

# **The Devil's Outlaws**

*An American Horror Story*

A play by  
Vincent S. Hannam

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## **CHARACTERS**

MARTHA JACKSON: White. Female. 20s-30s.

ARNOLD JACKSON: White. Male. 20s-30s.

JACOB BUTLER: African American. Male. 20s-30s.

TSALI: Cherokee/Native American. Male. 20s-30s.

FUR TRAPPER: Any race/ethnicity. Male. Any adult age.

MAN IN BLACK: White/Latino. Any gender\*. 20s+

CONDUCTOR: White. Any gender\*. 20s+

RAMIREZ : Latino. Male. 20s.

COOLEE: Any race/ethnicity. Male. 20s-30s.

CAPTAIN: White. Male. 30s-40s.

WAYNE TURNBULL: White. Male. 30s-40s.

MASTER GHOUL: Any race/ethnicity. Any gender\*. Any adult age.

EVIL VOICE;  
SAILOR VOICES;  
MEMORIES OF BAD MEN: Voiceover characters.

**PLACE**

SCENE 1: A train station

SCENE 2: A train car

SCENE 3-10: Deep within the Appalachian Mountains

EPILOGUE: San Francisco Bay

**TIME**

1867

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**NOTES**

You can perform the play with as few as eight actors. Suggested doubling would look like:

MAN IN BLACK/RAMIREZ

FUR TRAPPER/CONDUCTOR/CAPTAIN/MASTER GHOUL

*\*Please change written pronouns to accommodate the gender identity of the actor cast.*

# **THE DEVIL'S OUTLAWS**

## **ACT I**

### **SCENE 1**

*Lights rise. A crowded train station. MARTHA stands unsure, holding a ticket and a suitcase; she is looking for someone.*

*A MAN IN BLACK approaches her.*

MAN IN BLACK

'Scuse me, ma'am.

MARTHA

Oh! Sorry.

*She drops her ticket and suitcase.*

Oh.

MAN IN BLACK

No, no, please.

*The Man hands her the suitcase but studies the ticket.*

MARTHA

Thank you, sir.

MAN IN BLACK

You're jumpy.

MARTHA

I'm waiting for someone.

MAN IN BLACK

Ah. Your man?

MARTHA

My husband, yes.

MAN IN BLACK

He going with you to...

(reads tickets)

San Francisco. One way.

MARTHA

I'll have that now, please.

MAN IN BLACK

I sure am glad you ain't sailing from here to there all by yourself.

Long way from Virginia!

MARTHA

Now.

*He hands the ticket back.*

MAN IN BLACK

You're a little jumpy to sail that far without a man.

MARTHA

My husband will be along every step of the way.

*Beat. The Man looks around. No husband.*

MAN IN BLACK

'Course if you find yourself in need of somebody...

MARTHA

I'll look under the nearest rock.

MAN IN BLACK

Well, then... Bon voyage.

*He exits. ARNOLD JACKSON enters, her husband.*

ARNOLD

Martha!

MARTHA

Arnold, you're back. Tell me you have your ticket?

ARNOLD

From here to St. Louis. Me and Jake will hit the California Trail then on horses.

MARTHA

Sounds like your marching days.

ARNOLD

I think I got one more in me. You get your ticket?

MARTHA

Let me ride with you.

ARNOLD

We can't afford it.

MARTHA

We could still pawn -

ARNOLD

Martha, we've sold everything.

MARTHA

We have our savings.

ARNOLD

Then what would we have to start with in California?

MARTHA

Damn California!

ARNOLD

This is the right move.

Martha

I won't see you for six months, Arnold.

*Beat*

ARNOLD

Come here.

*They embrace. Arnold pulls away.*

MARTHA

You all right?

ARNOLD

Lot of folks in here.

MARTHA

Let's wait for Mr. Butler outside.

*She reaches for him.*

ARNOLD

Don't touch me!

MARTHA

Arnold, take me hand.

ARNOLD

(to the room)

Sons of bitches!

MARTHA

Arnold! Look at me!

*Martha holds Arnold's face; he resists but maintains eye contact. Martha speaks calmly, but forcefully:*

Look at me and breathe. Breathe, Arnold. Arnold, breathe.

*Arnold calms down.*

There. Nice and easy. All right. I'm going to hug you now. All right?

*Arnold nods; Martha hugs him.*

How do you feel?

ARNOLD

Like hell.

MARTHA

Why?

ARNOLD

I don't want to be away from you.

MARTHA

But you are right about our savings.

ARNOLD

And now this outburst... It's been three years since the end of the war, Martha. Why can't I shake it?

MARTHA

We'll have a new start soon.

ARNOLD

God, it'll be like being born again.

MARTHA

And we'll be together.

ARNOLD

Plus one.

MARTHA

(playful)

We certainly tried hard enough.

ARNOLD

Martha, you're killin' me!

MARTHA

I know.

ARNOLD

I love you.

MARTHA

I love you, too.

(beat)

So tell me about this ship.

ARNOLD

It's "The Spirit". Top of the line.

MARTHA

I've heard otherwise.

ARNOLD

From who?

MARTHA

A loathsome insect.

(scans room)

There he is, over there.

ARNOLD

He walked up to you?

MARTHA

He ran into me and I dropped my ticket.

ARNOLD

Martha, let me see your ticket.

MARTHA

Of course, just let me find -

ARNOLD

Quickly, now.

MARTHA

All right, all right.

*Martha finds the ticket; hands it over. Arnold looks. There is nothing printed on it. Meanwhile, the Man has been keeping an eye on the pair; he decides it is time to sneak away.*

ARNOLD

Shit. There's nothing written on this.

MARTHA

Don't be silly -

(She sees)

But, I could have sworn.

ARNOLD

Who ran into you?

MARTHA

Him, the one in black. Arnold, I'm sorry -

ARNOLD

Stay here -

(to the Man)

Hey!

(Arnold catches the Man.)

Hey! Give it here!

MAN IN BLACK

Or what?

ARNOLD

I said give it back!

MAN IN BLACK

I'm outta here.

ARNOLD

I'm taking you to the Station Master.

MAN IN BLACK

Lay off!

*The Man's fist connects with Arnold's jaw. Arnold falls to the floor. The Man says to Martha:*

I'm still yours if you want a real man.

*Another person enters, an African American named JACOB BUTLER. He takes the Man by the scruff of the neck.*

JACOB

Give her the ticket.

MAN IN BLACK

I'll see you in hell, boy.

JACOB

Not before this knife gets between your ribs, boy.

MAN IN BLACK

Alright! Goddamn, take your ticket!

*The Man drops the ticket. Jacob exits to throw him outside. Martha rushes to Arnold, now coming to his senses.*

MARTHA

Arnold! Oh my God... Are you all right?

ARNOLD

I've been hit harder.

MARTHA

Here, lean on me.

*Arnold stands.*

ARNOLD

That, my dear, was Jacob Butler.

MARTHA

You didn't tell me he was so handsome.

ARNOLD

Martha!

MARTHA

Oh, hush. We won the war, didn't we?

ARNOLD

(hushed)

But that doesn't mean you can say -

*Jacob enters, picking up the ticket.*

JACOB

Arnold Jackson.

ARNOLD

Been too long!

JACOB

A lifetime.

ARNOLD

Still as hotheaded as ever.

JACOB

(to Martha)

Best not be losin' sight of this ticket, ma'am. I went through an awful lot for it.

MARTHA

Thank you, Mr. Butler.

ARNOLD

I'd like to introduce you to Mrs. Jackson. Martha.

JACOB

How do you do, ma'am.

*He kisses her hand. Arnold is nervous.*

ARNOLD

Uh... Jake.

JACOB

What? We won the war, didn't we?

MARTHA

I've heard so much about you, Mr. Butler.

JACOB

And I, you.

MARTHA

I'm not sure what you mean.

JACOB

I... well, Arnold told me stories back in the day... I mean... Oh shoot, I'm afraid eloquence has never been my strong suit.

MARTHA

Oh, please. You're by far the most charming man in the room and... do accept my condolences for what happened.

JACOB  
(deeply touched)  
My, you have heard a lot.

MARTHA  
My apologies, I did not mean -

JACOB  
Please, no. Thank you, Mrs. Jackson.

*Beat*

MARTHA  
What time is your train?

ARNOLD  
Late tomorrow afternoon.

*A train whistles.*

CONDUCTOR (o.s.)  
Three-Oh-Nine to Norfolk! Three-Oh-Nine to Norfolk!

MARTHA  
And here's mine pulling in now.

JACOB  
I'll get a move on. Leave you to it.  
(to Arnold)  
This all you got?

ARNOLD  
All I need. We sold off the house and everything in it.

MARTHA

Spent it all on a clipper named "The Spirit".

JACOB

The Spirit! I saw her built in my shipbuilding days. You couldn't have chosen a finer ship.

MARTHA

Mr. Butler, you have no idea the worry that saves me.

JACOB

We're all worried a little, Mrs. Jackson. I gotta spend six months with your husband.

MARTHA

How awful.

JACOB

(laughs)

See you in San Fran.

*He exits.*

MARTHA

God bless that man.

ARNOLD

He had a rough go of it, even before the war.

MARTHA

And the way he lost his family... Arnold, please be in San Francisco when I arrive.

ARNOLD

I promise you. We will see each other in a place far better than what we've known.

MARTHA

And promise me you'll look after Mr. Butler.

*The train whistles.*

CONDUCTOR (o.s.)

All aboard the Three-Oh-Nine to Norfolk!

ARNOLD

Jacob is a grown man, dear -

MARTHA

Please! He needs you more than you know - more than he knows.

ARNOLD

I'll look after him. I promise.

*The train whistles again. Louder. Martha hugs him crying.*

MARTHA

I love you so much.

ARNOLD

I love you too, so much.

(to the baby)

And you too!

*The train whistle screams.*

CONDUCTOR (o.s.)

ALL ABOARD!

*Steam whistles from the train and people cheer offstage.*

*Martha exits. Arnold looks on.*

## **SCENE 2**

*That night. The station is quiet. Arnold stands looking at a clock on the wall. A few others pass in and out. They slowly notice Arnold. They slowly close in on him with each pass. Arnold remains fixated on the clock. Menace fills the air.*

*Jacob enters. The passerbys dissipate.*

JACOB

You still standin' there?

ARNOLD

I can't miss our train.

JACOB

It don't leave till mornin'.

ARNOLD

What if the clock's slow?

JACOB

Come on, Arnold, it's nearly midnight. Let's get some shut eye.

*Jacob tries to get comfortable on a bench. Arnold stands fixated on the clock. Jacob tries to sleep, but Arnold's fixation drives him crazy; he sits up.*

JACOB

Goddamn it. Alright. Never could sleep in a train station and you're drivin' me crazy. You want some pecans? Picked 'em up while I was out. Arnold?

*Arnold is slowly coaxed to the bench. He and Jacob eat.*

ARNOLD

It's good to see you.

JACOB

You too, pal. You with me now?

ARNOLD

Yeah... yeah. You ready for another adventure?

JACOB

I hated soldierin', but I got no patience for sittin' still.

ARNOLD

At least we ain't marching all the way.

JACOB

Nothin's as bad as that campaign at the end of the war.

ARNOLD

Lord, we walked clear across both Carolinas.

JACOB

And the mosquitos! They got mosquitos where we goin'?

ARNOLD

I... I don't know.

JACOB

I mean, probably, right?

ARNOLD

Right. Yeah. Seems everywhere's got mosquitos.

JACOB

But God Almighty, it'll be good to leave this place behind.

ARNOLD

Startin' new... I never thought it would happen.

JACOB

You never thought you'd fight for Lincoln either.

ARNOLD

Hey, proudest moment of my life was puttin' on that blue uniform.  
It's just... this is where I'm from. I'll miss the mountains.

JACOB

I don't know about mosquitos but they definitely got mountains out west.

ARNOLD

Ah, but ain't nothin' like Appalachia.

JACOB

I lived in them hill too, don't you forget.

Arnold

No, I didn't mean nothin' by it.

JACOB

Then here's to new mountains.

ARNOLD

Can't wait.

JACOB

So tell me about our journey, Arnold.

ARNOLD

I'll show you.

*Arnold finds a table; he sets his suitcase down and pulls out a map, spreading it on the table.*

JACOB

You were always one for maps.

ARNOLD

Here... When we get off in St. Louis, we'll secure what we need before hittin' the trail.

JACOB

Okay, okay... Virginia, Kentucky... Tennessee... Hmm... One last tour through Dixie?

ARNOLD

It's the most direct route.

JACOB

Nah, nah, nah. I know my geography too. Look -  
(traces the map)

Here's a train north through Cincinnati, Springfield - home of that man, Lincoln - and then bingo, St. Louis.

ARNOLD

I already bought the tickets.

JACOB

Exchange them.

ARNOLD

This is the most direct -

JACOB

Southern.

ARNOLD

Fastest.

JACOB

Affordable.

ARNOLD

Look, I gotta see Martha as soon as I can.

JACOB

I know.

ARNOLD

I appreciate you being here.

JACOB

We go back a ways, Arnold. But for the record, I got my own life to restart.

*A Western FUR TRAPPER interrupts; he wears furs.*

FUR TRAPPER

Excuse me gents, but I couldn't help overhear your predicament.

JACOB

What's it to you?

FUR TRAPPER

What's it to you?

JACOB

I'll be outside.

*Jacob moves to the exit.*

FUR TRAPPER

Hold it young man.

(Jacob ignores him)

Boy!

JACOB

Do I gotta throw out every hillbilly in here?

FUR TRAPPER

I just want to talk to the both of you.

ARNOLD

You're not from around here, are you?

FUR TRAPPER

I'm a California man myself, plied a trade in furs. Not as lucrative as it once was. I come east looking for something new for me and the wife.

JACOB

Might want to lose that coat. Gets hot in Virginia.

ARNOLD

What can we do for you?

FUR TRAPPER

The thing is, we didn't decide to stay until we arrived. Now I'm stuck with a couple'a return tickets.

JACOB

San Francisco?

FUR TRAPPER

Aye. If you're interested.

ARNOLD

What time?

FUR TRAPPER

Tonight at midnight. Non-stop express north through Cincinnati, Springfield, Chicago.

ARNOLD

(consulting the map)

No, no, it's too far out of the way.

JACOB

Arnold, this is too good to pass up.

ARNOLD

Can I see those tickets?

*The Fur Trapper hands over the tickets.*

I'm going to run these by the clerk. If they had anything faster I would have bought them.

JACOB

What do you want for them?

FUR TRAPPER

You fight in the war?

JACOB

Yeah.

FUR TRAPPER

Then you paid your price.

*A train whistle screams. Steam fills the stage.*

ARNOLD

Now hold on -

JACOB

Arnold.

ARNOLD

Take a minute and think about this.

JACOB

We've caught a break.

ARNOLD

Don't be a fool.

JACOB

Don't be so high and mighty!

ARNOLD

I can't risk a sure-thing.

JACOB

It's a gamble worth taking. You see Martha sooner and I leave the South behind forever.

ARNOLD

And if the tickets are bunk?

JACOB

Then we get on our original train tomorrow and forget this sideshow. But make up your mind 'cause this express is gettin' underway.

ARNOLD

And if I say no, you're still getting on it?

JACOB

Without a doubt.

ARNOLD

You're a damn fool!

JACOB

Arnold.

ARNOLD

You know I can't be alone for two-thousand miles...

JACOB

I'm here for you. But you owe me.

ARNOLD

You have met me this far.

JACOB

You'll do it?

ARNOLD

I'll do it.

JACOB

All right!

(beat)

Mister California, you've made me one happy fella!

*But the Fur Trapper has disappeared into the steam.*

CONDUCTOR (o.s.)

ALL ABOARD!