FADE IN:

1 EXT. THE HIGH CHAPARRAL - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

It is early morning.

2 JOE

walking to the open front door of the house. BLUE and MANO come out and head for the corral. An exchange of greetings as they pass:

BLUE
Mornin', Joe.

MANO
Amigo...

JOE
Mornin'.

Joe goes into the house.

3 INT. CHAPARRAL LIVING ROOM - BUCK AND JOHN

as they come in from the dining room. John is still sipping a cup of coffee and looks noticeably haggard.

JOHN
(to Buck)
Be lunch time before we run the herd halfway back, so let's get started.

JOE'S VOICE
'Scuse me, Mr. Cannon...

4 NEW ANGLE - TO INCLUDE JOE

JOHN
Yeah, Joe.
CONTINUED:

JOE
The men are ready.

JOHN
All right -- fine.

Joe starts to leave.

JOHN
(continuing)
Oh -- Joe...

JOE
(turning back)
Yes, sir.

JOHN
Better send a couple of hands down to the south section and make sure that corral is re-paired.

Joe hesitates, as if not knowing what to say to this.

JOHN
(continuing)
What's the matter?

BUCK
John, you told him to do that yesterday.

JOHN
(surprised)
I did?

JOE
Yes, sir -- and I've already sent two men down to take care of it.

John is troubled by this lapse of memory.

JOHN
Oh...

The other two look at him, a little concerned. John covers:

JOHN
(continuing; to Buck)
You go on. I'll be out in a minute.
CONTINUED - (2):

Buck leaves with Joe. John pauses, puzzling over something, then turns and moves into:

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

John pours himself another splash of coffee. Most of the table has been cleared. VICTORIA enters to pick up the last of the dishes and looks at John in surprise.

VICTORIA

More coffee?

JOHN (his mind on something)
It's the strangest thing...

VICTORIA

What?

JOHN
That's about the third time in the last couple of days I've forgotten what I've said to somebody.

He gulps down the coffee. Victoria studies him worriedly.

VICTORIA
John, you look so tired.

JOHN
Didn't sleep much last night.

VICTORIA
Last night? For the past week, you mean. What is wrong?

JOHN
Nothing. Can't seem to stop thinking about everything -- so...

(a gesture)

... I don't sleep.

VICTORIA
Well, you look terrible -- and I think you should stay home today.
CONTINUED:
John sets down the cup and smiles at her.

JOHN
I'll be fine. Your coffee's strong enough to keep me awake for the drive.
(kisses her)
I'll see you tonight.

He leaves. Victoria looks after him a moment, still troubled, then adds his cup to the last few dishes and starts into the kitchen.

EXT. OPEN RANGE - DAY (STOCK)
The Chaparral men are rounding up the herd for the drive.

DISSOLVE TO:

ANGLE - BUCK
sitting his horse, frowning as he jots on a scrap of paper. John rides up.

JOHN
What's the tally?

BUCK
Five short.

JOHN
Sure you counted right?

BUCK
(shows him the paper)
Done it over twice.

Joe rides up.

BUCK
(continuing) And Joe's made his own count.

JOE
Six short, Boss.

Buck reacts to this, then turns back to John.

(CONTINUED)
BUCK
Well, whoever's got the worst 'rithmetic, it still means they's some missin'.

JOHN
Only place they could have slipped out is through the wash. (to Joe)
You start driving the herd. I'll head back and pick up the strays.

BUCK
No need for that. Couple of us could come back tomorrow -- pick 'em up easy.

JOE
That's right, Boss.

BUCK
'Sides, John, you look plumb wore out. We can do it tomorrow.

JOHN
(a little testy)
I thank you for your concern, but tomorrow I need every spare hand for the branding. Now, go on and get started.

He wheels his horse and rides off. Joe and Buck look after him.

BUCK
You know, I could stay real mad at Big John if he wasn't meaner to himself than the rest of us.

JOE
(smiles)
Yeah.

They start their horses around, as we --

EXT. DESERT AREA - DAY - JOHN RIDING
He reins in at a rise and looks across.
JOHN'S P.O.V. - THE STRAYS
five head in the distance, grazing on some scrub grass.

JOHN
A little smile of satisfaction, then he urges his horse forward.

MED. SHOT - JOHN
riding towards the cattle.

NEW ANGLE - CLOSER SHOT
as John suddenly reins in, a look of astonishment on his face.

JOHN
What the...?
His face is drained and gaunt. He looks up.

JOHN'S P.O.V. - THE DESERT SUN - (STOCK)
burning white.

BACK TO JOHN
He starts gasping for breath, staring out, trying to focus.

JOHN'S P.O.V. - THE DESERT, THE STRAYS - PANNING SHOT
It BLURS, TILTS, begins to SPIN.

SMASH CUT TO:

JOHN
lying face up next to his horse, unconscious.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER
ACT ONE

FADE IN:

17 INT. JOHN AND VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - CLOSE SHOT - 17

JOHN sleeping. CAMERA PULLS BACK to show DOC PLANT closing up his medical bag as he stares frowningly down at John on the bed. John is under the covers and breathing easily. Victoria enters timidly.

VICTORIA

How is he?

DOC

Asleep again -- and I hope he stays that way.

VICTORIA

But -- did you find out what is wrong?

DOC

Where's the rest of the family?

VICTORIA

Downstairs. But what's wrong with John?

18 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CLOSE SHOT - DOC

DOC (firm)

Total and complete exhaustion. That is John Cannon's illness.

PULL BACK to include Buck, Mano, Blue and Victoria as they listen solemnly.

DOC (continuing)

What's he been doing to run himself down this way?

BLUE

Nothin' much different than usual.

(CONTINUED)
MANO
Si.

BUCK
'Ceptin' what's usual for Big John ain't usual for most folks.

DOC
How do you mean?

BUCK
Well, it's a old problem we got with him. It's called "tryin' to do everythin' hisself".

VICTORIA
And he hasn't been sleeping for almost a week.

DOC
I can only tell you that either he undergoes a complete rest starting right now or...

(a gesture)

VICTORIA
(fearful)
Or what?

DOC
He'll be permanently disabled -- or dead.

The impact of this settles on them.

DOC
(continuing)
On the other hand, he'll be as good as new if he follows orders.

MANO
How long should he stop work?

DOC
For as long as it takes -- at least three weeks. I don't mean John should be bedridden -- but he is to give up running this ranch for that length of time.

BLUE
I sure can't see Pa doin' that.
CONTINUED - (2):

BUCK
That's right. If he's here, he's gonna run it.

DOC
Then get him away from here.

VICTORIA
Where?

DOC
How should I know? People do take vacations, don't they?

A sudden and delightful notion begins to come to Victoria.

VICTORIA
Yes...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CLOSE SHOT - VICTORIA

VICTORIA
And we have never had a honey-moon.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to show John, in pajamas and bathrobe and looking a little more like his old self, standing with Victoria by the open front door. He is by no means pleased. He begins speaking before we see him in the shot:

JOHN
(trying to be tolerant)
I realize that, but...
(moving to the door and out)
...it's just impossible.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

as Victoria follows him out.

VICTORIA
What is impossible? That the ranch could possibly run without you?
CONTINUED:

JOHN
(facing her)
Yes, as a matter of fact -- at least for the length of time you're talking about.

VICTORIA
Then let me ask you something.

JOHN
What?

VICTORIA
Is it going to be run better after you have killed yourself running it?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - BUCK, BLUE AND MANO

as they come down the stairs and over-hear the conversation. They exchange looks and move across the rooms towards the front door, listening, as:

JOHN'S VOICE
I think that's an exaggeration.

VICTORIA'S VOICE
Well, I don't.

JOHN'S VOICE
Look, I don't have to actually be doing the work. I'll just keep an eye on things and...

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

VICTORIA
(topping him)
Worry about things and not sleep about things and end up a very sick man. John, you need all the rest and relaxation you can get -- and you won't get it here.

JOHN
All I know is I've got important cattle deals coming up -- and the ledgers have to be kept balanced...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

VICTORIA
So why cannot Buck and Mano and Blue take care of all that?

JOHN
Victoria, you just don't understand what running a ranch means. They couldn't handle it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Buck, Mano and Blue exchange insulted looks.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

VICTORIA
Why?

JOHN
They just couldn't. It's a matter of seeing the whole picture -- knowing what decisions to make and when.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The eavesdroppers have had enough. Buck gestures them to follow.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

VICTORIA
And you, of course, are the only man on earth capable of...

Buck, Mano and Blue enter. Buck beams an innocent smile.

BUCK
Mornin', all.

John glares at him suspiciously.

BLUE
How you feelin', Pa?

JOHN
Just fine.

(beat)
I don't imagine you heard any of our conversation.

(CONTINUED)
Every word.

And I suppose you're very insulted.

Very.

Well, whether you like it or not, it's the truth.

And whether you like it or not, it ain't the truth. Far as judgin' cattle's concerned, I happen to be an expert.

And where bargaining for a price is involved, I have my father's respect for money.

Yeah -- and if this ranch is supposed to be mine someday, I'm sure gonna have to learn to keep ledgers. I can start now.

Just wait a minute.

Victoria plants herself firmly before him.

John, make up your mind to it: we are going on our honeymoon.

Si.

That's right.

And the sooner, the better.

John glares at this solid mass of determination, finally sighs:

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED - (2):

JOHN
(to Victoria)
Where do you want to go? Santa
Fe? St. Louis? Mexico City?

VICTORIA
(waving such
choices away)
I have been to those places.

JOHN
(frowning)
Where, then?

VICTORIA
(brightly)
San Francisco?

John digests this.

JOHN
Well...

VICTORIA
We take the stagecoach to Yuma
-- then another one to San
Diego -- and we get to San
Francisco on the boat.

JOHN
(dryly)
I see you've checked everything
out.

VICTORIA
Si.

JOHN
(resigned)
All right. San Francisco.

Victoria gives a delighted squeal and hugs her three
conspirators in victory.

EXT. TUBAC - DAY

The family is gathered next to the stage. Blue passes
up the last of the luggage to the DRIVER.

(DISSOLVE TO:)

(CONTINUED)
MANO
Victoria, you take more luggage
than this on a visit to Papa.

JOHN
I think she plans to do a little
shopping in San Francisco.

VICTORIA
For the both of us.

JOHN
Why me?

VICTORIA
John, you cannot go to the opera
in those clothes.

JOHN
(shocked)
Opera! You're not planning on
that, are you?

VICTORIA
(a shrug)
Well, the theater, anyway.

BUCK
(grinning)
Big John, I'd give a month's
pay to see you decked out in
an opera-goin' suit.

JOHN
I'm sure you would.

DRIVER
All aboard, folks.

Victoria embraces each of the three.

BUCK, BLUE & MANO
So long, Victoria. Have a good
time. And don't worry about a
thing.

BUCK
(to John)
That goes 'specially for you,
Big John.

BLUE
Yeah, we'll handle things just
fine, Pa.

(continued)
CONTINUED - (2):

MANO

Si.

John regards them doubtfully.

JOHN

Just remember what you promised: if anything goes really wrong, you wire me at our hotel.

BUCK

Now, nothin's gonna go wrong.

As John helps Victoria in:

JOHN

(sour)

Running a ranch by committee.

John gets in beside her and slams shut the door. The Driver flicks the reins and the stage lurches forward.

SHOT - BUCK, MANO AND BLUE

waving goodbye. Now they stand, a feeling of strange forlornness starting to settle as they begin to realize they are alone with their responsibilities.

BLUE

You fellas think this is really gonna work out?

MANO

To be perfectly truthful -- I don't know.

BUCK

Yeah? Well, to be perfectly truthful, it better. Come on.

They move off.

EXT. PORT OF SAN FRANCISCO - DAY - (STOCK)

SUPERIMPOSE: "SAN FRANCISCO".
EXT. HOTEL - DAY - CARRIAGE

pulling up to the curb with John and Victoria as passengers. They stare around at the teeming activity as John gets out to help Victoria down.

VICTORIA
Oh, John! How exciting!

JOHN
It's not exactly Tucson!

They are startled suddenly by the SOUND of gunshots. They look around.

THEIR P.O.V. - FALLEN POLICEMAN

holding his injured arm so as to aim his pistol. He FIRES. The crowds shrink back out of the way.

SHOT - MAN

running, pistol in hand. He turns, FIRES two shots back and escapes around a corner, the crowds parting before him.

ANGLE - FALLEN POLICEMAN

A number of men move in to help him up.

JOHN AND VICTORIA AT CARRIAGE

The DRIVER only glances without too much interest at the scene as he starts passing down their luggage to a couple of Porters. John and Victoria look at one another in amazement.

JOHN
(to Driver)
Does that kind of thing happen often?

DRIVER
(offhand; in Irish accent)
Numerous times each day -- except usually one of the parties is killed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
DRIVER (cont'd)
You'd be well advised to carry a weapon on your person while in San Francisco. That applies to the lady, as well.

JOHN
(dryly, to Victoria)
Rest and relaxation.

John pays the Driver.

DRIVER
Thank you, sir. Enjoy your stay.

JOHN
We'll certainly try.

The Driver tips his hat and flicks the reins. The carriage moves off as a Doorman ushers them into the hotel, porters following.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY - JOHN

in his shirtsleeves, standing in the middle of the very plush living room reading a newspaper.

JOHN
That cab driver was right. Fifteen shootings in the past four days. Makes living with the Apaches seem like a life of ease.

NEW ANGLE - TO INCLUDE VICTORIA

standing at the open window, looking out.

VICTORIA
That's not the only side of life here. Come and look.

John moves over and joins her.
A park in the middle of the busy midtown area. Carriages move briskly or leisurely along, couples stroll, businessmen stride purposefully along.

He picks up his coat from a chair and starts to put it on.

**JOHN**
It's got contrast, all right. Extreme wealth, extreme poverty. High fashion and a high crime rate.
(starts away)
Well...

**VICTORIA**
Where are you going?

**JOHN**
Just thought I'd go downstairs and see if there might be a telegram.

**VICTORIA**
But you did that when we checked in.

**JOHN**
That was an hour ago.

**VICTORIA**
(moving to him)
John, they'll send somebody up if a message comes in. Now, will you please stop worrying about the ranch?

**JOHN**
It's an old habit of mine.

**VICTORIA**
Which you are here to correct. Now, you know everything is all right at the High Chaparral. Otherwise, we would have heard.

**JOHN**
(relenting)
I guess you're right. It's silly of me to worry.

CUT TO:
INT. HIGH CHAPARRAL LIVING ROOM - DAY

Blue works with harried intentness on the ledger. The table is littered with papers. He picks up one, studies it, flips back a few pages, seeming bewildered at something he's not finding. His concentration is interrupted by a COMMOTION at the front door.

NEW ANGLE - TO INCLUDE BUCK AND MANO

entering in high spirits. They saunter over to Blue.

BUCK
What'sa matter, Blue Boy, the figures don't figure?

BLUE
(glum)
I'll get it straightened out, I guess. What happened with MacIntosh?

BUCK
(glowing)
Well, he ain't none too happy right now. Old Mano here beat him out of three dollars a head more'n we figured the top price'd be. You shoulda seen his face.

BLUE
(making a stab at being pleased)
That's -- just fine. You got the tally on the remainder of the herd?

MANO
(handing it over)
The tally, Senor.

Blue takes the tally and stares at it in surprise.

BLUE
Only fourteen head left?

Buck and Mano poke one another, very pleased with themselves.

BUCK
Mano here had MacIntosh over a barrel. Threatened to cancel the whole deal lessen he bought up fifteen more head.

(Continued)
Blue is starting to burn quietly.

BLUE

(low)

Lunkheads.

BUCK

(amazed)

What?

BLUE

Didn't you know we promised over thirty head to Lou Saunders.

MANO

(suddenly remembering)

Oh.

BUCK

We did?

BLUE

Yes, we did... And how we only got fourteen head to give him!

BUCK

Well then, why didn't you remind us before we turned 'em over?

BLUE

Remind you?

MANO

Si! After all, you are keeping the books!

BLUE

Oh, so it's my fault?

BUCK

Well, you sure coughta take your share of the blame!

MANO

That is right!

BLUE

I've got enough to do tryin' to make sense out of these crazy ledgers!
Continued - (2):

**BUCK**
Well, that ain't our fault!

**BLUE**
I never said it was!

**NEW ANGLE**
as Joe hurries in with a very worried PEDRO.

**JOE**
Hey!

They turn as Joe and Pedro move across to them.

**PEDRO**
(in agony)
We lost the rest of the herd.

**BUCK, MANO & BLUE**
You lost the herd? How? What happened?

**PEDRO**
Apaches. There were only the two of us so we couldn't fight them off.

**BLUE**
(angrily turning to Joe)
What's the idea not taking more men along, Joe?

**JOE**
(matching him)
How could I when you told me to send a crew down to the south range?

**MANO**
(accusingly, to Blue)
Ah-ha!

**BLUE**
(ignoring this and continuing to Joe)
Sending out that crew don't use up all your men!
CONTINUED:

JOE
It does when Mano orders me to send another one to finish the well-diggin' at Laughlin Flats!

BLUE
You did that without tellin' me?

MANO
You didn't tell me, either! What are you suddenly -- the Great Padrone?

JOE
(really burning)
And that's another thing! I been goin' crazy with one of you tellin' me to do one thing and another tellin' me to do somethin' else!

PEDRO
Four men might have been enough.
(to Buck and Mano)
If you two had stayed...

BLUE
Yeah -- instead of comin' back here to brag how smart you are!

Suddenly, the five of them erupt simultaneously, as follows:

BUCK
Braggin'! Well, let me tell you somethin', Mr. Smartmouth, you ain't one bit perfect yourself, so don't go tellin' me ... (etc.)

JOE
I do my job as good as the next man, but I can't be expected to handle this kind of crazy set-up with everybody in charge at the same... (etc.)

PEDRO
If we had a couple of men, we could have stood off the Apaches, but instead we had to run. It isn't fair to expect only two men to... (etc.)

(continued)
CONTINUED - (2):

BLUE
It's bad enough we only had fourteen head to sell Saunders and now you go ahead and lose the rest of them and then blame me because I didn't... (etc.)

MANO
If I give a foreman orders an he knows it will leave him short-handed, I expect a foreman to at least have the sense to tell me that... (etc.)

On this cacophony, we --

DIRECT CUT TO:

INT. SAN FRANCISCO HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT - CLOSE SHOT -
TWO CHAMPAGNE GLASSES
being filled. CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal John and Victoria dressed in their best and seated at an elegantly laid out dinner table. A food cart is next to the table. The Waiter puts the champagne bottle back in the ice bucket and turns fussily to the tray to start preparing the dishes. John and Victoria pick up the glasses and clink them together in a toast:

JOHN
To rest and relaxation.

VICTORIA
And no more worrying about the ranch.

JOHN
Yes. No more worrying about the ranch.

As they drink --

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
FADE IN:

EXT. THE HIGH CHAPARRAL - DAY - ANGLE TO PORCH

Blue sits glumly staring into space. Buck comes out. They eye one another uncomfortably, then look elsewhere. Buck moves to the post, leans. Blue shifts his position. Neither says anything, nor chooses to move away. There's no way for them to be casual. Finally:

BUCK
(looking off)
Mornin'.

BLUE
(beat, not looking up)
Mornin'.

Another uncomfortable pause. Mano comes out, stops. He's as uneasy as the other two.

MANO

Amigos...

They Mutter back a greeting. Silence. Mano wanders to an empty chair and sits. Another long and increasingly uncomfortable silence. Buck continues to stand with his back to them. Mano and Blue are seated at angles. They are stuck that way, with nobody wanting to make a deliberate move to establish easy contact. Suddenly, a simultaneous turning to each other:

BLUE, BUCK AND MANO

It's sorta been on my mind... I been thinkin' about... It seems to me that what happened...

They stop, startled. A moment. Blue gestures.

BLUE
Go ahead, Uncle Buck.

BUCK
Well, Mano here was...

MANO
No, no. You talk.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BUCK
(awkwardly)
Oh. Well, I was just gonna say... I mean about yesterday... I'm sorry about how I talked to you, Blue Boy.

MANO
Si. Me, also.

BLUE
It was my fault. I started it.

BUCK
No, if I hadn't of...

JOE'S VOICE (o.s.)
Mornin'.

NEW ANGLE - TO INCLUDE JOE AND PEDRO
Both of them look hesitant and apologetic.

PEDRO
Amigos...
The other three AD LIB more or less mumbled greetings.

JOE
Uhh -- Pedro and me been talkin' about yesterday -- and I'm sorry about sounding off the way I did. It was out of turn.

PEDRO
Si.
(off Joe's surprised look)
I mean, I, too, should not have said what I did about...
(indicating Buck and Mano)
... you leaving me with only one man to guard the cattle.

MANO
We have just been discussing the matter. We were all at fault.

BUCK
Maybe so, but it still was a dumb thing for us to leave Pedro and Felipe like we did.

(Continued)
BLUE
Sure it was dumb -- but everybody's got a right to be dumb now and then.

BUCK
(in complete agreement)
Sure, like -- uhh...
(gestures)
... like you not remindin' us about how many head to sell.

Blue thinks about this a beat, then, in as nice a way as he can:

BLUE
Well, I don't exactly consider that was where I was wrong.

BUCK
You don't?

BLUE
(still amiable)
No, I honestly don't.

BUCK
Oh.
(beat)
In other words, we're dumb, but you ain't?

BLUE
That's not what I said.

MANO
(polite)
That is how it sounded, Compadre.

BLUE
(fighting not to be irked)
Then take it any way you have to take it.

BUCK
Well, I don't take it kindly.

JOE
Wait a minute, Buck. He didn't say he wasn't at fault.
MANO
No, he is saying we are stupid but he is not.

JOE
No, he didn't -- but if you was to ask me, I don't think Blue shoulda had to remind you about how many head to sell.

BUCK
Oh, you don't? Well, he's the one keepin' the books!

BLUE
That's not fair! Joe could have thought to remind you easy as me!

JOE
Wait a minute, Blue. That's not my job.

BLUE
It's not mine, either.

BUCK
Like maybe not savin' enough men to go guard the cattle!

JOE
I told you, Mano ordered me to...

BUCK
It don't matter what Mano ordered you to do, you shoulda knowed...

JOE
Well, you're the ones left the herd!

PEDRO
And with only one other man, what could we do?

BUCK
(to Pedro)
I don't need you callin' me dumb, either!

PEDRO
But you were the one said it in the first place.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED - (3):

BUCK
That don't matter! The first thing went wrong was Blue not remindin' us -- and I call that dumb!

Simultaneously, as follows:

BLUE
Are you gonna start that again? What you really mean is I'm supposed to do your thinkin' for you, that's what you really mean!

BUCK
If you're keepin' books, you should know what's goin' on better'n anybody else and not take no chance that somethin' what should be done gets done!

MANO
All I know is I was expected to get the highest price for the cattle that I could get and that is what I did!

JOE
Nobody thinks about the fact that I'm supposed to carry out the orders, not make them! Suddenly, the whole thing is my fault, is it?!

PEDRO
Why should I be yelled at? I did the best I could. And with only one other man, we could not be expected to fight off the Apaches by ourselves!

DIRECT CUT TO:

INT. SAN FRANCISCO FASHION SALON - DAY

A BEAUTIFULLY GOWNED WOMAN models for John and Victoria, who are seated in the viewing area. Several other chairs are arranged next to and behind them. The PROPRIETOR, a distinguished man with a Britis accent, stands nearby, explaining:

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PROPRIETOR
You will notice the ruffled bodice and the puffed sleeves.

VICTORIA
It's beautiful.

JOHN
How much?

PROPRIETOR
Only forty-seven dollars.

JOHN
(to Victoria, eye-brows raised)
More than two months pay for most people.

VICTORIA
(worried)
Is it too much?

JOHN
(grinning)
For you? Never.

The Model finishes showing the gown and moves off.
A SECOND MODEL comes over wearing a stunning formal gown.
Victoria immediately knows it is hers, as:

PROPRIETOR
And now the very latest design from Paris...

VICTORIA
Oh, yes!

ANGLE - THE GOWN
below the face of the model.

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - DAY - GOWN

VICTORIA'S VOICE (o.s.)
It's the most beautiful dress I have ever owned!

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Victoria wearing the gown.
She does, indeed, look spectacular.

(continued)
CONTINUED:

(VICTORIA (continuing)
Come and look!

JOHN'S VOICE (o.s.)
I can't!

VICTORIA (remembering)
Oh! Of course.

She starts into:

INT. HOTEL LIVING ROOM - DAY - JOHN

He stands wearing the basic crude essentials of a tuxedo: no sleeves to the jacket yet, pins all over the thing. A frenetic little FRENCH TAILOR fusses about him. He has just run a tape measure along John's left arm and looks at the result pop-eyed.

TAILOR
(in French)
Incredible!

Both of them look over in a shock of appreciation as Victoria enters.

TAILOR
(continuing;
in French)
Magnificent, Madame!

JOHN
Victoria, you look wonderful.

VICTORIA
(delighted)
Gracias, Senores.

The Tailor goes back to measuring John. He whips the tape around his waist, as:

VICTORIA
(continuing)
I'd better take it off before it is wrinkled.

TAILOR
(staring at the tape reading,
in French)
Amazing!

(continued)
CONTINUED:

VICTORIA
(to John)
Can he have the tuxedo ready for tomorrow night?

JOHN
You'll have to ask him.

As the Tailor runs the tape around John's chest:

VICTORIA
(to the Tailor, in French)
Mister... Can you have the tuxedo ready for tomorrow night?

TAILOR
(in French)
Yes, Madame.
(gasps at the new reading)
Sacred Mother of God, the dimensions of this man!

INT. CHAPARRAL LIVING ROOM - DAY - BLUE

BLUE
There's only one thing to do:
wire Pa to come back.

NEW ANGLE - FULL SHOT - TO INCLUDE BUCK, MANO, JOE AND PEDRO

standing or sitting around in various attitudes of unrest.

BUCK
I'm against it.

MANO
So am I.

BLUE
But look what's happening! We can't say more'n a few words to one another without arguing -- Saunders arrives tomorrow to buy cattle we've lost or sold by mistake -- the new well caved in -- the ledgers are a mess...!
BUCK
That don't matter as much as
Big John's health. They ain't
been gone but two weeks.

MANO
Si. The Doctor was very clear:
John must have a rest from run-
ning this rancho -- or else.

BLUE
Well, I don't know what to do.

JOE
If you think you could all keep
from jumpin' on me, I know one
thing you could do that'd help.

BLUE
What?

JOE
Now, you gotta promise not to
get mad.

MANO
All right -- all right.

BUCK
Speak your piece, Joe.

JOE
Well, from the way things have
gone, it's pretty clear that
bein' boss of a whole ranch is
a one-man job. It just don't
work -- the three of you bein'
in charge at the same time.

MANO
And you are suggesting...?

JOE
You gotta decide on one of you
to take full responsibility.

PEDRO
Si. I agree.

BLUE
But which one?

(CONTINUED)
JOE
I ain't gonna give an opinion on that 'cause I don't want to start no riot.

BUCK
What do you think, Mano?

MANO
What I think is I would not relish the responsibility.

BUCK
Well, who would the men figure is the most... uhh...

He gropes for the word.

MANO
Qualified.

BUCK
Yeah -- qual-fied.

BLUE
Pedro'd probably be the fairest judge of that.

PEDRO
(startled)
Why me?

BLUE
Because you're not in charge of anything. You just work here.

PEDRO
(resignedly)
Si, that is true.

JOE
So which one of the three do you see takin' orders from?

PEDRO
Do I have to?

JOE
(tough)
Yeah, you have to!

Pedro looks miserably at the three candidates, wondering what abuse he's to endure by making his choice.

(continued)
JOE
(continuing)
Well?

PEDRO
(sighs)
Senor Buck.

BUCK
(offended)
Me? Why me?

PEDRO
(scared)
I don't know! I take it back if you want!

BLUE
No, that makes sense.
(to Buck)
You're the oldest, most experienced...

BUCK
And, according to you, the
dumbest.

MANO
Along with me, don't forget.

BLUE
(flaring)
Are you gonna start that again?

JOE
Yeah, let's cut out the arguments!
I think Buck's a good choice.

BLUE
So what about it, Uncle Buck?

BUCK
(frowns)
Uhh... All right with you two?

MANO
Si.

BLUE
You bet.

BUCK
(not liking it much)
Then I'm it.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED - (4):

Mano and Blue clap him on the back.

**MANO AND BLUE**

Bueno, Hombre! That's great, Uncle Buck!

Joe and Pedro smile with relief: sane leadership, at last. Joe moves in to Buck.

**J**

Then what's your first order, Boss?

**BUCK**

(startled)

Huh?

**BLUE**

Yeah -- let's get started straightenin' things out.

**MANO**

What do you say, Buck?

Buck thinks hard, then, with the full weight of command settling in:

**BUCK**

What I think is -- we gonna stage a raid on the A-pace 'n get them cattle back.

As the others react to this:

**FADE OUT.**

**END OF ACT TWO**
ACT THREE

FADE IN:

51 INT. CHAPARRAL LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CLOSE SHOT - MAP

A hand comes into frame and taps on a section.

BUCK'S VOICE (o.s.)
Now, this is where they most likely have the herd.

CAMERA PULLS BACK. Mano and Blue stand at the table on either side of Buck, looking down at the map.

MANO
And they will not be expecting a raid at night.

BUCK
You sure you won't feel better with me goin' along?

BLUE
Why take the chance? If we run into trouble and there's nobody left to take charge of the ranch...

BUCK
I'd just like to be with you.

MANO
We know that.

52 ANGLE - FRONT DOOR
as Joe steps inside.

JOE
All set.

53 FULL SHOT

MANO
(to Joe)
Gracias.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BUCK

Good luck.

Mano and Blue nod, move off to join Joe, and go out.
Buck stands a moment, looks down at the map, then walks
to the door and looks out.

EXT. COMPOUND - NIGHT - RIDE-OUT (STOCK "BROTHERS
CANNON"

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO THEATER - NIGHT

Fashionably-dressed people stroll past a prominently
displayed poster for "ROMEO AND JULIET".

DIFFERENT ANGLE

as John and Victoria arrive in a carriage. They are
resplendent in their formal attire. John pays the
driver and the carriage moves off.

NEW ANGLE - FOLLOWING SHOT

as they move up to the lobby and pause by the poster.
John studies it doubtfully.

JOHN
I don't know, Victoria —
Shakespeare.

VICTORIA
We could have got tickets to
the opera instead.

John's eyes widen in mock horror. He takes her hand and
starts leading her in.

JOHN
Shakespeare.

VICTORIA
Perhaps it will help take your
mind off worrying about the
rancho.

VOICE (o.s.)

JOHN CANNON?

They turn in surprise.
ANOTHER ANGLE

as HANNIBAL CLAY moves through the crowd to them, eyes bright with the pleasure of seeing John. Clay is elaborately well-dressed -- diamond stickpin, cane, silk cape over his tuxedo, top hat -- the works. About ten years older than John, he looks like, and is, a multimillionaire. The only discordant thing about Hannibal is his way of talking and generally behaving in an engagingly vulgar manner -- like an ignorant dirt farmer, which, in the not too long ago, he was. John does not immediately recognize him. Hannibal descends on John with a wrenching handshake.

HANNIBAL

It is John Cannon! You ole muskrat -- good t' see yuh!

JOHN

(still confused)

I'm -- not sure I...

Hannibal cackles with glee.

HANNIBAL

Don't reckonize me, huh?

JOHN

Well, I...

(them)

Hannibal?

HANNIBAL

(beaming)

Th' very same!

JOHN

(laughing)

You can't blame me for not know-ing you. You look so...

(a gesture at his resplen-dence)

HANNIBAL

I might say th' same 'bout you! Dressed up like that, goin' into a theeater with this party young thing!

JOHN

(suddenly re-memering)

Oh, I'm sorry. This is my wife, Victoria. Hannibal Clay.
CONTINUED:

VICTORIA
Hello.

HANNIBAL
Sure is a pleasure, Miz Cannon.

VICTORIA
(smirking)
Please -- Victoria.

HANNIBAL
Anythin' you say.
(to John)
I weren't sure.
(suddenly re-
spectfully
serious)
Did hear 'bout Annalee passin' on -- but I didn't know y' got hitched up agin.

JOHN
We've been married a few years
now -- but this is the first
chance we've had for a honey-
moon.

HANNIBAL
(taking them
'in)
Well, ain't that somethin'!

JOHN
I just can't get over it. Last
I saw you, you were a poor dirt
farmer in Kansas.

HANNIBAL
Well, I tell you, John: one
mornin' I woke up and felt like
th' entire place could just sink
into hell, far as I was concerned,
an' I took my mule and headed
west. Spent a few years workin'
little an' starvin' a lot. Then
I come on this here silver de-
posit an' I been a rich man ever
since!

He cackles delightedly.

VOICE (o.s.)
Curtain going up! Curtain going
up!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED - (2):

JOHN
Well, I guess we'd better...

HANNIBAL
Not 'til I make sure we get t'gether least once more. Tell y' what, Want ya to meet the missas. Now 'bout t'morrow. Can y' come?

JOHN
(looks to Victoria)
Uhm... Victoria?

VICTORIA
I'd love to.

HANNIBAL
What hotel y' at?

JOHN
The Baldwin.

HANNIBAL
Have a man there t' pick y' up at noon. Now go enjoy y'selves.

JOHN
Good night, Hannibal.

VICTORIA
We will see you tomorrow.

They move into the theater.

HANNIBAL
He watches them go, shaking his head in admiration.

HANNIBAL
Ain't that somethin'!

FAST DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE HIGH CHAPARRAL - NIGHT - ANGLE - PORCH

Buck dozes in a chair. SOUND of many hoofbeats approaching. A beat before Buck snaps awake.
as Mano and Blue ride up, dismount. Blue calls out:

BLUE
Pedro, when you're finished, take care of our horses!

PEDRO (o.s.)
Si!

Buck moves quickly to them.

BUCK
You find the herd?

BLUE
(strangely)
We found 'em.

BUCK
(smiles)
Well, that's just...
(notices their attitudes)
... fine?
(beat)
What's wrong?

MANO
They were mixed in with a larger herd. We had no time to decide which were ours, so...
(a gesture)

BLUE
We took 'em all.

How many?

BUCK
Forty-two.

Buck lets out a soft whistle.

MANO
We sent some of the men to take the herd to Lawson Canyon. They will not be found there.

BUCK
Them A-pache'r gonna be awful mad.

(continued)
CONTINUED:

BLUE
At least we'll be able to deliver to Saunders tomorrow.

BUCK
We can't do that, Blue!

BLUE
Why not?

BUCK
Because more'n half of them're stolen -- or at least they ain't ours.

BLUE
I know that. What I'm thinkin' is we can replace 'em later and give the Indians back the same number that was theirs.

BUCK
(shaking head doubtfully)
Well...

MANO
What do you think, Buck?

BUCK
I think maybe we better start barricadin' this ranch right now.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

as John and Victoria enter in their evening clothes. Victoria is agitated, whips off her evening cape and tosses it onto the back of a chair.

VICTORIA
Falling asleep in the middle of "Romeo and Juliet"!

JOHN
Well, I just couldn't understand what they were saying.

VICTORIA
You could if you had tried.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JOHN
Victoria, I'm supposed to be here for a rest.

VICTORIA
Not in the theater.

JOHN
I got sleepy. I can't help that.

VICTORIA
You could help it if you would not spend most of your time worrying about the High Chaparrel! That's what takes up all your energy!

A beat.

JOHN
I'm sorry, Victoria.

VICTORIA
Oh, John -- I want you to have a good time, that's all.

JOHN
And I am, mostly. Just being alone with you means a great deal to me.

(holds her away)

Except when you shout.

VICTORIA
(automatically)
I do not...

She sees him grinning at her and she laughs.

VICTORIA
(continuing)
Oh, John!

She embraces him.

EXT. HANNIBAL CLAY RESIDENCE - DAY
It is a mansion suitable to an owner worth millions.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HANNIBAL CLAY LIVING ROOM - DAY - HANNIBAL, JOHN AND VICTORIA
as Hannibal is handing John a drink.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MARGARET LOUISE (o.s.)

There you are!

NEW ANGLE

as she moves toward them. Margaret Louise is twenty, effervescent, very pretty and superbly gowned. She speaks with a Southern accent.

MARGARET LOUISE

(taking Hannibals arm affectionately)

Been lookin' all over for you!

HANNIBAL

(to John and Victoria)

This's Margaret Louise -- all th' fam'ly I got in th' world. Mistah an' Miss Cannon.

MARGARET LOUISE

Sure am pleased to meet you.

John and Victoria AD LIB greetings.

VICTORIA

(to Hannibal)

I did not know you had a daughter.

Hannibal and Margaret Louise laugh easily, as at a familiar joke they continue to find amusing.

HANNIBAL

Margaret Louise is my wife.

Victoria is immediately embarrassed. John starcs, mildly amazed.

VICTORIA

Oh, I'm so sorry!

HANNIBAL

Oh, thass awright!

MARGARET LOUISE

Sure 'nuff -- everybody thinks that at first.

HANNIBAL

They also think Margaret Louise married me for my money. 'Course I know for a fact, thass exac'ly what she done!

He laughs happily at this while Margaret Louise pokes him affectionately in the ribs.

MARGARET LOUISE

Hannibal!

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

HANNIBAL
It's fine with me! She's got a sweet nature an'...
(to Margaret Louise)
... I know she's awful fond-a-me. Why don' you show Miz Cannon around?
(to Victoria)
You don' mind, Victoria?

VICTORIA
I would enjoy it very much.

MARGARET LOUISE
(delighted)
Well, so would I!

She goes to Victoria, takes her arm and leads her away, as:

MARGARET LOUISE
(continuing)
Come on, Misses Cannon!

VICTORIA
Please call me Victoria.

Hannibal smiles glowingly at them as they leave, then gives John a poke.

HANNIBAL
Well, John...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

John and Hannibal are now seated.

HANNIBAL
Thass very in'restin'. Very.

JOHN
Why do you say it that way?

HANNIBAL
'Cause th' same thing happened t' me. F' years, I was down in th' mines diggin' an' sweatin' an' haulin' along with th' rest-a my men.

(MORE)
CONTINUED:

HANNIBAL (cont'd)
I was keepin' th' books an' frettin' over ever' detail -- an' then one day -- jus' like you -- I jus' keeled over almos' dead. It was only then I learned th' mos' valable lesson-a my life.

JOHN
What's that?

HANNIBAL
Man in charge of a thing -- he should do everythin' he knows only he can do -- an' nothin' he can hire somebody t' do for him.

John thinks about this.

HANNIBAL
(continuing)
Y' see, John, bein' in charge sucks about ten times more out-a us than it feels like at th' time. Add a lotta unnecessary work 'n frettin' -- you bound t' be in trouble.

John studies Hannibal warmly.

JOHN
Hannibal, I can't tell you how glad I am we ran into one another.

HANNIBAL
(heartily)
It's mutual, John, entirely mutual!
(a sudden thought)
Say! Did I tell you I'm runnin' for th' Yoo-nited States' Senate?

JOHN
(amazed)
No.

HANNIBAL
(grinning broadly)
Yes, sir -- an' you know somethin' else? I'm gonna be 'lected, too.

He bangs a table, cackling happily.

(continued)
CONTINUED - (2):

HANNIBAL (continuing)
I surely am!

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY - VICTORIA
She turns from the window anxiously.

VICTORIA
John, I don't like it.

WIDEN ANGLE - TO INCLUDE JOHN
He regards her, relaxed and comfortable.

JOHN
It'll be all right. Believe me.

VICTORIA
But the doctor said at least three weeks.

JOHN
It'll be almost that by the time we get back.

She isn't very convinced. John goes to her, takes her affectionately by the shoulders.

JOHN (continuing)
Victoria, this has been wonderful and I have enjoyed it. I just feel it's time to go back to the ranch, that's all. I'm not worried about it. After all, they would have sent me a telegram if anything were wrong. They promised me that.

Victoria moves away from him guiltily.

VICTORIA
John, I have something to tell you.

JOHN
What?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

VICTORIA
You made them promise to send a message if there was trouble; I made them promise not to.

John thinks about this.

JOHN
I might have known.

VICTORIA
Are you angry with me?

JOHN
(smiles)
No. It makes sense why you did it. Besides, I'm sure the High Chaparral hasn't fallen into ruin because I'm gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT OUTSIDE THE HIGH CHAPARRAL - DAY -
SCREAMING APACHES
as they charge, FIRING their rifles.

ANGLE TO BARRICADES
The High Chaparral men start FIRING back.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. THE HIGH CHAPARRAL LIVING ROOM - DAY - LUGGAGE stacked inside the entry.

BUCK'S VOICE
(troubled)
And that's just part of what's gone wrong.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal John and Victoria, still in their traveling clothes, with Buck, Mano and Blue.

BUCK
(continuing)
I'm sorry, Big John.

BLUE
We all are.

MANO
Si.

John looks very noncommittal.

JOHN
Did you at least sell the fourteen head to Saunders?

BUCK
That's th' worst part. We couldn't sell him any. Turned out the herd we stole back didn't have none of our cattle in it.

JOHN
You stole back the wrong herd?

BUCK
(miserable)
Yeah. Musta just been renegade Aypache took ours.

BLUE
So we gave the herd right back.

JOHN
Then why are they still attacking?

(CONTINUED)
MANO
You see, Juano -- the Chief, Chiopana -- we have made him very angry.

JOHN
(a touch of the old sarcasm)
I don't doubt it.

BUCK
So he's demandin' a equal amount of our cattle in payment for stealin' his.

JOHN
Forty-two head of our cattle.

BLUE
Yeah. We can't afford that.

JOHN
We can't.

BUCK
An' besides, we got contracts on all th' other herds. We already lost Saunders as a buyer. We can't chance losin' another.

JOHN
I see.
(beat)
Anybody been killed?

BUCK
No. Couple of the hands been shot up a little. Mostly, Chiopana seems to be just tryin' to wear us down.

MANO
One attack each day -- and then they go away.

JOHN
Any of his men been killed?

MANO
I don't think so.

BUCK
Uhh... John...?

John turns.

JOHN
(calmly)
Yeah?

BUCK
(groping)
Well -- what're you goin' t' do?

John thinks a moment, then:

JOHN
Change my clothes.

And walks up the stairs. Victoria sighs and starts across the room to follow. As she passes Buck:

BUCK
Victoria...?

She stops, turns.

VICTORIA
Yes?

BUCK
Uhh... We been makin' a lotta mistakes around here...

VICTORIA
Yes.

BUCK
I mean, it's a real mess.

VICTORIA
It does sound that way.

BUCK
(blurt ing)
Well, then, how come he ain't hollerin' at us?

VICTORIA
Don't you know -- really?

BUCK
Well -- no.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED - (3):

VICTORIA
It is bad for his health.
And also walks up the stairs. The three of them are left
more confused than ever.

INT. JOHN AND VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - DAY - JOHN

He stands before the mirror in his work clothes, strapp-
ing on his gun belt. There is a calm purposefulness
about him that is more than a little evident.

VICTORIA (o.s.)
John...?

NEW ANGLE - TO INCLUDE VICTORIA

JOHN
Yeah.

VICTORIA
What are you going to do?

JOHN
Well, nobody's been killed so
far. I'm going to try to keep
it that way.

How?

JOHN
By having a talk with Chiopana.

Today?

VICTORIA

JOHN
Just as soon as I can get there.

He starts to the door.

VICTORIA
John.
(as he stops)
You seem very different. I mean
the way you're behaving.

JOHN
Well, I learned a lot in San
Francisco.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

VICTORIA
I know. We talked about that -- and the things Hannibal Clay said, but...

JOHN
But what?

VICTORIA
I can't put my finger on it.

JOHN
I think I'm behaving very calmly.

VICTORIA
Yes. Too calmly. John, there is something you're not telling me.

JOHN
(straight)
I can't think what it is.

A SHOT is heard from outside, followed by:

PEDRO'S VOICE
Apaches! Apaches!

They hurry out the door.

74 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - ANGLE TO DOOR
as Mano hurries in.

MANO
John!

75 NEW ANGLE
as John and Victoria move quickly down the stairs.

MANO
(continuing)
They're massing for the attack.

JOHN
(to Victoria)
Stay inside and keep the door closed.

VICTORIA
(as he joins Mano)
All right, John.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JOHN
(to Mano)
Let's go.

They go out.

EXT. THE APACHES - DAY - (STOCK)
as they gather for the attack.

EXT. THE BARRICADES - DAY - (STOCK)
John and the men waiting.

FRONT DOOR - DAY - (STOCK)
Victoria opens the peephole and peers out.

CLOSE SHOT - JOHN - (STAGE 9)
He waits at the barricade, calls out:

JOHN
They're coming!

SHOT - CHIOPANA - (STOCK)
signaling his men to the attack.

FULL SHOT - (STOCK)
The Apaches riding in to the attack.

AT BARRICADES - (STOCK)
John signals to the men.

JOHN
Remember, shoot over their heads!

THE SCENE - (STOCK)
The Apaches attacking and the men FIRING back. It is a
mild sort of business, all things considered, like our
stock footage, and over very quickly. Chiopana leads
his men off.
CLOSE SHOT - JOHN

John

Mano!

FULLER SHOT

as Mano moves around the other men to John.

TWO SHOT - MANO AND JOHN

MANO

Si.

JOHN

You and me are paying a visit to Chiopana.

MANO

(startled)

Just the two of us?

JOHN

Just the two of us.

INT. WICKIUP - DAY

John and Mano sit with Chiopana. The Chief scowls angrily.

JOHN

(to Chiopana)

We realize it was dangerous to come here -- but a serious error was made by taking your herd and we owe you something for that.

Chiopana only grunts.

MANO

(to Chiopana)

But forty-two head of cattle is more than we can give you.

CHIOPANA

We had a bargain! In exchange for using your land, we would leave your cattle alone!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CHIOPANA (cont'd)
You broke the agreement, not
Chiopana -- and you will pay
what Chiopana demands or we
will continue to attack you
until we drive you out or
kill you!

John looks at Chiopana and can tell that he means it.
He sighs:

JOHN
All right, you can have the
cattle tomorrow.

MANO
But, John -- that is so great
a loss!

JOHN
And we'll take it. Chiopana
has right on his side.

MANO
Forty-two head!

JOHN
We take the loss.

EXT. CHAPARRAL PORCH - DAY
Blue watches as John examines the ledger.

JOHN
It isn't all that bad. You
just put certain items in the
wrong categories.

BLUE
That's what was confusin' me,
all right.

JOHN
Tell you what. We'll both keep
the books from now on.
EXT. OPEN RANGE - DAY - AT WELL SITE

Shoring boards poke up at angles out of the caved-in well. Joe and some of the HANDS stand around as John examines a sample of the soil.

JOE
What do you think, Boss?

JOHN
With this kind of earth, digging a well is always difficult. I can see why it caved in. It's almost pure sand.

JOE
Does that mean we can't do it?

JOHN
No, it just means that when you re-shore it, use twice to three times the normal cross-bracing. It'll be fine. Now, get on with it. We need that water.

JOE
Yes, sir.

John moves to his horse, as Joe turns to the men:

JOE
(continuing)
All right, let's go!

The men start in on the work.

INT. CHAPARRAL LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - ANGLE TO DOOR

as Buck, Mano and Blue come in. Buck immediately stops and sniffs the air.

BUCK
Now, what do you suppose could smell that good?

They head for the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

They enter and find the table elaborately laid out. There is much CLATTERING from the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MANO
(calling)
Victoria, what are you cooking?

Pedro enters from the kitchen wearing an apron.

PEDRO
Victoria is not cooking. I am cooking. Following her instructions, of course.

BLUE
How come?

VICTORIA'S VOICE
We are having a celebration, that is how come.

DIFFERENT ANGLE - SHOOTING INTO LIVING ROOM

They turn and gape at John and Victoria in their formal attire. The handsome couple enter.

JOHN
Doc Plant gave me a clean bill of health today...
(to Buck)
... and, besides, didn't you tell me you'd give a month's pay to see me all decked out?

BUCK
(stunned)
Sure, John, but...

JOHN
Don't worry. You won't have to pay it.

BUCK
Oh, it ain't that -- I'd gladly pay it -- 'cause -- I never thought you could look like that.

John smiles, moves to Victoria's chair and holds it for her:

JOHN
My dear?

PEDRO
(as Victoria sits)
Shall I serve now, Madame?

(CONTINUED)
VICTORIA
(airily)
I suppose so.
They laugh. Pedro goes into the kitchen. John and the
others sit.

VICTORIA
(continuing)
I have discovered something about
my husband that has been puzzling
me ever since we got back.

JOHN
Now, Victoria...

VICTORIA
I think they should know.
Pedro comes in with a platter of food and sets it down,
then pauses to listen.

MANO
Know what?

VICTORIA
All the time we were gone, I
thought he was worrying that
something would go wrong here
without him.

BLUE
Well, wasn't he?

VICTORIA
No! He was worried that some-
thing wouldn't go wrong without
him!

MANO
Why -- John.

They all laugh, Pedro included.

BUCK
So that's why you wasn't hollerin'
an' carryin' on!

BLUE
(to Buck)
He was glad we made all them
mistakes!

John regards them sourly:

(Continued)
CONTINUED - (2):

JOHN
I wasn't the least bit happy about the mess this ranch was in.
   (glares at Pedro)
Pedro, if you're going to serve dinner, serve it.

PEDRO
   (startled)
Si, Padrone.

And scurries off. John looks around at the others still regarding him with high amusement.

JOHN
Well, it'd make a man feel pretty useless to come back to his ranch and find it running perfectly without him.

Buck starts to chuckle, shaking his head. The others slowly join in. John relents and begins laughing, too, as we:

FADE OUT.

THE END