! What're you--

-- a laser blast vaporizes a rock at Billy's feet.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Ohhhhh, shit!

They dive for cover, huddle behind a boulder.

HANCE  
Believe the sit'ation's changed a mite, Mr. Dickerson.

ANOTHER BLAST DIRECTLY ABOVE THEM. But then:

WILD WAR WHOOPS FILL THE CANYON!

FURTHER UP THE CANYON

THE INDIAN PATROL ENCOUNTERED EARLIER, now augmented by half the Apache and Navajo nations, streaming into the canyon at full tilt.

AT THE SHIP

BILLY CHEERS AND WAVES HIS HAT as arrows and gunshots find their marks.

A PITCHED BATTLE BEGINS between Indians and aliens --with lots of strategic help from sharpshooter Clem Japes.

HANCE FLIPS OPEN THE CYLINDER of his Remington: one shell left.

HANCE (CONT'D)  
I'm going inside. Stay here.

BILLY  
You're WHAT?

HANCE IS ALREADY RUNNING across the canyon, behind the distracted aliens, under the ship. He touches a dark spot on the metal strut. The door opens in the ship's belly -- too high to reach.

HANCE TOUCHES THE ANTI-GRAV DEVICE and rises into the ship.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP - DAY

HANCE DRIFTS UP AND IN. A silver glow floods his face. The interior surfaces are cold polished metal, hundreds of facets with geometric embellishments. A corridor curves around the circumference of the craft.

HANCE CREEPS ALONG THE CORRIDOR, disoriented by the multiple reflections. The corridor widens into a spacious chamber. The room seems empty until:

HANCE STEPS ON A METAL PLATE in the floor- -- A THICK PARTITION DROPS FROM THE CEILING! Hance jumps back brandishing his pistol, then stops and looks:

THE 'PARTITION' IS A HOLOGRAPHIC RELIEF MAP. The landscape is peppered with alien symbols, but it's easy to identify: Baja California and the American Southwest...

CUT TO:

EXT. ABOVE THE ALIEN CAMP - DAY

CLEM HAS SET UP HIS SHARPS .50, with its metal "kick stand" and telescopic sight. Again and again he loads, aims, fires.

SPLAT! SPLOCK! SPLOOSH! -- aliens check out.

BELOW

A STRAY LASER BEAM PIERCES A JUNCTION BOX; sparks fly.

MINING SLAVES REJOICE as their light-shackles shimmer and disappear. They run yelling into the thick of battle, swinging clubs and throwing rocks.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP - DAY

THE SHIMMERING IMAGE OF A FRONTIER FORT, a desert, foothills, mountains, waterfall, river, finally a mesa and a box canyon.

HANCE MOVES HIS LEFT HAND and frowns as:

THE HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGE SHIFTS left. When he moves his right hand it shifts right. When he steps closer the image seems to leap out at him, expanding drastically in size and detail.

THE HOLOGRAPHIC BOX CANYON now contains a tiny holographic alien saucer.

HANCE WALKS BEHIND THE MAP, finding that the back is exactly like the front, but with the blotches of color flickering from green to brown and back again -- a time-lapse depiction of changing seasons.

HANCE STUDIES THE IMAGE OF WINSLOW, which expands in front of him and races through 120 years -- spreading across the desert like spilled paint, extending freeway tentacles. Finally, it's a miniature metropolis -- a modern city.

HANCE  
Yer shittin' me.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALIEN CAMP - DAY

AN INDIAN WRESTLES AN OTTER-CREATURE, stabbing at it with a knife.

AN ALIEN AND AN INDIAN FIGHT hand-to-hand; an extra set of metal arms erupt from the alien's chest to choke the Indian.

A FRUSTRATED INDIAN tries repeatedly to scalp a chrome-dome alien.

A LEVITATING ALIEN LIFTS AN INDIAN OFF HIS HORSE, carries him aloft. They struggle in the air until the Indian stabs the creature in the throat. They fall to their deaths.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABOVE THE ALIEN CAMP - DAY

CLEM TAKES CAREFUL AIM and squeezes off a shot.

-- an alien is gravely wounded.

THE CREATURE FALLS, REACHING INTO ITS STOMACH, pulling something out and throwing it as it drops dead.

A GLOBBY CREATURE WAFTS TOWARD CLEM as he struggles to reload -- a silvered airborne "liver-monster" that flaps like a manta ray.

CLEM DROPS THE RIFLE and grabs his pistol.

THE MONSTER IS ALMOST UPON HIM when he fires.

-- the liver-monster is pate.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP - DAY

HANCE LEAVES THE MAP CHAMBER, continues along the corridor, steps into an even larger chamber -- and recoils in horror:

THE HUMANS HAVE BEEN DISSECTED by an automated surgical apparatus. The limbs have been slit open and the flesh folded back to reveal bones and sinews -- Vesalius drawings in the flesh.

THE EVISCERATED CORPSES ARE LEM JAPES AND PRIVATE DORT!

CUT TO:

EXT. ALIEN CAMP - DAY

THE BATTLE'S TURNED. The humans have the upper hand.

BILLY IS PULLING THE TRIGGER OF HIS EMPTY PISTOL frantically, aiming at:

AN ALIEN STOMPING INEXORABLY TOWARD HIM, raising its arms --

-- EXTRUDING SILVER SPIKES FROM ITS PALMS.

BILLY HOLSTERS THE USELESS PISTOL, draws his knife, takes up a defensive stance.

THE ALIEN CHARGES as Billy ducks under its arms to slash the creature's chest.

THE CREATURE LOOKS DOWN -- "What the--?" -- and Billy jabs upward --

-- THE ALIEN CLUTCHES ITS FACE.

BILLY  
That's the way an educated man  
fights.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABOVE THE ALIEN CAMP - DAY

RED OWL AND KATE COME OVER A RISE, stop suddenly upon  
seeing:

CLEM JAPES HUNKERED DOWN BEHIND HIS NEEDLE GUN. Aiming at:

BILLY LOCKED IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT with an alien.

CLEM SHIFTS THE GUN BACK AND FORTH, looking for a clear  
shot.

KATE PICKS UP A SHARP ROCK and creeps toward him. Clem hears  
a stone RATTLE and rolls aside as she leaps at him. He tries  
to fend her off.

CLEM  
Whoa, now, hol' on there, girly—

KATE  
You pig! You filthy--!

CLEM HAS KATE FIRMLY BY THE WRISTS and she writhes  
helplessly.

CLEM  
Hey, now! You stop a tryin' t'  
clobber me! I ain't gonna hurt ye  
none! I'm on yer side!

KATE  
You're lyin'! You're shootin' at  
Billy!

CLEM  
I am not! Hope to god I ain't! It's  
that Big Ugly--

KATE  
(quieter)  
Aren't you that Clem Japes?

CLEM  
(proudly)  
Ah is.  
(as she resumes  
struggling)

CLEM (CONT'D)  
 But I's a new man! I seen the  
 arrows of my ways!

RED OWL SUDDENLY LOOMS OVER KATE'S SHOULDER and Clem reacts  
 instinctively-

CLEM (CONT'D)  
 Injun!

--flinging Kate aside and clawing at his pistol.

KATE LANDS WITH AN UNDIGNIFIED THUMP! but leaps back at once  
 to grab Clem's wrist.

KATE  
 Don't! He's a friend! He's... He's  
 Mister Hance's...  
 (to Red Owl)  
 ...stepfather?

RED OWL  
 (shrugs)  
 A white man's word. It will do.

CLEM  
 Well I'll be. Now I's seen  
 ever'thin'.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP - DAY

HANCE BACKS AWAY FROM THE DISSECTION TABLE and its grisly  
 burden. A shadow falls across his back.

WAINWRIGHT (O.S.)  
 Ahhh. Marcus Hance...

HANCE PIVOTS TO CONFRONT:

FRANK WAINWRIGHT, HALF-HIDDEN IN THE DOORWAY, then stepping  
 out to display a body revoltingly altered by alien implant  
 technology:

His eyes are bulging silver copies of the aliens' lemur  
 orbs. Half his face and body are prosthetic silver. When he  
 smiles he reveals gleaming silver fangs.

HANCE  
 Oh god...

WAINWRIGHT MOVES FORWARD STIFFLY, with a slight limp on his  
 silver leg.

WAINWRIGHT

Oh! A religious sensibility! I thought you were a skeptic. But now you see, not every miracle is God's work.

(a theatrical gesture)

These eyes? Grotesque! But you'd be thunderstruck if you could see what I see!

(striking a pose)

"I see the fourfold man, the humanity in deadly sleep, and its fallen emanation, the spectre and its cruel shadow. I see the past, present and future existing at once, before me."

(relaxing)

William Blake. He could not have been altogether human, I think.

HANCE IS PULLING HIMSELF TOGETHER, holstering his Remington.

HANCE

How human're you, now, Frank? There're other humans dyin' right outside here.

WAINWRIGHT

Are there? Ah. Too bad. They will miss so mu--

(a spasm)

*Ah! Le meilleur, c'est...*

(face clenching)

*Über den himmel, und...*

(a shudder)

The dependence of the pressures P(1) and P(2) and the drag coefficient... Oh God!

WAINWRIGHT DOUBLES OVER trying to control his lurching nervous system. He succeeds at last.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Oh, I am sorry! A social indiscretion. Unforgivable!

HANCE

Like passin' gas?

WAINWRIGHT

Indeed!

(grandiose)

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)

"If the doors of perception were  
cleansed everything would appear as  
it is, infinite."

He pauses.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)

There are no words for the things  
that I can now see, for the things  
I am only now beginning to  
understand.

HANCE

Hell, Frank, that's nothin'. Injuns  
have plenty a words for things that  
white men have never-

WAINWRIGHT

No, no, no, listen to me!

(cocks his head)

I can see that you have only one  
bullet left. Now how do you suppose  
I know that? I wish I could tell  
you! And ... I can see your death.  
It's right about...

(indicating his chest)

...here. It will squeeze the life  
out of you.

(off Hance's reaction)

You know I'm right!

HANCE

You're just as big a fraud as you  
ever were. This silver shit hasn't  
done anything for you at all.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABOVE THE ALIEN CAMP - DAY

KATE - LOOKING DOWN AT:

THE BATTLEFIELD - only scattered skirmishes. Billy is  
exchanging greetings with a staunch-looking Indian chief.

KATE SPOTS BILLY, turns to Clem and Red Owl.

KATE

Billy looks like quite somethin',  
don't he?

RED OWL  
A strong young man.

CLEM  
(disassembling the  
Sharps)  
We'n prolly go on down now, he'p  
'em get cleaned up.

CLEM PULLS OUT THE BOTTLE OF WHISKEY pilfered from the saloon, takes a grateful pull.

A WOUNDED ALIEN ERUPTS RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM! Clem hops back and instinctively smashes the bottle over its skull.

A BUBBLING ACID-REACTION as the alien rolls away, clawing at its smoking face. It tumbles over a ledge and out of sight.

THE THREE HUMANS PEER DOWN after it, eyes wide.

CLEM (CONT'D)  
One thing I can't abide, it's  
somebody can't hold 'is likker.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP - DAY

FRANK WAINWRIGHT IS LEADING HANCE further down the corridor.

HANCE  
Frank, we have to stop this. Those  
are still people out there-

WAINWRIGHT  
Is that your trump card, Marcus?  
Humanity? No. I'm afraid humanity  
stands far below these beings in  
mental as well as physical  
development. And their ability to  
alter their own bodies gives them a  
vaster advantage. We should  
consider it a privilege to be  
annexed, to be selected...

THEY TURN A CORNER into a new chamber.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)  
... as a source of nourishment!

WAINWRIGHT STEPS BACK so that Hance can see:

A PROCESSING DEVICE WITH A HOPPER AT ONE END and a bin at the other, transforming unconscious naked humans into

WAFERS THE SIZE OF HOCKEY PUCKS

WAINWRIGHT LIMPS OVER TO THE BIN, selects a wafer.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)  
Call it ... people jerky.

WAINWRIGHT'S PROSTHETIC SILVER TEETH CHOMP into the wafer.

FOR HANCE, THIS IS THE LAST STRAW. He goes for his gun.

WAINWRIGHT PIVOTS, RAISES ONE ARM - A BUILT-IN LASER peeks through a fissure in the palm!

THE LASER AND THE PISTOL FIRE simultaneously. Hance and Wainwright both stagger....

HANCE GRABS HIS GUN ARM. Blood leaks through his fingers. His pistol clatters to the floor. But Wainwright goes down, the corpse twitching for several seconds before the life runs out of it.

HANCE SHAKES HIS HEAD, looks around, lurches to the processing machine.

THE HUMANS ARE COLD AND FISH-BELLY WHITE except for their Texas tans. Hance reaches into his shirt, pulls out his last stick of dynamite and a wooden match. He strikes the match on his front teeth, lights the dynamite, drops it into the hopper, takes off --FWOOMPH! -- the machine explodes!

HANCE POUNDS DOWN THE CORRIDOR as bulbs POP and wires spray sparks and smoke.

AN IMMENSE SHADOW LOOMS UP ON THE WALL in front of him. Giant pounding FOOTSTEPS. Hance skids to a stop, turns, dashes back through the dissection room and the map chamber, to the front door, but:

THE ENTRY HATCH HAS BEEN SEALED. Hance looks around as the FOOTSTEPS get louder. He races on and swerves left into a dome-shaped central chamber, reminiscent of the silver grotto, with a control unit at the center: a contour chair surrounded by a rat's nest of plugs and wires.

HANCE WHIRLS AROUND as the FOOTSTEPS come to a stop behind him.

THE ULTIMATE ALIEN! - a twelve-footer with no visible organic surfaces, with hundreds of implant sockets and decorative silver foliage. With its two towering barbed horns, it resembles the Indian God Wéitsoh.

THE ULTIMATE ALIEN DRAWS ITSELF UP, unfurling additional rows of spines in the pattern of an Indian headdress.

THE ALIEN LOOKS HANCE UP AND DOWN, then visibly relaxes, half-turning dismissively as it steps forward.

HANCE LURCHES ASIDE but the Alien brushes past him without a glance, moving toward the rat's nest.

THE ALIEN PLUGS ITSELF IN and the ship comes to life in stages: banks of lights flicker on, great HUMMING generators start up.

THE ALIEN SLIDES INTO THE CONTOUR CHAIR. Additional plugs snake out automatically. The creature is all but concealed by the dense wiring.

A great RUMBLE of power from the ship's engines....

NEW SHOWERS OF SPARKS ERUPT from the ship's damaged circuits. Hance drops, woozy from loss of blood.

THE DOME ITSELF OPENS LIKE A LENS, from the top down, turning transparent, revealing a panoramic desert landscape.

AS THE SHIP SHIFTS Hance is elated to see the humans victorious, heads turning as the craft begins to rise.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANYON - DAY

BILLY AND THE INDIANS WATCH THE SMOKING CRAFT LIFT OFF the ground, glowing and RUMBLING.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP - DAY

HANCE HAULS HIMSELF UP, pain-wracked, as the desert landscape drops away. He squares his shoulders, turns to face the Ultimate Alien. He remembers:

AN INDIAN PICTOGRAPH of alien weak points; an arrow penetrating beneath the chin.

HANCE DRAWS THE CEREMONIAL SILVER KNIFE, staggers toward the alien -- oblivious in its control nest, a silver hood covering its face.

HANCE BENDS OVER THE ALIEN, close enough to see a tiny lock-like opening in the metal hood. He draws his lock pick from his belt, bends over. A CLICK. The hood rises, revealing:

A FLESHY CHINK between the sheets of silver plating. HANCE SCOWLS VICIOUSLY as he tosses the pick away.

HANCE  
 Alright then.

HANCE JAMS THE KNIFE INTO THE ALIEN'S THROAT.

-- the alien's body buckles. The ship lurches, throwing Hance to the floor.

HANCE PULLS HIMSELF UP, and the alien rears up to meet him. Its hands lock around Hance's neck.

HUMAN AND ALIEN GRAPPLE as the landscape beyond the dome rushes upward.

HANCE AND THE ALIEN INCHES APART, looking at each other as the alien's claws plunge into Hance's shoulders:

HANCE (CONT'D)  
 Damn you...

CUT TO:

EXT. CANYON - DAY

BILLY WATCHES THE BIG SHIP list and drop sharply. It disappears behind a ridge --

FAWHOOMMM! -- the impact almost knocks Billy off his feet.

BILLY  
 Marcus.

A tear in the corner of one eye as he turns to the Indians nearby. Suddenly:

KATE  
 Billy!

KATE, RED OWL AND CLEM JAPES ON TOP OF A LOW RISE. Clem is supporting the old man.

BILLY  
 Kate!

SEVERAL INDIANS RUSH TO RED OWL'S SIDE as Kate runs to Billy and leaps into his arms.

KATE  
 You're not dead!

BILLY  
Mister Hance.

She understands, hugs him harder.

CLEM JAPES REACHES THEM, grinning. Just then --

THE LARGER PLASTIC CUBE HAS BEEN LEFT BEHIND. Now it begins to HUM and pulsate, glowing and growing, expanding over the desert. Parts of the assemblage drop off one by one, like golden raindrops. Each of these expands in turn and --

A PERSON EMERGES, groggy and disoriented. We may recognize a few Silver Fork townspeople, but there are strangers, too:

NEW PEOPLE ARE POPPING UP EVERYWHERE, from every corner of the globe: Brits in bowlers, Aborigines, Chinese peasants, Arabs, Zulus -- the ultimate cross section. They babble away in a hundred tongues.

CLEM JAPES IS STUNNED, a little braver but no smarter than he was the day before.

ERNESTINE  
You gonna say howdy or jes' stand  
there lookin' stupid?

CLEM WHIRLS around.

CLEM  
(reverent)  
Ernestine.

HE GRABS HER.

ERNESTINE  
Clem honey, you all could use a  
bath.

HE WHOOPS, then remembers.

CLEM  
They got ol' Lem!

ERNESTINE  
He was a good soul, although even  
dumber 'n you.

ONE YOUNG MAN IS SHAKING HIS HEAD and trying to focus. Kate spots him.

KATE  
TOMMY!

TOMMY BOYLE TURNS -- the other face in Eleanor's locket. The siblings run together and embrace.

KATE WHISPERS EXCITEDLY AS SHE LEADS TOMMY over to Billy, who throws a proprietary arm around her.

KATE (CONT'D)  
 Billy Dickerson, this is my brother  
 Tommy.

TOMMY  
 (still dazed)  
 My sister says I should thank you  
 kindly, Mr. Dickerson.

The men shake hands.

BILLY  
 Name's Billy. Plain ol' Billy.  
 (pause)  
 Figger you'll need some help on  
 that farm 'a yours?

CUT TO:

EXT. WAGON TRAIL - DAY

A LINE OF HUMANITY trying to understand itself, lead by  
 three

young people, a deputy and a prostitute. Walking down a hill  
 toward a semblance of civilization.

THE COLUMN PASSES A HAND-LETTERED SIGN:

"WINSLOW: 15 MILES"

AN ENORMOUS CRATER HAS BEEN GOUGED out of the desert in the  
 background. A column of smoke rises from its depths.

FADE OUT:

THE END