

GETTING BY

by
Thomas Hill

(256) 998-2347
thill70@yahoo.com

FADE IN:

EXT. BRASS RAIL SALOON - NIGHT

In the dirt main street, horses stand tied to the hitching rails. They watch a DRUNK stumble through the saloon's batwing doors and fall to the board sidewalk.

SUPER: "April 12, 1861, Shreveport, Louisiana."

The Drunk crawls toward the water trough. He dips his head under and emerges wide-eyed. After shaking the water off like a dog, he rises and weaves his way down the street.

INT. BRASS RAIL SALOON - NIGHT

SALOON GIRLS mingle about the crowd, delivering beers and flirting with the PATRONS of the bar, who range from farmers to plantation owners to store keepers.

In the center, four men sit around a green-felt card table, playing poker.

ANDREW JACKSON BUELL, in the vicinity of 30, jovial, and dressed like a riverboat gambler, deals the cards.

Across from him sits LASHLEY, 50s, smoking a cigar, and dressed in a suit that screams plantation owner. He leaves his cards where they land until Buell finishes dealing.

HASTINGS and SCHMIDT are about Lashley's age but less well dressed. Both drink beer and study their cards as they receive them from Buell.

HASTINGS

Think there's gonna be a fight,
Mr. Lashley?

LASHLEY

That is most certainly a strong
possibility.

HASTINGS

(disgusted at cards)
Take three.

SCHMIDT

That Mr. Lincoln needs to let folks down here alone. We been handling our business just fine.

LASHLEY

Two. Hopefully, Mr. Schmidt, now that he's been elected, he'll do just that. I doubt any sane man would want to enter into a war so soon after getting into office.

SCHMIDT

(nods at Lashley's opinion)
Gimme three.

BUELL

I think you're right, Mr. Lashley. Dealer takes two. I reckon the politicians have to piss about for all their supporters back home and then they can let it all die down. Mr. Hastings?

HASTINGS

Check.

LASHLEY

Maybe so, Mr. Buell. Fifty.

Lashley moves \$50 from in front of him to the center of the table, leaving him with a very small stack of bills.

SCHMIDT

Too rich for me.

The BARTENDER walks over from the bar to bring Lashley and Hastings more beer.

Unseen by the other players, Buell takes notice of the bartender scratching his head as he walks away. Then, Buell picks up his cash and begins to count out bills.

BUELL

I'll see your fifty and raise two hundred.

Hastings slaps his cards on the table in disgust.

HASTINGS

I'm out.

LASHLEY

Mr. Buell, I seem to be running a bit low. Would you be willing to accept my note? My friends here can vouch for its value.

The other gamblers nod or speak affirmatively.

BUELL

I generally like to keep things cash only. . .

Lashley clears his throat.

BUELL

. . . but I'm sure you're a man of honor.

Lashley smiles and takes a pencil from his coat pocket.

LASHLEY

(writing a note)

I certainly am, Mr. Buell. While I'm writing, I think I'll add another fifty. With your permission, of course.

BUELL

I'll see your fifty and call.

Lashley triumphantly spreads his cards on the table and begins to reach for the pot.

LASHLEY

Flush, all hearts.

BUELL

I'm afraid I'll have to break your hearts, Mr. Lashley, with a house full of jacks and sevens.

Lashley sinks back in his chair.

INT. BUELL'S RENTED ROOM - NIGHT

On his made bed, Buell snuggles with SUE ELLEN, a saloon girl from downstairs.

They look longingly into each others eyes.

Buell's hand inches from her waist up her side.

SUE ELLEN

Do you love me, Andrew?

She places a gloved hand upon his roaming hand, stopping its advance.

BUELL

I love you more than life itself.
Sue Ellen, you are the light in
the darkness of my soul. The mere
touch of your hand makes me--

She stops his words with her mouth, kissing him.

Wasting no time, Buell's hands go to work on the buttons up the back of her dress.

Buell rolls Sue Ellen over him and onto her back. He kisses his way down her neck, while working at her dress.

The skin of her shoulder appears.

Buell kisses it.

A KNOCK.

BUELL

Who is it?

BARTENDER (O.S.)

Me.

While Sue Ellen pulls the shoulder of her dress back into place, Buell gets up and opens the door.

BUELL

Come on in, partner.

BARTENDER

(entering)

How much?

(a look at Sue Ellen)

What she doing here?

BUELL

(to Sue Ellen)

Could you excuse us, Mary Sue? We
have business to discuss.

SUE ELLEN

(getting up)

It's Sue Ellen, you ass!

Buell grins and shrugs.

She storms out, slamming the door behind her.

BARTENDER

What you doing with her up here?
I can't have this getting out.

BUELL

Don't worry, she doesn't have a
clue.

BARTENDER

Better not. How much we get?

BUELL

Total of \$640, counting the note.
That's \$320 each.

BARTENDER

Good night's work. Sure you want
to leave so soon?

Buell goes over to the dresser and reaches into a drawer
and pulls out a stack of cash.

BUELL

Yep, heading for Texas first
thing. So here's your half and
I'll meet Lashley in the morning
for the rest of my cut.

The bartender accepts the money from Buell. They shake hands.

BUELL
Now don't flash it around too soon.

BARTENDER
Rest easy about that. Good luck to ya.

The bartender leaves and Buell, contented, drops onto the bed.

EXT. BRASS RAIL SALOON - DAY

Buell steps out onto the sidewalk to find Lashley with TWO other WHITE MEN and a black man, JEREMIAH, mid-20s and muscular, in chains.

BUELL
(smiling)
Morning, Mr. Lashley.

The two men shake hands.

LASHLEY
And a fine one it is, Mr. Buell.

BUELL
Hope you brought cash. I ain't looking to wait around for the bank to open.

LASHLEY
Better than cash, much better. . . flesh.

Buell's smile drops into a scowl as Lashley waves a hand toward the black man.

BUELL
A slave? Mr. Lashley, I'm not a landowner, I have no use for a slave.

LASHLEY

(smiling broadly)

Look at it as an investment, my boy. Why as soon as you get far enough away that no one has heard of all the trouble this one's caused me, he'll likely fetch a price double what I owe you.

BUELL

But--

LASHLEY

Of course. . .

Lashley looks from one of his men to the other.

LASHLEY

. . .you could choose to decline my generous offer of payment. As they say, take it or leave it.

Buell glowers at Lashley, long and hard.

LASHLEY

Otherwise, we may just have to investigate how it was that you had two-hundred-dollars worth of certainty that your hand was better than mine.

Lashley raises his eyebrows and purses his lips as though saying, "Hmmm?"

Buell's expression of defiance fades into a more congenial smile.

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - DAY

Buell rides a strong, well-groomed horse beside Jeremiah, who is no longer in chains and riding an old nag.

BUELL

What they call you?

Jeremiah scowls ahead and says nothing.

BUELL

Got to call you something. How about Humperdink? You like the name Humperdink? Has a ring to it, I think.

JEREMIAH

Jeremiah.

BUELL

Nice to meet you, Jeremiah. My name's Andrew Jackson Buell.

Jeremiah cuts his eyes at Buell.

BUELL

I'm new to this slave-owning business, so you just speak right up if I do something wrong.

Buell looks to Jeremiah for a response.

BUELL

Damn, you're one talkative son of a bitch, ain't you? What was it you did to make Lashley want to be rid of you so? Give him the silent treatment?

Jeremiah looks straight ahead.

BUELL

Now look, I took those chains off you and talked the old bastard out of a horse for you to ride, not much of one, but it beats the hell out of walking. Least you could be a little sociable. We got a long way to go and I have no idea what the hell we're going to do once we get there, so it'd be nice to have a little company.

JEREMIAH

Disappeared a few times.

BUELL

I'll be damn, almost a whole sentence. . . Thought they shot runaways.

JEREMIAH

Don't reckon even white folks take to shootin' their own young'uns.

BUELL

Goddamn, are you shitting me?

JEREMIAH

My Ma'am told me a while back.
(a beat)
Before she passed.

BUELL

You had no idea up 'til then?

Jeremiah shakes his head.

BUELL

So how'd Lashley know she told you?

JEREMIAH

Called me an "insolent nigger." I called him "Pa."

BUELL

(laughing)

I like your style, Jeremiah. You might not believe this, but I've been called insolent a few times myself.

Jeremiah raises the back of his shirt and twists his back toward Buell to show scars left from whippings.

JEREMIAH

This happen when you was called it?

BUELL

Jesus!

JEREMIAH

(hint of a smile)

You take the Lord's name a lot,
don't you?

BUELL

(sarcastically)

Insolent fucker.

In the distance, TWO RIDERS follow.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Surrounded by trees, Buell sings, loudly and off key, while cooking bacon over a campfire. His coat lies off to the side on his saddle.

Jeremiah is not in sight.

Two men on horseback and holding shotguns ride into the clearing.

Buell hasn't noticed their approach because of his singing.

BUELL

(singing)

Oh Susanna, oh don't you cry for
me. I come from Alabama with a
banjo on my knee. . .

Buell looks up, sees the riders with their shotguns leveled at him, and stops singing.

BUELL

Aww, shit.

RIDER ONE

Get your hands up. And if you
know "The Yellow Rose of Texas,"
don't sing it.

Buell puts down the frying pan and raises his hands above his head.

BUELL

Listen pards, I ain't got any
money.

RIDER TWO

Toss that hog-leg.

BUELL

But he said to keep my hands up.

RIDER ONE

Use your left!

BUELL

You two need to practice a bit more.

As Buell speaks, Rider One gets off his horse and takes Buell's wallet out of his coat and opens it.

RIDER ONE

Where's the rest?!

BUELL

That's all.

Rider One pulls out a small amount of cash and throws the wallet on the ground.

RIDER TWO

What is it?

RIDER ONE

About \$30.

RIDER TWO

Damn it, where's the rest? You won over \$600 last night.

BUELL

Talk to Lashley. He screwed me.

RIDER TWO

Don't fuck with us!

BUELL

Don't worry about that. I'm strictly a ladies man.

Rider One hits Buell in the stomach.

BUELL

(gasping)

I'm telling you. . . Lashley stuck me. . . with a slave. . . No money.

RIDER ONE

Let's just kill this smart-assed son of a bitch. We can still grab his boy and turn him in as a runaway.

As Rider Two begins to lift his shotgun to aim, a rock hits his horse's flank, causing the animal to buck. His wild SHOT sends his horse into more of a panic, bucking all around the camp.

Buell dives for cover behind a fallen tree.

Jumping out of the way, Rider One drops the money into the fire. Oblivious to the burning money, he tries to catch his own frightened horse.

Rider Two struggles to hang onto his horse as another rock hits its rump, causing it to bolt off through the woods.

Just as Rider One gets a foot in a stirrup, a rock hits his horse, which takes off at a run instead of bucking, dragging Rider One behind.

Jeremiah steps out of the trees with another rock in his hand.

Buell's head bobs up from behind his tree.

BUELL

(standing)

Mr. Jeremiah, that was some mighty fine rock throwing. Why'd you want to take a chance like that?

JEREMIAH

Looked like we was on the same side.

Buell looks thoughtful and nods.

JEREMIAH

Reckon they'll be back?

BUELL

Doubt it. They got the money,
wouldn't be any profit in coming
back. But we best be hitting the
trail, just in case.

JEREMIAH

I saw him drop it when the horse
'bout got him.

BUELL

Drop what?

JEREMIAH

The money.

Buell looks around on the ground and then notices something
in the fire. He takes a stick and fishes out less than
half of one recognizable bill.

BUELL

I'll be goddamned.

Buell flings the stick into the woods and kicks at the
fire.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Buell and Jeremiah ride up the main street of a typical
frontier town, deserted except for one establishment -- the
saloon, which is well-lit with horses tied in front.

Music, laughter, and shouting emanate from the inside.

BUELL

How about taking the horses and
finding the livery, while I get us
a room?

JEREMIAH

Thought all the money burned?

Buell reaches into his saddlebag and pulls out a sealed
Mason jar and a pair of black gloves.

BUELL
(winks)
It did.

Buell dismounts and walks toward the saloon.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Buell steps through the door and pauses to look around and get a feel for the place:

A wide variety of FRONTIER TYPES, some in city clothes, some in buckskins, and a few in farmer clothes. Some seem to be enjoying themselves, while others sulk.

To the tune of a PIANO PLAYER plunking away in a corner, the requisite SALOON GIRLS mingle about, chatting with the patrons.

Buell heads to the bar where BARTENDER TWO is filling mugs of beer.

BARTENDER TWO
What'll it be?

Bartender Two glances down at the gloved left hand that Buell rests on the bar with the pinkie and ring finger missing above the knuckle.

BUELL
Whiskey.

Bartender Two grabs a bottle and fills a shot glass.

BARTENDER TWO
Just ride in?

BUELL
Yep.

Bartender Two fills another mug of beer and slides it down the bar.

BARTENDER TWO
Where you headed?

BUELL

Just passing through, hoping to
find a room for the night.

BARTENDER TWO

Got a few upstairs.

BUELL

Reckon I could interest you in a
little trade?

BARTENDER TWO

Doubt it, but you can try me.

Buell sets his jar on the bar. Inside, two fingers float
in a murky liquid.

TWO PATRONS on either side of Buell take notice and elbow
their neighbors.

BUELL

Two fingers for a bottle and a
room.

Bartender Two looks closely at the jar and then looks at
Buell like he thinks Buell is crazy.

BARTENDER TWO

Nope, got ten already.

Buell picks up his drink and starts it toward his mouth.

BARTENDER TWO

You got two bits for that drink?

BUELL

No, but--

Bartender Two snatches the drink, only inches from Buell's
lips. Most of the whiskey spills on the bar.

BARTENDER TWO

Then you don't drink.

Buell, affronted, slaps his hand on the bar in anger.

BUELL

I fully intend to pay!

This gets the attention of most of the patrons who were not already looking at the jar.

Bartender Two laughs as he walks down the bar to take another order.

Buell grabs an empty chair from a nearby table and stands on it.

BUELL

Ladies and gentlemen!

Buell surveys his audience.

BUELL

Well, mostly gentlemen. Let me have your attention, please.

The crowd slowly quiets and turns to Buell.

BUELL

I am one down on his luck jackanapes. In just the past twenty-four hours, I've had a recalcitrant slave pawned off on me in payment of a gambling debt, been shot at, and had what little money I had burn up while I was fighting off two good-for-nothing thieves at my campsite.

PATRON ONE

Awww, poor feller.

Buell nods thanks to the speaker.

BUELL

(solemn)

Not to mention the fact that I lost two of my fingers a few months ago.

Buell holds up his gloved hand.

BUELL

I've carried my fingers around with me ever since that saw mill accident.

Buell holds up the jar.

Mingled laughs and gasps come from his audience.

BUELL

I've had such a rotten run of luck that I'm willing to give up my two precious mementos of when I had a whole hand, just so's I can have a good bottle of whiskey and a nice warm bed.

OLD BEARDED PATRON

What's anybody need with fingers in a jar, young feller?

BUELL

I'm glad you asked, old timer. How many of you have ever wished that you could count to twelve? Or, even twenty-two if you take off your boots? You can even do more subtractions, like figuring out twelve minus seven or eleven minus five.

PATRON TWO

How 'bout if we can already cipher? What they good for then?

BUELL

Many things, my friend, many things. You can use them as decorations. You can scare children or faint-hearted ladies. Gentlemen, there are any number of uses for two extra fingers. Now, who'll be the first to buy a chance for two bits?

The crowd quiets as they all look around at each other.

BUELL

Hell, if you need any help with the ladies, you could tie one to the end of your pecker.

Several laughs from the crowd.

OLD BEARDED PATRON

Aw Hell, I'll take a chance. . .
Shit, gimme two!

Many more laughs come from the crowd as more of them begin reaching into their pockets and step up to buy a chance.

BUELL

That's the spirit! Now, who's next?

PATRON ONE

I'll take one.

PATRON TWO

Here's my two bits.

As people crowd around Buell, QUINCY HIGHTOWER, 50s and dressed like a rich plantation owner in a long-tailed frock coat, enters the saloon. Noticing the ruckus, he walks over to lean against the bar and watch.

Buell takes the last of the offered money and counts it.

BUELL

Come on now, who wants to buy one more to make it an even \$15?

OLD BEARDED PATRON

Hell, I'll take another. Sure would like to have those extra fingers.

Buell takes his money.

BUELL

Good man, good man. Now, I think it's only fair that you get the first draw. But first. . .

Buell takes the hat off of the Old Bearded Patron's head and gets a handful of red poker chips off of a table. He puts these in the hat along with one blue chip. He then makes a show of mixing them up.

Holding the hat high in the air, Buell offers it to the Old Bearded Patron to make the first draw. He stirs his hand around in his hat and comes up with a red chip.

OLD BEARDED PATRON
Gawldurnit! Hell, I bought two
right off the bat. I'm gonna go
again.

He draws another red one and flings it to the floor in disgust.

BUELL
Want to go ahead and use your last
chance?

OLD BEARDED PATRON
Naw, I'll save it till the odds're
a little better.

BUELL
Wise man. Who's next?

PATRON TWO
I'll go.

He, too, draws a red chip.

BUELL
Next?

Buell shifts the hat toward the nearest man, who draws red.

Two more hands go in and remove red chips.

OLD BEARDED PATRON
Hold up now, I'm callin' in my
third try.

He reaches in and pulls out the blue chip. When he sees it, his eyes light up and he dances a little jig.

OLD BEARDED PATRON

(laughing)

I knew those fingers were meant to be mine.

PATRON ONE

You better make sure it's good and dark before you try using them things on the ladies.

Everyone laughs. Some pat the Old Bearded Patron on the back.

PATRON TWO

Say, how did you lose them fingers anyway?

BUELL

Awww, I just like to whittle and paint a little every now and then.

Buell pulls off his glove to reveal that his two "missing" fingers were folded underneath inside the glove. He wiggles them around, and everyone has another good laugh.

Buell walks to the bar and picks up the bottle and key that the bartender has left for him.

Only Hightower doesn't seem to have enjoyed the show.

Leaning against the bar, a few feet from Buell, Hightower talks to the bartender, loudly enough for Buell to hear.

HIGHTOWER

If I were sheriff of this county, I'd arrest that man for fraud.

BARTENDER TWO

Well, you ain't, so don't fret over it.

As Buell walks past, Hightower straightens up. Taking a few steps toward the center of the floor, Hightower raises his hands above his head for attention.

HIGHTOWER

You attention for a moment. I've got good news, no, great news. Yesterday, South Carolina troops fired on the Union at Fort Sumter. The war is on, boys!

A cheer goes up from the crowd.

Upon hearing Hightower's words, Buell, on his way up the stairs, stops, turns, and looks a little taken aback.

Then, he continues on his way.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

Buell and Jeremiah ride north.

JEREMIAH

You gonna join up?

BUELL

Shit no, are you crazy?

JEREMIAH

Thought all you white folks couldn't wait to show the Yankees what for.

BUELL

Not me. I got no use for slaves, no offense, and I ain't about to put my neck on the line for any rich folks that do.

JEREMIAH

Your pappy didn't own no slaves?

BUELL

My pappy worked hisself sick, trying to feed all of us, right alongside a plantation that had near two hundred slaves. Naw, I ain't doing any fighting for them.

Jeremiah nods thoughtfully.

BUELL

My friend, it is high time I got myself a decent stake and headed north into the territories or down to Mexico or somewhere farther south before those brilliant politicians get it into their heads to start forcing people to join their armies.

JEREMIAH

They can make white folks join up if'n they don't want to?

BUELL

Yeah, called conscription.

JEREMIAH

Ain't that something? But what about me?

BUELL

What about you?

JEREMIAH

I belong to you remember? You ain't gonna fight for no slave-owners but you are one.

Buell shakes his head.

BUELL

Don't no man own me, and I ain't looking to own no other man. All I'm looking to take care of is my own self. You're free as far as I'm concerned.

JEREMIAH

(laughs)

You was right, you don't know nothing about owning no slaves. They don't let nobody free a slave. It's against the law.

BUELL

Well, maybe you can stay my slave
'til we get to free territory.

The two fall silent for a few of their horses' strides.
Then. . .

BUELL

I'll be damned.

JEREMIAH

What?

BUELL

That's more than you've talked in
two days.

Jeremiah snorts a quick laugh, and they ride on.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - DAY

With a town ahead in the distance, Buell and Jeremiah ride
past a sign: "WELCOME TO COOL SPRINGS, TEXAS."

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Cool Springs boasts clean neatly painted buildings. Clean-
cut people in city clothes walk up and down the sidewalks,
going in and out of the various establishments. A few
SLAVES carry packages or wait on wagon seats.

Buell and Jeremiah ride down the middle of the street.

BUELL

Yep, this looks like a perfect
place for us to get busy.

They stop in front of Mrs. Fletcher's Boarding House.

Buell dismounts and hands his reins to Jeremiah, who turns
the horses and goes toward the livery stable at the end of
the street.

Buell steps up on the sidewalk to see none other than
Quincy Hightower coming toward him.

HIGHTOWER

(smiling)

Good afternoon, Mister. . . ?

BUELL

Buell, Andrew Jackson Buell.

HIGHTOWER

Andrew Jackson, a fitting name.
By the way, mine is Quincy
Hightower. But you can call me
sheriff.

Hightower pulls his coat back to reveal a tin star.

HIGHTOWER

Yes, sir, a fitting name indeed
for a man who killed a judge's son
in a duel.

BUELL

Pardon?

HIGHTOWER

Yes, sir, after witnessing your
little game last night, just as
soon as I got back here, I checked
through the old posters and there
you were. Looked just like you.

Buell tries to hide it but there is some worry in his
voice.

BUELL

You must be mistaken.

Hightower pulls out a pair of handcuffs and takes Buell's
arm.

HIGHTOWER

Now come along.

In the distance, Jeremiah turns back and sees Buell being
taken into custody.

Instead of stopping at the stable, he rides out of town.

EXT. BACK OF THE JAIL - NIGHT

Jeremiah creeps up to the barred jail window, dragging along a rope, the end of which is tied to Buell's horse.

JEREMIAH

(whispering)

Buell, that you?

Buell steps up to the bars.

BUELL

(whispering)

Yeah, didn't expect to see no more of you.

JEREMIAH

You got me out of chains, reckon I can get you out from behind bars.

Jeremiah holds up the rope.

BUELL

Mighty kind of you, but it won't work. They put ankle chains on me.

Buell RATTLES the chain with his foot.

Jeremiah hangs his head.

BUELL

But I have an idea. Take the horses to that patch of woods we saw east of town. If I ain't there by sunup, head out and go northwest 'til you make the Indian territory.

Jeremiah

Sunup.

Buell watches Jeremiah gather the rope and mount his horse. As he rides away. . .

BUELL

Damn fool.

EXT. FRONT OF JAIL - NIGHT

The door to the jail slowly opens and Buell sticks his head out, looking left then right.

The street is deserted.

He steps on out, turning to close the door very gently.

He walks down the sidewalk, trying to appear nonchalant.

As he approaches the corner, he looks back to make sure he hasn't been spotted.

Turning back, he darts into the alley--

right into Hightower, who's carrying a shotgun in the crook of his arm.

HIGHTOWER

(leveling the shotgun)

Why Buell, I was just coming in to check on my deputy. You know he's fairly young and we don't get many prisoners of your caliber here in Cool Springs. So how is young Yardley?

Buell raises his hands and turns around.

BUELL

He's fine, had a bit of headache, so he laid down for a nap.

Hightower retrieves a pistol from the back of Buell's waistband and then prods him back toward the jail with the muzzle of his shotgun.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A modest crowd has gathered for the hearing.

With Hightower at his side, Buell stands before old JUDGE BEAN, fat, whiskered, and ornery.

JUDGE BEAN

Mr. Buell, you look just like the drawing on this here poster that says you killed a feller name of Martin Bascomb over in Georgia. Now, you ain't gonna waste my time by denying that it's you, are ya?

Buell attempts to answer, but --

JUDGE BEAN

Let me warn you, sir, I don't take to nonsense.

BUELL

I won't waste his honor's time if he'll kindly keep my cooperation in mind when he makes his decision.

JUDGE BEAN

Now that's a fair deal, so why don't you tell me how you come to kill a Georgia judge's son. That was not a smart play, not at all.

BUELL

Well, I was courting this gal--

JUDGE BEAN

A fine lookin' one, I'll wager.

BUELL

Yes, sir.

JUDGE BEAN

Always seem to be good-lookin' women around when men go to shootin' at each other.

BUELL

Yes, sir, sure do.

JUDGE BEAN

Sometimes ugly ones, too. But it was a looker sho' brought my uncle a heap of trouble down on the Pecos.

BUELL

Anyway, we were there by the creek having a lovely and chaste, mind you, a very chaste picnic when this fella comes riding up hell for leather, yelling about my filthy hands and her purity. Before I could explain things, he slapped me across the face with his riding crop. Naturally, being a proud southerner, I challenged, he accepted, and I won. That's when I found out that he was a judge's son. So I lit out.

JUDGE BEAN

Where'd you shoot him?

BUELL

Outside Atlanta, sir.

JUDGE BEAN

Body part, dammit, man!

BUELL

Gut.

JUDGE BEAN

That's a fine place when you want to kill a man.

BUELL

I ain't much of a shot, sir. I was aiming at his head.

JUDGE BEAN

(snorts a laugh)

Seein's how duelin's been illegal for about forty years, not knowin' the daddy's occupation was a real oversight on your part. Most of the time, we just overlook the illegality and call'er self-defense.

BUELL

That's the way I saw it, sir.

JUDGE BEAN

Don't interrupt me, boy. Like I was saying, I've got half a mind to let you go. That judge's boy was probably a horse's ass, anyway. But that's only half a mind. Since there's a war coming on right quick, I'll give you the choice. You can either be sent back to Georgia, so's that boy's paw can hang you, or you can join up with the Cool Spring's Cavalry Brigade, forming under the command of soon to be former sheriff Hightower. Which'll it be? Fight or hang?

Hightower's grin fades and his mouth drops open.

Buell looks as though he's been punched in the stomach.

BUELL

Your honor, I don't--

JUDGE BEAN

Fight or hang?

BUELL

Well, shit, where do I sign?

JUDGE BEAN

That'll be a \$5 fine for cussin' in court, and you can just go along with the sheriff. He'll join you up.

Hightower grasps Buell's arm and they begin to turn away.

JUDGE BEAN

Oh, and one more thing, if you attempt to desert, you'll be shot or hung, whichever's more convenient at the time.

Judge Bean pounds his gavel.