BONANZA

"ESCAPE TO PONDEROSA".

Production No. 30325.
1. EXT. PONDEROSA  DAY  FULL SHOT  LITTLE JOE, ADAM

They are on horseback and in the process of rounding up a couple of strays. Both of them are wearing sheep jackets buttoned high against the weather. After a moment, they pinch the two strays to a halt between them.

ADAM
You take those two back, Little Joe. I'll take a lock the other side of the hill, see if there're any more strays.

LITTLE JOE
You be comin' along after that?

ADAM
IF I don't find any, I'm liable to be back and sitting by the fire before you get those two into the corral.

He wheels, and starts riding c.s. Little Joe looks after him, then heads the strays out.

2. EXT. GULLY  CLOSE SHOT

We see a pair of hands linked by an iron chain, which is stratched taut over a small boulder. A hand gripping a rock thrusts into FRAME, and smashes the rock down on the chain. Sparks fly from the chain, but it still holds. CAMERA FULLS BACK TO REVEAL three men hunched together in the gully. They are dressed in scalded and bramble-torn army fatigues. Painted on the back of each of their jackets is a large "P" for prisoner. The three are: SUTTON, a stocky, sallow faced man of about 27; TYLER, a good-looking boy of about 23; and MERTZ, who is hulking, dim-witted and basically harmless unless he is roused. It is Mertz whose hands are chained. Tyler is the one who has been trying to release him.

SUTTON
Why don't you give up. You'll never get those things off.

TYLER
We can try --

SUTTON (impatiently)
Much good as it'll do -- Tyler, he's slowing us down. Bolton's bound to've picked up our tracks by now.

MERTZ
You ain't gonna leave me, Sutton? You wouldn't never do that.

TYLER
We're not leaving you.

SUTTON
We ought to, you stupid caf. If you hadn't killed that stockade guard, Bolton wouldn't have found cut about us for another day.
CONTINUED:

MERTZ

I never meant to kill 'im. Just pay 'im back some for what he done to me.

TYLER

It's done now. Stretch your hands.

EXT.HILL TRUCKING SHOT ADAM

as he rides. From a distance comes the SOUND of HAMMERING. He REACTS, then spurs forward.

EXT.GULLEY CLOSE SHOT MERTZ

He is straining his arms apart, trying to break the chain. CAMERA PULLS BACK. Sutton looks on with annoyance.

SUTTON

We passed you the key. Ought to have know you wouldn't have brains to do nothin' but lose it.

MERTZ

Maybe over to your friend's place you said you was takin' us. Maybe there'd be a chisel or somethin' there.

SUTTON

Sure. We'll just walk in and tell her you always go round wearin' chains.

TYLER (reacting)

Her? -- Sutton, you never said your friend was a girl?

In answer, Sutton smiles egotistically and with a slight leer, but his expression changes suddenly as a horse is HEARD approaching from o.s. They freeze.

MED.CLOSE SHOT - ADAM

He dismounts and moves cautiously into the gully with his gun drawn. Suddenly, Mertz' hands loom into FRAME, as he loops his cuff chains around Adam's neck and drags him to the ground. CAMERA PULLS BACK, as Sutton lunges in at Adam and smashes a rock across the back of his head. He is about to hit him again, when Tyler grabs his arm.

TYLER

You want a dead body for Captain Bolton? Mertz, strip his jacket off. And quick. We've got to move.

ANOTHER ANGLE SUTTON AND TYLER

SUTTON

What're we gonna do with Mertz?

TYLER

We'll have to hide him out till we can get the chain off.
CONTINUED:

SUTTON
Suppose...just suppose now, Bolton
was to find part of what he's huntin'...?
glances meaningfully toward Mertz)

TYLER (understands; gives
Sutton a scathing look; then:)
We broke out together. We'll face what
comes together.

SUTTON (easy shrug)
Sure...just so long as it don't include
goin' back to Bolton's stockade -- cause
nobody's gonna put me back in that
stink-hole -- not alive anyway.

Adam groans slightly, and starts groggily trying to get to his
feet. Reacting instinctively, Tyler snatches up Adam's fallen
gun, and smashes the butt of it across the back of Adam's head.
Adam drops face down and unconscious.

CLOSE SHOT: TYLER

With a momentary twinge of self-revulsion, he stares down at
the gun in his hand; then he quickly moves it into his waistband.

TYLER
All right, let's move.

FADE OUT:

ACT I

FADE IN:

EXT. PONDEROSA RANCH HOUSE - DAY
Establishing.

INT. RANCH HOUSE FULL SHOT
Hoss is seated at the table building an intricate house of
cards. He is silently intent on what it is doing. Little Joe
stands by the fire warming himself. He seems somewhat bored,
as he watches Hoss carefully lay another card on the house.

LITTLE JOE (smiles)
Always knew you were good for some-
thing, Hoss. Just that I didn't figure it
would turn out to be building houses
out of cards.

HOSS
Shh! I only got four more cards to go.
I'm going to make it this time for sure.
CONTINUED:

Little Joe crosses to the table and looks over Hoss’ shoulder. A slight, impish smile comes across his face.

LITTLE JOE
You know, I’m proud of you, Hoss.

HOSS
You have to breathe so hard when you talk? This house’ll come down.

LITTLE JOE
But when I say I’m proud...
  (hitting the "P")
I mean I’m proud.

With the stress on the "P" a whoosh of air knocks the house of cards down.

HOSS (wailing)
Hey!!!

ANOTHER ANGLE TO INCLUDE BEN

as he ENTERS from the rear of the house, slapping wind dust from his hat.

BEN
You round up them strays, Little Joe?

LITTLE JOE

BEN (looks about)
Where’s Adam then?

LITTLE JOE
He said he’d be comin’ right along.

HOSS (to Little Joe)
You was over the line next to the Oakes’ ranch, wasn’t you? Maybe he took a notion to go see Miss Nedda.

LITTLE JOE
Not Adam.

BEN
Wouldn’t distress me any if one of you did spark to Nedda some. She’s a fine girl, and handsome too.

HOSS (putting on)
What about Little Joe here? He’d make a fine husband for Miss Nedda.

He turns aside from Little Joe, and gives Ben a big wink.
HOSS (continuing)
You could arrange the whole thing, Pa.

BEN
Yeah, I guess I could at that.
(playing along)
What do you figure be best, Hoss --
to hold the wedding here or in town?

LITTLE JOE
Wait a minute! I ain't marrying nobody.

BEN
Don't you think Nedda's pretty?

LITTLE JOE
Yeah, she's pretty, but --

HOSS
And she's got the makin's of one of
the best horse ranches in this part
of the country. Her Pa left it to her
free and clear. It's all in her name,
Little Joe.

LITTLE JOE
I don't care. I just don't plan on
gettin' married -- not yet anyhow.

BEN (to Hoss)
He'll change his mind.

HOSS
Sure he will. And we're all going to
be proud of him.

He begins LAUGHING, then breaks off, as the SOUND of horses is
HEARD from outside.

LITTLE JOE
That's probably Adam right now.

HOSS
Sounds like more than one to me.

ANOTHER ANGLE  BEN
as he looks out a front window.

BEN
Soldiers...Now that's strange...

As he turns and starts crossing toward the front door, a KNOCK
is HEARD. Ben opens the door, REVEALING Captain JAMES BOLTON.
He is a solidly built man of about forty, whose carriage is
square shouldered and rigid. Everything about him is cold but
impeccably correct, his uniform, his bearing, his attitude.

BOLTON
SHOOTING OUT PAST Bolton, as he nods crisply to Ben, then turns to look back at three troopers who are waiting in front of the ranch house on their horses.

BOLTON (talking it)
Detail, dismount. Stand to your horses.

He turns back to Ben and strips the riding glove off his right hand. (NOTE: It is obvious from the way he takes the glove off that his left hand is hopelessly stiff and useless). He offers his bared right hand to Ben, who takes it.

BOLTON
Captain James Bolton, provisional barracks, Fort Dayton.

BEN
Well...won't you come in, Captain?

BOLTON
Thank you.

FULL SHOT

as he steps inside and Ben closes the front door behind him.

BEN (gesturing)
I'd like you to meet my sons. Hoss. Little Joe.

Bolton nods quickly to each of them in turn. Ben, almost as if hoping to ease the Captain's stiff attitude, begins trying to make conversation.

BEN
I guess you Army people've got your hands full these days, what with the Cheyenne uprising.

BOLTON
Fort Dayton is a Casuals post.

HOSS
Casuals post -- what's that?

BOLTON
A place for troops not deemed fit for line duty.

The way he says it rather embarrasses the Cartwrights.

BEN
Well, the least we can do is offer you and your men out there some coffee. It's pretty cold out today. Little Joe, you hustle. Hop Sing out with a hot pot of coffee.

BOLTON (sharply)
My men are on duty.
CONTINUED:
His tone, which is essentially that of a command, stops Little Joe.

HOSS
On duty here? This is the Ponderosa. You must've got yourselves lost, Captain.

BOLTON
Hardly. I'm trailing three deserters who escaped from my stockade.

BEN
Did you say your stockade, Captain?

BOLTON
I command it.

LITTLE JOE
You figure they're somewhere out this way?

BOLTON
Their trail led toward your land.

LITTLE JOE
I sure ain't seen no sign of anybody. You Hoss?

HOSS
Nope.

BOLTON
No sign of tracks..campfire..trampled brush??

Little Joe and Hoss shake their heads.

BOLTON
That's odd.

BEN
Why odd, Captain? This is a big stretch of land. Three men could lose themselves in it easy enough.

BOLTON
Perhaps...
(looks about)
Who else is in the house with you now?

BEN
Our cook, Hop Sing.
(amused)
You don't think we're hiding the three men you're looking for, do you?

Bolton, almost pointedly ignoring the question, continues looking searchingly about the room.
It's not within my province to think one way or the other, Mr. Cartwright.

I'll save you the trouble of thinking about it, Captain. They're not here.

Then you'll have no objection to my men searching this area.

Maybe I wouldn't have had any five minutes ago, but I'm not so sure now.

Bolton snaps around at him.

Let me state the situation very precisely for you, Mr. Cartwright. We know that these three men have come into this general area. It is also quite obvious that they can not hope to evade detection here without some outside help. Anyone who aids them in any way will be charged and tried with obstructing military justice.

He glares at Bolton with angry annoyance, but controls his temper.

Hoss, I think you'd better show Captain Bolton out.

Sure, Pa, I'll be glad to do just that.

As he starts to advance on Bolton, SOUNDS of commotion are HEARD from outside.

Captain!

They react sharply, and move toward the front door.

We got a man out here, Captain!

A hard, instinctively ruthless expression sets his features, and he yanks out his pistol.
ANOTHER ANGLE

SHOOTING THROUGH the door toward the front porch. Two of the soldiers have hold of Adam, who shows the effects of his beating. Ben, Little Joe, Moss and Bolton crowd into SCENE.

BEN
LET him go. He's my son Adam.

The soldiers hesitate.

BEN (continuing)
I said, let him go!

The two soldiers glance toward Bolton, as if for instructions. He nods curtly, and they release Adam. Ben immediately takes him.

BEN
What happened to you?

ADAM
I don't know exactly, I heard a noise, I started to look around. Next thing I knew I was being jumped.

BOLTON (jumping at it)
Did you see their faces?

Ben starts shoudering Bolton aside and heading Adam into the house.

BEN
We'll get you inside and take a look at those bruises. Little Joe, get that bottle of liniment.

ADAM
I'm all right now, Pa.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FULL SHOT

as Ben and Moss help Adam into a resting position. Ben carefully looks him over to see how badly he has been hurt.

BEN
Well, not as bad as it could've been.

Little Joe enters SCENE carrying the liniment. He hands it to Ben, who starts applying it to Adam's bruises.

BOLTON (impatiently)
The men who assaulted you --
Could you tell if there were three of them?

ADAM
There were at least two of them, because sort of dim in the back of my head I could hear them arguing over whether to kill me or not. Could've been a third, but I'm not sure.

        (flinching)
CONTINUED:

ROSS
Looks like they tried to club
your head clean open -- and for
no reason at all. Pa, seems like
to me there ought to be some settlin'
done.

BEN
There will be.
(beat)
You bandage Adam up and get him
into bed.

ROSS
I figured on goin' after them
bushwackers with you, Pa.

BEN
Little Joe knows the spot he and
Adam were riding strays.

LITTLE JOE
I'm ready when you say, Pa.

TWO SHOT - BEN AND BOLTON
as Ben crosses the room to take up his gunbelt.

BOLTON
If these are the three men I'm
after, they belong to me.

BEN
I think we'd better get something
straight, Captain. This is my land
you're on. And that's my son over
there who was ambushed. I'll settle
it my way. Now, if you want to come
along with us, all right. But you
ride where I say, and you ride behind
me. Otherwise, take your men and get
off the Ponderosa.

A pause, as Bolton stares back at him. A slight wavering in
his attitude indicates there is nothing he can do but accept
Ben's terms.

BOLTON
And if they are the men I'm
after?

BEN
You can decide that after I'm
done with them.

ANOTHER ANGLE
as Ben turns abruptly and starts out. Bolton and Little Joe
follow.
EXT. WOODED GROUND - DAY - FULL SHOT - SUTTON, TYLER, MERTZ

They push their way desperately ahead, then draw up by a small culvert.

ANGLE (STAGE)

As Sutton looks about, as if trying to pick up his bearings.

SUTTON
Let's stop for a breather.

TYLER
You sure you know where you're taking us, Sutton?

SUTTON
You want to strike out on your own, go ahead. I'm not stoppin' you, am I?

(looks off; studies land, then;)
Ranch is over that way, I think. Yeah, I'm sure of it.

MERTZ
How you know they gonna take us in?

SUTTON
I told you, I worked there when I was driftin' west a couple of years back. I'd have stayed on maybe, except the old man that run it booted me off cause his daughter took to me.
(smiles)
But he died... I always told Nedda I'd be comin' back for her. Just a little sooner than I figured, that's all.

Turning, Mertz brushes against a thicket, and YELPS as the branches scratch him.

SUTTON (continuing)
Shut up!

MERTZ
Aint nothin' around to hear us but heat owls and crawlies. And I don't like it none either...

SUTTON
You ain't ever known anything better --

MERTZ
No?—Once in Omaha, when I won stakes at faro, I went to a big, fancy hotel -- red velvet everywhere... brass knobs --
(smiles at memory)
And I met me a woman there... Huyee... And she was sure enough a woman, too.
SUTTON
Yeah...I'll just bet she was really somethin'.

MERTZ
You ain't puttin' a lie to me, are you, boy?

SUTTON
And if I was?

They are on the verge of squaring off, as Tyler steps between them and roughly shoves them apart.

TYLER
Cut it out! Both of you. That's an order.

SUTTON (reacts, then smiles)
"That's an order." You hear him, Mertz? Only you ain't an officer no more, Tyler. So maybe you better forget about issuin' orders. (studies him) I still don't figure you out. Mertz here was facing the gallows. Me, I had five years left to serve. But you had maybe six months to do and you'd have been free. So why risk your neck breaking out?!

TYLER
My reasons don't concern you.

SUTTON
Maybe...Maybe not. (looks off) You two hole up here, and I'll see if it's clear up at that girl's place.

TYLER
I'll go with you. Sutton ---

SUTTON (beat; then:)
All right. (indicates Mertz) But not him. Nelda might scare off, if she seen himadin' up in chains.

TYLER (considers, then to Mertz)
He's right. You'd better lie low till we can get some other clothes and something to pry those chains off with.

MERTZ
You gonna come back for sure though. You give me your Bible word on it?
Continued:

TYLER
You have my word.

SUTTON (to Tyler)
If you're comin', then let's move.

Sutton and Tyler start off, while Mertz heads into the culvert.

EXT. OPEN GROUND — FULL SHOT — BEN, LITTLE JOE, BOLTON
They ride out of the area of the gully where Adam was ambushed.

LITTLE JOE
They'd have headed off that way.
Pa, or else we'd have seen some sign of them.

BEN
Yeah, probably kept to the creek bed. Turning dry now... but the bank would still be soft enough to leave prints.

He spurs his horse forward, and the others follow his lead.

Dissolve to:

EXT. CULVERT AREA — P.O.V. SHOT — DAY
As the riders approach from the distance.

EXT. CULVERT — CLOSE SHOT — MERTZ
He boggles cold and shivering in the culvert. From O.S. the SOUND of horses, then indistinct VOICES, is heard. He reacts with fear.

EXT. CULVERT AREA — DAY
The riders gallop in, pull to a halt.

EXT. CULVERT — FULL SHOT — LITTLE JOE, BEN, BOLTON, SOLDIERS
Little Joe points toward the bank.

LITTLE JOE
Somebody's come by here — and not too long ago.

ANOTHER ANGLE — BOLTON
He turns to look back at his men.

BOLTON
Spread out. Search every spot that's big enough to hide any of them.
(to Ben, sarcastic)
CLOSE SHOT - MERTZ

With the pure, instinctive fear of a hunted animal, he hunches back soundlessly, as we see the legs of one of the soldiers crossing the frame in front of him.

FULL SHOT

as the group spreads out and searches the ground.

MED. SHOT - MERTZ

as one of the soldiers approaches his hiding spot. He tenses, and just as the soldier is about to discover him, he lashes out with his chain, and clubs the soldier to the ground. The soldier manages a startled cry. Terrified now, Mertz breaks and starts running.

ANOTHER ANGLE - BEN

He spots Mertz, and blocks his way. Mertz flails at him with the chain. Ben ducks, belts him in the stomach, then lays him out with a blow to the chin. He spots Bolton approaching with a drawn pistol.

BEN
You can put your gun away, Captain.

Bolton crosses to Mertz, turns him over with his foot, and peers down at his face.

BOLTON
That's one of them.
(formally)
I charge and hereby arrest this man for known and specific crimes against the articles of war.
(to Ben)
He's a military prisoner now.

Mertz stirs groggily awake, and Bolton turns to one of his men.

BOLTON
Corporal, take the prisoner in charge.

The corporal moves forward and pulls Mertz to his feet.

CAMERA MOVES IN, as Bolton starts to question him.

BOLTON
Where're the other two, Mertz?
(beat)
I'll ask you again, where are they?

He cuffs him with a backhanded slap. There are reactions from Ben and Little Joe.

MERTZ
I don't know. And if I did,
I wouldn't tell you, not if you
beat me to death.
BOLTON
You put a blotch on my record, Mertz, and I intend to erase it. It's going to be a while before you hang. How would you like to spend every second of that time in the hot box?

Mertz reacts, but manages to remain silent.

BOLTON (continuing)
Where are they?

MERTZ
I don't know. We split off --
(turns to Ben)
I'm tellin' the truth, mister. I swear it.

Bolton starts to hit Mertz again, but Ben catches his arm.

BEN
He might be telling the truth, Captain --

Bolton stares at Ben, then smiles slightly.

BOLTON
Of course -- if he knew where the others were he'd have poured it out. Because he's scum, and scum always breaks.

(whips around at Mertz)
Isn't that right, Mertz? -- Or have you forgotten what it was like in the hot box.?

MERTZ
Some day somebody's gonna get you yet, you butcher!

BOLTON (cockily)
But not you, Mertz. I can assure you of that.

He nods to the corporal, who starts dragging Mertz off.

MERTZ
NO! -- I'd rather die than go back to that hot box!

As he continues to struggle with the corporal, Bolton slips his foot out, half tripping Mertz, who stumbles forward off balance. Bolton pulls his gun, and is about to fire point-blank into Mertz' back, when Ben hits his arm, causing the shot to go wild.

BEN
You can't kill a man just like that!

Bolton stares at him, slowly resumes his self-control, puts
CONTINUED:

BOLTON
The prisoner was attempting to escape. You're a witness to that.

ANOTHER ANGLE — BEN
also controlling his anger.

BEN
And I'm a witness to the fact that you deliberately attempted to murder that man. Bolton, I'm going to see to it that my good friend, Colonel Metcalf at Fort Dayton, knows exactly the kind of officer he has in his command.

The two men stare tightly at each other, then suddenly Bolton whips around, turns back to his horse.

FADE OUT.

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. NEDDA'S YARD — NIGHT — FULL — TYLER AND SUTTON

They pause in the moonlight and look around. Sutton wears Adam's sheep jacket.

TYLER
Nice ranch.

SUTTON
Wait'll you see the gal who lives on it.

TYLER
We'd better get cleaned up first. Scare her half to death if we walked in on her this way.

SUTTON
Scare her? I guess you didn't listen when I told you about her. We were real close, Nedda and me. (beat) It ain't her I'm worried about. It's her pa... (looks around) The stable's over there.

They move off.
EXT. STABLE - NIGHT - FULL - TYLER AND SUTTON

As they make their way to the stable, Sutton opens the door, and the two men go inside.

INT. STABLE - NIGHT - MEDIUM

Sutton finds a lantern on the wall and lights it.

SUTTON
Shut the door!

Tyler obeys.

ANOTHER ANGLE - FULL SHOT

Sutton looks around and spies a water basin.

SUTTON
There's what we want.

He crosses towards it. Hanging on a nail, is a work shirt, which Sutton takes off and tosses at Tyler.

SUTTON
Put this on... Help you look human again.

He looks around at Tyler who is squatting at one of the stalls, looking at a foal.

TYLER
Good-looking colt. The mother must have died. He needs care.

Sutton who is washing, glances over at Tyler.

SUTTON
This is a fine time to be fussin' over horses.

TYLER
I sometime prefer them to people.

SUTTON
What's that supposed to mean?

TYLER
Just a general statement of philosophy.

Tyler starts to put on the work shirt over his prison outfit. Sutton glances at himself again in the mirror, then smiles as he slicks down his hair.

SUTTON
I'd like to see Butcher Bolton's face right now! Probably hunting us halfway across the Sierra.
TYLER
I doubt that. He's a sadist, but he was one of the best Indian trackers in the Army.

SUTTON (tries to laugh it off)
We're not Indians...
(serious)
Besides, after we hole up here a coupla days, they'll probably quit looking for us.

TYLER
Not Bolton.

SUTTON
All right, not Bolton, maybe -- but the brass. They won't figure we're worth the trouble. You're an officer -- you know how they think.

TYLER
I was an officer.

He crosses to the basin and uses the water and mirror to comb his hair.

TYLER (continuing)
That girl of yours... You've been gone for two years -- how do you know she hasn't married or something? --

SUTTON (cocky)
I know!
(smiles)
Like to make a little bet on it?

TYLER
You already have -- your life.

SUTTON
Yours, too -- and don't you forget it.

From outside, they HEAR the SOUND of someone opening the door. Sutton motions Tyler into shadows, then he stands behind the door.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as NEDDA OAKES, a handsome strong-featured girl of about 22, enters. She is wearing dungarees. She crosses to the stall where the foal is. As she takes a blanket and spreads it over the foal, Sutton slips up behind her and puts his hands over her eyes. She jumps up, CRIES OUT and starts to struggle as he slips his arms about her. But as she turns and sees his face her mood changes to one of surprise and shock.
CONTINUED:

NEDDA

Jimmy! -- Jimmy, it's you! --
But what are you doing here?
Where —?

Sutton touches her lips gently, stilling her, then draws her
into his arms and kisses her. After an instant she responds
passionately and clings to him.

SUTTON (laying it on)
I told you I'd be coming back.

NEDDA

Jimmy, I thought — I thought
maybe you'd forgotten me.

SUTTON

Forgotten? You think I'd ever
forget you, Neddah?

As he starts to kiss her she sees Tyler and REACTS.

SUTTON

Oh, that's my partner. I've told
him all about you — now he can
see everything I said was true.
(expansively)
Right, Tyler? -- Isn't she a honey?

TYLER

You never even got close, Sutton —
Miss, I'm pleased to know you.
Tyler's my name — Paul Tyler.

SUTTON (laughs)

Miss? — Her name's Neddah.
Call her Neddah.

Nedda immediately senses something different in this other man,
his manner and speech.

NEDDA (to Tyler)

How do you do?...You're in the
Army with Jimmy?

TYLER

Well, not exactly...

SUTTON (breaking in)

I left the Army, Nedda. Some time
back — Tyler and I — we've been
prospecting together...

NEDDA

Oh, I see...Jimmy, why didn't you
and Mr. Tyler come right up to the
house? — What were you doing here?

SUTTON

We have a lot of trail dirt on us,
honey -- we wanted to get cleaned
up before we barged in...
34 Continued: NEDDA
That's not fair, is it, Jimmy 
-- and you're getting prettied up 
and not giving me any warning.

SUTTON
Honey, you look wonderful --
just beautiful.

She basked in the compliment.

TYLER
I think I'll take a walk 
outside.

NEDDA
That's not necessary.

TYLER
I'd like a little air.

SUTTON
Wait a minute. 
(to Nedda)
I guess your father's in the 
house.

NEDDA
He died, Jimmy -- over a year 
ago.

SUTTON
That's a real shame -- I'm sure 
sorry. 
(beat)
Who's taking care of the place?

NEDDA
Just my hired man -- Charlie, 
but he's in town for the week.

SUTTON (suppressing relief)
That's awful, you being alone like 
that.

TYLER
I'll be outside. 
(exits)

35 SHOT -- SUTTON AND NEDDA
as he kisses her again.

SUTTON
Hey, honey -- you sure look 
good to me...

NEDDA
Jimmy, why didn't you ever 
write me?
Continued:

NEDDA (a touch of rerimination)
I know how it is... but do you?
Waiting for letters that never come! Looking down the road for
somebody to ride up... After a while you quit hoping -- you even stop
dreaming.

SUTTON
I didn't stop. That's all that kept me going. Nedda, I'm gonna make up
for all the lost time.

NEDDA
I'm not sure you can...

SUTTON
Let me try!

He pulls her close and starts to kiss her on the mouth. She
resists a moment, then finally clings to him.

Dissolve to:

36

INT. METCALF'S OFFICE - DAY - MED. SHOT

Ben faces COLONEL METCALF, a career officer of about 50,
who seems reasonable, dedicated and competent.

METCALF
Ben, I've known you a long time, but I can't accept these charges
you make against Captain Bolton -- not without proof.

BEN
What kind of proof do you want?

METCALF
At the moment, it's your word against his.

BEN
What did he tell you? That Mertz was trying to escape?

METCALF
That's what his report says.

BEN
Have you spoken to Mertz? Have you gotten his side of the story?

METCALF
I would have done so, of course. Unfortunately, Private Mertz is dead.

BEN
Dead...
METCALF
He attacked a guard in the stockade last night. During the ensuing struggle he was killed.

BEN
And you believe that? You really believe that?

METCALF
Why shouldn't I believe it? — I have the word of an officer to that effect.

BEN
Colonel, how many men have died in Captain Bolton's stockade?

METCALF
There are deaths in every stockade. They are not necessarily the responsibility of the officers in charge.

BEN (standing)
Colonel, if you choose to ignore the facts —

METCALF (standing too)
I don't ignore them. Ben — I know them, perhaps a little better than you do. Captain Bolton is an officer with a distinguished record, commended several times for bravery in action. Perhaps you noticed his hand. He was captured and tortured by the Sioux.

BEN
The Sioux are savages. Captain Bolton is supposed to be a civilized, responsible man.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

METCALF
Come in.

The door opens and Bolton comes in

BOLTON
The Colonel sent for me?

METCALF
You know Mr. Cartwright?

BOLTON
Yes, I do, sir.

METCALF
Captain Bolton, Mr. Cartwright has made certain charges against you. I thought you should be here to defend yourself.
CONTINUED:

BOLTON
I'm aware of Mr. Cartwright's charges. The Colonel knows that my behavior has been and always will be strictly according to Army regulations.

BEN
There's no regulation to cover the killing of prisoners.

BOLTON
Mr. Cartwright, maybe you don't know who you're defending. Private Hertz killed a fellow soldier in a brawl over a card game. As for Sutton, he attempted an armed robbery of an Army payroll.

METCALF
Ben, this is a Casuals post. I don't know whether you realize that -- It's made up of outcasts and misfits.

BEN
But they're still men, and as such entitled to certain minimum standards of treatment.

BOLTON
That's exactly what they get -- certain minimum standards --

(reveals himself)

-- and if you feel you have to bleed your heart over these cowards, murderers and thieves, I pity you.

METCALF
That'll be all, Captain.

BOLTON
Sorry, sir --

METCALF
Ben, I respect your opinions and your judgment, but this is the Army, and I have to stand behind Captain Bolton.

BEN (containing anger)
I understand -- Good day, Colonel.

METCALF
Good day --

Ben turns and goes out.

BOLTON (to the Colonel)
Thank you, sir.
Metcalf
Captain, I chose my words carefully in front of Mr. Cartwright, but your conduct has been brought into question. If there is the slightest indication of any transgression of regulations on your part, I'll see that you are investigated and, if the facts so warrant, court-martialed. Is that understood?

Bolton
Yes, sir.

Metcalf
That's all.

Bolton
With the colonel's permission. I request leave to return to the Ponderosa with a detail of men.

Metcalf
That's private land, Captain. We can't search it without permission of the owner, or an order from a civilian court.

Bolton
I've already obtained the required court order, from the Federal District Court in this Territory.

Metcalf
By what authority?!

Bolton
Judge-advocate general's manual of procedure, Article 39. "When in pursuit of known deserters, the pursuing officer shall be deemed in command, and where time is of the essence he shall initiate and take such steps as are necessary to apprehend the said deserters."

Metcalf
Request granted -- But, if I were you, Captain, I'd remember the warning I gave you. I'd remember it very carefully.

Bolton snaps to attention, salutes, exits.

Dissolve to:

Int. Nedda's Kitchen - Day - Full Shot

Tyler and Sutton, who has shaved now, are finishing breakfast. Nedda, who has a dress on and fixed her hair, is across the room getting coffee from the stove. Sutton, who seems in buoyant spirits, watches her with a smile, then turns to
CONTINUED:

SUTTON
What do you think of her?
Pretty special, huh?

Nedda crosses back to the table and pours coffee. Sutton puts his hand intimately on her arm.

SUTTON
That was great, honey. A good meal makes a man feel like he belongs.

Nedda starts to clear the plates from the table. She hesitates over Tyler's plate.

NEDDA
You hardly touched your food.

TYLER
I guess I spent too much time eating Army chow.

NEDDA
Army chow?

Sutton immediately covers with a smile.

SUTTON
He was in the Army too -- before we started the prospecting.

A KNOCK is heard on the back door.

SUTTON (continuing)
Who's that? --

NEDDA
I don't know who it could be at this hour.

Sutton catches Nedda's arm as she starts toward the door.

SUTTON
Nedda honey, would you do me a favor? Don't say anything about Tyler and me being here.

NEDDA
Why?

SUTTON
Could be we hit a big silver strike. It's best nobody knows about us -- not yet. You understand.

Before Nedda can answer, there's another KNOCK. She crosses to door.

MED. SHOT - AT DOOR
as Nedda opens the door to reveal Hoss.
38 CONTINUED:

NEDDA (surprised)
Hoss, Good morning.

HOSS
You sure look fine this morning,
Miss Nedda — that dress and all.

NEDDA
Well, thank you, Hoss.

HOSS
Don’t mean to alarm you, but Pa
thought you ought to know — there’s
a couple of Army prisoners on the loose.

NEDDA
Army prisoners?

HOSS
There were three — but they caught
one.

39 REACTION SHOT — SUTTON
He pulls out his gun.

40 BACK TO SCENE
Nedda seems distracted. Hoss puzzles over her slightly.

HOSS
Nobody’s been around? I mean you’re
all right, ain’t you, ma’am?

NEDDA (quickly)
Yes, yes — I’d ask you in for
coffee, but —
(hesitates)
— the stove, it’s not working right.

HOSS (ready to go inside)
Oh, that’s too bad, Miss Nedda.
Maybe I could fix it for you.

41 REACTION SHOT — SUTTON
He sets himself with gun.

42 BACK TO SCENE
Nedda is trying to block Hoss’ way without appearing rude

NEDDA
Thanks, Hoss, but it’s not really
broken — just a little hard to
handle — Thanks for stopping by —

HOSS
You’re sure you’re all right?
CONTINUED:

NEDDA
I'm fine -- just fine, Hoss.

HOSS
Well then, I guess I'll head back, Miss Nedda --

He hesitates, then turns and starts toward his horse. Nedda watches him, then closes the door.

FULL SHOT

Sutton still holds the gun.

SUTTON
He gone?

Nedda nods. He turns to put the gun away, then catches her lock.

SUTTON (innocently)
You can't ever be sure about people, honey. We heard about those Army prisoners, too. It might have been one of them.

NEDDA
It might have been...
(beat; concerned)
Jimmy, just where were you prospecting?

SUTTON
Up North a piece...Ain't that right, Tyler?

TYLER
I don't know, Sutton --
(shrugs)
Guess it is if you say so.

SUTTON
Sure it's right! -- what's got into you!

TWO SHOT - NEDDA AND SUTTON

NEDDA
Jimmy?...
(beat)
Is it you they're looking for?

SUTTON (beat)
Yes. But I was framed. It's a long story, Nedda...You know me, honey -- I was wild, but I never did anything dishonest.

NEDDA (worried)
But breaking out of prison... --
SUTTON
You'd have to know what it was
like. Beatings...starvation...
(gestures toward Tyler)
You know what happened to him?
Three weeks of the sweat box. He
was practically dead when they
dragged him out.
(To Tyler)
Tell her!

TYLER
That much is true...

NEDDA
Why didn't you tell me all this
last night?

SUTTON
I was going to, but -- I was afraid.

NEDDA
Of me? -- You couldn't have been
afraid of me, Jimmy.

SUTTON
That's what Butcher Bolton does to
you. He makes you feel like you're
an animal, so you're scared all
the time --
(grips her shoulders)
Nedda, if you love me you'll help
us.

NEDDA
What can I do?

SUTTON
Hide us out here.

TYLER
There's no point dragging her into
this Sutton. Let's get out while we
can.

SUTTON
Where to? They got Mertz.
(softening)
Look, Tyler, we got a good thing
here -- and it's the only chance
we have.

Tyler glares at him for a moment, then starts to push past him.
Nedda takes his arm.

NEDDA
You can both stay.
(beat)
I want you to...
CONTINUED:

Tyler looks at her and nods... Then he tries to lighten the
moment by smiling.

TYLER

Well, if I'm going to stay, I
know my way around horses. Maybe
I can help you with some of the
chores.

NEDDA

Thanks, but Charlie left things in
pretty good shape before he went to
town.

TYLER

Tell you one thing that's not in
good shape. -- that colt in
the barn. Think I'll have a look.

Nedda nods her agreement, and Tyler turns and goes out.
Nedda locks after him.

NEDDA (to Sutton)

I've never met anyone quite
like him before.

SUTTON (appraising her)

You... you like him?

NEDDA

I don't know. I feel sorry for
him. I feel sorry for both of you.

(beat)

Let's get some of these dishes off
the table -- if anyone came along,
I'd hate to have to explain three
for breakfast.

SUTTON (smiles)

Honey, you're talking my language.

She starts to clear the table, and he helps her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CREEK AREA - DAY - FULL SHOT - BOLTON, DETAIL

Bolton and his men are drawn up near the culvert where
Mertz had hidden.

BOLTON

I want every inch of this ground
combed. Corporal, take half the
detail and start searching in that
direction. The rest of you will fan
out this way with me.

CORPORAL

Yes sir... Only, well, the way I
figure it, Captain, they could be
half over the Sierras and runnin'
for California by now.
BOLTON
They're here. I spent half my career tracking renegade Indians.
You learn to sense your quarry.

CORPORAL
But that's different... These men aren't Indians, Captain.

BOLTON
There's no difference. Animals, savages, men like these -- when
they're scared they run for the first hole they can crawl into. All
we have to do is find that hole...
Step your men out.

CORPORAL
YES sir.

As the Corporal barks the command, the detail of soldiers
starts forward.

FADE OUT:

ACT III

FADE IN:

46 INT. PONDEROSA - DAY - CLOSE SHOT - HOSS

He is seated at the hearth, worried.

HOSS
I don't know, Pa---she seemed all right---but she was acting kind
of nervous-like.

OUR SHOT PULLS BACK AND ADJUSTS to include the rest of the
Cartwrights, in the midst of a family conference. Adam shows
some of the marks of his beating.

ADAM
You mean her not letting you in
the house?

HOSS
That, and --well, it's just something
you feel. If I didn't know Nellie so
well, I'd say she wanted to get rid of
me.

LITTLE JOE
If you were feelin' so much, why
didn't you take a good look around
the place?

HOSS
Little Brother, I been kickin' myself
all the way home for not doing just that.
CONTINUED:

BEN
I think we'd all better take
a good look around her place.

ADAM (standing)
Suites me fine. I'm getting
tired of being an invalid.

BEN
Adam, I'd rather you stayed here.

ADAM
But, Pa —

BEN
With Captain Bolton and the deserters
still in this area, we shouldn't
leave the house unguarded.

ADAM (smile)
All right, I'll hold the fort.

Ben pats him on the shoulder, and he and the boys go out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NEDDA'S KITCHEN - DAY - FULL

Nedda pours some milk into a pot on the stove. Sutton finishes
putting away some of the dishes.

NEDDA
The colt'll be needing this.

SUTTON
You and Tyler...you sure spend
a lot of time worrying about
that colt.
    (starts for the door)
I'll see you later.

NEDDA
Where are you going?

SUTTON
I want to scout the area.
    (smiles)
Army talk -- I guess it rubs off
on you whether you like it or not.

He goes out. Nedda pours the milk from the pot into a pan
and goes out with it.

EXT. STABLE - DAY - FULL

Nedda walks up to the stable door, carrying a pan of milk.
She opens the door and goes in.

INT. STABLE - DAY - FULL

as Nedda ENTERS, Tyler is barning over the colt.
CONTINUED:

**NEDDA**
I brought him some milk —

**TYLER (looks up, smiles)**
Ne needs it. Is it warm?

**NEDDA**
Should be just about right.

Tyler takes the pan, dips his fingers into the milk, letting the colt drain the milk off his fingers. The girl studies him.

**NEDDA**
Where did you learn about horses?

**TYLER**
I grew up with them. My father bred trotters as a hobby...back in Maryland.

**NEDDA**
Don't see many trotters cut here. -- I love them, the way they move.

**TYLER**
You ought to see them being trained. They'll fight you, make it tough, but once you have their trust you can depend on them —

(turns away)

Wish you could say as much for people.

**NEDDA (slowly)**
You've been hurt pretty bad, haven't you?

Tyler looks at her, rises to his feet, doesn't answer. Then he turns, crosses to the wash basin and starts to remove his shirt.

**NEDDA (continuing)**
Paul, is there anything you really care about?

**TYLER (tight)**
One thing. That stockade —

I'm never going back.

He now has his shirt off — there are ugly welts on his chest and back.

50 MEDIUM SHOT — NEDDA

She is shocked by what she sees. OUR CAMERA PANS WITH HER as she crosses to him.

**NEDDA**
Is that what they did to you?

**TYLER**
That's right...
CONTINUED:

NEDDA
It's -- It's terrible... Paul, forgive me for not understanding.

He nods and starts to wash, as she watches him.

51

EXT. NEDDA'S HOUSE - DAY - FULL

Ben, Little Joe and Ross ride up and dismount. Ben walks up to the front door and knocks. There's no answer. He knocks again; then he tries the front door. It opens and he and the boys enter.

52

INT. NEDDA'S KITCHEN - DAY - FULL

For a moment, the room is empty, and we HEAR Ben's VOICE...

BEN'S VOICE
Nedda...

Then Ben and the boys ENTER.

ROSS
Funny... she wouldn't have gone away without locking up.

BEN
You boys take a look out back. I'll check the stable.

LITTLE JOE
Right, Pa...

They turn and go out.

53

EXT. STABLE - DAY - FULL

as Ben walks towards the stable door. He stops at the door, as he HEARS VOICES from inside.

TYLER'S VOICE (O.S.)
I'm sorry you had to see those scars...

54

INT. STABLE - DAY - FULL

NEDDA
I'm not... I'm glad I saw them.

TYLER (studies her)
Nedda, worry about Sutton, not me.

55

ANOTHER ANGLE TO INCLUDE BEN

as he ENTERS the stable, hears what Tyler says. Tyler whirls, grabs the first weapon at hand--a pickhandle. Ben lets his hand drop to his gun.

BEN
Put it down.
CONTINUED:

Nedda whips around, reacts to Ben's presence.

    NEDDA
    Ben, please.

    BEN
    I don't have any choice, Nedda.
      (draws gun)
    I mean it now, son-- drop that.

REVERSE ANGLE - SUTTON

He stands in the open doorway, holding Adam's gun on Ben.

    SUTTON
    And you can drop that gun. Now, Mister!
      (beat, as Ben hesitates)
    I got the drop and from here I ain't gonna miss.

Nedda steps protectively in front of Ben.

    NEDDA
    Jimmy, no----this is Ben
    Cartwright, he's -----

She steps in between Ben and Sutton. Ben sees that she's in
the line of fire.

    BEN
    Nedda, watch out-----

Ben's attention is momentarily on Nedda. Tyler takes advantage
of that moment to swing the pick handle at Ben from his blind
side, knocking him down and out.

    NEDDA (bending over him)
    Ben!
    SUTTON (to Tyler)
    Good work, pal---
    TYLER
    Good? I could have killed him!

Tyler kneels beside Nedda.

    NEDDA
    He'll be all right, won't he?
    TYLER
    In a mo----while ... I hit him
    hard, too hard.

    SUTTON
    Ben Cartwright, eh? From the
    Ponderosa?
      (no answer)
    Tyler, from the way he was talking
    he knows who we are, doesn't he?
TYLER
I'm afraid he does.

SUTTON
Nothing to be afraid of. It's his hard luck, not ours. Nedda, get away from him.

His gun is ready, and his intentions are clear.

NEDDA (Unable to believe it)
No, Jimmy, what are you doing?

SUTTON
I said get away from him!
(Dismisses her aside)
It's him or us!

NEDDA (anguished)
Jimmy! You can't!

He levels the gun. Tyler picks up Ben's gun and faces Sutton with it.

TYLER
Put it down, Sutton.

SUTTON
You decide to start giving orders again, Lieutenant?

TYLER
I've got no choice -- you try killing him, you die yourself.

Nedda watches, horrified, as the two men face each other.

SUTTON
What's the matter with you? You itching to have Bolton beat you to death?

A PAUSE. Tyler stands unmoving. Sutton wavers.

SUTTON
All right, you stay with him. I'm gonna get out. Come on, Nedda --
(as Nedda hesitates)
You're coming with me, ain't you?
(waits; then)
All right -- stay here with him!
See where it'll get you!

He moves quickly to the door, but pauses as he sees something in the distance.

POV - HOSS AND LITTLE JOE
coming toward the stable.
EXT. NEDDA'S FARM - DAY - FULL SHOT

Hoss and Little Joe react as they see Sutton.

LITTLE JOE

Come on.

They start running towards the stable.

INT. STABLE - DAY - FULL SHOT

as Sutton weighs the situation. He hesitates, just as Ben starts to regain consciousness. Ben means, then climbs to his feet. Nedda crosses to him.

NEDDA

Ben, are you all right?

BEN (rubbing head)

I think so...

Tyler notes Sutton's hesitation, calls across to him?

TYLER

What's the matter, Sutton? --- anything wrong?

Sutton slowly turns back into the stable, a half-smile on his lips.

SUTTON (to Nedda)

I thought it over, Nedda --- I just couldn't leave you, after all --- not with the big plans I got for us.

(crosses to her)

You and me, honey --- we'll make a great pair.

The girl looks up, stares at him.

NEDDA

Will we, Jimmy? ---

60

ANOTHER ANGLE

as Hoss and Little Joe ENTER the stable, guns drawn.

ROSS (to Tyler and Sutton)

Drop your guns, boys ---

(they do so, and Ben picks them up)

You all right, Pa?

BEN

I am now.

SUTTON

Tyler hit him before he knew who he was --- but it's all right now, isn't it, Mr. Cartwright?

BEN

What is it you're after?
CONTINUED:

SUTTON
Just a chance, that's all. Just so we don't have to go back to that stockade...Mister, they treated us like we were caged animals.
(pulls up sleeve to reveal chain mark)
I could've stood it. But it was for Nedda -- that's why I broke loose.
(to Ben)
Give us a break. You could help us get out of the Territory. Just a break, that's all. Turn us back and it's as good as killin' us.

There's a moment's silence, then Nedda turns to Ben.

NEDDA
I've seen the scars they got in that stockade. Help them, Ben -- you've got to help them!

BEN
It's an Army matter. I don't have any part in it.

NEDDA
What if one of them was your son -- Ross or Little Joe?

Ben tries to shrug the question away.

NEDDA (continuing)
Look at them, Ben. It's not that impossible.

BEN
If it was my son, I'd tell him to turn himself in.

TYLER (wryly)
To the mercies of Captain Bolton?

CLOSE SHOT - BEN
He wrestles inwardly with the problem, then seems to make a decision.

FULL SHOT
Ben turns to Sutton and Tyler.

BEN
Give me your name tags.

SUTTON
What do you want them for?
CONTINUED:

BEN
I'll need them to convince
Colonel Metcalf that I've talked
to you and you're both ready to
surrender.

SUTTON
You mean to Bolton? --

BEN
I'm not making any promises...
I'll talk to Colonel Metcalf --
I'll try to convince him to treat
you fairly.

SUTTON
You ain't got a prayer, Mister --

CAMERA HOLDS on Sutton and Tyler. Slowly, Tyler reaches into
his shirt, takes off his name tag, hands it to Ben.

TYLER
Sutton -- do we have any choice?

Slowly, Sutton hands over his tag to Ben.

TYLER
But one thing, Mr. Cartwright --
if Bolton comes for us, I'm
not going back.

Ben looks at him, turns to Hoss and Little Joe.

BEN
Keep an eye on them, boys --

SUTTON
What's the matter? -- Don't you
trust us?

Ben looks at him, doesn't say anything.

HOSS
Don't worry, Pa -- they won't be
going anywhere.

Ben nods, exits.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OPEN GROUND - MED. SHOT - BOLTON

as the Corporal comes up to report to him.

CORPORAL (pointing off)
No sign of them that way, sir.
A mountain goat'd have trouble
getting through some of that ground.
And even if they had made it,
we'd have spotted tracks.
CONTINUED:

BOLTON (points off)
How about over that direction?

CORPORAL
Some kind of horse ranch, Sir.
And a dirt road that leads to it.

BOLTON (thinks, then)
Take your men that way.

CORPORAL
Yes, Sir.

He salutes and starts off. CAMERA HOLDS on Bolton.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY - TRUCKING SHOT - BEN
as he rides.

CORPORAL'S VOICE
Halt!

ANOTHER ANGLE TO INCLUDE CORPORAL
who steps onto the road and blocks BEN. He FIRES A SHOT
in the air.

ANOTHER ANGLE - BEN
He wheels his horse, and is blocked from the rear by other
soldiers.

CORPORAL
Dismount.

Ben hesitates, then starts to comply.

ANOTHER ANGLE - BOLTON
as he comes into SCENE. CAMERA PANS with him, as he crosses
to face Ben.

BOLTON
I’m taking you into custody.

BEN
For what reason, Captain?

BOLTON
Aiding and abetting in the escape
of an Army prisoner.
(turns to Corporal)
Search him.

BEN
You’re stepping over that line,
Bolton.
CONTINUED:

BOLTON
You'll allow me to be the judge of that.

Ben resists as the soldiers start to search him, but there are too many of them. The Corporal finds Sutton's and Tyler's stockade name tags, and hands them over to Bolton. Bolton smiles briefly over them, then turns on Ben.

BOLTON
Where are they?

Ben's expression indicates he has no intention of answering anything. Bolton turns to the Corporal.

BOLTON
Which way was he coming from?

The Corporal points down the dirt road.

CORPORAL
From the west, Sir ---

BOLTON
They found that hole and crawled into it. Just the way I told you, Corporal —
(indicates Ben)
Bring him along.

The Corporal gestures to Ben, who then mounts his horse.

CORPORAL (barking the order)
Detail, move out!

As the group rides off...

FADE OUT:

--- END OF ACT III ---

ACT IV

FADE IN:

INT. STABLE - FULL SHOT - DAY

Nedda and Tyler are near the colt's stall. Sutton is on one side. Hoss and Little Joe are on guard in b.g.

69 TWO SHOT - NEDDA AND TYLER

Tyler looks at the colt which gets shakily to its feet and
CONTINUED:

moves about the stall.

TYLER
She's going to make it. Funny
what a thin line separates things.
Yesterday I wouldn't have given
that colt much of a chance.

NEDDA
It can be the same with a man... A
day ago, I might not have thought
you were worth saving.

TYLER
Do you think I am now?

Nedda puts her hand lightly on his arm.

NEDDA
You saved Ben Cartwright's life.

Tyler looks closely at her.

ANOTHER ANGLE - SUTTON

He has eased himself towards the side of the stable, somewhat
behind Hoss. He glances thoughtfully about and spots some
team traces and halters which hang over a rafter near where
Hoss stands. Little Joe turns slightly and looks at him.

LITTLE JOE
You'd just as well sit down,
mister. We got us a long wait.

SUTTON
I was just stretching my legs.

LITTLE JOE
Well now, you got all the kinks
out, so just sit yourself.

SUTTON
All right, friend -- don't get
angry.

MED.SHOt - TYLER AND NEDDA

still by the stall, as Hoss moves into scene.

HOSS (watching Tyler)
You sure care a lot about that
little foal --

TYLER
He doesn't have much else to
care for him...
showing her growing feeling for the man. Hoss notes this also, looks at Tyler.

HOSS
You don't have to tell me this
if you don't want to...
(hesitates)
But what was it you done got
you into all that trouble?

TYLER
I was convicted of cowardice.

Nedda, Little Joe and Hoss all react. Tyler sees this, laughs bitterly.

TYLER (continuing)
It's true -- the actual charge
read: Dereliction of duty, refusal
to obey a command, cowardice in
battle.

ANGLE -- FAVORING TYLER

He hesitates a moment and then shrugs.

TYLER
It was in the border campaign
against the Apaches -- my first
command. The regiment was pinned
down. I was ordered to take my
platoon and make a flank attack
in the open. Twenty-seven men
against four hundred Apaches. I
refused...

(beat)
Maybe it was because I was afraid.
All I know is that I couldn't bring
myself to lead twenty-seven men to
their deaths.

HOSS
Why'd they want you to do that?

TYLER
That's the terrible part -- I didn't
know that it was meant to be a
diversionary attack. The real attack
was from the other flank. They were
thrown back and half the regiment was
wiped out.

(beat)
Maybe my life -- and the lives of my
twenty-seven men could have made the
difference.

(beat)
But now I can't ever know.
ANGLE - NEDDA, HOSS, LITTLE JOE.

HOSS (gently)
Fighting Indians isn't like any
other kind of fighting -- you
got to be real experienced to
know how to figure them devils out.

TYLER (taut)
But I was wrong. Experienced or not,
an order was an order. It should
have been obeyed.

LITTLE JOE
Too bad they wouldn't give you
another chance.

TYLER (lashng at himself)
Why should they? -- Any reason to
think I'd work out better another
time?

Suddenly, Nedda leaps to her feet, eyes blazing.

NEDDA
That wasn't cowardice, Paul --
just because you wouldn't obey
an idiotic order and commit
suicide with all your men!

HOSS (shakes his head)
No, Miss Nedda -- you're wrong.
It wasn't an idiotic order. The
Army generally knows what it's
doing.

NEDDA
Then what was it doing when it
put those scars on his back?

LITTLE JOE
You can't judge the whole Army
by a man like Captain Bolton --

Sutton inserts himself into scene at this point.

SUTTON
But, friend -- that's the man
we've got to go back to.

LITTLE JOE
Pa promised he'd take care of
that, didn't he?

SUTTON
Your Pa's a good man, and maybe
he's got good intentions -- but
he never came up against anyone
like Bolton before. Friend, I
guarantee you -- Bolton'll kill
us both.
CONTINUED:

HOSS
Mister, you're wrong.

SUTTON
There's only one way we can beat it -- and that's if you fix it so we don't have to go back!

HOSS
Now you know we can't do that --

SUTTON
Can't you? -- This morning, when I scouted the terrain, I left a buggy and a couple horses back in the gully -- all you gotta do is turn your back a couple seconds -- and Tyler, me and Nedda'll disappear.

LITTLE JOE
You're wasting your breath.

SUTTON
You think a lot about Nedda, don't you? You want her to be happy? All right -- how do you think she's gonna feel watching them take me back to get killed! She's been waiting for me all these years -- Tell them, Nedda -- tell them to let us go!...

NEDDA
I can't do that, Jimmy.

SUTTON
Why not?
(looks at Tyler and the girl)
Hey -- I just wonder what's been going on in this stable besides carin' for sick colts...

TYLER (furious)
Why, you -- !

Tyler charges Sutton and hits him. Sutton falls back. Little Joe and Boss rush in to break up the fight, and pull Tyler off Sutton who is on the ground. In the melee, Sutton manages to whip Little Joe's gun out of his holster. Then he springs to his feet, his gun in the boy's back.

SUTTON (to Hoss)
Take one step my way and I'll put a bullet in him.

HOSS
Mister, you do that and all the bullets you got in that gun ain't gonna stop me from squeezin' the life outta you.
SUTTON

Don't you worry, friend — I'll do it. I got nothin' to lose now — throw over your gun.

Frustrated, Hoss finally throws the gun on the floor by Sutton. Cautiously, Sutton bends and picks up the gun. With a cocky smile he gives Little Joe a shove away, then covers them with the two guns.

SUTTON (sure of himself)
You think I was just gonna march meek as a lamb back to that pesthole of a stockade?

HOSS
Don't look to me like you're much closer to bein' free now than you was two minutes ago -- unless you figure on killin' all of us. And that'd be a lotta killin' — even for a man like you. You got nowhere left to run, little man.

SUTTON
I told you — I got that buggy and those horses.
(looks at Tyler, laughs)
So long, Lieutenant -- you had your chance.
(looks at Nedda)
You can have what's left of him after Captain Bolton gets through with him.
(turns, exits)

EXT. STABLE AREA - CLOSE SHOT - SUTTON

as he runs off.

INT. STABLE - TWO SHOT - NEDDA AND TYLER

She looks out after Sutton, then turns and holds against Tyler.

NEDDA
I'm sorry for him. I don't know why -- but I can't help feeling bad for him.

TYLER
I know.

He holds her.

EXT. STABLE - TRUCKING SHOT - SUTTON

as he flees. Suddenly he stops as he sees:

SUTTON'S POV
ANGLE - SUTTON

An animal at bay now, he tenses, starts running in the opposite direction.

80 ANOTHER ANGLE

A second soldier suddenly looms up in front of Sutton.

SECOND SOLDIER

Halt!

Sutton turns to run back again, only to face the first soldier. He raises his guns to fire, when suddenly a SHOT rings out, hitting him in the back. He drops on his face, the guns still in his hands.

81 ANGLE - BOLTON

as slowly he lowers his gun. Then he nods to Corporal at his side.

BOLTON

As you saw, Corporal -- he was armed and dangerous.

The Corporal remains silent, tight-faced.

82 REACTION SHOT - BEN

under guard, as he sees the killing of Sutton.

83 INT. STABLE - MED. SHOT - NEDDA, TYLER, HOSS, LITTLE JOE

They rush to door, look out at scene. Suddenly Nedda grabs Tyler's arm.

NEDDA

He'll kill you, too -- just the way he killed Sutton!

(turns quickly to Hoss and Little Joe)

Hoss -- tell him Paul's going to give himself up. Tell him he doesn't have a gun.

HOSS

I'll tell him, Miss Nedda -- but I don't figure Bolton's gonna wait long.

NEDDA

Just keep him out for a moment -- that's all I'm asking, Hoss.

LITTLE JOE

What good's that gonna do?

HOSS (pulling him along)

I guess she'd like to say a private goodbye...
ANOTHER ANGLE - NEDDA

She waits until Hoss and Little Joe have moved out, then grabs Tyler and starts leading him toward the rear door. After a couple of steps he pulls up short.

TYLER
What're you doing, Nedda?

NEDDA
The back door. We can make it to the gully.

TYLER
No, Nedda. Don't you know Bolton would shoot you down just as quickly as he would me?

NEDDA
I don't care! I love you. I want to be with you. I'm not going to let them kill you.

TYLER
Would you go on loving me, if I ran now?

EXT. STABLE - FULL SHOT

Bolton and his men advance on Hoss and Little Joe.

HOSS
No need for you to go in, Captain. Tyler's comin' out to surrender.

BOLTON
Get out of the way!

CLOSE SHOT - BOLTON

BOLTON
Tyler!

ANGLE - TYLER

as he comes out of the stable.

TYLER (calmly)
Here I am, Captain.

CLOSE SHOT - BOLTON

A cold smile comes across his face, then his features tighten.

BOLTON
Drop your gun, Tyler.
CLOSE SHOT – BEN

reacting, as he realizes that Bolton plans to shoot.

BEN

Captain! — He’s not armed. He doesn’t have a gun!

ANGLE – SUTTON

Slowly he raises his face inches off the ground. His right hand tightens on his gun.

ANGLE – BOLTON

He ignores Ben, all his attention on Tyler.

BOLTON

I said, drop your gun, Tyler.

He starts to draw his pistol.

REACTION SHOT – NEDDA

She cries out.

ANOTHER ANGLE – BEN

He pulls his guard aside and slams into Bolton before he can fire. Ross and Little Joe start to move in, but the Corporal stops them with his rifle.

CORPORAL

Stay where you are!

ANGLE

as a pair of soldiers grab Ben from behind, pin his arms.

BOLTON (savage smile)

Cartwright, you’ll be sorry you ever interfered with the Army.

BEN (bitingly)

Don’t you call yourself the Army!

BOLTON (as he starts to pull off his glove)

I’m all the Army you’ll ever see —

As he raises his hand to hit Ben, a SHOT rings out. Bolton sways, looks surprised, drops to the ground, dead.

ANGLE – SUTTON

A crazy grin on his face.
CONTINUED:

SUTTON
That's one Indian trick
you forgot, butcher —

It's his last gasp. His face hits the dirt.

96 GROUP SHOT — DAY

as each man reacts to the climax of events. Ben slowly turns

to the Corporal.

BEN
You'd better start back to the
Fort, Corporal...

The Corporal turns to Tyler.

97 TWO SHOT — TYLER AND NEDDA

They are aware only of each other,

NEDDA
How long will it be?

TYLER
I don't know — but I'll never
run again...

98 FULL SHOT

Tyler takes leave of Nedda and crosses to the Corporal.

TYLER
Let's go back, Corporal...

CAMERA PANS to the Cartwrights.

BEN
We'll look out for her, Tyler
— until you get back.

As they exchange looks...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT IV.