Matewan

By John Sayles
Damn!
Shootin' coal!
Shootin' coal!
Danny! What in god's name
are you doing?
I got a shot set up back there.
Word come down from Turley.
Tonnage rate?
They brung it down
to 90 cent a ton.
Down!?
Them dagoes are
holding fast in #3.
He says, "Take it or leave it."
Sephus, what we gonna do?
"Hit were 19 and 20
in the southwest field
and things was tough."
"The miners was trying to bring
the union to West Virginia...
and the coal operators and their
gun thugs was set on keeping 'em out."
"Them was hand loadin' days, they
paid you by the ton and they didn't
care no more for a man than
they done for a draft mule."
Them was hard people, your
coalminers then.
They wudn't nobody
you wanted to cross."
"So push come to shove and pretty
soon we had us a war down there
in Mingo County,
which in them days
was known as 'bloody Mingo'."
"And that's where it all came
to a head, there on Tug Fork,
in the town of Matewan."
We done it Mama,
we're gonna have the union!
- Just gotta stop for a little repairs.
  Sorry for the inconvenience.
- They shifted Italians in, right off the boat,
  so they're still bring coal outa there.
I'd sure hate to get
a whiff of that mine.
What the hell we stopping for?
Step down gentleman, this
here'll be your new home.
How come we ain't
getting off in town?
- Just get in line.
I'n gonna kill him!, kill him!
Get on the train! Get on!
C'mon, Bill!
Come on! Come on, Bill!
Gimme your hand, man.
- Git out of here!
When do we get to Matewan?
- You don't want to go there mister,
ain't nothing but crazy people.
Hi
Hi
Everybody was here,
then they got word
and they gone on
up the line a ways.
Some kind of union bizness.
Yeah, I saw.
- You best steer clear of it.
My name's Bridey Mae Tolliver.
Uh, Joe Kenehan.
Uh, you know
Radnor's Boarding House?
- Big white house.
Right on past the coal dock,
she's a real sourpuss, though...
Elma Radnor.
Thank you.
You gonna be in town long?
It depends.
I'll see you around.
I hope so.
- These picks and shovels
are to be considered a loan
from the Stone Mountain Coal Company.
Their costs will be deducted
from you first month's pay.
Tool-sharpeners provided by the company's 25 cents a month.
Use of the wash house is 75 cents a month.
Medical doctor provided by the company is 2 dollars a month,
special procedures extra.
Your train ride here provided by the company will be deducted from your first month's pay.
Your pay will be issued as company script, redeemable for all goods and services at the Stone Mountain Company Store.
Purchases of any items available at the Company Store from outside merchants will result in firing without pay.
- What's to keep y'all from jacking up them prices at your store?
Name?
Johnson, they calls me 'Few Clothes'.
Powder, fuses, lamps, head gear and all appropriate clothing will be available at the Company Store, and Stone Mountain will generously advance you a month's supply of these items, payment to be deducted.
I'm going to take you over to camp now where you'll be livin'.
There's some Italian gentleman that are very eager to meet you.
Rentals will be for one room, 250 a month.
Company rule, no more than two people to one room, children included.
Electricity, where that is feasible, will be 1 dollar a month.
Mrs. Radnor?
Yes.
My name is Joe Kenehan.
I'm going to be
in town for a bit and
your place here was recommended.
What do you do?
Uh, I guess I'm looking for work.
You with the Company?
The company?
- If you ain't with the Company,
  there ain't no work.
Look mister, don't act the lamb with me.
What's your business here?
- Mama!
- Mama, it's Hillard! Them scabs
done it, up the line a mile...
They was all coloured this time,
they bust his nose!
You got any ice?
- Some in the back.
Go fetch me two chunks about this big
and a piece of rag.
You a doctor?
- No, but I seen my share
of broken noses.
Now just put it up in the air, buddy,
just like your watching
the clouds.
We'll get that bleeding stopped.
I ga my liggid...
Say what?
- He said he got his licks in.
Seems to be all the men around here
care about, wives and kids are starving,
so long as they've
got their licks in...
It's just frustration, is all
when you can't take
care of them you care about.
I know, it ain't their fault.
Here you go.
This freezes up all
them little veins inside.
It's just so they close up and they
don't let any more blood out.
You a doctor?
No.
I'm just a guy
looking for a place to stay.
5 dollars a week cash.
That includes dinner and clean sheets.
Hope I'm not making a mistake.
Name is Joe Kenehan.
- Well, mostly I work
for the railroads, laying track.
Kansas, Missouri...
I went west for a bit
and worked in a lumber camp.
A little of whatever
pays an honest dollar.
I'm a coalminer. At least
until we come out I was.
Had me over in section 3.
I was a trapper boy.
Ain't you a little young?
- I'm almost 15.
There are some in there
younger than me.
Of course with the strike now
I work mostly on
running this place.
I help a little, don't I?
It's gonna be a long one.
That superintendent
at Stone Mountain he said
he'd go broke before he let
one union sumbitch so much as step
into his coalmine.
- Danny...
Sorry, ma'am, but
that's what he said.
Daniel is a preacher.
- Is that so?
- You ought to hear him testify.
What church you with?
Well, round here there's
the missionary folk... they's
Hardshell Baptists and then there's the free will folks which is your Softshell Baptists. Right now I preach for both. I'll get it. Daniel is gonna preach tonight over at the missionary. I never was religious myself. It's Sephus, mama. Hello, Elma... Mrs. Knightes - Hello, Sephus. I come to have a word with your new boarder, if he don't mind. Excuse me. Claims he's the fella the union sent us. Can you prove it? Don't take nothing to have a card printed up. I guess you'll just have to trust me. Who wrote "The Iron Hill"? Jack London - Where's Joe Hill buried at? All over the world. They scattered his ashes. Which eye is Big Bill Hayward missing? His right one. - How did Frank Little die? Butte, Montana. They hung him from a railroad trestle. You know your stuff. I was with the Wobbley's. - Me too, back when it meant something. One big union. - Not around here buddy. C.E. Lively... this is my restaurant. Fellas are waitin'. They don't give a damn whether
we live or die
just so long as they get the
coal out of the ground.
They had us pulling pillars and
the roof was working, you know
like it does before it's going
to fall down.
If I say I ain't dying in here
and walk away
they'll put me down in some damn
puddle in a 2 foot seam
and no air to breathe...
a man can't mine coal that way.
They're just pushing us further
than we can go.
- The check wayman he'll take 50
pound off your load for slate
when there ain't a pebble in it.
It's down in the bottom he'll say
where they ain't no looking for it.
Then they raise the prices at
the company store the same god
damn week that they lower the
tonnage rate.
And they still ain't rock dusted
that damn hole.
Who'm I talking about?
- Jesus
I can't hear you!
- Jesus!
I still can't hear you!
- Jesus!!
Jesus Christ our lord!
Do you know His name?
Hallelujah, say yeah!
Have you felt the warming
comfort of His precious love?
Praise Jesus!
Praise His holy name!
Praise His blessed spirit!
Praise His everlasting love!
Jesus Christ our lord!
Listen to me now, listen to me.
The prince of darkness
is upon the lion!
Amen!
Now in the bible his name is
Beelzebub
Lord of the flies.
Right now on earth today
his name is bolshevick
socialist!, communist!, union man!
Lord of untruth, sower of evil
seed, enemy of all that is good
and pure and this creature
walks among us.
What are we gonna do about it?
First thing we got to have is
all of these niggers and all
these dagos that come
in here to take our jobs
thrown out of the mines.
Mines, hell! They got 'em in our
houses, they're setting at our
tables right now
and they're sleeping in our beds
while we're out living under a
piece of canvas at
the back of the hollar.
I been a union man my whole life.
I know the story with these coal
operators and their gun thugs.
The only thing they understand
is the bad end of a bullet.
If we show 'em, we just as soon
blow up their damn mines than
seen them worked by a bunch of
scabs and then they gonna listen.
- Someone is coming, it's Alex.
He got someone.
Where did you find him?
He come right up on the steps
They told me that C.E. Lively's
is where the union mens meet.
So?
I got business with the union.
That so?
What's your name, son?
They calls me "Few Clothes".
I didn't come here
looking for no trouble.
A mans got to eat.
- So why don't you go eat,
back where you come from?
They told me that they was jobs here.
- Go home nigger.
- God damn scab.
You watch your mouth peckerwood!
I been called nigger and I can't
help that's the way white folks is...
but I ain't never been called no scab!
And I ain't fixin' to start up now.
I'll go ton for ton loading coal
with any man here.
And when I do, I expects the
same dollar for the same work.
You get out of this hollar alive son,
you be doin' good for yourself.
Union men my ass.
You want to be treated like men?
You want to be treated fair?
You ain't men to that coal company.
You're equipment
like a shovel, a gondola car,
a hunk of wood brace.
They'll use you til you
wear out or you break down,
or your buried under a slate fall
and then they'll get a new one.
And they don't care what color
it is or where it comes from.
It doesn't matter how much
coal you can load
or how long your family
has lived on this land.
If you stand alone you just so
much shit to those people.
You think this man is your enemy?
Huh?
This is a worker.
Any union keeps this man out
ain't a union,
it's a god damn club.
Now they got you fighting white
against colored,
native against foreign,
hollar against hollar,
when you know there ain't but
two sides to this world...
them that work and them that don't.
You work,
they don't.
That's all you got to
know about the enemy.
You say you got guns.
Well I know that you all
are brave men
and I know you could shoot it
out with the company if you had to.
But the coal company
don't want this union
and the state government
don't want it.
The federal government
don't want it.
And they're all of them just
waiting for an excuse to come down
and crush us to nothin'.
Fellas, we're in a
hole full of coal gas here.
The tiniest spark at the wrong
time is going to be the end of us.
So we got to pick away
at this situation
slow and careful.
We got to organize
and build support.
We got to work together.
Together!
Til they can't get their coal
out of the ground without us
cuz we're a union!
Cuz we're the workers damn it!
And we take care of each other.
- How can we shut the mines down
if we don't dynamite 'em?
The men walk out!
All of them!
Fat chance.
And every man that walks out
on his own steam
we take into the union.
- All the dagos
and all the coloreds?
That's what a union is fellas.
You better get used to it.
So this fella owns a vineyard,
goes out first thing one morning
and he hires some workers.
Says he'll give 'em a dollar for
the day which was decent wages
in biblical times.
Well then he's at the
marketplace and he sees some
other fellas and he hires them.
And some more at noon and some
at 2 and some at 5 and
every time it's the same deal...
a dollar for the day and he's
hiring all day long right up
til 1 hour before quitting time.
Look we're real sorry to barge
in on you like this,
but it's come to a point where
we got to talk to you.
Now I know you people got it
hard coming to a new country.
You don't know the rules.
Don't know how things work.
They don't know shit about
mining coal that's for sure.
They been dying like flies
in that #3 hole.
- But how it is,
you don't have a whole lot of
choice in this thing.
You know what a union is?
Sindacato.
- Sindacato?
What the situation is,
we need every...
- We join the union they shoot us.
We no join the union you shoot us.
Well, that's one way of looking at it.
That dago's just driving me crazy
Now what's he playing?
-Shhhh
Now who's that?
Peckerwood's gone past.
Union men will be up in a few minutes.
What we talking to him for?
-You want to walk back to Alabama?
The sun goes down and he sends for his foreman and he says to go pay off the workers starting with the ones he picked up just an hour ago and to pay everyone of them the same dollar a day. And of course the fellas that went out first is roped off about this. So they get to agitating, complaining so loud that the owner come up and he says, "Look it, we dealt for a dollar and that's what you get. And what I pay anybody else is none of your look out, so there."
Now that's all the gospel story says except for the moral Jesus drew out of it. And so Jesus says, Thus it will be in the kingdom of heaven the first will be last and the last will be first. Now it's clear from this parable that Jesus hadn't heard nothin' about the union. If he was walking the earth today and seen the situation we got with these coal operators
he'd a changed his tune.
A man deserveth an hourly wage.
He'd say for those
the pit be gassy and the face
full of slate, a man still toileth by
the sweat of his brow.
And wants a better deal here on
earth, no matter what I got in store
for him in the hereafter?
Praise Jesus!
- Kenehan.
Out kinda late, aren't you?
I met some people and
we got to talking.
Talking?
Yeah.
Who are you?
Name is Sid Hatfield.
I'm chief of police around here.
It ain't against the law
to talk, is it?
Depends.
I take care of my people.
You bring them trouble,
you're a dead man.
Sleep tight, Kenehan
Hi.
Well, look at this, Griggsy.
They got up
a little reception committee for us
What is your name, honey?
- Bridey Mae Tolliver.
You like to watch the trains
come and go, Bridey Mae?
Yeah.
And the people what come into town.
There been a lot of new people
coming here lately?
A few.
- Fella named Joe Kenehan show up?
Maybe.
Are you married, Bridey Mae?
I was.
He got killed in the mine.
That's too bad.
Did you hear that, Griggsy?
He got killed in the mine.
It's a shame.
Was your husband a union man
while he was living?
No. He said it wouldn't never
take hold down here.
He sounds like a smart fella.
I think that you are real pretty.
You know that, Bridey Mae?
Thank you.
Don't you think she's pretty, Griggsy?
You are the best looking
mountain trash I've seen
in a long while.
We'll see you around.
Let's roll, Griggsy.
The sooner we get
out of this shithole the better.
I was putting up blackberrys
when Tremel Blankenship come
shouting up the hollar that
the #5 had blown.
I remember I took
the pot off the stovetop
and washed up my hands
before I went down.
It took two days to dig through.
Then when they brung 'em up you
couldn't tell which was which.
They found blood on the walls
from fellas trying
to claw their way out.
Mrs. Elkins, Mrs. Mounts,
Bridey Mae, me...
we all lost our men in that fire.
Danny was 7 then.
Now he's back in that same hole.
How did it start?
Coal dust gets hanging in the
air down there
and there's a spark.
They could spray the walls down
but the company says
that'd cost too much.
Hey, was...uh, was Sid Hatfield
ever a miner?
Not for long.
He don't like to be closed in, Sid.
He's always real friendly,
smiling Sid.
Then the war come.
Cabell Testerman got to be the mayor.
He made Sid chief of police
and then the girl
that Cabell married... Well...
I don't want you using Danny on
no crazy union business.
A man has to stand up
for what he believes in.
Danny ain't no man...
Look it mister,
you gonna be movin' on.
Win or lose your gonna
walk on out of this hollar
and we gotta stay here.
I intend to leave a union when I go.
My husband used to talk union.
I seen where it got him.
- Mama. People out front mama.
Sorry mister, we're full up.
- Not anymore your not, sonny.
Stone Mountain sent us down here.
- We're still full up.
Can I help you gentleman?
- These two are trying to push
their way in here. I told them
there wasn't no use.
- I don't see where you got any
say in the matter.
If my mama says you can't stay
here then you can't, that's all.
Danny!
Keep out of this.
Look, I only got one room left.
Well then, somebody is going to
have to move, don't they?
Let me see your register?
- You ain't seen nothin'.
Lady, we're here as guests of the
Stone Mountain Coal Company.
They own this house.
- Good mornin'.
You fellas movin' in?
Yeah.
- No.
Well, you won't find a better
night's sleep anywhere in town.
It's a shame I got to move
over to the hotel.
It's business you know.
So you mind if I settle my bill, ma'am?
Danny, you sign these
two gentleman in.
Don't think the company isn't
going to hear about this.
Boy, sometimes you got to bend
so as you don't break.
Food's awful at the hotel.
Mattresses got lumps,
probably cooties, too.
I'll be all right.
I'll get my things.
-Thank you.
Now, if you want to
stay alive down here,
you got to listen up, get a
hold of something solid,
and give the top a little poke.
Now, if you get a nice ringing sound
you're all set.
Got a nice solid top over your head.
You get a kinda hollow sound,
like a drum, that slate's
sagging a bit,
and you gotta put in another post.
You dig coals a long time?
- Since I was 10. And you?
We make a shoe. Everybody in
same fabricca Milano,
make a shoe.
- Shoes.
You make-a shoes?
As soon as they get that union
they'll send us back.
It could be.
But, you try and head out of here
now, you be owin' all that money,
like they say, company
shoot you for a thief.
We just some slaves up here.
They own our black asses.
Gentleman.
- Hey, Few, I got
a question for you.
Yes...
Now suppose they let us in this
union like they say.
We gonna have to work
with them Italian people?
C'mon babies
C'mon and get it now,
c'mon, c'mon
C'mon now.
Oh, boy.
Taking a walk?
I'm going up to the coal camp to
meet those new fellas when they
come off their shifts.
Your doing union business,
ain't ya?
How you like Mrs. Radnor's?
Well there wasn't room.
I'm at the hotel now.
Isn't she a sourpuss though?
- Mr. Kenehan! They's evictin'
in town, Mr. Kenehan
It's Baldwin, them Baldwin thugs.
This is town property.
Who are you?
I'm the mayor.
Well, pleased to meet you.
My name is Bill Hickey.
This is Tom Griggs. We're
carrying out an eviction
for Stone Mountain.
You can do what you want
up at the coal camp,
but this is town property.
- Stone Mountain holds the deeds
on these houses, Cabell.
- You need a writ for eviction.
You the law around here?
Well good.
Then you can help us.
Now these people are trespassing on
company property.
They all signed a contract that
they wouldn't join any union.
You uh, you Baldwin-Felts agency?
That's right.
- Presently employed by the
Stone Mountain Coal Company.
This is from Mr. Turley here,
and this is from our boss,
Mr. Thomas Felts.
I've met Mr. Felts.
Well good, we won't have any problem.
I wouldn't pee on him if his
heart was on fire.
Neither of these will do for a writ.
You'll have to
see a judge in Charleston
What if we ain't got time
to go to Charleston?
Then you better find some.
Now I can't do nothin' about what you
pull outside town limits,
but you bother these people
under my jurisdiction,
I'll put you under arrest.
Yeah?
You and whose army?
All you men own a gun?
Go home and get it.
You're deputies as of now.
The rest of you people stick
close, we'll need witnesses.
I'm giving you 10 minutes to
get those people's belongings back in the house.
If the rest of the boys was here you wouldn't be so cocky.
If the rest of the boys was here, I'd give you 5 minutes.
Now move it.
You can't win you know, this is going to happen with you, without you.
You can't stop it.
All right boys, let's put it back in.
This ain't our day.
- That a boy, Sid!
I never seen a law man buck a company gun before.
He's mostly a real nice feller, is Sid.
I may be mayor of the town, but I'm gonna be mayor of a cemetary.
Contention makes him nervous, though.
We got a motion on the floor here and this is coal miners only.
All them in favor of keeping them scabs out of the mines tomorrow morning using whatever force it looks like is necessary raise your hands.
It's settled then.
Pass them peas, boy.
Pass the peas, Danny.
You boy deaf or dumb or what?
Daniel ain't dumb, Daniel's a preacher.
That right, boy? You a preacher?
Who do you preach to, boy?
Squirrels?
Daniel preached at the meeting last night.
It was a good number of souls there.
You a soul saver, boy?
You want to have a go
at me and Griggsy here.
We ought to be be a real challenge.
He's a squirrel preacher is
what stands up on a stump
out in the woods and
testifies to the holy rodent
- Danny!
You in a hurry to
meet your maker, boy?
- Ain't no guns allowed at table.
Sit down, Danny
You do what your pretty
mama says, preacher.
You put that away now, mister.
- Pack it away, Griggsy.
Look, we're gonna be here a
while, little lady. You can have
it the easy way or the hard way.
Now, how about them peas?
Boy's gettin' on my nerves.
Oh lord!
They told me they would
talk to the fellas.
I saw they're faces last night, Joe.
They wasn't buying it.
We're playing right into
the company's plans...
The men voted, Joe.
What more do you want?
I seen the lights on the hill.
They're sneaking them in
for a night shift.
Let's go fellas.
- Keller told me you're
sent from the union.
Uh-huh.
I bet you seen hundreds of strikes.
Yeah.
I got thrown clear out of the
missionary the other night,
talking the union from the pulpit.
Is we gettin' close?
- Up there.
They're down the hill!
Over here.
When our fellas put their lanterns out,
you just hit the dirt.
I think this belongs to you.
I'm with him.
All of you union men, let's
welcome our new brothers.
From now on
Stone Mountain don't move one
piece of coal unless it's
a union man that moves it.
Let's get out of here.
Glad you could help us.
"In them days the coal company
owned your camp houses,
they owned your land,
they owned most of the town
and the people who run it."
"If you wasn't for the company,
there wasn't too many places
you could go that was
still on the map."
"The union didn't have too much
they could give to the people,
back then."
" 'All we got in common
is our misery',
Joe Kenehan used to say, 'and the
least we can do is share it.' "
She got the evil eye that one.
Aw, mama.
Don't you let me catch you
peeking over there.
She got the evil eye
if I ever seen it.
Well, whatta we got here?
We brung you some food.
Mama stole it from the company.
Quiet, Danny.
- Well we can use
everything you got.
You people are crazy, you ain't
never gonna win this thing.
Then what are you
helping us for?
I got work to do.
We appreciate your help.
I ain't never seen everybody
all together like this.
Company don't stand a chance.
Jessie...
What's the pitch?
Well I was just saying to the
mayor here how
we're all trying to do our jobs.
You, and me and him.
And nobody is paying us enough
to be dodging no bullets for it.
Um, now,
Mr. Felts has authorized me to
make it more attractive for you
gentleman to cooperate.
Town ain't for sale, mister.
What about you?
Now, I figured that little show
you were putting on out there
the other day was just for
bargaining power.
Or are you going to
be stupid, too?
Either a you shit hogs
lift a finger
in town limits, I'll put you away.
Damn hillbillys always
gotta do it the hard way.
You boys are going
up against some
pretty big people.
Don't push your luck.
How's Jessie these days?
- Oh she's okay, Sid.
You think they're bluffin'?
Nope.
Neither am I.
Now the way the relief fund
works is kind of tricky
cuz all the
different situations we got
going around the country.
We stretched real thin.
There's a lot of strategy to who
gets what and when.
I report to the strike committee.
They evaluate the progress
we're making here
and the political situation
and then they release
the strike fund to us.
You mean they'd cut us off?
No, the amount we get
is based on...
What if they think
we're going to lose?
Look the strike committee
considers what's best
for the union as a whole,
but that doesn't mean...
Politics boys.
Gonna play union,
you gotta play politics.
I'm sure Joe don't like that no
more than you do.
- I don't like it one damn bit.
Me neither, I didn't get into
this thing so I can have one
more boss to tell me what to do.
The union isn't your boss,
it's you.
Then why we gotta wait
for some hunkies up
in Pittsburgh to give us
the word to move?
Cause it's a democracy.
It's like the United States.
Democracy.
- That's a joke.
Quiet!
Get down, they're shootin!
Just keep your head down, son.
They're gonna make a night of it.
- I think you just got a little
piece of bullet left in there.
Company doctor said
he wouldn't come out.
But there's a fella in Pikeville
on the Kentucky side
that'll treat union men on the sly.
He'll be here by noon.
Will he treat colored?
He treats union, he'll treat
colored.
More water, Danny
- Yes, ma'am
You just hold this up there
against that real gentle.
Don't press hard.
- Elma, you seen any of the men?
Only them that's wounded.
How's he doin'?
- Not bad.
At least nobody got killed.
No thanks to you.
Take it easy buddy.
Morning, Joe.
- Hey, Bridey.
You seen any of the fellas?
- Not a one.
He's real nice lookin'.
He likes me, I can tell.
How?
- I just know men that's all.
That'd make a cat laugh.
If you want to make
that kind of slop
for dinner you go
back home and make it.
This is United States here and
we do things differently.
Listen to me, you can
learn something here.
C'mon ladies, what's the problem?
I thought she was going to make
up some cornbread with it.
You should see the slop
she come up with.
Miss Elkins,
These people got their own way of doing things. Well that is a waste of good corn meal if you ask me. She makes up this porrigly kind of mess I wouldn't feed it to the pigs.

- Listen!

Where's all the men gone to? That changes the whole picture. What I'm saying is unions is fine for some things, but for other things a man's got to go on his own. Of course that's up to you. Roscoe...

You make sindacato, you do what the sindacato say. I listen to Joe.

Few Clothes...

We gonna be shooting white folks, right? That's the idea. People hear about black folks shooting white folks, no matter what it's for, there's going to be hell to pay. You gotta point.

Well then, if you gentleman will excuse us...

You people have been put out of Stone Mountain Mine housing and some of you have seen fit to take along certain items of food, furniture and clothing that don't belong to you but belong to the company. As of the day of the strike your script ceased to be legal tender, meaning that any item of food, clothing, and furniture not paid for in cash money must be turned over to me
and my deputies and I suggest
that you all cooperate.
See, my boys,
they didn't get much sleep last
night so they're kinda jumpy.
Besides we got
the law on our side.
- You ain't no law!
You got to slip around the real law!
You just got guns is all.
You just thugs.
Yeah, maybe your right, sonny,
we just got guns.
You still got to
hand in them goods.
Yellow scab-herder, you!
You hurt?
You get up from there.
- You gotta list of goods?
Don't need one.
How you gonna know what belongs
to the company and what don't?
He's the red, Hickey.
He's the agitator.
Everybody you see
I don't got a gun on me.
What good do you think that's
going to do you, red?
You shoot me folks'll
know it was murder.
Well, that's some cold comfort.
Now you listen to me, red...
We was huntin'.
You folks are making
an awful lot of commotion.
You scaredt all the game away.
This your machine?
Heard it last night, too.
It's an offense to the ear.
Hold it pops,
you're talking to the law here.
He ask you anything?
Where did you get that thing, pal?
Spanish war?
Nope,
war between the states.
You all get in this machine and
get back into town where you belong.
Ain't but one law out here
and that's the law of nature.
Let's get the hell out of here.
Folks try and keep the
noise down you'll do fine.
Help yourself to the bird
and the rabbit.
You see any hogs they probably
ours. We'd appreciate it if
you'd leave them be.
Good day to you.
Are you okay, Joe?
Yeah, I'll be all right
if it weren't for my ribs.
Who were those people?
Rossums, mostly,
and a Shuttleworth.
They miners?
- You never find them folks
near a hole, They have most of
their land stole by the company.
They's hill people.
- Foothill people really your
genuine hill people.
They can be dangerous.
Now the thing you
gotta remember, son
is your fuse burns
1 foot per minute.
Make it too long,
they might see it.
Make it too short,
we'll all be meeting you
on the other side.
Damn it.
Air shaft #4
Go out the back way.
Where is all our other friends
tonight, Miss Elma?
They get tired
of the chuck or what?
I think that old bitty
went on strike,
laid down her teeth
and protested.
They're just particular about
who they eat with.
- What about you, Miss Elma?
Are you particular?
Stone Mountain didn't
hold the lease here you two...
Stone Mountain didn't hold lease
here you'd be peddling puntang
down in cinder bottom so just
shut your mouth about it.
Where's the little
preacher tonight?
Bitch got no table manners.
Elma?
You know where Danny is?
No. I don't know where anybody is.
Ain't nobody wants
to tell me either.
You okay?
- Yeah just tired is all.
I been working all day.
This place...
I been working
the day they burned my husband I
started and I been working and it...
It don't never stop.
I get so tired
and
there ain't nobody.
- Look it's hard.
It's hard being on your own.
You don't know nothing about it.
- We're in business buddy,
let's get going.
What is it?
- Sounds like dynamite
up at the mine.
Might be that #5 shaft.
Might be some shootin'.
Hillard! Hillard!
You seen my boy?
Anybody seen my boy, Hillard?
That'll be the Baldwins.
Hillard!
Anybody seen my Hillard?
It's Baldwins up the hill!
Shoot low boys!
Cut 'em down!
You fellas get on out of here,
I'll hold 'em back.
Reese! Reese, get up!
Sephus, c'mon!
Okay boys, let's spread out,
he's here somewhere.
I got him. He's over here.
Hold it boys, it's me.
Hold your fire boys, it's C.E.
You all right?
You'd better get back to camp.
Judas.
Hold his leg.
Hold it, hold, hold.
Now I'm just going to pull this
back from your leg, boy.
Gimme back that knife, Hillard.
Hey, what happened?
We was sold.
Them Baldwins come up from behind.
Known right where
we was laying out.
They know'd when the men
was out of camp today, too.
How's she feelin', buddy?
You made it.
I thought we lost you back there.
Well, I got off
a couple of rounds...
buried myself in the leaves.
Seen Reese Hadley go down, though.
Sephus get back?
I don't think so.
You see what happens
when you pick up a gun!
All I see is them niggers and
dagos weren't there tonight and
we was sold and
somebody gonna pay.
Something bad is
happening out there.
Those guns.
Hunting party, that's all.
Now, where was I?
"time to put all shyness"
Time to put all shyness aside
and admit to our heartfelt
attraction
I'm not sure
how you spell "attraction".
How about,
"heartfelt desires"?
Are you sure you
want to do this?
heartfelt desires,
dearest
Joseph
- Look at that.
Just acovered with gore.
Dogs didn't do all that.
Are you drawing breath, son?
Baldwins, we were sold...
- What's your name?
Bosephus...
Sephus Purcell.
- Kin to Nimrod Purcell?
That's daddy's uncle.
Say some Baldwin agents took ya?
From behind.
- None of them Purcells
ever was too bright.
Grab his ankles missus
and mind your dress.
He's ableedin' like a stuck pig.
I found 'em boys, he's here.
- It's Reese.
Got yourself a martyr.
I tried to stop this.
See any sign of Sephus?
We'll maybe smell him before we see him.
They found somebody?
Just stay right here, honey, don't want to look at that mess.
But, I got somethin for Mr. Kenehan.
I don't think he's in no mood to be bothered right now.
I'll see he gets it.
Who is it?
Oh, just some poor miner whose troubles is finally over.
Don't look, honey.
I talked to Ellix. He says your phonograph machine is going to be fixed in a couple days now.
It's awful nice of you to do, Everett.
Well, we got to take care of our favorite lady now, don't we?
You been so generous...
thinking about me when that Mr. Kenehan got you all so busy with the union.
That Mr. Kenehan is what I come to talk to you about, Bridey.
I got a suspicion he might not be what he says he is.
What do you mean?
Bridey,
Did you send Kenehan some sort of letter?
What do you want?
No.
He wouldn't.
There's a whole crowd of fellas standing around him, I seen Kenehan laughing and waving that letter.
So, I come over to see what was so funny.
A lot of fellers?
You mind if i have another drink, honey?
It ain't pretty what I gotta say.
He said some things, Bridey...
"She been following me around ever since I got here.
"Trailing after me like a dog in heat.
"Sniffing around my legs like a brood bitch.
"She don't wear no drawers", he says, "so she can be ready for whatever stumbles down the pathway."
He didn't!
He didn't!
He said you done it with one of the coloreds.
Lying bastard!
Bridey,
I think it might be worse than that.
I think he might be a spy in with the coal operators.
Well, he's got the fellas so turned around with all his talk...
I need for you to help me, Bridey, and sometimes you gotta tell a little bit of a lie just to get the truth across.
We fight them with guns we lose.
That's the whole damn story.
I'm not going to bullshit you fellas and tell you there won't ever come a time when the people that own this state send the word down to have us all murdered.
But, if we don't stand together now as workers, we got no hope at all.
Help me up.
You going somewhere?
This is miner's business
and you ain't no miner.
You two come along.
So, ah
last night he comes up here and
uh, he's all drunk and
everything and I says as how I
didn't want to have nothin'
to do with him and...
and I would call
some of you fellers
for help and
he says that all of you was
taken care of.
Taken care of, huh?
When I seen that there
weren't no help I...
He uh, kinda
forced me, he...
he forced me.
- Easy...
-That's okay. You better
hear this first hand.
Go ahead honey,
what happened then?
And afterwards he
thrown money on the bed like
I were some kind of a whore.
You done just fine, honey.
Now why don't you go sit outside
for a minute while we figure out
what we're going
to do about this.
So he don't have
no sense with women,
so what?
You know how Bridey
builds things up.
Take a look at this
that our friend left laying on
the floor last night.
Baldwin Felts Agency
What it say?
- It's a death warrant is what
for Mr. Joseph Kenehan.
So it's goodbye Mr. Kenehan, tonight.
Miners?
How'd you manage that?
That tramp that goes to
meet the passenger train.
Seems she's got the eye for Kenehan.
So he put it in her head
that Kenehan has been
bad mouthing her all around town.
He's got her down there right now
crying to the miners
and... he's got these
papers from Bluefield.
I didn't leave my Colt like this.
You spying little bastard!
What'd you hear, huh?
What did you hear?
- Nothin'.
- Horseshit!
Hit him, Bill!
See this medal?
You know how I won this,
preacher boy, huh?
I was sitting alone in
a ditch in France and this Kraut
jumps in right next to me
and I took my bayonet
and I stuck him
right in the face.
And then another jumps in
and I stick him too.
And another, and another
and another... They just
kept coming one at a time
all night long.
And, a little bit,
I got to worried
that they weren't all dead,
so I stuck them all again
a couple times just to make sure.
And in the morning
they said that I was a war hero.
Well, I'm gonna stay close to
you tonight, preacher boy.
And you let one wrong word fly
and I'm gonna put
one in your skull
and I'll do the same
for your pretty mama.
You know I ain't lying,
don't ya, boy?
Yes, sir.
Man who draws the short straw
gets to do the job,
and word don't travel beyond
this room about who it is.
The rest of us
will want a good alibi.
I figure in that
prayer meeting tonight,
right under the preacher's nose.
Welcome to the union, son.
What's the story?
Ludie heard that the Baldwins
was coming after you tonight
and I'm supposed to stick by you.
You got the shit detail again,
huh?
You all right, Danny?
- You got your sermon memorized?
I bet he don't know anymore
scripture than I do.
And that ain't a whole hell
of a lot, is it, Griggsy?
- You know any?
I never got no further then,
"In the beginning was the word..."
Guess we both doomed
to the hot place.
Lord relies on little shits like
this one to spread His word,
I don't want no truck with heaven.
And, as for hell, well
we been to West Virginia!
Ahhh!
- What in god's name you doin', son?
I just got your leaks
all stopped and here your
trying to bust them open again.
I got to get down there,
they got to know.
You ain't goin' nowhere
unless it's in a pine box.
Where's your sense?
I got to...
- I wish those fellas'd get here.
Huh?
If they're comin'
I wish they'd hurry up.
I don't want any more
shootin' in the woods.
You ever use one of those?
10th Cavalry,
in Cuba, back in '98.
San Juan Hill.
Pretty rough down there?
Did what I had to.
Is it true you're a red?
Yeah, I suppose it is.
Then how come you
don't carry a gun?
Well, we carry little round bombs.
Don't you read the papers?
I want to tell you tonight
about the blackness
in the heart of man.
Gonna warn you about the many
and devious ways in which satan
will hide from you the truth
of who your real friends are.
I'm going to do it with a
story from the Patriarchs.
Now, we all know about Joseph
and how out of all Jacob's
12 children he was the smartest
and the smoothest and how
his brothers got so jealous they
pulled off his coat of many colors
and whooped on him
and left him out
to be sold into slavery.
But Joseph was not your ordinary
fella even for biblical times, he had a special way with him. A way of looking at the grand scheme of things. So when this fella Potiphar bought him for a slave Joseph just smiled and vowed he was going to be a good one, Making the best of a bad situation he put his heart to his work and was honest and friendly in his dealings and before you knew it he was just about running Potiphar's households and fields and all his business' for him. The only trouble was Potiphar's wife. Now she was what you might call a loose woman When I was in Leavenworth there was a bunch of Mennonites, mainly because they wouldn't fight in the war, it's against their religion. It's also against their religion to shave their beards or wear buttons on their clothes and they was being forced to do both by the prison guards. So, they refused to work and they went on a strike right there in Hell's Half Acre. They was handcuffed to the bars of a cell house 8 hours a day for two full weeks. They were put with their arms up, like this, so's they had to stand on their toes or those cuffs would cut into their wrists. Can't nobody stay on their toes 8 hours, so pretty soon
their fingers would
start to swell up.
They turned blue and then
they'd crack open.
Blood would run down their arms,
8 hours a day,
day after day.
Still they wouldn't work.
Still they tore the buttons off
their uniforms every time they
were sewed back on.
They tore them with their teeth
because they're hands
wouldn't close no more.
So now I don't
claim a thing for myself.
But them fellas they ain't
never lifted a gun in their lives
and you couldn't find
any braver in my book.
- I wish them fellas
would get here.
Also in Potiphar's employ at this
time were a couple of
spies from one of his enemies.
Fellas that wanted to bring him
down in the world and get their
hands on his fields and houses.
They seen the want and lust in
Mrs. Potiphar,
and seen it would be good for
their purposes to get shed of
the young Joseph.
So they come to Potiphar's wife
She calls Joseph in and
she asks him one more time,
Joseph will you lie with me?
And he says, no ma'am I won't.
And she sets up a ruckus and grabs
a hold of his garment he's wearing
and rends it in two
before he can get clear.
Potiphar runs in with his guards
and she's a-bawling her eyes out
and shaking like a leaf.
Your servant Joseph, she says
He come in here and tried to
make me lie with him.
Only when I called out he fled
leaving this here garment
as evidence.
And not only that, she says,
he's been spying and plotting
against you with your enemies.
He means to take over here
and have you killed.
Potiphar had no reason to
misbelieve his wife.
Joseph was a slave
and a foreigner.
So he gathered up his servants
and household workers and they
went and slew Joseph dead.
Cut him from gut to gizzard and
left him bleeding in the street.
And lo they never learned of
Mrs. Potiphar's lies and
went to their maker, unrepentant,
with innocent blood on their hands.
Draw your own conclusions.
Gettin' awful late.
- Shhhhh...
You hear somethin'?
No, you?
Yeah I think I did.
Like somebody moaning.
Maybe it's the fellas.
I think we should go out there
and have a look.
Who's that?
That's...
Mingala.
Well, we better get back to camp?
Wait a minute
Well, at least we
didn't waste a trip.
No way. It won't spread.
Is C.E. inside?
No such luck.
Find that son of a bitch.
How come they waste more food
in one day than a poor worker's
family has on their table
in a week?
Now let me ask you?
Who's sweat was it that went into
building those mansions?
- "Once they seen how they'd
almost done an innocent man
"it was like Joe
couldn't say no wrong.
"We moved out into
the Mango County then
"spreading the word
about the union.
"Spreading like wildfire
over to Red Jacket,
"to Ragland and Delbarton all
up and down the Tug Fork river
"bringing the union out to
all the folks that needed help.
"Putting the spirit into them
and trying to shut down the
"whole southwest field."
- Helping themselves to our land
and our labor for too damn long.
"Joe Kenehan said how there was
a new day comin' and sometimes
"I could just about see it.
"But it were a dangerous living
for a union man and you
"didn't dare turn your back.
"It was hard times and it was
hungry times, too.
"The union relief was spread thin.
And with the hope of a new day
"you can feed your soul
"but leave your belly rumbling,"
Scout!
Lady?
Since there's just me and
Hillard, and you got all
these little ones, well...
You know what to do with this? Hillard brung it in. It's for you.
I ain't gonna watch no babies go hungry, now here you go on. Here is some navy beans and these here is ramps. Now you can cook with these. They put a taste in your stew.
Anyhow...
Well, I...
figure we's all in this together. You sure got some pretty babies.
Who's your favorite pitcher?
- Hod Eller.
He's from Logan county.
You get to play ball much?
When the mines were open.
Joe...
Yeah?
You ever kill anybody?
What brought that up?
Bet Sid has.
He were in the war.
All I saw was workers killin' workers and it wasn't any point in it. They thrown you in jail cause you wouldn't go?
Them two years kept me from killin some poor stiff that got pushed out on a battlefield by rich folks and politicians, and they were worth it.
It's gettin' dark, Danny. You better go get that coal.
You see there, right there by the railroad trestle?
That's where Cap Hatfield and his boy Joe Glenn killed three men.
Boy wasn't but 13.
Used a Winchester.
You think it hurts much?
A bullet?
Beats dying in a damn coal mine.
Boy wasn't but 13 year old,
Joe Glenn.
Must be in there.
He always sleeps with the lights on.
Just gotta be quiet is all.
- Let's get the little bastards.
- Over here.
- Grab him, cut him off.
- Well, well what we got here?
Smarts a little don't it boy?
Hillard, right?
Now, how about you give us the names of your ring leaders up in Logan?
Give us 5 names boy, that's all, 5 names and we'll let you go.
That's fair isn't it?
- Never.
Griggsy...
Talk to us boy.
Talk to us!
I'll rot in hell first.
- Have it your way.
Mr. Lively.
Boy, I sentence you to death for the crime of stealing company property and being a dirty bolshevist union man.
You got 10 seconds to talk.
- Talk.
- Whoo, what a smell, Boy dirtied his diapers.
- We want names, son.
I can't,
I sworn on a bible.
- Then we're going to have to get down to it son.
- Use the razor.
- Hold him boys.
  Just a little nick, boy.
- Get it off your chest, son.

Plyant Mount, Bill Mahan,
Asa Radnor, J.T. Keadle...
5, give us 5, boy.
And Harley Shilton.

- Kill him.

NO!
So where do them
fellas he named live?
Clay Hill.
Where's that?
It's a cemetery.
Them are all fellas that was
killed in a gas fire 5-6 years ago.
Nothin' like a young boy dyin'
to stir things up.
Baldwin's coming into town
tomorrow, Kenehan.
You fellas have any idea
what's waiting for us?
You mean they didn't tell you?
No. I just seen
a line in the papers of...
...'Opportunity for
red-blooded American men...
'Immediate openings, high pay
'travel, chance for advancement.
Apply Baldwin Felts and
'write your own ticket.'
When the natives get restless
someplace they put that out.
Hook some more cannon fodder.
Ever hear of the
Hatfields and McCoys, son?
Yeah, of course I have.
This Matewan is
their stomping grounds.
They'll put a bullet in your
brain as soon as they look at ya.
Sid, we have authorization
to put these miners
off company property here in town.
Not from me you don't.
And we also go a
warrant for your arrest,
you give us any trouble.
This ain't worth shit
and you know it.
One way or another we're going
to carry out these evictions,
tomorrow morning.
Gentleman.
They come to kill me.
Hillard was my friend.
When I first come down to the
mines it was Hillard who'd
show me what to do.
He was a good coal miner,
a good union man.
And he always
took care of his mama.
I don't know how they could have
done him like they did.
All he wanted to do was
live decent, that's all.
Sometimes people say how God
willed it, how everything is
His plan.
Well... I don't think He planned
on Hillard a'laying here amongst
all these Elkinses.
Not this young in his life.
I think all God plans is
we get born and we
got to take it from there.
So you rest in peace, Hillard.
You rest easy cause we're going
to take up where you left off.
Amen.
You gonna tell us to turn the
other cheek, still?
Shootin' is what they want now.
Maybe it's what we want, too.
You expect too much of people, Joe.
Your still after that one big
union but most of us,
we can't see past this hollar.
I need to talk to the men.
Wouldn't be decent now.
I'll call a meeting
in the morning,
first thing.
Pass the word to stay
out from town tomorrow.
Something up?
Got a feelin'. You know
how white folks is
when they gets all excited.
Nothin's gonna bring
Hillard back you know.
Danny, I came here to help.
Sure you did.
First people come here to
help us with some money.
Next we know we got no land.
Then they say they're going
to help us with a job and
a place to live
and they stick us in some
damn coal camp
and let us dig out their mines.
Now you come here to help us
bring in the new day.
Well, Hillard ain't gonna
see no new day.
We had about as much help
as we can stand.
We gotta take care of ourselves.
We got to take care
of each other.
Joe!. Joe! The men go to town.
See it?
No need for you
to be in on this.
It's my town too,
they're my people.
Y'all have no right to come to
this here town with all these
people and drawing guns and
terrorizing them.
The writs you have are not valid for this town.
If you can't get one...
- NO!!!!!
Oh...
Jesus, don't shoot me.
I just wanted to talk.
I just wanted to talk.
I can't feel my legs.
"There was a trial but there wasn't nobody going to pass 'guilty on Sid Hatfield in Mingo county.
"Sid got married to mayor Testerman's widow and then the Baldwins they caught him unarmed "walking up the steps of the McDowell county court house.
"They shot 15 bullets into him, "right in broad daylight and C.E. Lively stepped in and put one "right through his skull.
"Wasn't even a trial on that one.
"That was the start of the great Coalfield War and us miners "took the worst of it, like Joe said we would.
"It's just one big union the whole world over as Joe Kenehan "used to say.
"And from the day of the Matewan massacre that's what I preached.
"That was my religion.
"We buried Joe Kenehan with our own.
"My mama she thought he wouldn't never stay, "but now he's with us for always, "laying up here in these West Virginia hills."