

THE HAMMER - ACT 1

Written by

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FADE IN:

OVER BLACK

The pained cries of a newborn cut through the darkness.

It WAILS, and WAILS, and WAILS.

EXT. FARM CEMETERY, NORWAY (1887) - DAY

A cold wind HOWLS across the rocky Norwegian landscape and over the fjord.

THOR HAAKENSEN (late 30s), a wiry farmer, weathered beyond his years and his slight, earnest son LARS (12) carry a tiny hand-hewn CASKET toward a small hole in the earth.

Thor's emaciated wife, ANNA (30s), trails behind them. Tears stream down her cheeks.

They stop at the modest grave.

Lars steps forward and opens his BIBLE.

LARS

A voice was heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children,
refusing to be comforted because
they are no more.

Anna sobs in silence and rubs a baby's PINK MITTEN between her fingers.

LARS (CONT'D)

Thus says the Lord: Refrain your
voice from weeping, and your eyes
from tears. For your work shall
be rewarded.

Lars looks up from his Bible. His grief-stricken eyes meet his mother's.

LARS (CONT'D)

There is hope in your future, says
the Lord. Jeremiah 31: 15-17.

Father and son secure ropes to the tiny coffin.

They gently lower it into the darkness.

EXT. NORWEGIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY - TRAVELING

Thor's brother JENS (30s) snaps the reins as a horse-drawn wagon makes its way along a rough country road.

Thor sways back and forth in the passenger seat.

Anna and Lars ride in back. A single oversized STEAMER TRUNK lays next to them.

Anna's brown curls bounce as she grips the sideboards.

A Norwegian FARM FAMILY lingers outside a stone house, near the road.

Their hollow malnourished eyes stare as the Haakensons pass.

A skeletal BOY (5) forages a few remaining blades of grass and stuffs them into his mouth. His lips are stained green.

As he chews, Anna and the boy lock eyes.

She turns away.

EXT. PORT OF BERGEN, NORWAY - DAY

Thor, Anna, Lars, and Jens make their way through a swarm of desperate travellers toward a wooden ramp, which leads to the deck of an enormous passenger ship.

Jens and Thor each support one side of the oversized trunk.

They set the trunk down and look at their feet.

Jens reaches into his pocket and produces a shiny SILVER POCKET WATCH.

JENS
(to his brother)
Take this.

Thor eyes the watch.

JENS (CONT'D)
To remember us.

THOR
I can't. It was-

JENS
Take it.

Jens pushes it into his hand.

THOR
We will see each other again.

Thor looks at his brother's gaunt face, then away.

JENS
It will be better there.

Two PORTERS come by.

PORTER
America?

Thor nods.

The two hoist the trunk onto their shoulders and carry it toward the belly of the vessel.

JENS
(to Lars)
Take good care of your Mama
and Papa.

Anna's eyes well up.

JENS (CONT'D)
(to the three of them)
The Lord be with you.

LARS
Amen.

The ship's horn BLOWS.

EXT. RAMP TO THE SHIP - DAY

A long line of starving emigrants push and shove their way up the ramp to the deck.

Thor, Anna, and Lars peer out over the mob below.

Thor gazes past the throng of people, past the port, to the snow capped mountains off in the distance.

CREW MEMBER
Documents!

Thor blinks, and unfolds several sheets of paper.

The CREW MEMBER examines them, then waves the Haakensons on.

INT. HALLWAY OF THE SHIP - DAY

Thor, Anna, and Lars enter a crowded hallway flanked by small berths.

Others watch from their meager accommodations as they pass.

Thor looks down at his papers, then up at a door.

THOR
Ten twenty-two.

Thor opens the door to a cramped, windowless room.

Inside, there are four undersized bunks. Each bunk has a thin mattress, a course blanket, and a pillow.

A HULKING MAN (20s) with a mop of blond hair and a dumbish grin reclines on one of the bunks.

Thor frowns.

Another CREW MEMBER scurries past the open door.

Thor follows him.

THOR (CONT'D)
Excuse me.

Thor catches up and taps him on the shoulder.

THOR (CONT'D)
Excuse me. I was told we would have a berth for our family.

CREW MEMBER
Is there a bunk for each of you?

THOR
Yes but-

CREW MEMBER
You are lucky. I've seen as many as nine to a berth. Two to a bunk and one on the floor.

The crew member scurries off.

INT. BERTH - NIGHT

The enormous man lies there, asleep on the narrow bunk. An empty TIN of Swedish sardines sits next to him.

Lars snores on the bunk above.

ANNA
I think he is deaf.

THOR
He is not deaf.

ANNA
An idiot then. I tried to speak
with him but he would not answer.

THOR
He is a Swede.

ANNA
It is no wonder. He smells of fish
and cheese.

THOR
Soon we will all smell. But things
will be better.

ANNA
For that, I pray.

Anna rolls onto her side, facing away from him. Her eyes
remain open.

INT. BERTH - DAY

Thor wakes with a start as Anna pokes him with her
bony finger.

ANNA
Thor. Lars is gone.

Thor rises.

THOR
Stay here.

HALLWAY OF SHIP

Thor pushes past other immigrants gathered in the hall.

THOR
Lars!

MEN'S TOILET

Thor scans the shoes below the doors of the toilet stalls.

THOR

Lars!

SHIP DECK

Thor surveys the deck for the slight figure of his son.

THOR

Lars! ... Lars!

There, near the ship's railing, he spots Lars.

LARS

Good morning, Papa. Isn't it beautiful? Nothing in front of us. Nothing behind us. Just God's ocean.

Lars takes in the vast open waters around them.

THOR

Don't leave us like that, Lars. Your Mama ... Promise you will never leave us.

LARS

Yes, Papa. I won't leave you.

Thor rests his hand on his son's shoulder. Together they gaze out toward their future.

INT. BERTH - DAY

The ship sways and GROANS.

Anna and Lars sit next to each other. The boredom of waiting day after day is etched on their faces.

A few feet away, the Swedish giant sprawls out on his narrow bunk, mute.

On the upper bunk, Thor opens the silver pocket watch.

Seconds tick by, then he puts it away.

Lars slides his hand into his pocket and produces a simple hand-carved PUSH PUPPET.

He presses the bottom of the toy, and a small wooden man goes limp and falls to the ground.

He lets go, and the man springs to his feet.

Lars does it again and the Swede notices. He leans forward on his cramped bunk.

Lars looks up into the Swede's curious eyes.

Anna watches as her son holds the simple toy out for the Swede to try.

The Swede hesitates, then reaches out and takes it.

He presses the bottom with his oversized thumb and the wooden man goes limp. He releases it and the man springs upright.

The Swede looks at Lars and grins.

EXT. SHIP - DAY

The large vessel steams through the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

SUPER: THREE WEEKS LATER

EXT. SHIP DECK - DAY

Lars stands near the front of the ship, head bowed in prayer.

His lips move but his words are barely a whisper.

The ship's horn BLOWS.

Lars raises his eyes and squints.

Off in the distance stands the speck of a female form, arm raised high, torch in hand.

INT. IMMIGRANT LANDING DEPOT, NEW YORK - DAY

Thor, Anna, and Lars wait among the haggard masses to enter the United States of America.

They arrive at the front of the line.

An IMMIGRATION OFFICER studies them through bloodshot eyes.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Name.

THOR
Thor, Anna, and Lars Haakenson. Two
A's. H-A-A-K-E-N-S-O-N.

He scribbles their name into a ledger. Hawkenson. With a W.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
Married?

THOR
Yes. And our boy.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
Country of origin?

THOR
Norway.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
Who paid for your passage?

THOR
We did. We paid.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
Have you been to prison or an
institution for the care of
the insane?

THOR
I am sorry?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
Have you been to prison or an
institution for the care of
the insane?

THOR
No.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
You a polygamist or an anarchist?

Thor squints.

He glances at Anna and Lars, then looks back at the officer.

INT. IMMIGRANT EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

An immigration HEALTH OFFICER picks through Thor's hair with
a nit comb for evidence of lice.

Lars watches from a nearby chair and waits his turn.

The officer peers into one of Thor's eyes, then the other.

HEALTH OFFICER

Open.

Thor opens his mouth. The officer pulls back his cheeks and inspects Thor's teeth as if he were a farm animal.

INT. FINAL PROCESSING DESK - DAY

A MECHANICAL STAMP slams ink onto a document marked "Application for United States Citizenship."

INT. HOMESTEAD LAND OFFICE - DAY

A mustachioed OFFICIAL with silver spectacles slowly leafs through a register of available parcels of land in the Dakota Territory.

OFFICIAL

You would like a water source?

The official looks up.

THOR

Yes.

Thor checks the time, then returns his watch to his pocket.

OFFICIAL

That is a nice pocket watch.

THOR

It was my father's.

The official shows Thor a survey of several plots on a large MAP.

OFFICIAL

There's a stream that leads to the Missouri on this plot here, outside Clover City, Dakota.

He traces a line along the map with his finger.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

But I am not sure it is available.

Thor examines the plot.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Your watch. May I see it?

Thor raises an eyebrow.

THOR
It's all I have left from him.

The official looks at him, unmoved.

Thor reluctantly removes his father's watch from his pocket and places it on the desktop.

The official flips it open and examines it.

OFFICIAL
Very nice.

He winds it and holds it to his ear.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)
It's good land. Fertile. Work it
five years and it's yours, free
and clear.

The official looks Thor in the eye.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)
Should I see if it is available?

Thor hesitates.

He nods.

The official slips the watch into his pocket and turns to the ledger.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)
You are in luck. Name?

THOR
Haakenson, Thor. H-A-A-K-E-N-S-O-N.

INT. BOWERY MISSION DINING HALL - DAY

The family sits at a long table, surrounded by the ALCOHOLIC DREGS of New York, and spoon weak broth into their mouths.

Thor shows Anna the HOMESTEAD DEED.

ANNA
Clover City. It sounds nice.

Anna reaches across the table and lays her hand on his.

Thor gazes up from the documents and gives her a melancholy smile.

He refolds the papers and tucks them into the breast pocket of his jacket for safe keeping.

THOR

The next train leaves in a week.

Across the dingy dining hall, Lars spots the young Swede from the boat at a crowded table.

The Swede sees him and grins.

A MISSION WORKER steps into the dining hall.

MISSION WORKER

Disinfection! Doors open again at five o'clock!

The squalid residents grumble and filter out onto the street.

EXT. THE BOWERY - DAY

The Swede stands among the desperate masses with his trademark grin.

Three local BOWERY BOYS case the latest crop of fresh-off-the-boat marks.

The Swede's dumbish smile catches their eye.

The RAT-FACED LEADER of the boys nods toward him.

LEADER BOY

He looks like a dim one.

FOLLOWER BOY

He's big.

LEADER BOY

Big means slow.

As the crowd disperses, the rat-faced leader sidles up to the Swede, and his accomplices come up behind him.

He turns toward the Swede and flashes a KNIFE.

The Swede's dumb grin becomes a smile of recognition.

In nothing flat, he grabs the rat-faced boy's wrist.

He twists it. Hard.

CRACK!

Rat-face whimpers and drops to his knees.

The other boys' eyes go wide. They turn and run.

INT. BOWERY MISSION MEN'S LAVATORY - NIGHT

Thor and Lars brush their teeth among a sea of UNSAVORY CHARACTERS. Voices MURMUR.

The throng of dirty residents parts as the Swede makes his way into the crowded lavatory.

UNSAVORY CHARACTER (O.S.)
(whispering)
He's the one.

The Swede steps up to a wash basin next to Thor and Lars and smiles.

INT. BOWERY MISSION DORMITORY - NIGHT

Anna pulls back a blanket and cringes.

A mangy rat scrambles from the narrow cot in front of her.

The Haakensons hurry to the opposite side of the dormitory and stake their claim.

The Swede hesitates, then comes over and chooses a cot next to theirs.

Thor frowns.

The Swede reaches into his pocket. He fishes out a partially eaten CHOCOLATE and breaks it in two.

He offers half to Lars.

ANNA
He's like a big puppy.

THOR
We can't take care of a puppy.

ANNA
He is alone.

THOR
We are alone.

ANNA

Together we are not. He can help
us. He is strong.

THOR

Anna, no.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Thor and the enormous Swede sit side-by-side in a small
compartment as the train CLICKS and CLACKS down the track.

Lars and Anna ride opposite them.

The Swede closes his eyes and begins to snore.

The train jolts, and the Swede's oversized head comes to rest
on Thor's wiry shoulder.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

The train rolls to a stop as the sun peeks above the horizon.

Thor stirs.

Anna, Lars, and the Swede sleep like the dead.

Thor rubs his eyes and looks out across the vast emptiness of
the Midwestern grassland.

He tiptoes out of the compartment.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

Thor steps down from the train car.

At the front of the train, a crew member pumps water into the
tank of the steam engine from a railway well.

Nearby, Thor spots a small hill and walks toward it.

Just shy of the peak, his foot kicks something in the grass.

He looks down and squints. There, at his feet, lies an
oversized RIB BONE.

He climbs the short distance to the top.

He peers down from his perch and sees BISON SKELETONS.

Thousands of them. Strewn across the plain.

Picked clean by buzzards and bleached by the sun.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

The locomotive snakes its way westward through the untamed American landscape.

The train passes an oil encampment but doesn't stop. A MAN on horseback watches.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

Another man (30s) with shifty eyes, dressed in a vest and BOWLER HAT, sits in a compartment with three others.

He spots the encampment's wooden DERRICK through the window, then gets up and goes into the--

HALLWAY

He peers one way down the hall, then the other.

Under his coat, a CHROME REVOLVER gleams beneath his belt.

A passenger in the hallway opens the door to his compartment and steps back inside.

The shifty-eyed GANG LEADER turns and gives the other BANDITS the all clear.

ENGINE CAR

Two STOKERS shovel coal into the steam engine.

INTERCUT BETWEEN HALLWAY AND ENGINE CAR

The gang leader makes his way, from car to car, toward the front of the train.

The ENGINEER monitors the gauges, with a SNUB NOSE PISTOL within reach.

The gang leader nears the engine car.

The door behind the stokers flies open.

The gang leader raises his revolver and cocks the hammer.

GANG LEADER
Good day, fellers.

The engineer goes for his gun.

BOOM!

A 45 caliber bullet blasts a hole in the floor at the engineer's feet.

GANG LEADER (CONT'D)
Oh, no you don't.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

A woman SCREAMS.

The locomotive chugs to a stop.

Thor rises and looks out the window. Nothing.

He opens the door, pokes his head into the hallway, and sees the bandits, guns drawn.

ANNA
What is it?

Anna peeks out as one of them shoves a gun in another PASSENGER's face.

Anna ducks back into the compartment.

One of the other bandits comes closer.

He thrusts out his hat and points his GUN at them.

BANDIT
Pockets! Now!

They empty their pockets and drop the meager contents into his DERBY.

BANDIT (CONT'D)
That all you got?

He stares at them. Then at Thor.

BANDIT (CONT'D)
You.

The bandit steps forward and presses the barrel of his gun against Thor's heart.

BANDIT (CONT'D)
How 'bout your jacket?

Trembling, Thor slides his hand into his breast pocket and removes the homestead deed.

The bandit unfolds it. He squints and tries to sound out the words.

BANDIT (CONT'D)
H-o ...

Thor's heart races.

BANDIT (CONT'D)
H-om-e-st ... Homestead?

GANG LEADER (O.S.)
Curly! Safe! Now!

The bandit sneers.

BANDIT
Damn immigrants. Stealin' our land.

He crumples the deed into a ball.

The Haakensons watch in horror as the bandit pitches the precious document out the open window.

INT. SECURE EXPRESS CAR - DAY

The gang leader holds two GUARDS at gunpoint, bound and gagged.

Another bandit unbolts the SAFE from the floor of the secure car.

The four men struggle to heave the safe overboard.

GANG LEADER
One. Two. Three!

They groan and the safe tumbles out of the car.

EXT. LOCOMOTIVE ENGINE - DAY

The gang leader presses the barrel of his chrome 45 against the engineer's temple.

GANG LEADER
Go! NOW!

The engineer looks to the stokers. They begin to shovel coal into the furnace.

Steam builds.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

The Haakensons sit, paralyzed with fear.

The train lurches forward, then begins to roll.

Anna gasps.

Nobody moves, except the Swede, who scrambles to his feet.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

More members of the gang arrive on horseback from the direction of the encampment with red sticks of dynamite.

As they gather around the stolen safe, the enormous Swede springs from the train.

He bounds to where the deed lies crumpled in the grass.

He snatches it.

He throws it through the compartment window, then sprints along the tracks as the locomotive builds speed.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lars, Anna, and Thor stand at the window with eyes wide as the Swede dashes to catch the train.

LARS

Run.

Anna whispers a prayer.

HALLWAY

Thor clambers down the hallway toward the boarding door.

TRAIN DOOR

Thor bends down and braces himself.

He strains to reach the Swede's hand.

THOR

Go. Go!

TRAIN TRACKS

Covered with sweat, the Swede stretches his arm as far as it will go.

LARS (O.S.)

RUN!

The Swede's fingers clasp the tips of Thor's.

The train gains speed.

The Swede loses his grip.

Thor's hand pulls just out of reach.

The Swede gives it one last burst of speed.

Everything he's got.

More than everything.

He almost reaches Thor.

But it just isn't enough.

The WHISTLE BLOWS.

The train chugs out of reach.

The Swede slows to a trot, then stops.

TRAIN COMPARTMENT

Anna stops praying.

A single tear rolls down her cheek.

TRAIN TRACKS

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK.

The Swede looks up to see three members of the gang. Guns drawn. Hammers cocked.

They surround him.

He raises his hands to the sky.

TRAIN COMPARTMENT

The Haakensons stare out the window, as the balled-up deed rolls across the floor at their feet.

ANNA
This is America?

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

KABOOM!

In the distance, a cloud of cash rains down on the prairie.

EXT. UNDERNEATH THE TRAIN'S ENGINE - DAY

A small stream of water the size of a bullet trickles from a hole in the engine's water tank, and wets the ground below.

EXT. DAKOTA GRASSLAND - DAY

With the sun on the horizon, smoke billows from the engine of the locomotive as it continues to snake its way westward.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

The train rolls to a stop.

Someone POUNDS on the door of the berth.

Thor rubs his eyes.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)
Out of steam!

The CONDUCTOR moves on to the next berth.

PASSENGERS emerge from their compartments and make their way to the exits.

Thor stops one of them.

THOR
What is happening?

PASSENGER
No more water to power the engine. Reckon we have to walk the last stretch.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

Two RAILROAD EMPLOYEES toss suitcases and crates from the luggage car.

They drop the Haakenson's steamer trunk at their feet.

THOR
(to an employee)
Clover City, how far?

The employee points off into the distance.

RAIL EMPLOYEE
Just around that hill.

Thor's eyes follow the rail line until it disappears around a bend.

Passengers hobble down the tracks with their luggage.

Thor and Lars each take one side of the trunk, then they hoist the unwieldy box onto their shoulders.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Thor and Lars put down the oversized trunk and lean on it to catch their breath.

The other passengers are so far ahead they are just specks.

Thor squints.

THOR
I see it.

LARS
Where?

Thor points.

THOR
There. Do you see it, Anna?

Like a dream in the distance, Anna spies what looks like a wavy pool surrounded by trees.

Anna nods.

Thor wipes the sweat from his brow.

He and Lars lift the trunk and continue.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

The steamer trunk stands upright next to the tracks as the sun beats down on the grassland.

Thor, Lars, and Anna hunker down in the small sliver of shade the trunk provides.

LARS

I am hungry.

Thor rises and stares in the direction of Clover City.

Nothing.

He looks back toward where they came from.

THOR

We must keep moving. The temperature drops at night.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

The sun is lower in the sky.

Thor grasps one of the handles and drags the trunk down the track, one heave at a time.

Lars and Anna trail behind.

A heavenly WHISTLING comes from the west.

Thor stops and shields his eyes from the sun as he gazes in the direction of the music.

The song gets louder and louder.

Through the blinding sunlight, a RAILROAD HANDCAR carrying a BARREL OF WATER and a COFFIN appears like an apparition.

A black WORKER (50s) with a STOVEPIPE HAT and a passing resemblance to Abraham Lincoln, pumps a SQUEAKY hand lever up and down to propel the handcar forward.

The worker stops whistling, and the handcar rolls to a stop in front of them.

WORKER

Pardon me sir, could I trouble you to move your trunk from the rails?

The Haakensons stare at the surreal figure.

THOR
A drink of water first?

The worker glances at the trunk, then back at Thor.

WORKER
Where are my manners.

The worker holds out a dipper.

Thor passes it to Anna.

She and Lars take big gulps of cool water. Then Thor drinks.

When he finishes, Thor looks at the rail worker.

THOR
Clover City. How far?

WORKER
Not far. Just out of sight. I'd
take you there myself, but I have a
job to do.

The worker points to his unusual cargo.

WORKER (CONT'D)
Two birds one stone, you see.
May I?

THOR
Yes, of course.

Thor drags the trunk off the tracks and out of the way.

THOR (CONT'D)
Thank you.

WORKER
Much obliged.

The rail worker pumps the handcar forward.

WORKER (CONT'D)
Step right up ... and claim
your future.

The Haakensons watch as the surreal figure puckers his lips
and begins to WHISTLE again.

The handcar SQUEAKS out of sight.

EXT. CLOVER CITY - DUSK

Thor drags their oversized steamer trunk down Clover City's dirt Main Street.

Anna and Lars follow in his shadow.

A row of a dozen or so businesses line the street.

Judging by the signs above the doors -- Brauhaus Wellendorff, Glenister's Saloon, Der Tipler, O'Donoghue's -- more than half of them are Irish or German saloons.

Bottles CLANK.

DRUNKEN VOICES sing along to the notes of a PLAYER PIANO.

Curious TOWNSFOLK track them with their eyes.

A MAN stumbles through a set of saloon doors.

He steadies himself against a porch poll, unzips his pants, and pisses.

Thor spots a sign that reads "Dunklemann's Boarding House."

He heaves the trunk up to the doorstep.

INT. DUNKLEMANN'S BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

Thor enters the sitting room of the fleabag establishment.

Several misfit BOARDERS turn and size him up, then go back to what they were doing.

An UNKEMPT CLERK looks up from behind a shabby desk.

THOR
I would like a room.

CLERK
Lucky you, we have one room left.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Anna and Lars wait in a dark and dingy hallway outside a communal washroom.

The sounds of MUFFLED VOICES and a woman's faux GIGGLES ooze from a nearby room.

The giggles stop.

LOW MOANS follow.

Then the rhythmic SQUEAK, SQUEAK, SQUEAK of rusty bedsprings.

Anna avoids eye contact with her son.

The washroom door swings open and another BOARDER lumbers out. He yawns and scratches himself.

Lars steps aside for his mother.

ANNA

No, you go.

Anna ushers Lars in.

She waits in the hallway.

Loud THUMPS punctuate the SQUEAKS and MOANS as a bed frame bangs against a wall, faster and faster.

Anna's cheeks turn scarlet.

She closes her eyes, tight.

A DEEP PRIMAL GROAN echoes through the boarding house.

The thumps, squeaks, and moans stop.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE ROOM - NIGHT

Lars lies asleep in a single bed on the far side of the room.

Thor and Anna speak in hushed tones.

THOR

It is temporary.

ANNA

This is not suitable-

THOR

The street is more suitable?

Anna is silent.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE ROOM - DAWN

Anna sits awake, perched on the edge of the bed.

Lars breathes deeply -- in and out, in and out -- across from them.

Thor rolls over.

He looks up and sees Anna's sleepless eyes.

She cradles their baby girl's tiny pink mitten in her hands.

She rubs the mitten between her fingers, then brings it to her cheek.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE ROOM - DAY

Thor takes out the homestead documents and unfolds them.

He lays them on the bed and attempts to smooth the wrinkles.

He examines the deed.

Lars nibbles on a piece of bread and watches.

Thor traces the route to their plot with his finger.

He stands.

THOR

Stay here.

EXT. CLOVER CITY - DAY

Thor steps outside and peers down Main Street.

A DRUNK, asleep on a porch, grunts and rolls over to shield his eyes from the sun.

Thor studies the map and gets his bearings.

He begins to walk.

EXT. CLOVER CITY OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Thor follows the rough dirt road past the edge of town.

He passes a handful of farmers. Some with crops to barter. Others with much-needed supplies.

He smiles politely and tips his *BUNAD* to a woman who hangs laundry on a clothesline to dry.

THOR

Good day.

She eyes his Norwegian hat and squints.

Thor leaves the buildings behind and follows the road into the untamed grassland.

EXT. DAKOTA GRASSLAND - DAY

The wind sweeps across the gently rolling Dakota hills.

Tall grasses bend and sway.

In the distance, Thor travels a narrowing road that slices through the vastness, on foot.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Thor continues on.

He walks, and walks, and walks.

Weeds rise from the dirt in front of him.

The farther his feet carry him, the less travelled the road becomes.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Finally, Thor spots a stand of trees in the distance.

He continues until he comes across another road, which trails off in the direction of the stand.

Thor unfolds the map and compares it to what he sees.

He traces the road on the map, then finds a stream.

He refolds the map and sets off toward it.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

As Thor gets closer to his land, he squints.

A puff of smoke drifts above the trees.

He walks faster. And faster.

He comes to an even narrower road that leads directly into the stand.

Thor follows it.

He begins to run.

Beyond the trees, he sees a small--

FARMHOUSE

And a barn.

Smoke rises from the chimney.

Thor stops and stares.

A sheep BAAAAs.

He looks down and sees he is standing in sheep shit.

Thor marches up the steps of the house and onto the--

PORCH

He POUNDS on the door with a clenched fist.

Behind the door, a RIFLE COCKS.

The door swings open.

JEB CALLAHAN (40s), bearded and serious, glares at Thor down the barrel of his gun.

Thor ducks.

BOOM!

The warning shot WHIZZES by Thor's ear.

JEB

Git!

INT. CLOVER CITY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

SHERIFF CALLAHAN, a rugged man (50s) with a certain intimidating calmness, studies Thor from behind a heavy WOODEN DESK.

There is a RUSTY GOLD STAR pinned to his chest and two days of silvery growth on his face.

A WEATHERED STETSON hangs on a hook nearby.

Thor slides the homestead deed across the desktop.

The sheriff picks it up and examines it.

SHERIFF

There's a lot of land out
there. What makes you so sure
he's on yours?

Thor unfolds his map and slaps it down on the desk, next to
the deed.

His finger trembles with fury as he traces a line on the map.

THOR

The road.

Thor's finger finds another, windier line.

THOR (CONT'D)

And the river.

Sheriff Callahan's eyes follow as Thor points out a
third spot.

THOR (CONT'D)

Our plot.

The sheriff squints.

THOR (CONT'D)

The deed clearly shows that in the
eyes of the law-

SHERIFF

The law?

Sheriff Callahan looks up at Thor.

He leans back in his chair.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Last I checked, I'm the law here.

The sheriff eyes Thor without speaking.

THOR

Sir, I only ask that you-

SHERIFF

I'll look into it.

EXT. CLOVER CITY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Thor marches out of Sheriff Callahan's office and onto
Main Street.

He takes a few angry steps, then stops.

He leans over, rests his hands on his knees, and takes a deep breath.

Thor notices his dirty BOOTS.

He pulls an old handkerchief from his pocket and wipes away the sheep shit that remains.

Underneath, there is an oily stain.

Thor rubs but the stain won't come off.