

(sample first 30 pages of screenplay)

MURRIETA'S LEAP

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS, 1852 - DAY

In a pristine oak forest and beautiful springtime meadow, a solitary DEER is grazing in deep grass. Suddenly the deer raises its head, on the alert -

Off in the woods there is slight movement. An old CHUMASH INDIAN is poised with bow taut, ready to release his arrow at the deer.

The NOISE of pounding horse hooves, rattling harnesses and men shouting jolts the silence. The deer bolts for cover. The Indian turns his arrow toward the intruding sounds.

EXT. NEARBY DIRT ROAD [CONTINUOUS]

Down by the ocean beach, a fast-moving over-loaded WAGON with four horses and a DRIVER comes rolling into view, followed by four US SOLDIERS on their Cavalry horses.

They pass near the old Indian without noticing him.

EXT. ROUGH-HEWN INN - DAY

The wagon and mounted guards halt in front of a stop-over building with a corral holding fresh horses.

A young woman named JUANITA (good-looking, long dark hair, maybe with some Indian blood) greets the driver. Everyone except a Cavalry guard goes into the inn.

INT. INN [CONTINUOUS]

As the driver and soldiers enter the room, six HIGHWAYMEN leap out with pistols. One of them, JUAQUIN MURRIETA (tall, gaunt, worthy of respect, Spanish/Chumash heritage) gives orders:

MURRIETA
Arriba los manos!

He stops one of his men from roughing up the driver.

DRIVER
(to Murrieta)
Hey, you're a dead man, doing this.
We've got cavalry all over here.
California's American territory now.

MURRIETA
 (calm, bitter)
 Not for me.

DRIVER
 (demanding)
 Who are you, don't I know you?

Murrieta smiles.

MURRIETA
 My name is Juaquin, Juaquin Murrieta.

The Driver reacts.

DRIVER
 Bull - they got that renegade's head
 in a jar up in Sacramento, everybody
 knows that.

MURRIETA
 So what you think I am, a ghost?

The driver takes a folded WANTED poster out of his pocket and looks at it - no question, the man in front of him is the same. The driver tenses - afraid.

DRIVER
 Hey - but you're dead.

Murrieta reaches out, pushes the man's face half-playfully, but with an edge of anger.

MURRIETA
 That's where you're wrong, amigo.

Someone SHOUTS outside. Murrieta and two of his men go running out.

EXT. COACH STOP [CONTINUOUS]

One of Murrieta's men is busy filling several saddle bags with GOLD COINS from the coach strongbox.

In the distance up the coast, about 20 US CAVALRYMEN can be seen running their horses toward the coach stop.

Murrieta sees them - jumps on his horse, gives a curt impatient order. His men forget the rest of the gold, run to get on their horses.

Juanita comes running outside.

MURRIETA

Juanita, quick - jump on.

She jumps up behind him on his horse. He sees a small chest on the wagon and reaches to grab it.

MURRIETA (cont'd)

(to Juanita)

Can you hold onto this and me at the same time?

JUANITA

Si pues!

They take off on a run into the oak forest.

EXT. OAK FOREST - DAY

As Murrieta and his gang ride fast through the woods, they come upon the old Indian standing quietly by the trail.

Murrieta pulls his horse to a stop - and says something to the Indian in Chumash. Juanita hands the Indian the small heavy chest. Then they ride on.

EXT. A BEAUTIFUL LITTLE VALLEY - DAY

Murrieta and his small gang come riding fast past a stream, and up to a primitive rancho. The old adobe HACIENDA sits near a giant distinctive OAK TREE.

A part Spanish/part Indian RANCHER comes out of the house, followed by his wife and young child. Murrieta says something in Spanish to him, and hands him some gold coins - then gallops up the canyon behind the rancho, with Juanita still riding behind him on the horse.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAME RANCH - DAY

A short time later, the Cavalrymen come riding fast up to the hacienda. They fire a shot and the rancher comes out from the house.

CAVALRY LEADER

Where'd they go?

RANCHER

(shrugs his shoulders)

Lastima - no puedo hablar Ingle.

A translator speaks up in Spanish, and the rancher shrugs his shoulders again, points in the wrong direction.

The scout is pointing in the right direction. The cavalry leader makes a face - raises his gun and waves at the house and barns.

CAVALRY LEADER
(to his men)
Arrest him - and torch the place.

Most of the cavalymen take off on a run after the outlaws. Four stay behind to destroy the rancho.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. UP THE CANYON - DAY

Murrieta, Juanita and his men go splashing through a stream. One man knows the territory and leads them through a tricky opening in the rocks.

Down in the distance below, the Cavalymen are seen running their horses uphill.

As Murrieta's gang ride off into the wilderness up the stream, the IMAGE FREEZES ... into an illustration in a history book.

INT. OJAI HIGH SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - PRESENT MOMENT

The book closes - the title is "The Life and Legend of Juakin Murrieta".

Teenagers hurry out of class - all except a country-looking teenager, BENNY SCOPE (16, handsome, intelligent, rugged). He remains sitting, staring at the cover of the book he just closed.

A solitary graceful girl, LUCY (16) stands in the doorway, pretending to be searching for something in her purse, but furtively glancing at Benny.

He looks vaguely around the room, lost in inner thoughts - and fails to even register Lucy's presence.

Struck by his unseeing stare, Lucy walks quickly away. Benny again looks dreamily at his history book.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SANTA BARBARA BANK - DAY

Outside a snazzy downtown bank, tourists in bright casual clothes are everywhere, talking and gawking.

A lone man in his thirties, JACKO MURRIETA (played by the same man who played Juaquin Murrieta in earlier scenes but with different posture and expression) comes walking through the tourist crowd, a day pack on his back.

Jacko pauses outside the bank, desperation mixed with fear dominating his expression. He remembers something -

BEGIN FLASHBACK

In a hospital a few days earlier, a sick middle-aged Latino woman, AUGUSTA MURRIETA, is sitting in a wheelchair. Her son Jacko is standing alongside her, looking hopeless.

A young woman, Jacko's cousin CHRISTINA, is with them. Jacko looks to Christina - and their eyes lock on each other.

CHRISTINA
(quietly to Jacko)
We must do it.

Jacko just nods.

END FLASHBACK

Pushed by the memory, looking determined and tough now, Jacko pulls a stocking mask over his head, takes out a pistol - and enters the bank.

EXT. OJAI HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Same time, outside the Spanish-arch entrance of the Ojai school, loud laughing STUDENTS come bursting from the building. The school gardens are in full Springtime blossom.

A dozen students are hanging out near the parking lot, chatting, goofing around. The mood is laid-back, youthfully jubilant. A girl spreads her arms wide in Christ-imitation - some kids laugh, some scowl at her irreverence.

Benny comes walking by - he looks friendly, well-liked, bright-eyed but somehow distant from the teen scene.

As he heads for the parking lot, Lucy comes and walks along with him toward his old pickup. With a subtle sexy flair, she risks embarrassment to speak.

LUCY
Uhm - hi Benny.

BENNY
(equally shy)
Lucy, what's up?

INT. BANK - DAY [CONTINUOUS]

As V.O. from the previous scene continues, we SEE Jacko hesitate inside the door of the bank. Then he musters his nerve, walks toward the customers standing in line -

LUCY (V.O.)
So your dad has you doing ranch-work
all vacation like usual?

BENNY (V.O.)
Not this Easter - it's all mine.

In the bank, customers turn - gape at the masked robber.

Jacko looks at one of the tellers and locks eyes with her - it's his cousin Christina.

Just then a customer makes a move to escape the situation. Jacko lunges impulsively at the man, hits him with the pistol. Christina reacts to his violent flair with a gasp.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT [CONTINUOUS]

Benny and Lucy continue their shy-romance conversation.

LUCY
Well maybe we could go someplace this
week, do something, you know.

BENNY
Good idea but I'll be gone.

LUCY
Gone - where to?

Benny's eyes light up. He looks into the far distance where the Topa Topa wilderness area looms high above the valley.

BENNY
Heading way up there - hunting.

LUCY
Hunting what?

EXT. BENNY'S PICKUP [CONTINUOUS]

Standing quietly beside Benny's pickup is the old Indian, watching Benny talking to Lucy. People walk by the Indian but no one sees him at all.

Benny pauses at the pickup.

BENNY (V.O.)

Oh - hunting a buck maybe. And just finally see what's up there, way behind the ranch.

LUCY

Just you and your dad going up?

BENNY

Uhm, nope - I'm going solo.

A FRIEND of Benny's who's been listening in on the conversation pipes up, half-joking, half-chiding -

FRIEND

Benny's going to prove to his dad he's a genuine Indian, bag him a deer like a real Chumash with the native bow and arrow.

LUCY

So - what's wrong with a gun?

INT. BANK - DAY

As V.O. continues, we SEE Jacko in extreme emotions, holding his pistol on a terrorized bank manager who is stuffing Jacko's day pack with bundles of hundred-dollar bills. Christina stands watching, mute.

BENNY (V.O.)

I just prefer a bow rather than a gun - the old way.

Christina in the bank now has her hand over her mouth to suppress a scream - Jacko is very threatening as he pushes everyone in the bank into a corner.

LUCY (V.O.)

But you can't miss the party over at Roger's on Good Friday. I was thinking, you and I - I thought you were - we were ...

BENNY (V.O.)
 This hunt, it's a promise I made to
 my Gramps, to carry on with, with
 something. Listen, you know how I
 like you - but I gotta go pack.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT [CONTINUOUS]

Benny gets into his pickup. The old Indian is no longer
 there. Lucy walks right up to his window.

LUCY
 So - you're afraid.

BENNY
 Not.

LUCY
 Then you just don't like me.

BENNY
 (honest - warm)
 Wrong again.

She holds his eyes one last moment.

LUCY
 Ah, Benny, you're always running.
 Pretty soon, look out - I'm going to
 give up on you. Last warning.

She reaches, touches his arm lightly - then turns and walks
 off resolutely.

Benny almost shouts something to her - but doesn't. He
 starts his engine, drives fast out of the parking lot.

We see the old Indian riding with calm expression in the
 back of the pickup - although no one else seems to see him.

EXT. LOCAL INTERSECTION [CONTINUOUS]

Benny pulls onto the street - just as a beat-up old
 convertible Chevrolet comes too fast through a stop sign and
 nearly hits him.

Benny shouts and honks his horn at the driver - then
 recognizes her. She's a local non-glamorous beauty, FLURA
 SPARKS (played by the same woman who played Juanita in the
 early scenes - 20, wild dark hair).

When she sees who's honking at her, her expression changes, softens a moment - she smiles, waves to Benny.

Lucy is standing at a distance. She sees this unspoken exchange of friendly recognition between Benny and Flura.

From her point of view, the old Indian is not in the back of the pickup.

Benny hears cars honking behind him. Flura waves with her hand for him to go first - he drives off.

Flura drives through the intersection, then stops her car beside Lucy.

FLURA

Hey Lucy, want a ride home?

Lucy hesitates - gets in.

EXT. OJAI ARCADE - DAY

Flura and Lucy cruise through the quaint downtown arcade, enjoying the moment.

FLURA

Ah, a bit'a peace, just like the old days.

LUCY

Old days?

FLURA

Well - before this.

She holds up her left hand with a wedding ring.

FLURA (cont'd)

One thing not to do - get married right out of high school.

LUCY

You went to junior college in Ventura for a while.

FLURA

One year. That was good too. Then you know, along came the great singer - end of story. I don't want to talk about it.

EXT. OJAI SUBURBAN ROAD - DAY

Flura and Lucy ride in silence a few moments, eyeing each other uncertainly.

FLURA

Benny, he your beau?

LUCY

Oh - I wish. Him and his dad, they're not exactly the social type.

FLURA

Benny's one solid young man, I've known him since he was real little. I still go clean their house.

LUCY

I wish he'd grow up just a bit.

FLURA

It knocked him flat, his momma dying. (beat) But hey, you're looking real pretty - driving the boys wild?

LUCY

(bashful)

Hardly. Besides, I'm not one tenth as beautiful, Flura, as you.

FLURA

(disdainful)

And look where looks got me - zero.

Lucy glances at her with concern.

LUCY

You doing okay these days? I hardly see you anymore, even though we're neighbors.

Flura makes a slight deflated scowl.

FLURA

Oh - gettin' by.

Lucy hesitates - then speaks up with concern.

LUCY

We can't help but hearing. It's not right, Rickie doing that to you. My dad almost called the cops last time.

FLURA

(reacting)

You tell him, mind his own business.
Rickie and me, we do fine - except
when he's drinking.

LUCY

Could I help - any way?

FLURA

No, no.

They become silent.

INT. BANK IN SANTA BARBARA - DAY

Jacko has everybody on the floor. Someone walks in and he uses his pistol menacingly to get this person down too. Then with a full backpack, he takes off outside, removing his mask - cutting down a side street.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE NEAR OJAI - DAY

Benny comes driving along in his pickup past open hay fields and orange groves. It's a beautiful spring day - magnificent visuals. We see the old Indian in the back again, smiling as he watches the beauty of the countryside go by.

Benny passes a big man-made LAKE (Lake Casitas) and then makes a right turn and heads up a private ranch road.

Alongside the private drive in a big field, Benny sees his father FRANK out plowing, driving a D6 bulldozer. Benny waves - his father waves back.

Over a small hill at the end of the road, Benny drives up to an old wooden ranch house with barns and corrals (they've been built beside that same stream and ancient oak tree we saw earlier, where the old-time hacienda and its barns once stood).

Pulling up to the barn, as Benny gets out the old Indian jumps out as well - but Benny doesn't see the Indian at all.

EXT. OJAI SUBURBS - DAY

Flura and Lucy come driving through a somewhat run-down part of town. They pull into a driveway beside a beat-up 2-ton truck. Flura reacts to the truck with sudden anxiety.

FLURA
Oh no - he's back, already.

LUCY
You can come over to my house.

FLURA
You're sweet - but this is something
I gotta deal with myself.

Flura forces herself to get out with her bag of groceries.
She walks toward the house. Lucy gets out, turns,
concerned - watches Flura disappear into the house.

INT. SMALL HOUSE [CONTINUOUS]

It's dark inside, curtains closed. Flura walks through the
living room, increasingly afraid - hurries into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

FLURA is bending to put vegetables in the refrigerator.

Suddenly she's grabbed from the rear. Her husband RICK - big
and handsome but drunk and drugged - grabs her sexually.

She struggles out of his grip, backs off from him.

FLURA
What are you doing, back a day early?
I thought you had to go all the way -

RICK
(accusing)
Where you been - who you been with?

FLURA
Nobody, you know that.

RICK
(ugly tone)
Come here, I want ya.

FLURA
You're stoned - leave me be.

She backs away, runs from the room. He follows.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Rick catches Flura by the sofa. She pushes away. He slaps her across the face, she fights back hard - hits him, hurts him.

He starts beating her, ripping her clothes off.

RICK
Bitch - out screwing this whole
screwed town.

She tries to escape, but he catches her again and hits her hard in the face - she screams out - he puts his hand over her mouth to muffle the scream.

Suddenly another female voice screams -

LUCY (V.O.)
Stop - somebody - police - police!

Rick looks up. Lucy stands in the doorway.

LUCY
(bravely)
You leave her alone or I'll tell the
police.

Rick loses his temper, comes after her.

EXT. HOUSE [CONTINUOUS]

Lucy runs out of the house with Rick hot on her heels.

He gets halfway across the local road, then comes to a stop. There's half a dozen NEIGHBORS facing him.

Rick takes a look around him at the outraged faces, then makes a move, gets into his truck - drives wildly off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LARGE HAWK IN SKY - DAY

High in the sky, a large majestic HAWK is flying through the air - we hear the sound of its wings beating the air. The Hawk looks down to the left, then to the right.

EXT. POV HAWK

We fly over magnificent California coastal ridges, with no sign of human habitation - it's a vast wilderness ...

Diving through an untouched canyon, the Hawk zooms over a stream at the foot of a high cliff, cascading around mossy boulders into a deep pool -

Climbing suddenly out of the canyon on powerful wings, the Hawk flies on over another ridge -

EXT. HIGH OVER RANCHING VALLEY [CONTINUOUS]

From the hawk's POV as it glides down to lower elevations, we see a large secluded CATTLE RANCH down below, at the end of a county road and private drive - Benny's ranch - corrals and barns, horses and some yearling calves. The big old RANCH HOUSE beside the giant live oak looks unkempt and run-down.

The Hawk gives a sudden loud cry -

Benny is sitting outside a barn, wearing Levi's and a cowboy work shirt - but moccasins now instead of his usual cowboy boots, plus a headband rather than a cowboy hat.

The pickup door is open, a country-slide Indian-jazz piece playing on his radio. Benny is concentrating as he slides special razor blades into the slots of a hunting arrow.

His finger tests the sharpness of the blades. The Hawk up above again cries out suddenly - Benny glances up - cuts his finger slightly on a razor.

Sucking blood from the cut, Benny looks up. Over by the corrals, he sees the old Indian standing there watching him, a benign expression on his face.

Shocked by the sight, Benny jumps up and goes running as fast as he can toward the Indian -

But when he gets to the corrals, the Indian just isn't there. Benny looks totally jolted by the experience.

BENNY

(confused)

What was that? Did I see - what?

EXT. SKY - POV HAWK

We see Benny's father down below on the tractor - then fly on down to the INTERSECTION of the ranch road with the county highway where Benny turned off earlier. In the distance is the large man-made lake and dam - Lake Casitas.

EXT. INTERSECTION [CONTINUOUS]

Two POLICE CARS are now parked at the intersection, half-blocking the main road coming over the hills from the coast.

Zooming down, we see two POLICEMEN, out of their cars. One of them - CALVIN WADDELL (50) - is watching worriedly as the other bends over in terrible stomach cramps, throwing up.

The Hawk suddenly dives, crashes to the ground in a field right beside the police. Sinking talons into flesh, it takes off with a squirming ground squirrel in its grip.

A car (Flura's Chevie convertible) approaches the road-block from Ojai - and slows as Calvin walks over. He's a benign small-town cop - carrying a shotgun, looking upset.

In the car, Flura is wearing dark glasses to somewhat hide her bruises. Rolling to a stop, she focuses out at the policeman - sees her own raw expression in his mirror glasses - makes a face.

Calvin notices her bruises, speaks with concern while remaining official.

CALVIN
Flurina - you alright?

Flura makes a casual grimace, shrugs her shoulders.

FLURA
'Course I'm alright. Hey, put that gun away, you look downright ugly with that thing.

CALVIN
Where you going, Flura?

FLURA
Over to the Scope's as usual on Wednesdays, same old clean-up job.

She nods to the policeman who's vomiting by the road.

FLURA (cont'd)
What's the matter, he got the flu? He should be home in bed.

CALVIN
Yeah, that's where he's headed.

FLURA
But what's up - did war break out around here?

CALVIN
(nervous voice)
Robbery over in Santa Barbara. You can go up the Scope road - we're watching people coming down from Carpinteria.

FLURA
You look scared, Calvin. I thought policemen never look scared on duty - ain't it against regulations?

CALVIN
Bank robbers, they scare anybody. Now you go along - and stay off the highway, next couple hours.

She lowers her sunglasses just enough to look directly at Calvin above them - then turns right onto the Scopes road.

EXT. BARNS AND CORRALS - DAY

A high-spirited young HORSE is standing wild-eyed in the corral - it bolts - someone SHOUTS low and strong.

BENNY
Hold it now, Tony.

The horse comes to a halt. Benny walks up, catches it with experienced moves - leads it over to the barn.

The old Indian is watching but Benny doesn't notice him.

The SOUND of a loud car engine disturbs the peace - Flura comes driving up to the barn on her way to the house. She stops her car to watch with appreciation as Benny throws a pack saddle onto the skittish horse -

FLURA
 (lightly)
 You look just like some old album
 cover I saw somewhere - just as
 handsome. Broken any hearts lately?

BENNY
 Fat chance.

FLURA
 Lucy?

BENNY
 What about her?

She spies his packs.

FLURA
 Looks like you're actually doing it.

Bashful in her presence, Benny still meets her eyes.

BENNY
 You bet.

FLURA
 Just to prove that -

BENNY
 (testy)
 Prove nothing - doing what I want to,
 that's all.

FLURA
 Going Injun against your own Pa.

BENNY
 (reacting)
 You're one major blabber mouth.

FLURA
 You're the touchy one, can't even
 carry on a normal conversation.

Their banter stops a moment, they meet each others eyes, and
 both soften in their deep-down affection for each other -
 but Benny's still nervous in her presence.

BENNY
 You better get on up to the house,
 you were scheduled to do the cleaning
 this morning. Dad's upset, house is a
 mess -

FLURA
 (gently chiding)
 You're two grown men, you should be
 able to keep a kitchen clean.

He scowls - turns and goes back to his work. Flura gets out of her car - a naturally sexy young woman, not putting it on. She notices his hunting arrows by the barn.

FLURA (cont'd)
 I mean come on, going out and killing
 some innocent wilderness animal just
 to prove you're some kind of noble
 warrior - that's almost as bad as
 Rick.

BENNY
 What, your Rick, he bow-hunt?

FLURA
 You kidding? Thirty-ought-six with
 some gigantic power scope. Blew the
 brains clean off some poor rabbit
 last weekend - set me near to puking,
 just like that policeman down at your
 corner there.

BENNY
 What policeman?

As VOICES CONTINUE, we cut to -

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

A SPEEDING CAR is approaching the intersection from the other direction than Flura came.

FLURA (V.O.)
 Calvin - you know Calvin?

BENNY (V.O.)
 Him and Dad went to high school.

There's only one police car now. Calvin stands there with his shotgun as the approaching car comes to a halt some distance from the police car.

Calvin starts walking slowly over toward it. He can vaguely see there's one man inside, but he can't make out his face. He flips the safety off on his shot gun.

The man inside the car - it's the modern-day Jacko Murrieta - hears the ominous sound, tenses -

JACKO
(low monotone voice)
Afternoon, officer - trouble?

CALVIN
License if you will.

Jacko's shadowed face looks tense -

EXT. BARN - DAY

Benny is working with his packs on the ground while Flura, uncertain of herself, flirts lightly to cover her agitation.

FLURA
So why don't you invite me on this great odyssey - bag yourself your first deer all noble-like with the ancient bow and arrow and who knows, maybe bag some genuine romance all on the same little Easter outing.

BENNY
Damn, Flurry, you shouldn't talk like that - I mean you're married for Christ's sake.

His words set off buried emotions inside her - she turns her head so Benny can't see the feelings that flood over her.

She waits a frozen moment, blinks away the tears - then turns her head to meet his eyes again - her expression now entirely free from any flirting.

The old Indian is standing over in the shadow of the barn, watching and listening without being noticed.

FLURA
Hardly what I'd call marriage. I envy you, really, heading up there all alone - maybe wake up into some real old-time Chumash stuff, you know.

Benny is hit by her words. He glances where the Indian was standing - but when he looks, the Indian is not there. Benny looks back to Flura.

BENNY

(vulnerable)

I don't know, I'm just pulled to go up there, even though Dad thinks everything Gramps believed about the Chumash, about their spirit being still alive way up there. He thinks that's all just bull but I at least gotta find out, you know, for myself.

Benny reaches into his shirt pocket, comes out with an old piece of paper - opens it, shows it to Flura.

BENNY (cont'd)

Before he died, Gramps gave this to me - told me when I hit sixteen to go up and bag me a deer the old way. So I just figure what the hell, I will.

She stares at the rough map - then looks into his eyes with tears suddenly welling.

FLURA

(honest)

Benny, I tell ya, I gotta get away. Gimme a break, let me come with ya.

BENNY

But you can't do something like that. Your hubby, he'd -

FLURA

So I leave some kind of note, say I went to Vegas to get a divorce, throw him total off the trail. Come on Benny, take me, will ya? I always liked you one whole bunch.

BENNY

(blushing)

Cut that talk.

She sees his fear of intimacy, talks to him more like a mother now.

FLURA

Come on, Benny, you gotta open up. So big deal, you lost your mom - I lost my poppa. We gotta let go all that, heal inside, move on.

He has tears in his eyes. She falls silent, steps close to him - holds him gently.

Suddenly their moment gets violently jolted by the SOUND of two different-sounding guns going off in the distance, one right after the other.

CU - a very brief flash of Calvin's face as he's blown backward, his expression total shock -

Benny and Flura both look off in the direction of the intersection. Flura is shaken, sensing what's happened.

FLURA (cont'd)

Oh no - not - quick, bring that bow
and arrow. Why the hell don't you use
a real gun!

Benny grabs his bow and quiver of arrows, runs with Flura for his pickup. As they get in, the old Indian jumps into the back.

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

Everything's perfectly still at the police roadblock. There's Calvin's solitary vehicle, and nothing else.

Flura and Benny come driving up fast, screech to a stop. They jump out of the pickup - Benny has his bow strung and arrow set to fly. They silently advance on the roadblock.

Flura cries out, goes running over to where Calvin is down in his own blood on the pavement. She kneels, lifts his head - he's still alive.

Benny comes beside her, looks down at the unconscious man.

The radio CRACKLES in the police cruiser, headquarters calling for Calvin.

A JEEP comes driving up fast. Benny's dad Frank jumps out and comes running in cowboy boots. He eyes his son with the bow and arrow - then sees Calvin on the pavement.

FRANK

Oh God - what the hell!

Frank goes into instant combat mode, looks around - moves fast for the SHOTGUN that's on the ground.

A POLICE CAR comes roaring into view - screeches to a stop.

Flura sits there stunned with Calvin's head in her lap.

The old Indian is quietly watching - no one sees him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FLURA'S HOUSE - DAY

Flura comes bursting into the house, emotionally out of control, her clothes bloody.

She freezes, realizing she might not be alone.

FLURA
Rickie - you here?

No answer - her expression shows relief.

INT. BEDROOM [CONTINUOUS]

Flura enters, sees herself in a mirror, blood stains all over her. She gasps, starts taking off her clothes.

Some SOUND outside makes her tense.

FLURA
Oh no - not Rickie.

She yanks open a drawer, takes out a .32 PISTOL. Hiding behind a door, she cocks the pistol - ready for him.

But then she HEARS - it's only some kids playing outside.

INT. KITCHEN [CONTINUOUS]

Flura enters, gets a bottle of wine, pours a glass - then reaches for the land line phone - dials.

INT. EXEC. OFFICE, LOS ANGELES [CONTINUOUS]

Flura's mom, JULIA - late 40's, suave business woman - is in a meeting with a country-western recording artist and his manager - she's under pressure.

As the phone rings she says to the two people -

JULIA
That's probably Tom now. (into phone)
Hello?

INT. FLURA'S LIVING ROOM

Flura walks into the living room with the phone.

FLURA

Mom - somebody just got themselves,
down the road, all shot up to hell
and gone. I'm totally freaked.

INT. OFFICE

Julia stays calm, doesn't take Flura seriously.

JULIA

Listen love, I can't talk right now,
I'm in a -

FLURA (V.O.)

Mom, this is it for me - I'm moving
off. Life, Rickie, everything - it's
gone just totally insane.

Julia glances apologetically at the two guys in her office,
then gets up and walks across the big office for privacy,
stares out at the LA skyline.

JULIA

(quietly, to Flura)

Now listen. Stop freaking out. I told
you a hundred times, what you need is
a divorce from that monster. Come
right on down here this minute, your
bedroom's waiting for ya like always.
My lawyers will take care of
everything. I'll be home around six.

FLURA (V.O.)

(choked up)

No - no more of your babying routine
either. I'm taking off for real this
time. I just wanted to say, you know,
goodbye.

JULIA

Flurina, I'm at work. These are
conversations for private.

INT. FLURA'S LIVING ROOM

FLURA

Oh - hell with your private.

Flura hangs up. Shaking, she raises the pistol, aims it
right at her head -

Unable to pull the trigger, she shifts into some vague non-emotional inner-blank realm - then snaps suddenly into a state of clear determination.

FLURA (cont'd)
I gotta leave ya, Rickie - I gotta
leave, or I gotta die!

She sits there a final moment - then jumps up, begins throwing things into a backpack.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM, SCOPE RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Benny comes walking into his attic bedroom, vaguely looks around the room -

It's full of old-time ranch and Chumash Indian memorabilia. Old PHOTOS of Benny's Grandfather and Great-grandfather are pinned on the walls.

Benny looks out the window - he can see the Topa Topa mountain wilderness off in the distance.

A large Hawk zooms past the window.

INT. HALLWAY AND STAIRS [CONTINUOUS]

Benny heads down steep stairs. He pauses and looks out a second-story window at SEVERAL POLICE CARS in the parking area of the ranch house, and half a dozen cops with rifles.

Benny sees the old Indian standing casually over by the barn, watching all this - then the Indian is gone.

Benny shakes his head, stunned - heads down the stairs.

INT. RANCH LIVING ROOM [CONTINUOUS]

There are several tense POLICEMEN in the room. A quiet unassuming detective about 50 - VERN RAFFERTY - is talking with Benny's father Frank, both looking at a mug PHOTO.

Benny walks in unnoticed by the two men and overhears them:

VERN
... some dumb Chicano hoodlum, Santa
Barbara toughy, bunch of minor stuff
on his record.

(MORE)

VERN (cont'd)
 Cousin worked in the bank - idiots.
 And guess their family name -
 Murrieta.

FRANK
 I guess it runs in the blood. Don't
 tell Benny, he takes the Juaquin
 Murrieta legend as holy gospel.

VERN
 Steal from the rich, give to the
 poor - still stealing. All these
 romantic Zorro myths, entirely
 against law and order.

They notice the teenager listening in -

VERN (cont'd)
 (genuine warm voice)
 Oh, Benny, how ya feeling? Helluva
 thing, you and that Flura girl having
 to see all that.

BENNY
 (numb tone)
 Yeah, well. Sun's setting. I'm going
 down, milk the cow.

He and his father exchange a sharp glance. As Benny leaves
 the room, Vern looks after him with kindly eyes.

VERN
 'Specially hard on the kids. (beat)
 Now listen, Frank. That killer out
 there - long as he's on the loose I'm
 leaving two men here, no argument.

FRANK
 Fuck that. No idiot would hang right
 around the site of the shooting.

VERN
 Let me do the figuring here.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Benny is cooking up a storm in the kitchen. Frank sits at
 the dining table drinking bourbon on the rocks. There's a
 PISTOL on the table.

Outside the dining room window Frank can see several police cars still parked outside.

Benny serves dinner, his expression taut. As he sits down, he and his father glance at each other - there's buried tenderness for each other under their cowboy toughness.

Frank frowns, cuts his steak. Benny's a pile of nerves, unable to take a bite. Frank sees this.

FRANK

(gruff)

So somebody gets shot. That's just the way the world is. Policemen, they play the odds.

BENNY

Tell that to his kids.

FRANK

We got over your momma dying. They'll get over him dying - if he dies.

BENNY

(emotional)

Goddamn, he was your friend! (beat)
And you know well as me, we never yet got over Mom ...

Benny is hit with emotions - Frank winces.

FRANK

What you going to do now, cry in front of all those men?

Benny pokes at his food, glances out the window -

BENNY

Well anyway I'm still going on my camp trip tomorrow morning. Like you said, that killer's long gone.

FRANK

Hell you are - who knows where that maniac's hiding out. And enough of all your Indian romance stuff - time to be a man and get on with life.

BENNY

What, be like you? Doesn't look much fun, being a man.

Vern walks back in.

VERN

They just sighted our cop-shooter
over in Bakersfield - got him
cornered. I'm heading over.

FRANK

(tough)

Go cut him down like he deserves.
Want me to come?

VERN

No, professional job. You two just
relax, take care of yourselves.

Vern exits.

Benny eyes his father. Frank's expression softens just a
moment - then hardens again.

FRANK

Murrieta, junk that myth. People who
go out stealing, doesn't matter who
from - they deserve what they get.

BENNY

(fighting back)

Hey, our own US government troops
outright stole Juquin Murrieta's
land up north, killed his family,
raped and pillaged - so Murrieta went
on the offense, stole back his own
gold, gave it to the poor. You think
he was wrong? I say you're wrong.

They stare hard at each other - neither giving an inch.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Flura is pumping gas into her convertible while a horny guy
makes eyes at her. She makes a face at him, gets in her
car - looks in her handbag for her cell phone.

INT. BENNY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Frank is putting his 30-30 rifle away in a fancy gun-rack
full of rifles. He glances at Benny - who is on the old sofa
comparing his hand-drawn map to a relief map.

FRANK
 (disdainful)
 So what you think, you'll follow that
 map Gramps drew you, go up Coyote
 Creek, find all that gold Murrieta
 supposedly left up there?

BENNY
 I don't know what's up there but I
 respect Gramps - even if you don't.

FRANK
 History says Murrieta got himself
 killed way up in Sacramento in 1851 -
 he never even got down this far. Dump
 that dumb map, wake up.

The phone rings. Frank goes to answer it.

Benny runs his finger along a dotted-line trail on a relief
 map of the Sespi wilderness - we see "Coyote Creek" written
 on the map where he's pointing.

Frank walks back toward Benny, holds out the phone for him -
 speaks with his hand over the receiver.

FRANK (cont'd)
 It's that dumb cleaning girl. What's
 she want with you this time of night?

Benny jumps up, nervously takes the phone, waits a moment
 until his father's gone into the next room - then speaks
 into the phone.

BENNY
 (bashful)
 Uhm, Flura - hi. How ya doing after
 all, well, all that?

INT. HER CONVERTIBLE

FLURA
 Benny, I'm just goin' crazy.

BENNY
 Where's Rick?

FLURA
 Hell with Rick.

BENNY
 Listen - they found the shooter guy,
 way over in Bakersfield.

FLURA
Caught him?

BENNY
Maybe. Not quite. I don't know.

FLURA
(shaky)
Benny, I'm in a raw way. What about I
come over, meet you at the barn. I'll
park down below and walk up, your
mean dad won't even know. I just
gotta talk to somebody, somebody
that's warm an' real inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Benny is momentary mute. He glances nervously at the door
his father walked through - then exhales tensely.

BENNY
Sure - alright. But you know my dad,
you come up real quiet.

FLURA (V.O.)
Ah, thanks - I'll love ya forever.

INT. TELEVISION ROOM [CONTINUOUS]

Benny walks uncertainly into the room. Frank is watching a
western. He's drinking but not drunk.

BENNY
So anyway, if the shooter guy's been
sighted in Bakersfield, I'm taking
off early tomorrow morning like
planned.

FRANK
(exploding)
Jeez Benny, this whole Injun-lover
routine's getting on my damn nerves.
Face it. Gramps is dead - it's all
dead and gone. You and me, we got the
discing and the rest to get done.

BENNY
No. You promised I get Spring Break
off. I'm going down to the barn, get
things ready.

Frank glares at him.

FRANK

Some partner you turn out to be.

EXT. BARN [CONTINUOUS]

As Benny comes walking from the house to the barn, there's a near-full moon already up.

Something CRACKS over in the distance - Benny reacts.

INT. BARN [CONTINUOUS]

Darkness. Benny flips on a lone light bulb hanging from the high open-beam roof - chickens squawk at the intrusion.

Benny checks out his supplies in his pack-horse bags - he nervously reacts at some animal noise.

Behind him, through a dirty barn window, someone is sneaking around outside - looking in the window. There's a PISTOL menacingly gripped in a hand -

The person suddenly makes a move, comes pushing in through the big barn door - Flura.

Benny stares at her standing there with the pistol.

FLURA

Spooky outside.

She looks wild, dressed in a fancy blouse and long skirt.

BENNY

What if Dad catches you here, this time of night?

FLURA

You two, no females at all out here except that milk cow - you got life all distorted.

She walks closer, half-flirting to cover her insecurity. He looks at her sexy presence nervously - turns away from her when she comes over to him.

FLURA (cont'd)

Jeez, Benny, I'm not some monster, it's just plain old me. You gotta get over being so total shut down inside, open up to some feelings. Lucy's sitting at home pining away for ya.

Benny blushes, busies himself with his packs.

We see the old Indian in the shadows, watching quietly.

Flura sits down beside Benny, reaches and touches his arm - her voice softens.

FLURA (cont'd)
Come on, give in, Benny, let me come
with you. I'm your pro camper.

BENNY
But I just couldn't - it wouldn't be
right.

She looks at the pistol in her hand, cocks it.

FLURA
(serious)
I stay with Rickie one more night, he
does that stuff to me one more time -
I blow him away.

BENNY
(breathless)
(beat) So - what's he do?

She grabs the hem of her dress and lifts it - exposing
bruised thighs - then drops the hem.

FLURA
Honest, Benny, I'm at the end. I'm
headed out forever, one way or the
other -

BENNY
(opening slightly)
But we'd have to come back.

FLURA
Not me - I'm off on one permanent
vacation.

They're silent a moment, sitting close together. She gently
leans her head on his shoulder, takes his hand in hers
tenderly.

FLURA (cont'd)
You're such a healthy creature -
genuine human heart ... I just need
to feel loved, Benny. I gotta find
out, one way or another, if I'm still
alive, way deep down inside.

Mistaking her closeness, her touching him, as sexual openness, Benny gives into his own awkward needs, touching and feeling her.

Breaking the nervousness with action, Flura half-wrestles with him, being playful physically. They slip down onto the floor together - but she reacts when he starts to kiss her.

FLURA (cont'd)
Wait - no, not that - stop!

She rolls on top, sits astride him - he sees that her blouse has come open.

FLURA (cont'd)
Please, no - I beg ya, Benny, be soft, don't go for me. (beat)
Promise?

Benny is flustered, nods. She relaxes, lays down at his side, in his arms -

A moment of tenderness, even peace comes over them.

FLURA (cont'd)
(almost dreamy)
Ah - I knew I could feel real, with you. Life's so simple when there's nothing dirty going on. You gotta see, deep-down I'm still a virgin, just like you.

Suddenly the barn door BANGS OPEN -

Frank stands there, rifle in hand. Lurid with anger, flush with alcohol, he thinks he's caught them in a full-blown sexual encounter.

FRANK
(dangerous voice)
What we got here - little whore sneaking around the barn, fuckin' bitch in heat.

Flura stands up, gasps, threatened - glances at Benny.

FRANK (cont'd)
Filthy hussy - I aught'a blow you away - married woman!

Benny, on his feet fast, steps angrily toward his father -

BENNY
You shut up!

Flura comes between them -

FLURA

No - no Benny. Don't. I'll leave.
This is all wrong - ease up.

Wild with emotions, she grabs the pistol from the ground,
then runs from the barn - and is gone.

Benny stands there, gasping for breath - facing his father.

FRANK

Goddamn whore -

Benny explodes, runs violently at him - but Frank hits him
hard in the gut with the barrel of the rifle. Benny
collapses down onto his knees, in pain but not injured.

Outside, the raunchy ENGINE SOUND of Flura's car is heard
starting and roaring wildly off.

FRANK (cont'd)

I see her here again, I shoot those
whore tits right off her.

BENNY

(condemning)

You're no different than that cop
killer -

FRANK

Your own mother's spirit - if she saw
you fornicating with some other man's
wife - that slut, she should rot in
hellfire. You get up to bed now, you
hear me!

Frank stomps out of the barn.

Still hurt and winded by the physical blow of the rifle to
his solar plexus, Benny stands up - utterly alone.

DISSOLVE TO: