Man in the Saddle

By Kenneth Gamet
You'll have to hurry, Mr. Isham, or you'll be late for your own wedding. Nobody buys a drink tonight. Boys, I'd like you all to shake hands with Fay Dutcher, Skull's new foreman. Will Isham sent all the way to Texas for him to ramrod our outfit. Happy to meet you folks. And with my boss getting married... this will be the biggest night this town has seen. So crowd around, everybody, we got to do something about it. "Do something about it."
The question is, what are you gonna do about it, Owen? The Methodist minister is here. So I guess it'll be a proper wedding.
- The women have started crying already.
- What makes women cry at weddings?
Yeah, what?
You drunk yet, Owen?
- The bottle is still about half full.
- Then you're sober.
I don't know where they hide, or where they come from...
but there's a lot of pretty girls in town.
- Takes a wedding to bring them out.
- Maybe it's hope.
Antelope are running pretty heavy over in Fremont Basin. Guess it's time I had another look at that country. That's your trouble. Always taking another look at a piece of country. Just fiddle-footed, smelling the wind for scent.
- So you lose your girl.
- To a man like Will Isham.
Now...
the bottle's empty. Let's take a walk. What for? You're always
taking a walk. Why?
- I'm tired of listening to long speeches.
- I ain't said nothing, but I will.
Owen, you and Prine and me are just small ranchers.
Good neighbours, never paid like Isham...
but that's no reason we should always let him have his own way.
He is.
- If Laurie Bidwell was my girl...
- Drink up. It's Skull's treat.
- I'll pay for my drinks.
- Me, too.
Mike and Ike, they talk alike.
What have you fellows got against Skull Ranch?
So you're Fay Dutcher?
They sure dress them fancy in Texas.
I said, what have you fellows got against drinking on Skull?
- This is the Vird boys, Juke and George.
- We work for Owen Merritt.
- He sits right over there.
- Well, that explains it.
It don't explain nothing.
Will Isham didn't have to send clean to Texas for just a ranch foreman.
- What are you, a professional gun-hand? - Me? A gun-hand?
I'm a cattleman, sir.
I just carry this thing...
because my old mother thought it looked pretty on me.
Yeah? It was plenty fancy shooting I saw, the way you knocked off that bottle.
Just luck, plain luck.
I couldn't shoot my way out of a chicken coop.
Lucky again. This must be my lucky night.
Juke, George.
Owen.
I'm glad to see you because
I wanted a word with you.
You've got the floor.
I want to know how
you take this marriage.
If there's going to be trouble
between us, I'd like to know it now.
Will, I congratulate you.
You're sure?
The luck is yours. No complaints.
I want the truth...
and I want everybody
in this room to hear it.
I won't have rumours going around.
I said, I wish you luck.
Better let it go at that.
Let's drink on that.
Gentlemen, this is on Skull.
To the future Mrs. Isham.
Her health and yours, Will.
You'll excuse me...
but I don't wish to appear before
the Bishop with liquor on me.
Croker, I'm buying the house
for the rest of the night.
Mr. Dutcher already set
them up at your expense.
That's very generous of you.
Good night.
Well, so you're Owen Merritt.
Genuine pleasure meeting you.
Gonna be our next-door neighbour.
Not quite next door.
- My ranch is in between.
- Is that so?
Well, look at the groom
what ain't going to be.
You know, Laurie's old man is out there
bragging about his son-in-law already.
You know, she'll see that the
old coot is well taken care of.
You didn't have to do
that. He's drunk, Owen.
It's talk I don't like to hear,
from a drunk or from anybody else.
- You're likely to hear more than that.
- Take it easy.
This is my job.
On your feet, Bale.
Now get going. Head back to the ranch.
- What did I do?
- Get!
I hate to see a gent forget his manners. It does something to me.
I must apologize for my men, neighbour.
- Have a drink?
- No, thanks.
This is Will Isham's night, so drink up, folks.
Will Isham had a reason for buying you a drink...
in front of that crowd.
- Peace and good will.
- Good will, my fat aunt's foot.
You shouldn't have had that drink. It ties your hands.
How long are you gonna let Isham crowd you?
Excuse me, gentlemen.
Look, that's Laurie Bidwell's wedding bouquet.
Now if I was you and you was me, I'd mosey up them stairs...
and I'd get a rig and drive around to the back...
and wait there for both of us.
But I'm not you and you're not me.
Owen, when I saw her earlier, she wasn't smiling.
I tell you, Laurie's heart's not in this wedding.
Maybe. But her mind's made up.
I'll meet you at the horses in five minutes, then we'll leave this town.
- Clagg, what do you think of Owen Merritt?
- I don't like him. I never have.
From what I hear, you don't like much of anybody...
and nobody likes you, either. It's not worth the powder to blow you apart. Nobody in 500 miles would stop to pick up the pieces. Still, I might have use for a lone wolf like you now and then. Just in case I don't get around to doing my own chores. Nan.
- Owen. - I'd like to talk to Laurie if she'll see me. She'll see you. But are you sure you want her to? Why not?
All right, Owen.
Laurie, are you sure it's got to be this way?
- Is that all you came to say?
- It's enough, isn't it?
- You're condemning me.
- No.
You're the one that made the choice, not me. All I want to know is if you're sure. I've got to be sure, haven't I?
- Then I wish you luck. So long.
- Wait.
You're coming to the wedding?
- No.
- Please.
To make the record complete? Is it so hard to believe that I can still take an interest in you? Don't you understand that yet? I guess I do. You're an ambitious girl, Laurie. You set your mind on certain things long ago.
- I couldn't break up that.
- I was ambitious for both of us. But there was a restlessness in you I couldn't fight any longer.
- I got tired of waiting.
- I don't blame you.
You always figured...
you could make your mind
pull your heart along.
I hope you can.
I know what I'm doing, Owen.
We always argued too much.
That was one of our faults.
- Good night, Owen.
- Goodbye.
It's time to go.
I'm ready.

- Owen, you're a
putty-headed fool. - Shut up.
- Quite a party, boss.
- For this occasion.
- Here's to you and your bride.
- Why, thank you, Judge.
Congratulations.
- Best of luck.
- Much happiness.
- Congratulations.
- Thank you, Judge. Thank you.
There's enough champagne
water there to drown a horse.
Mr. Isham had it shipped all
the way from San Francisco.
- Won't you have some?
- I don't drink.

Nan.
Can I see you home from the party?
- Another night.
- You got a date?
No, but after helping Laurie
with her wedding all day...
I'm about run down.
- I wouldn't be good company for anyone.
- I wouldn't care.
Why can't we be friends
like everyone else, Nan?
- I hope we'll always be friends, Hugh.
- You don't fool me.
Why don't you ever smile at me, Nan?
Sometimes I come out of the hills, stand
near your cabin and watch the light.
Sometimes I come close to the door.
You don't know what I feel
inside. I'd tear off my arms...
I'd burn Springrock down
to ashes if you wanted it.
There isn't anything I
wouldn't do for you, anything.
- Hugh.
- Anything.
All right, then.
There's the dance on Saturday night.
Yes, I'll call for you.
Now, if you'll excuse me.
We Ishams are going to show you
all just what luxury really is.
We're going to open
the doors of Skull...
and ask you all to come in and eat
and drink the finest food and liquor...
that money can buy.
That's a very
hospitable proposal, Dad.
I'm sure my husband would
be happy to second it.
- Why, of course.
- Congratulations again.
I lost me a daughter,
but I got me a son.
Dad, you must be tired. Wouldn't
you like to go to your room?
Excuse us, please.
Lankershim.
I'd like to talk to you in the study.
- Come outside.
- What for?
Get on your horse and leave.
- Now lookie here.
- You lookie here.
I'm not gonna have you
panhandling off of Skull.
You'd send me away?
My own daughter?
I'm now Will Isham's wife.
And you'll not keep me from having the respect and dignity... that he expects me to have.

After all I've done for you.
- The way I raised you.
- The way you raised me?
I saw Mother work like a horse to keep us alive.
I saw her die, out of shame, mostly.
What'll I do, daughter? Where'll I go?
Go back south where you used to live.
You won't starve. I'll send you money, but you've got to stay away from Skull...
and from Will Isham.
I've got a chance to be something the Bidwells never were.
And you're not gonna ruin it. Goodbye, Dad.
- Pay, would you like some brandy?
- I don't drink.
I'm going to buy your ranch tonight.
You aiming to threaten me, Will?
If you are, I'm too grown up to scare.
I'm gonna make it so worthwhile, you can't afford not to sell.
I'll give you $50,000 cash.
It ain't worth nigh that.
There's a small lake, a waterhole, that straddles your land and mine.
Well, what of it?
There's more than enough water there for both our herds.
You don't get the idea.
I'd only own half a lake.
I never own half of anything, I own it all. Lock, stock and barrel.
That goes for anything.
Whatever I have is mine and mine alone. I'll share with no one.
You're a strange man to figure, Will...
but I reckon you can't be beat.
I'll sell.
If a man like Owen Merritt wouldn't
fight for what belonged to him...
I reckon I'm too old to try.
What belonged to him, Pay?
Pay, you're my guest
and I'll say nothing.
But when you ride off Skull tonight,
don't ever come back on my land again.
I'll pick up the papers at the
bank and give you your money.
What happened to your father?
He's going away on a trip.
He won't be back to Skull.
You're a smart woman, Laurie. I
was very pleased. You've got tact.
You know how to handle people
and make them feel good.
Thank you.
That's what you want.
What is it you want, Laurie?
Nothing more than I'm getting now.
You know my family, what I came from.
I'm grateful to you, Will.
And I'll never let you down
on my part of the bargain.
Remember that.
I'll play the part
you want me to play.
Is this nothing more than
a bargain with you, Laurie?
Nothing more?
Did I ever give you the
impression it would be otherwise?
No. I'll give you credit. You didn't.
Good night, Laurie.
Good night, Will.
Help yourself to the whiskey.
Thanks, boss.
Here's to you.
- What about it? - Skull is now
up against Owen Merritt's line.
What's wrong with that?
In spite of what he said, you
don't trust Merritt a bit, do you?
No. And I never will.
In that case, I'd better get on with what I came here for. Because the longer I put it off... the longer he'll be standing on those stairs... between you and her. All rounded up and tallied, Bourke. Looks like this year you're a dozen head up on me. Is that right? The way prices are, reckon we both ought to do all right... when we get this batch to market. When do you figure we ought to move them, Owen? Look, the rest of the outfit just showed up. Hello, Nan. Your herd is sure getting big. This year I have 10 head. Howdy, partner. Need an extra hand, mister? Sure, if you can cook better than Cultus Charley. Almost anybody can do that. - Hello, Charley. - Hello. Is he still making you sing for your supper? Sure is, Nan. - Howdy, Nan. - Hello, George. - All set for the big cattle drive? - Sure am. How many head you shipping this year? Six? I've got 10. And you just see that nothing happens to those steer. They're the best beef in this section, practically hand-fed. I'll be doggone. Here I always thought they only ate grass.
- Coffee. Hot coffee.
- That sounds wonderful.
What happened to the cookies
you made at the ranch, Charley?
I don't know what happened. I
feed the pigs. Pigs get sick.
As a cook, Charley, I'll bet you're
a whiz at baking adobe bricks.
What's the matter,
Juke? Something wrong?
Say, what is this anyway?
- Coffee. Good coffee.
- I doubt that.
Charley uses gunpowder instead of
coffee. Pretty soon your head blows off.
I know. Mine just passed the moon.
Doesn't seem to bother Charley.
Charley no fool. Charley drinks tea.
You two cut out the horseplay
and pick up those strays.
Sure, boss. Anything you
say, boss. Right away, boss.
And don't call me boss.
All right, boss.
- Where's Pay Lankershim?
- He ain't shipping with us.
We've been bunching
our herds for years.
No more.
Pay sold out to Will
Isham. Everything.
- That makes Skull your neighbour now.
- Yeah.
Stay away from trouble,
Owen. It comes easy to you.
It'll come still easier 'cause you're
in a frame of mind to have some.
Besides, it's always been a
great comfort to me at night...
to look across the desert and see
your light shining on the hill.
- I hope I'll see it there always.
- It'll be there.
There's no woman in the world
worth tearing yourself apart for.
And you'd better take
care of my cattle.
The cattle are restless,
getting pretty spooky.
- Bad smell in the wind.
- Couldn't be your cooking.
- There we go.
- We'll be moving out around 4:00.
Hitch up and have Chuck ready
for us at the springs by daybreak.
If I catch you under my
hat again, I'll plug you.
Or worse, make you
drink your own coffee.
- Don't you think that I need a new hat?
- No. The hat needs a new head.
And weren't you told
to hook up the horses?
Boys, look!
You ride the herd. I'll try
to turn it with the wagon.
Juke!
Owen!
Stampede ran him down.
Yeah, after he was shot
in the back of the head.
- Charley, get a blanket.
- Yes.
My brother, dead.
- Who were they, Owen? Do you know?
- Couldn't tell.
Juke knew.
You got nothing to say, Owen?
There's only one bunch that
had a reason to do this.
If Skull got Juke, they did it to
get me. They knew how close we were.
Then wake up. Quit
mooning over Laurie.
You know just as well as
I do that Will Isham...
can't bear to have
anything stand in his way.
You do.
George.
Over there.
A little warm in there, mister.
Don't tell me, Bale.
Clay on the shoe of your horse out there comes from only one place, Coral Flats.
Well, Mr. Merritt.
Come in. I was thinking about you.
These boys were just getting set...
for a little celebration
after what they did tonight.
I was about to oblige them
with some good clean fun...
but I don't think
they like the odds now.
Tell you what, Owen, you and
me don't want to spoil anything.
So let's you and me go down
the street and have a drink.
George and I'll go down
the street and have a drink.
- Come on, George.
- Don't be like that, Owen.

My motto is:
when a man's out for some
good, clean fun and enjoyment.
Just shoot him in the back of
the head like you got my brother.
Skull hands wouldn't shoot anybody.
They're cattlemen, like Mr. Dutcher.
He couldn't shoot his
way out of a chicken coop.
I've had enough of his talk.
What's it gonna be, Fay?
Yeah, what?
Let's find out.
You're all standing around
here braced for a fight.
Which one of you was gonna handle
George? Or was it all of you?
Sure the whole bunch. Skull style.
A wolf pack on one man like
they got my brother, Juke.
All right, men, scratch for it.
Killed a poor kid like Juke,
who never did nothing to nobody.
Well, Bale started it.
I can sleep a little better now.
Sort of takes care of Juke.
- I was riding your way.
- Glad I saved you the trip.
- Hello, Laurie.
- Hello, Owen.
I'll be with Mrs. Keenan.
She wants to fit my new dress.
Will.
I want a word with you.
What are you so jumpy about?
- Do you want trouble with me?
- I've been having trouble with you.
But from now on you're going
to have trouble with me.
- Is that an offer, Owen?
- Yeah, it's an offer.
Merritt.
I'll tell you something.
I've never liked you, your
manners, or your style.
I'm thinking about something,
and you know what it is.
What belongs to me is mine, entirely
mine. Do you hear? So stay away.
Stay away from everything
that belongs to me.
Just make sure that you hang
on to what belongs to you.
One horse is coming.
Better drop that cigarette.
The house is all lit
up. You're pretty jumpy.
Yeah, I am. I feel it...
close.
Like a man feels when a
gun's pointing at him...
even when he can't see it.
You haven't seen
anything tonight, George.
Sure.
- Not a very good place for you to be,
Laurie. - I know. I had to see you.
- May I sit down?
- Please do.
Owen, what are you thinking?
- Things I shouldn't.
- I was afraid you would.
And afraid you wouldn't, too.
What was it you came here to say?
It's my husband. His
pride is terribly strong.
It makes him wonder if I still
feel about you as I once did.
Do you?
Owen, Skull's too big, too
big for you to fight alone.
- There's nothing else to do.
- Sell out to Will. Leave the country.
No, Laurie.
I thought I could make you see it.
You doubted that I could make
my mind pull my heart along.
- You're right, Owen, I can't.
- I'm sorry.
Sometimes ambition
can be bad for people.
It can hurt them so much.
Now there may be more
bloodshed all because of me.
You say you won't run away, Owen.
But if I break my bargain with
Will and run away with you...
then would you leave?
You'd go that far for me?
I would. I'll be here tomorrow night.
George.
Have you seen George?
No, he's not here.
He don't feel sleep. He
going out to see the cattle.
He told me not to tell.
- Yeah?
- Yes.
- I'd better go look for him.
- Everybody go away. I have to stay here.
- I don't like this place.
- Spooky, Charley?
Like a long time ago
when Chief Egden...
he come through with his guerrillas.
I had a bad feelings, like I have now.
I hear the trees talk.
I hear the water talks. It's not good.
- Keep away from that vanilla extract.
- What do you mean?
Blow out that light.
Four horses.
Look.
George, who did it?
Bad feelings like old days.
Rise and shine, you lunkhead.
Why don't you shoot?
I was just thinking, when
I pull this trigger...
I'll be shooting Christmas Creek
Ranch right out from under me.
It'll start a run and jump fight.
Sitting on my porch night after
night was getting dull anyway.
What are you shooting at this hour
of the morning all by yourself?
What are you trying
to do? Is this a joke?
No joke, Repp. You know I can
shoot straighter than that.
Someone from Skull got one of
my men last night. Who was it?
I don't know.
Who was it, Repp?
You're wrong, Merritt.
None of us shot George Vird.
Repp, how did you know it was Vird?
I just thought that...
Think faster, Repp. Send him
out, or I'll shoot to kill.
Merritt, listen!
No time for talk.
Look.
You can't fight the whole army.
Charley, get word to Mrs. Isham that
I won't be around for a few days.
That Merritt, he just shot us all
up. He knows about George Vird, too.
Dutcher, are you gonna
let him get away with this?
Shoot.
Much shooting on
Seor Merritt's rancho.
- Will you saddle my horse, please?
  - Yes.
Spread out. You got to find him.
What are you doing?
Paying him back for what they
did to our line cabin today.
Get out. Why don't you grow up?
  - Just when I was having a little fun.
  - This is no time for kid's games.
Someone is coming.
You and your shooting.
Nan, over here.
This may sting.
Here, put some inside of you, too.
You'll hate that.
Feel better?
My favorite pair.
Owen, why did you go back
to your place tonight?
I got to thinking, a man
can't run all the time.
He has to fight sooner or later.
Nan, thanks for everything,
but I got to get out of here...
or you'll be in a mess of trouble.
You can't.
Come on now. Sit back.
You've lost a lot of blood.
That's better.
Stop trying to be a
hero and get some rest.
Hitch up the buckboard. I'm
taking Miss Nan to the dance.
Hello, Nan.
- I told you, hitch up the buckboard.
- No buckboard.
- Nan.
- No Nan.

We've a date for the dance tonight. She couldn't have forgot.
I've been counting on it all week. She promised.
Bandages.
Owen Merritt was shot last night. He came here, didn't he?
She's gone off with him.
I don't ask for much.
Just take her to a dance, and be with her once in a while.
Merritt doesn't love her, but it don't make no difference to her.
She'd run off with him.
She'd do anything he asks.
I ought to kill both of them.
Where are they?
I'll find them.
You stay here and make sure Mrs. Isham doesn't leave the house.
We're ready to start after Merritt, Mr. Isham.
I've never seen in you the desire to destroy, to kill.
- Have I killed?
- Your men have.

You hired them and you supported them.
Owen Merritt killed one of my men, and I suppose that's all right.
If you'd have been in his place, what would you have done?
I'm not in his place.
Suppose you'd known before our marriage that I meant to go after Merritt.
Would you have married me?
What a brutal question.
Thanks for the compliment.
Now remember, watch
You don't like coffee?
I knew this stuff was good for something.
Look. Boot polish.
Charley, you been around this country 1,000 years or so.
What kind of scout are you?
How good are you at tracking?
- My father was good.
- But your father's dead.
- What's he got to do with it?
- I am much better.
Then get on that trail and find Owen Merritt fast.
You men see anything of a buckboard going by here?
Yeah.
- Which way did they go?
- They went up into the mountains.
- How long ago?
- Three days ago.
Thank you.
Who's that?
Mrs. Isham.
You got to stay here, Mrs. Isham.
- Get away, Repp.
- Sorry, but I can't.
- Get out of my way.
- Put that silly little thing away.
Repp, I've used a gun for years...
and I could tear your collarbone to pieces before you moved.
- We'll see about this, ma'am.
- Take off your hat.
Walk in front of me, and run when I tell you to run.
- I ain't taking orders from no lady.
- I'm not a lady, Repp.
I'm the Bidwell girl...
and I was raised among harder men than you think you are.
Now, get in front of me.
And if you stop before I tell
you to, I'll shoot you. Come on.
Maybe we can be leaving here soon.
I could use a razor, if I had one.
Sounds like a coyote
going through dry brush.
It's good to hear you laugh.
- There hasn't been much to laugh about.
- Yeah.
Wish I could thank your
grandfather for this hideout.
He built it when they
first came to this country.
It was a place of safety
against Indian raids.
I'll take the Indians
to Skull any day.
Owen, what are you gonna do now?
The problem hasn't changed.
So you're not going to run.
- You want me to?
- No. Even if I did, you wouldn't.
I know you too well for that.
You'll stay and fight.
I don't know how you'll do
it, but you'll do it somehow.
But what about you?
By now, everybody must
know you're with me.
I don't care. It's been worth it.
I never had a man to boss before.
Nan, whatever happens, the past
few days balance for everything.
That's the way I feel.
I'd better get these dishes washed.
Cheap woman.
Don't try it, Merritt.
I should smash your face in, running
off with this fiddle-foot like that.
What's aching you, Clagg?
Get away from that gun, Nan.
Get back over there. Put your
hands behind you, both of you.
Go on. Get back over there.
Not too close together.
What's the matter with 
you? Have you gone crazy?
Maybe I have.
Merritt, you get
everything your own way.
You can have Laurie by lifting your 
finger if you wanted, and now Nan.
What's the difference 
between you and me?
I'd claw down the hills for 
a kind look from that girl...
but I'd never get it,
not in a thousand years.
You'd cheat for this man,
do just what he wanted.
Pull up, Clagg.
You two are fooling yourselves,
and I'm going to end it.
No.
- I could kill him!
- I know.
- It's what he said, what he said 
about you. - But it's wrong.
I don't want you to kill anybody.
Let's get started.
She got away? But I told 
you not to let her out of...
You didn't tell me she had 
a gun and knew how to use it.
Look at that. And that 
ain't all. My feet.
- Where'd she go?
- I don't know, but she sure went fast.
Been looking for you.
Looks like you met up with 
a mountain lion, maybe two.
- Are you still looking for Merritt?
- So that's it. He chewed you up.
Where is Merritt?
Holed up in an old hideout 
in Rock Canyon at the falls.
He's probably gone by now, 
but he'll be easy to trail.
- He's got a woman with him.
- What woman, Clagg?
What woman? Who do you think?
The one woman of this country...
who'll double-cross her own
soul to save Merritt's life.
You're too free with
your tongue, Clagg.
No man talks about my wife.
It isn't the woman
you were thinking of.
It wasn't your wife.
Don't just stand there. Get your
horses. We're going to Rock Canyon.
- Boss, I bring the horse for you.
- Good.
You know, Owen, with the Skull
outfit hunting the hills...
this would be a good time to go
to Isham's ranch and take it apart.
No.
Because Laurie's there?
It'd serve Isham right
if you walked in...
and took her away from
him while he's gone.
- You could do it, you know.
- I have other plans.
Owen, you won't be needing
me anymore. I'm going home.
- Nan, wait!
- Goodbye, everybody. Good luck, Owen.
Nan, I want to talk to you.
I'll be doggone. Maybe
the wind is changing.
Maybe it's going to blow
in a different direction.
If we're gonna take on Skull
in a run and jump fight...
Not that kind of a fight.
There'll never be peace that way.
Peace? The only peace you'll ever
get from Isham is rest in peace.
Shooting is better.
And Skull's so big...
So is a steer big.
But when you're gonna eat him, you first
have to cut him up in little pieces.
I don't care what you want, Mr. Isham.
We've been in the saddle for six
hours, we'll stretch our legs.
We can't stop now
when we may be close.
You know, Mr. Isham, when you're hunting
a man that can shoot like Owen Merritt...
go losing your head, and
you might lose your head.
- Have a drink.
- Thanks.
Sure could go for a shot of
something stronger than water.
So could I.
I just remembered, I got
to go fix a stirrup strap.
Don't move around!
I might miss in the dark,
and I don't like that.
You fellows are only fooling.
- You wouldn't do this to me, would you?
- No, we wouldn't do it to you.
We just wanted you to talk, but
things seem to have got out of hand.
We didn't know the Vird brothers were
such good friends of these people.
I didn't do nothing to
the Vird boys. Tell them.
Cultus Charley, we think
you're going too far maybe.
Maybe.
I can throw closer.
You see, Repp, it's no use.
We three can't fight the whole
bunch in their end of the town.
That's right, Repp.
I can't stop Charley.
Stop him. Please stop him!
He's a yellow coward.
Fay Dutcher killed Juke Vird
the night of the stampede.
- You killed George Vird.
- No, I didn't.
Dutcher did that, too.
Tell the truth, Repp.
Will Isham gave orders for both killings, didn't he?
I don't know nothing about that.
None of the crew knew Dutcher was going to kill them fellows.
He laughed at them.
He was still laughing when they died, cold as ice.
You'll never tie Isham into this.
You may rope Dutcher, but Isham can always hire a new gunslinger.
- I still think you're lying, Repp.
- I'm not lying.
I know, you're after Will Isham's hide.
Why don't you ask him who shot down Hugh Clagg?
That's what you want to know, ain't it?
- Isham shot Clagg, ain't that right?
- Yeah, that's right.
All right, boys, thanks.
I must talk to Seor Isham.
I saw your man Repp tell Owen Merritt how you killed Clagg.
They take Repp to town.
- Can we get to town by dawn?
- Sure.
Then we'll beat them in. Wake up the boys.
- Nan.
- Hello, Laurie.
You were with Owen? I've been trying to find him.
How did you expect to do that when Isham can't?
- Owen's all right, then?
- Yes, but he was hurt.
Then why did you leave him?
I'm like your husband in one respect,
Laurie, half of something isn't enough.
Giddap.
- Looks like we beat him in.
- We'll see.
- I'll be up at the hotel.
- Put your mind at ease, Mr. Isham.
This is like shooting
crippled ducks in a barrel.
All right, boys, spread
out. Get out of sight.
Gray, put these horses
where they won't be seen.
I smell something in this wind and
sand that's not altogether the weather.
Yeah.
- Howdy, Croker.
- Hi.
Set them up over here.
I like the view.
Sure got a lot of nervous
people in this town.
And you're looking at one right now.
So you came here.
Will, why are you in town?
My men have an appointment
to meet someone.
Owen Merritt?
Can't you stop now? Haven't
you done enough to Owen already?
You're giving yourself away, Laurie.
Every time you mention his
name your voice goes soft.
Your imagination makes
you believe anything.
The man who has your heart
has a wonderful thing.
But I haven't got it.
But maybe there's hope for
us yet. Maybe you can change.
Could you keep on loving
a man after he was dead?
- Sheriff.
- Merritt.
- Prine.
That's us all right, Sheriff.
Howdy.
Howdy.
Say, I just saw the funniest sight going down the street. A whole cart full of Mexicans, but they weren't Mexicans. And one of them had on a pair of fancy boots with spurs. You know, Prine won them spurs and boots at a rifle shoot last July.
How do you know?
I know 'cause I was in it. Tried for it myself.
Say, they had your man Repp with them. Took him into the Sheriff's office. He was all dressed up, too. Sign here.
I ain't never had nothing against you, Merritt, so I got to tell you. Will Isham and that whole Skull crew is in town. Looks like them coming. We know you're in there, Merritt, so come on out.
Why don't you come in?
That's just what we're gonna do. Don't! If we start that gang shooting, there'll be a lot of men killed for nothing. There're too many of them.
Where's Isham?
At the hotel.
Let me out the back way. Owen, they'll spot you.
Let them come in when I get out. Owen, if there's gonna be gunplay between you and Isham... there's one thing you've got to get clear in your head. If you're thinking of Laurie, you'll be a dead man. My mind is clear. Open that door, or we blow it down. All right, Dutcher, I'm opening up.
- Where is he?
- Where's who?
Don't give me that. Three of you came into this building and now...
You might as well quit, Dutcher.
When Merritt gets hold of Isham at the hotel...
"Isham at the hotel"?
Okay. It's all yours.
Don't do it, Will.
- You're not going to...
- I ought to...
the way Fay Dutcher killed the Vird brothers...
and the way he shot down Hugh Clagg without a chance.
- Will.
- I don't blame you for killing Clagg.
That I wanted to do myself. But you did.
And Lee Repp's word can hang you for it.
That I have, already signed.
I wouldn't.
There's a way out, for a price.
If your price is her,
I'll never pay it.
I came to end troubles. Sell Skull and get out of the country.
Sell out Skull?
Please, Will, let's do it. Let's go away.
You'd go away with me after all that's happened?
You're my husband, Will.
I made a bargain.
I almost forgot that once...
but I never will again.
Owen, you've won.
But so have I.
Don't, Dutcher!
You kept your bargain. Thanks.
Skull's yours.
Never sell it.
No, I won't.
By the way, Merritt, I
just quit working for Isham.
We got nothing to fight about anymore.
Let her go, Dutcher.
- Owen, don't. Please!
- Stay back.
Hold it, Dutcher.
You wouldn't shoot a man
in the back, would you?
I could you.
I've got no gun. It would be murder.
I was hoping that you'd try your luck.
Head for the Sheriff's office.
You're hurt again.
Won't you ever learn?
You'll have to teach me.