

COLORADO

Written by

Tom Romano

FADE IN:

MONTAGE:

An open field. Trees. Wildlife. SWEATY MEN lay down railroad tracks. The blast of a WHISTLE. That of a colossal locomotive. With many BOOMING RUMBLES, it barrels across the frame, leaving a suffocating trail of smoke in its path.

A factory. Smoke. CLANG. BOOM. Fire. Steel. Huge furnaces. WORKERS hammer away. COUGHING from all the gas. CHILD LABORERS covered in grime. Pipes fall on top of a worker. Smokestacks pollute the air.

The city. Filthy. Garbage. A DEAD HORSE on the street. Overcrowded tenements. STRUGGLING FOLK straight out of a Jacob Riis photo.

A locomotive charges into the vast open land. The smoky city far behind.

INT. MANSION - NIGHT

A spacious master bedroom. A TICKING clock permeates the deadly quiet.

Everything from the dresser, to the candelabras that hang above it, to the embroidered armchair, to the marble fireplace, fire raging inside, must've been made by the best respective craftsman of its day.

On the wall hangs a portrait of a man in his 30s. Stiff suit with the little pocket-watch chain hanging out. Thick mustache and eyebrows. Hard, near soulless eyes. One would not want to cross this man. He thinks he's better than everyone else, and just might be.

In a no less exquisite bed lies the same man, STANLEY O. MILLER, now in his 50s. This version of Stanley is quite less foreboding. Disheveled, pale, he tosses and turns. Nightgown and pillow drenched in sweat.

He jerks out of bed and HACKS up some blood. It SPLATTERS on his portrait.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Shelves of glass bottles and various metal instruments line the office walls. Through the foggy windows a bustling city street can be made out.

Stanley slumps in an examining chair. DR. COLE (40s) examines him.

Stanley's wife, LOUISE (40s), stands next to him. She wears a long, flowing dress and feathered hat. Her face seems expressionless. Stale. She is showing.

A CAT nimbly moseys along a shelf.

After some time, Dr. Cole steps back.

DR. COLE
Tuberculosis, consumption... you're
a lunger, Mr. Miller.

LOUISE
No, you must be mistaken.

DR. COLE
No mistakes have been made, I
assure you.

Dr. Cole takes a seat.

LOUISE
What can you do for him?

Dr. Cole lights up a pipe. As he's engaged in doing so, his cat leaps on Stanley's lap. PURR. Stanley scowls and swats it away.

Dr. Cole puffs his pipe.

DR. COLE
Not much. A sanatorium is probably
your best bet.

STANLEY
A sanatorium?! You're supposed to
be the best damn doctor money could
buy and--

He COUGHS. Louise hands him a handkerchief.

DR. COLE
No amount of money can buy what
you're looking for.
(beat)
Listen, they'll take good care of
you there. They'll make sure you're
eating, you'll get fresh air. And
there are some just north of
Manhattan here.
(MORE)

DR. COLE (CONT'D)

You can surely afford your own room
if you so wish.

STANLEY

No.

LOUISE

Please, Doctor Cole, things aren't
as they were. Is there any other
option? He's too stubborn to--

STANLEY

We get plenty of fresh air out in
Rhode Island! And I eat well
enough. I will not be sent off to
some revolting sick house like a
common peasant with those rats off
the street! They'll only make me
sicker! If either of you mention it
again, I will--

He COUGHS some more. Blood this time. Louise covers her eyes.

DR. COLE

There is another option.

Stanley, wiping the blood from his mouth, looks up.

DR. COLE (CONT'D)

If you're willing to make the
journey, you can move out west. The
dry, mountain climate of Colorado
is especially easy on the lungs.
Other than that, I don't know what
to tell you.

EXT. WHEAT FIELDS - DAY

A locomotive pulls a seemingly infinite amount of train cars
through a breezy field of wheat.

EXT. DENVER TRAIN STATION - DAY

Louise assists her husband in stepping off the train. He
stumbles a bit and nearly falls, but she catches him.

BIRD (30s), a rugged looking cowboy in a large Stetson,
duster, boots, the works, approaches them on the platform.

BIRD

Miller, ain't it?

The Millers are taken aback.

LOUISE

Umm... Yes. You must be Mr...?

BIRD

You can call me "Bird." It's what my friends call me anyway, on account of my "incessant" whistlin' and all.

The Millers stare at him blankly.

BIRD (CONT'D)

That's what my friends tell me anyway.

STANLEY

Are you taking us to the cabin?

BIRD

Right this way, sir.

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

The Millers ride in a stagecoach pulled by a couple of HORSES. Bird at the helm.

He WHISTLES a pleasant folk tune as the stagecoach traverses vast empty plains and an immense blue sky.

Stanley pinches his eyes at the incessant whistling.

BIRD

So, Mr. Miller, you got your millions from building trains?

STANLEY

I developed cross-country railways. Now, because of me, anyone can get anywhere.

BIRD

That ain't quite so, sir. Your tracks don't reach far enough to these mountains for you and the missus to rail it. That's why you got me luggin' you two all this way.

STANLEY

We're working on it.

Louise points out the window of the wagon.

LOUISE
Look, Stanley, look!

The distant mountains come into view. As beautiful as they are ominous, they cut across the flat terrain like a brick wall. Storm clouds gather at their massive peaks.

BIRD
They say there's still some gold in 'em. That it wasn't all found yet.

LOUISE
Can you believe it? I've never seen anything like it in my life.

EXT. VALLEY - NIGHT

The carriage enters a wide valley surrounded by the mountains. In the distance there's a small homestead overlooking a large lake.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

A rustic, barebones living arrangement.

Louise assists an ever-weakening, ever-COUGHING Stanley through the door and into bed.

LOUISE
(hesitantly)
Well, isn't this charming?

Stanley shivers.

Louise takes notice of a fire-less fireplace. She steps toward it. She looks at it for a moment, not quite sure what to do.

She grabs a blanket from one of their trunks and throws it over her husband.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
We'll keep you warm anyhow.

She pulls a chair next to the bed and takes a seat.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
Things are going to be okay now that we're here. Just you wait and see... Just you wait and see.

STANLEY

A walk.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Stanley traverses up a wooded mountain-side. He seems like he's about to collapse, but he trudges on.

A COUGHING fit overcomes him. He falls against a tree. His head lowers. Defeated.

There is a RUSTLING sound. He lifts his head to see a BIGHORN SHEEP staring him dead on in the eyes.

STANLEY

Hey...

The sheep BAAS and dashes off.

Stanley pulls himself up and moves on. After a few more steps he comes to a clearing.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

It's breathtaking. Mountains as far as the eye can see. Some snow-capped, some covered in shrubbery, some rocky and bare. All beautiful.

A flock of CANADIAN GEESE fly over Stanley in perfect v-shaped formation, as if it was all planned out by a little goose choreographer.

Stanley takes a deep BREATH.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Stanley sits at the table. Louise places a big, meaty plate of haggis (or an attempt at it) in front of him and goes on to fuss about the kitchen, tidying it up.

LOUISE

These have been tough times...
Without the help like we used to
have. But my cooking has certainly
improved, wouldn't you say?

Stanley looks at the plate. He does not touch his food.

STANLEY

My dad's favorite. Did I ever tell
you? Back in Scotland...

LOUISE

You surely must be getting old.
I've heard this story over many a
dinner. Except then, there was more
than just haggis. Remember the plum
duff Mr. Park would make for
Christmas?

She takes a seat at the table with her own plate of food. She
digs in.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Oh, how I miss those times. Those
damn papers and all their silly
little cartoons. Those liars think
they're doing good.

STANLEY

Maybe they are.

LOUISE

Hmm?

STANLEY

Let's stay here. Leave New York
behind for good. We'd be happy
here. We could raise our son here.
I could teach him how to fish. How
to climb. Ride with the buffalo.
Live off the land, like the
Indians. We could remain in this
heaven. For the rest of time. What
do you say?

EXT. VALLEY - DAY

Bird assists Louise in climbing aboard his stagecoach.
Stanley watches from the doorway of the cabin.

Bird takes his seat and grabs the reigns.

LOUISE

I hope you feel better, Stanley. I
sincerely do.

STANLEY

You can't take my child away from
me.

LOUISE

Don't worry, my father will watch
after him just as you would.

STANLEY

Yes, and he'll be coronated as king of his steel empire when the old man passes on, right? And continue to dirty this good earth? Make this world an unclean, ungodly place? This land is not ours! It belongs to them! To the deer, to the bear! They lived here long before we did! But man comes in and destroys everything. Nothing in this world can be beautiful because of man. Man and money. Leads to nothing that isn't misery, destruction... death! I'm done with it all. Wash my hands of it. Go back to that rotten city. It weakened me. Nearly killed me. But I'm back now! There's a fire in me. A power stronger than you can imagine. Don't you feel it? It's in the water here, in the air. I will tear down your beloved New York and all the other cities with it.

Bird LAUGHS.

LOUISE

On Sunday, while you were on one of your walks, I decided to go for one of my own. There was a storm the night before, you remember it. Well there must've been some strong wind... I came across a fallen nest. Four or five eggs all cracked in the dirt. I could see the little chicks. They hadn't even hatched yet.

(beat)

I wish you the best of luck. I hope you enjoy your new life with the deer.

Bird begins to ride off. As the wagon pulls away:

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Come visit your child sometime.

BIRD

(re: Stanley)

He's sure looking better.

Stanley watches them travel toward the horizon.

EXT. CAVE - NIGHT

A mass of RAILROAD WORKERS gather around outside a partially blasted-through tunnel in the side of a mountain. Unfinished railroad tracks lead up to it. A pile of BISON carcasses sits to the side.

The workers surround Stanley, who stands over the lifeless body of a FOREMAN. A pickaxe stuck in his head. Right through the eye.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

Stanley sprints up the same mountain he hiked earlier. It's dark. Pitch black.

The CLAMMORING of the workers can be heard, and their lanterns seen through the trees.

Stanley moves to hide behind a rock, but trips on uneven ground. He takes a tumble down the mountainside.

THWACK. He lands in some foliage alongside a peaceful stream. One or two of his legs are broken. Exposed bone. He SCREAMS when he tries to stand up. He can't and THUDS back down.

He lies there. In the dark.

PURR.

STANLEY

Hey...

A COUGAR lunges out of the dark. Its jaws grab Stanley by the face.

Blood flows into the stream.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END