

BLACK ALLIGATOR

based on true events

Series Bible

Matisse Tolin & Alexander Felix



DECEMBER 1865

The Civil War is over. Abraham Lincoln has been killed.

The Thirteenth Amendment is passed by Congress, ending slavery in America.

The country is in disarray, and the extraordinary challenge of putting it back together is now in the hands of ordinary men and women. An old order has been destroyed and everything is up for grabs. The historical period known as Reconstruction begins.



Defeated Southern men return home from the war, bitter and aggrieved. Women whose husbands were killed find themselves taking over the plantation.

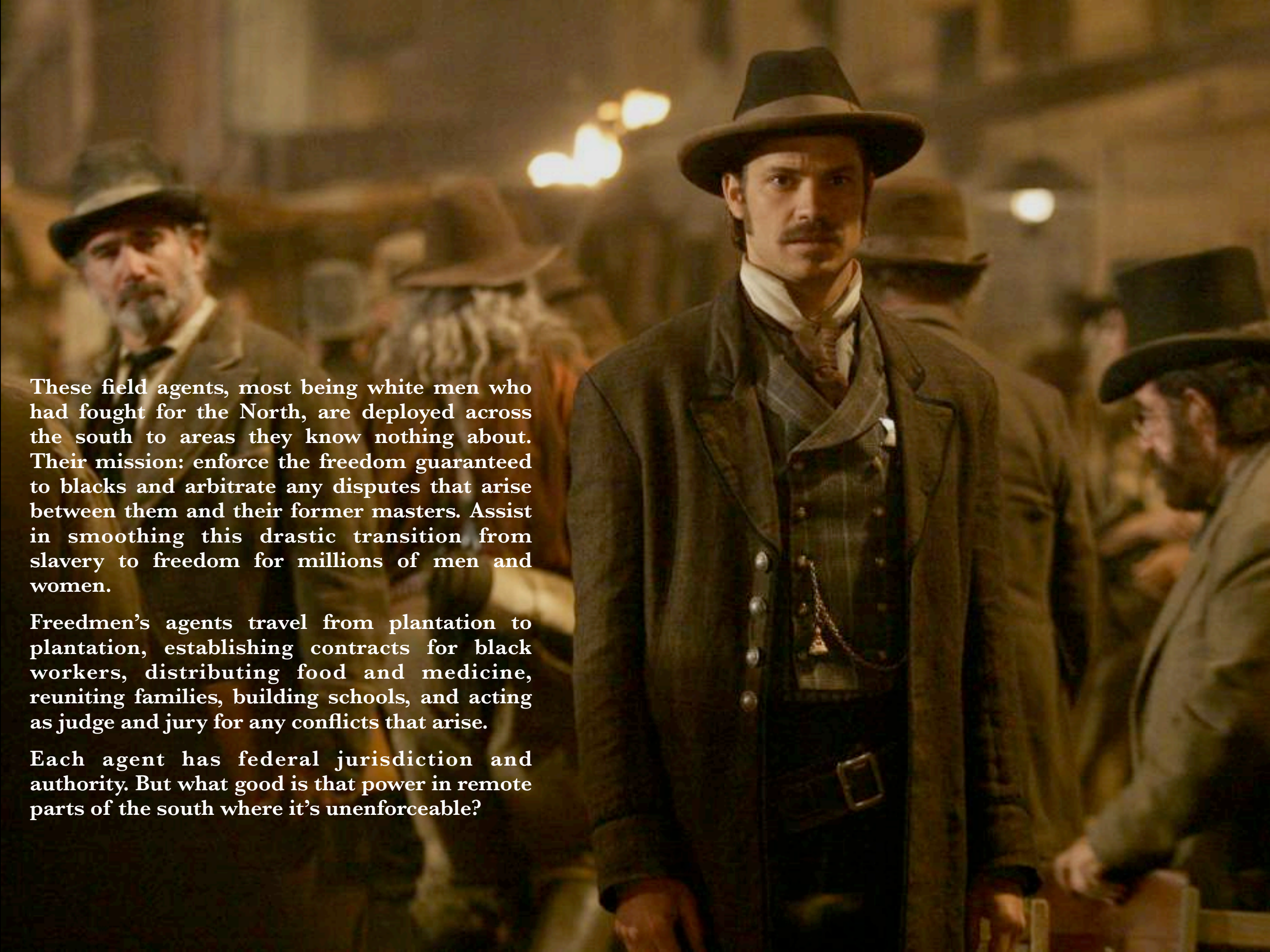
News spreads through the South that slavery is dead, and the free labor system that white planters have been so accustomed to is no longer viable or legal. Blacks, now claiming their freedom, begin to revolt as news of the amendment spreads. Whites wonder what their former slaves will do to them, given how they've treated them.



THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU

In response, the Reconstruction government creates a unique and unprecedented agency, the Freedmen's Bureau. Bureau commissioners take office in every Southern state and begin hiring field agents.

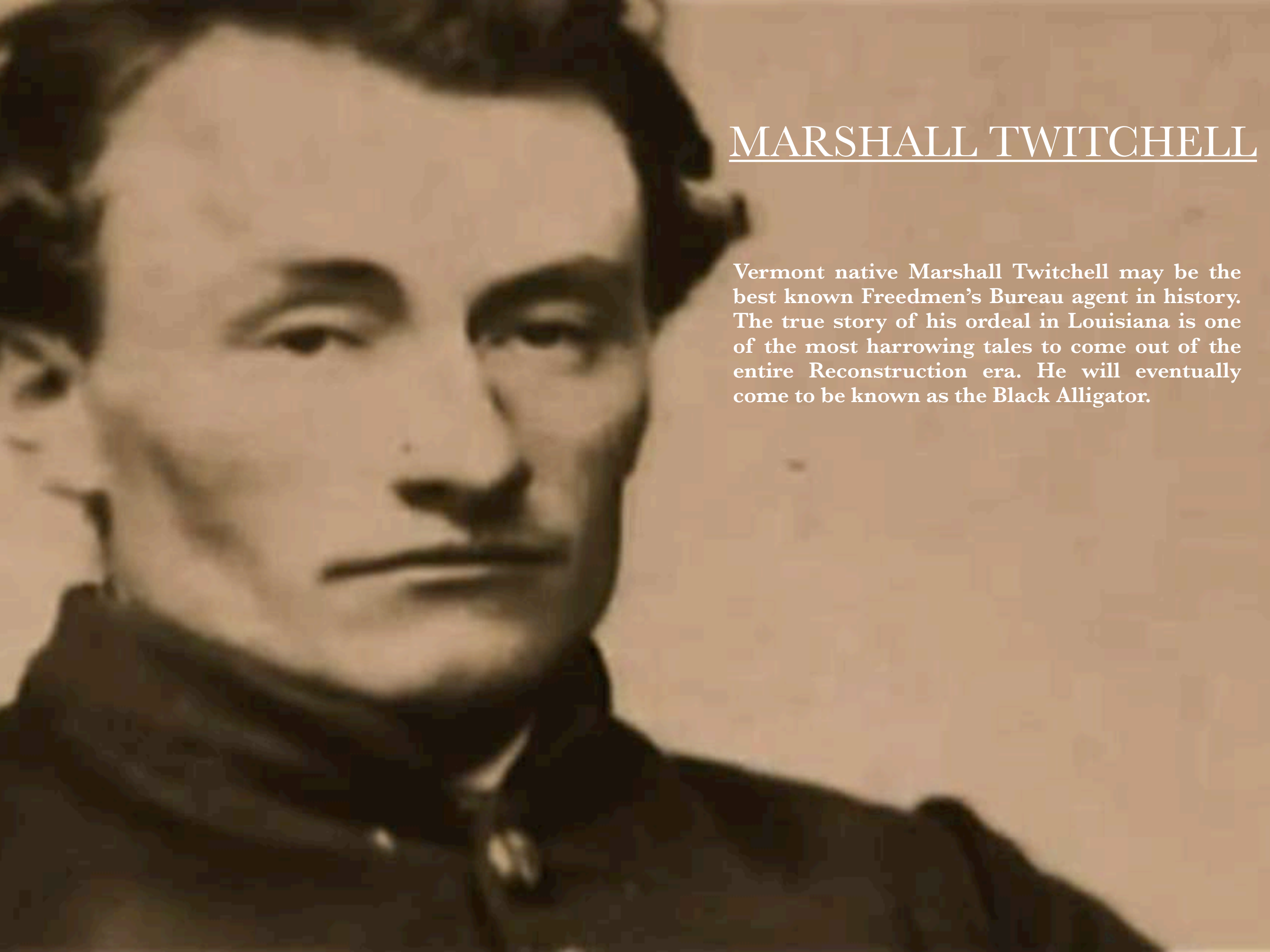


A man with a mustache, wearing a dark top hat and a dark, double-breasted coat over a vest and white shirt, stands in the center of a crowd. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a dimly lit, crowded street at night, with other people wearing hats and coats visible in the background. Warm, yellowish light from street lamps illuminates the scene.

These field agents, most being white men who had fought for the North, are deployed across the south to areas they know nothing about. Their mission: enforce the freedom guaranteed to blacks and arbitrate any disputes that arise between them and their former masters. Assist in smoothing this drastic transition from slavery to freedom for millions of men and women.

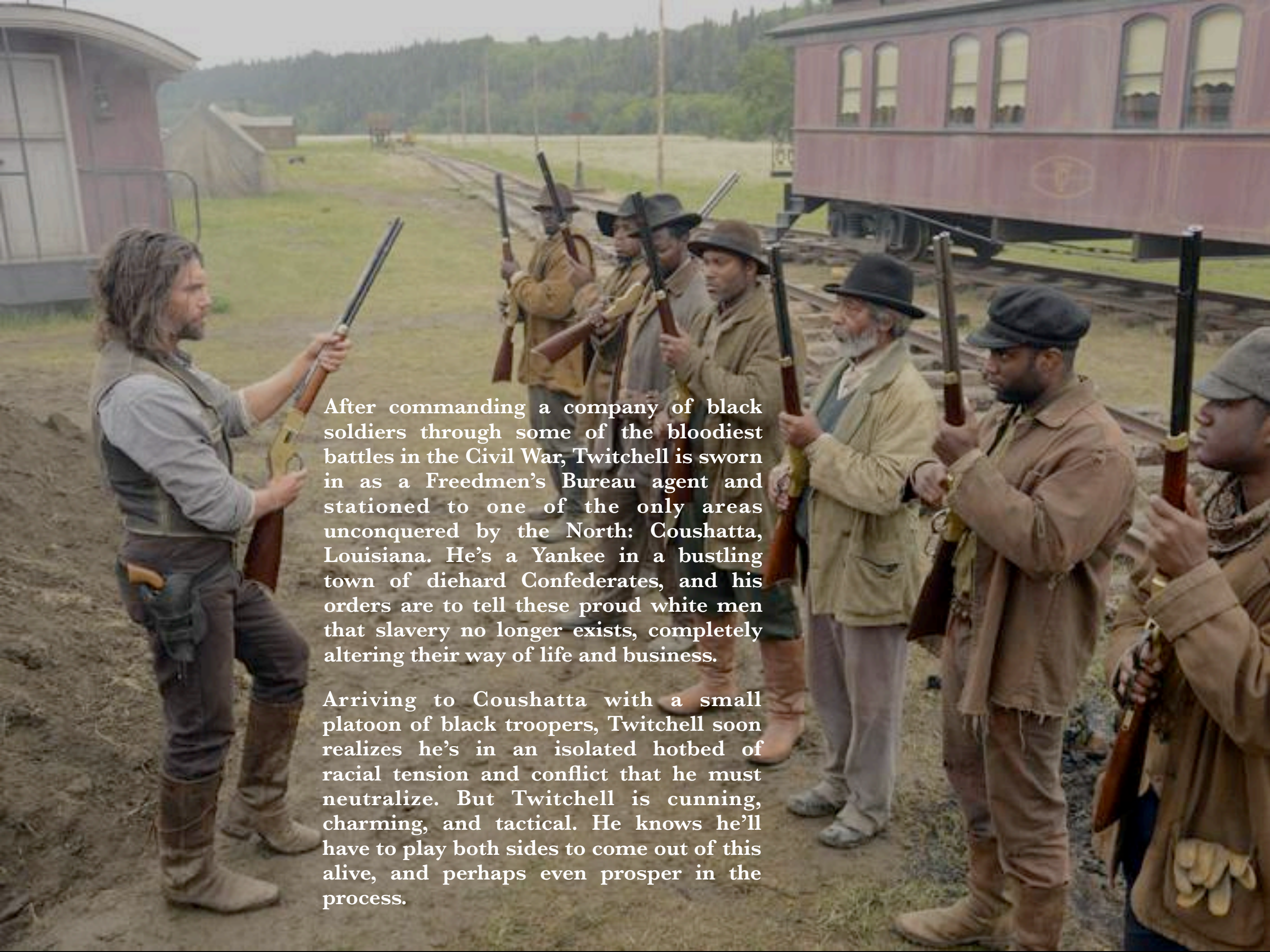
Freedmen's agents travel from plantation to plantation, establishing contracts for black workers, distributing food and medicine, reuniting families, building schools, and acting as judge and jury for any conflicts that arise.

Each agent has federal jurisdiction and authority. But what good is that power in remote parts of the south where it's unenforceable?



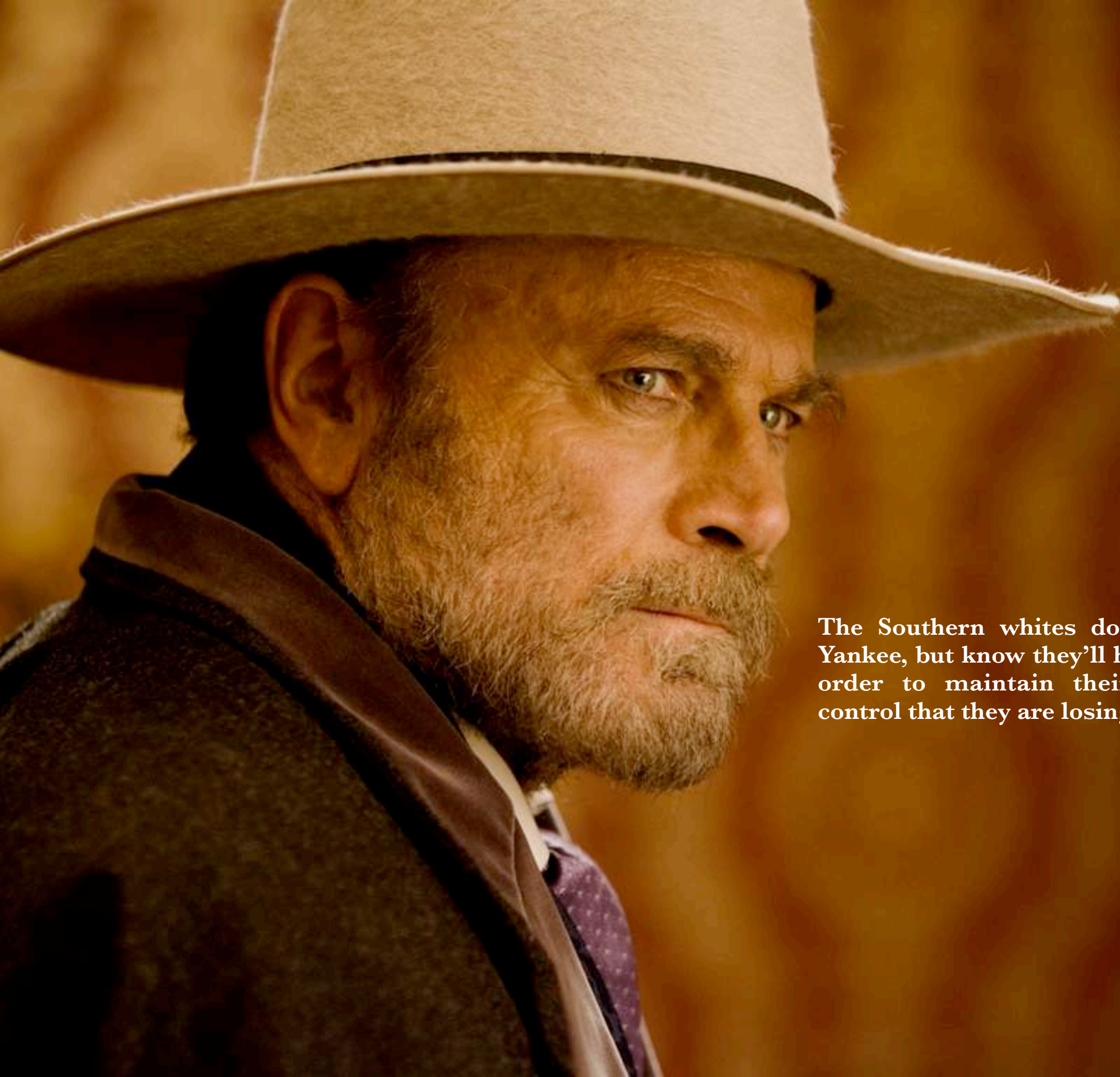
MARSHALL TWITCHELL

Vermont native Marshall Twitchell may be the best known Freedmen's Bureau agent in history. The true story of his ordeal in Louisiana is one of the most harrowing tales to come out of the entire Reconstruction era. He will eventually come to be known as the Black Alligator.



After commanding a company of black soldiers through some of the bloodiest battles in the Civil War, Twitchell is sworn in as a Freedmen's Bureau agent and stationed to one of the only areas unconquered by the North: Coushatta, Louisiana. He's a Yankee in a bustling town of diehard Confederates, and his orders are to tell these proud white men that slavery no longer exists, completely altering their way of life and business.

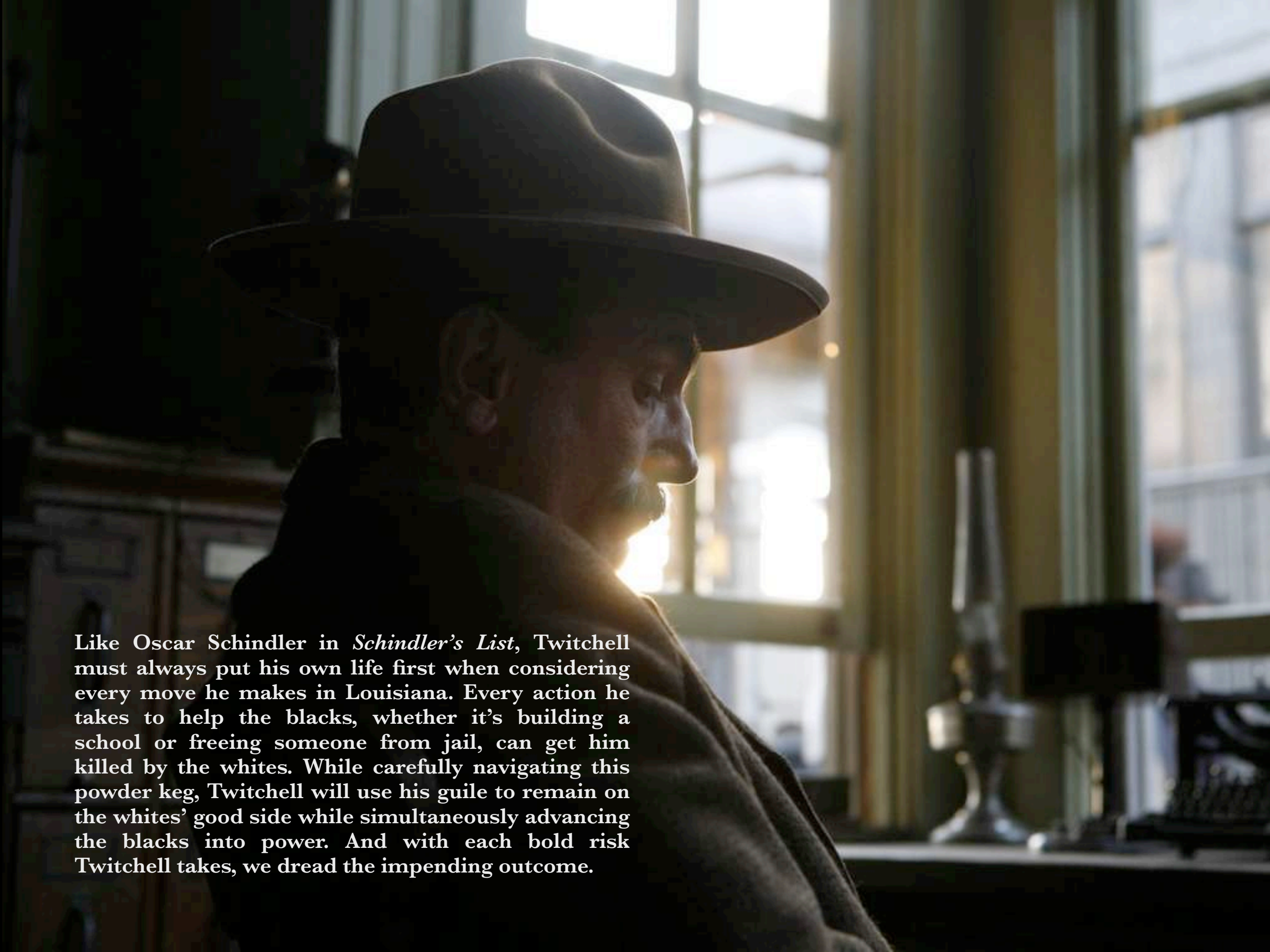
Arriving to Coushatta with a small platoon of black troopers, Twitchell soon realizes he's in an isolated hotbed of racial tension and conflict that he must neutralize. But Twitchell is cunning, charming, and tactical. He knows he'll have to play both sides to come out of this alive, and perhaps even prosper in the process.




The Southern whites don't take kindly to this Yankee, but know they'll have to deal with him in order to maintain their power and control; control that they are losing with each passing day.

The blacks hope Twitchell is their messiah in blue, but soon come to realize this self-righteous arbiter isn't going to deliver all that the government has promised, at least not outwardly in front of the whites.



A man wearing a dark fedora hat and a dark jacket is shown in profile, looking out a large window. The scene is dimly lit, with bright light coming from the window, creating a silhouette effect on the man's face. In the background, a desk with a lamp and a typewriter is visible, suggesting an office or study setting.

Like Oscar Schindler in *Schindler's List*, Twitchell must always put his own life first when considering every move he makes in Louisiana. Every action he takes to help the blacks, whether it's building a school or freeing someone from jail, can get him killed by the whites. While carefully navigating this powder keg, Twitchell will use his guile to remain on the whites' good side while simultaneously advancing the blacks into power. And with each bold risk Twitchell takes, we dread the impending outcome.



One of the most fascinating aspects of Twitchell's story is his rise to power and his violent downfall. As he gains notoriety in Louisiana, he'll use his position and accomplishments to become political boss of the Red River, not unlike the character of Nucky Thompson in *Boardwalk Empire*.

But Twitchell will eventually put himself directly in the crosshairs of the White League, Louisiana's more aggressive version of the KKK, who attempt to assassinate him.

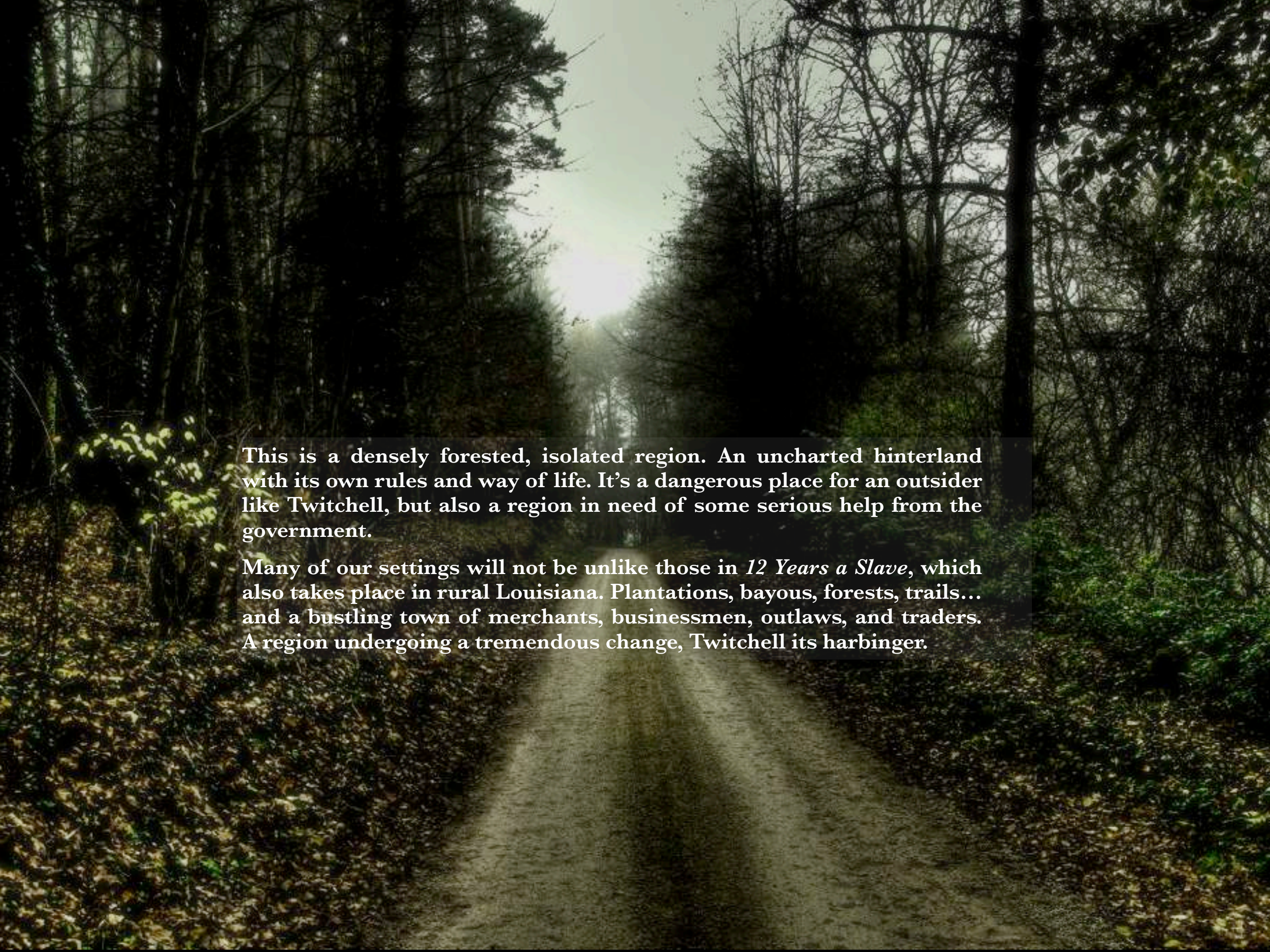
Twitchell miraculously survives, losing an arm in the process... and returns with a vengeance.



THE WORLD

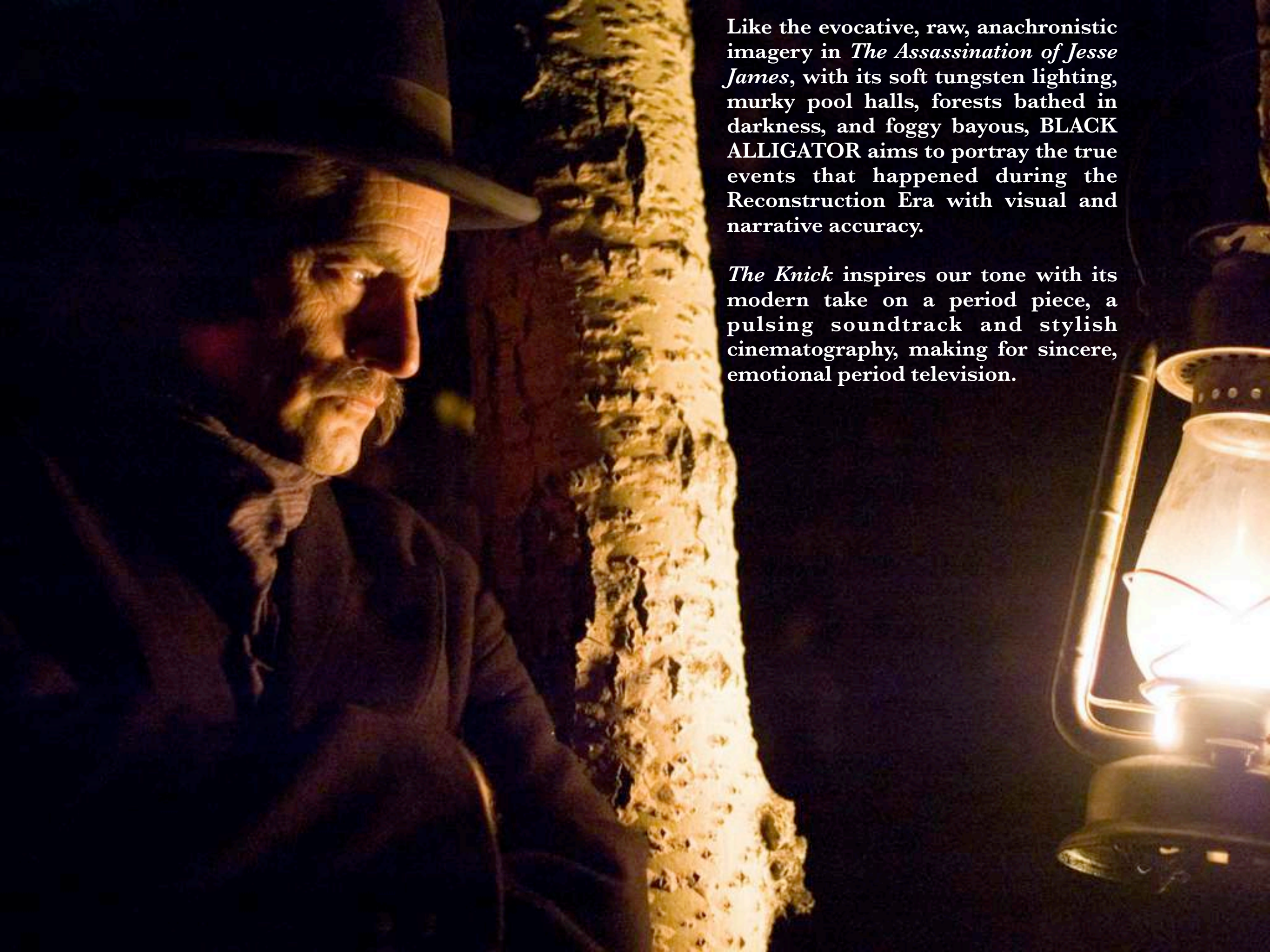
BLACK ALLIGATOR takes place primarily in the town of Coushatta, Louisiana. Similar to *Deadwood*, the town is an ever-evolving and bustling frontier of merchants, planters, businessmen, brothels, pubs, and bowling alleys. Situated in northern Louisiana on the edge of the Red River, Coushatta was a town never conquered by the Union.

Some of the most diehard Confederate soldiers made Coushatta their home. And in their minds they never lost the war.



This is a densely forested, isolated region. An uncharted hinterland with its own rules and way of life. It's a dangerous place for an outsider like Twitchell, but also a region in need of some serious help from the government.

Many of our settings will not be unlike those in *12 Years a Slave*, which also takes place in rural Louisiana. Plantations, bayous, forests, trails... and a bustling town of merchants, businessmen, outlaws, and traders. A region undergoing a tremendous change, Twitchell its harbinger.



Like the evocative, raw, anachronistic imagery in *The Assassination of Jesse James*, with its soft tungsten lighting, murky pool halls, forests bathed in darkness, and foggy bayous, BLACK ALLIGATOR aims to portray the true events that happened during the Reconstruction Era with visual and narrative accuracy.

The Knick inspires our tone with its modern take on a period piece, a pulsing soundtrack and stylish cinematography, making for sincere, emotional period television.



CAST OF CHARACTERS



MARSHALL TWITCHELL

Our protagonist and anti-hero. Sharp, self-assured, machiavellian, charming, bold... Twitchell adeptly navigates all sides and angles to get what he needs and follow through with his federal orders.

He harbors dark secrets from his service in the Civil War. A mysterious scar running across his face causes many to wonder what this brooding Yankee's past holds. Through flashbacks and hints of dialogue, we come to find that Twitchell committed many sins while he commanded blacks during the war. As Twitchell begins to sink into his role of Freedmen's Bureau agent, exposing himself to the worst atrocities he has ever witnessed in his life, he will come to use his skills to aid these freed people and redeem them from slavery while redeeming himself from his shameful past.



THOMAS ABNEY

Our antagonist is a born leader and shrewd businessman. Having risen to the role of Major of his Confederate company during the war, he is a natural enemy to Union veteran Twitchell. With deep roots in this land and a vast network of allies in Coushatta via his real estate, slave, and business ownerships, Abney is a gregarious, self-possessed man with fierce loyalty to the Confederacy and a penchant for free slave labor.

The biggest street in Coushatta bears Abney's name. He has major plans for this town, his empire, and refuses to see all his years of hard work go down the drain after the Thirteenth Amendment puts an end to slavery. As Coushatta begins to come under Northern jurisdiction and 'Negro rule,' Abney will assemble and organize his fellow white citizens into a paramilitary force called the White League in order to crush Twitchell and his black allies.

ANDY BOSLEY

Our foil is a light skinned black man who was born a slave in 1837. A carpenter and mechanic by trade, Bosley is a natural born leader and has been serving as a minister in the black community of Coushatta.

Literate, perceptive, tenacious, and determined, Bosley is not easily wooed by Twitchell's charms, and will question his methods in assisting the freed men, eventually becoming Twitchell's second in command. Bosley's faith will be tested along his journey and we will see him rise from poor slave to Justice of the Peace, and eventually to elected State Senator. We'll travel with Bosley and Twitchell to New Orleans as they fight for changes in the state constitution and the extension of rights for blacks.

Bosley is a strong and fierce presence; a tough survivor with a keen wit to match. He will lead his people against the White League as blacks rise to power in Coushatta. Bosley looks after a wife and young daughter whom he'll fight to protect amidst the violence.



A large group of Black soldiers in blue uniforms marching in a platoon. The soldiers are wearing blue tunics and caps, and some are holding rifles. The scene is set outdoors, with a large crowd of people in the background.

THE TROOPERS

Twitchell arrives to Coushatta with four black troopers: Pvt. Ishmael, Pvt. Freeman, Sgt. Eli, and Corp. Harris. Varying in age and origin, all are former slaves with disparate experiences under bondage and perspectives on how to resolve the conflicts in Louisiana. Armed black soldiers had never been seen in Coushatta before their arrival, and the platoon immediately comes under threat from local whites who refuse to recognize their federal authority.

While Eli serves under Twitchell as loyal Sergeant of the platoon, Harris refuses to stand for the way the soldiers are treated. Ishmael is a young reckless former runaway and Freeman is a spiritual man imported from Africa.

Providing armed support to Twitchell, some of our troopers will not survive the ordeal in Coushatta. The authority, pride, and power each trooper carries with him amongst the born and bred slaves of Coushatta juxtaposes the gray areas existing between slavery and freedom.



ADELE COLEMAN

Twitchell meets alluring and restless southern belle Adele Coleman, whose family is well established in Coushatta and runs a successful plantation. Adele wants nothing more than to get out of Coushatta and explore the world, and Twitchell's Northern charm quickly wins her over. Working at the finest restaurant in town while teaching piano lessons at the nearby music academy, Adele and Twitchell begin a secret courtship that leads to marriage, despite her Confederate veteran brother's initial threats against Twitchell.

Eventually winning over the Coleman clan, Twitchell learns the tricks of the planting trade, helping him purchase land and make a profit off of it, and like a chameleon, convincing other whites within the community that he is one of them. Twitchell's unlikely alliance with the Colemans and marriage to one of the more sought after women in the town turns quite a few heads.



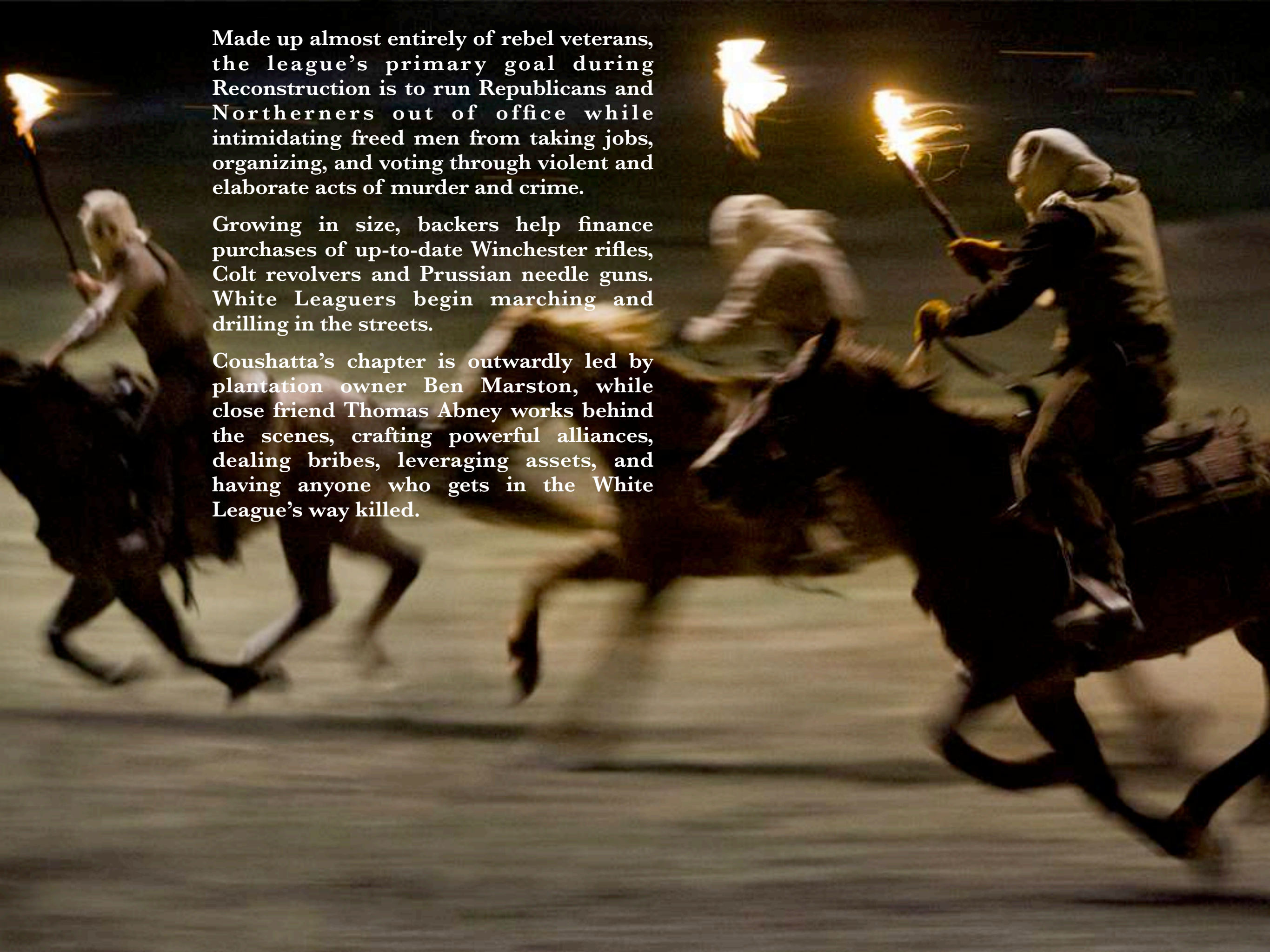
THE WHITE LEAGUE

A violent, terrifying, and pervasive paramilitary group that begins to commit acts of terrorism in Louisiana. Not to be confused with the KKK, the White League differs in that they operate openly, make their actions known in newspapers, and their members' identities generally known.

Made up almost entirely of rebel veterans, the league's primary goal during Reconstruction is to run Republicans and Northerners out of office while intimidating freed men from taking jobs, organizing, and voting through violent and elaborate acts of murder and crime.

Growing in size, backers help finance purchases of up-to-date Winchester rifles, Colt revolvers and Prussian needle guns. White Leaguers begin marching and drilling in the streets.

Coushatta's chapter is outwardly led by plantation owner Ben Marston, while close friend Thomas Abney works behind the scenes, crafting powerful alliances, dealing bribes, leveraging assets, and having anyone who gets in the White League's way killed.





SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

BEN MARSTON - Former Confederate Captain with half his ear missing. Abney's second in command and ostensible leader of the White League. Ruthless and coarse.

JULIUS & MARKS LISSO - Successful Jewish merchant brothers. Though prosperous businessmen in Coushatta, like Twitchell, they remain outsiders to local Protestants. Staunch allies of Twitchell and essential comic relief who will eventually turn on Twitchell.

MATTHEW BRADY - Illustrator and eventual photographer for The Citizen Newspaper, who will end up aiding both sides in terms of his coverage on the atrocities occurring in Louisiana.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY - Twitchell's direct supervisor. His eyes and ears in Washington. Conway believes in Twitchell and backs him with federal support, serving as Twitchell's mentor. A kind man who's in way over his head as he attempts to implement and oversee Reconstruction in Louisiana. He'll keep us informed of federal happenings and bigger changes afoot in politics.



RELEVANCE

There are numerous parallels to be drawn between the events that occurred during Reconstruction and those happening in America today, which is what elevates BLACK ALLIGATOR beyond a period piece; it couldn't be more timely or relevant. 2015 marked the 150th anniversary of the inception of the Reconstruction era, but the continued tragedy is the inability of many Americans to grasp its real significance and the ripple effect it has had on our democracy, civil institutions, and individual rights.

During Reconstruction, whites used violence to deter blacks from owning land, building schools, and voting. The Freedmen's Bureau's task was to protect blacks against this violence and improve legislation in support of them. Today, the Black Lives Matter movement has brought issues still lingering from Reconstruction back into the forefront of public interest, from violence to prison systems to employment. And BLACK ALLIGATOR will shine a light on past true events in order to better understand the present ones we face.

More than most historical subjects, how we think about this era truly matters, because it forces us to think about what kind of society we wish America to be. Issues that are the lynchpin of American politics today — access to citizenship and voting rights, the delicate balance of power between state and federal governments, the relationship between political and economic democracy, the proper response to terrorism, white-on-black police brutality — all of these core issues trace their roots back to Reconstruction, where BLACK ALLIGATOR will address them head-on.



**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER**

PROSPECTIVE SERIES ARC

SEASON ONE (1865-1866) - The Carpetbagger Appears

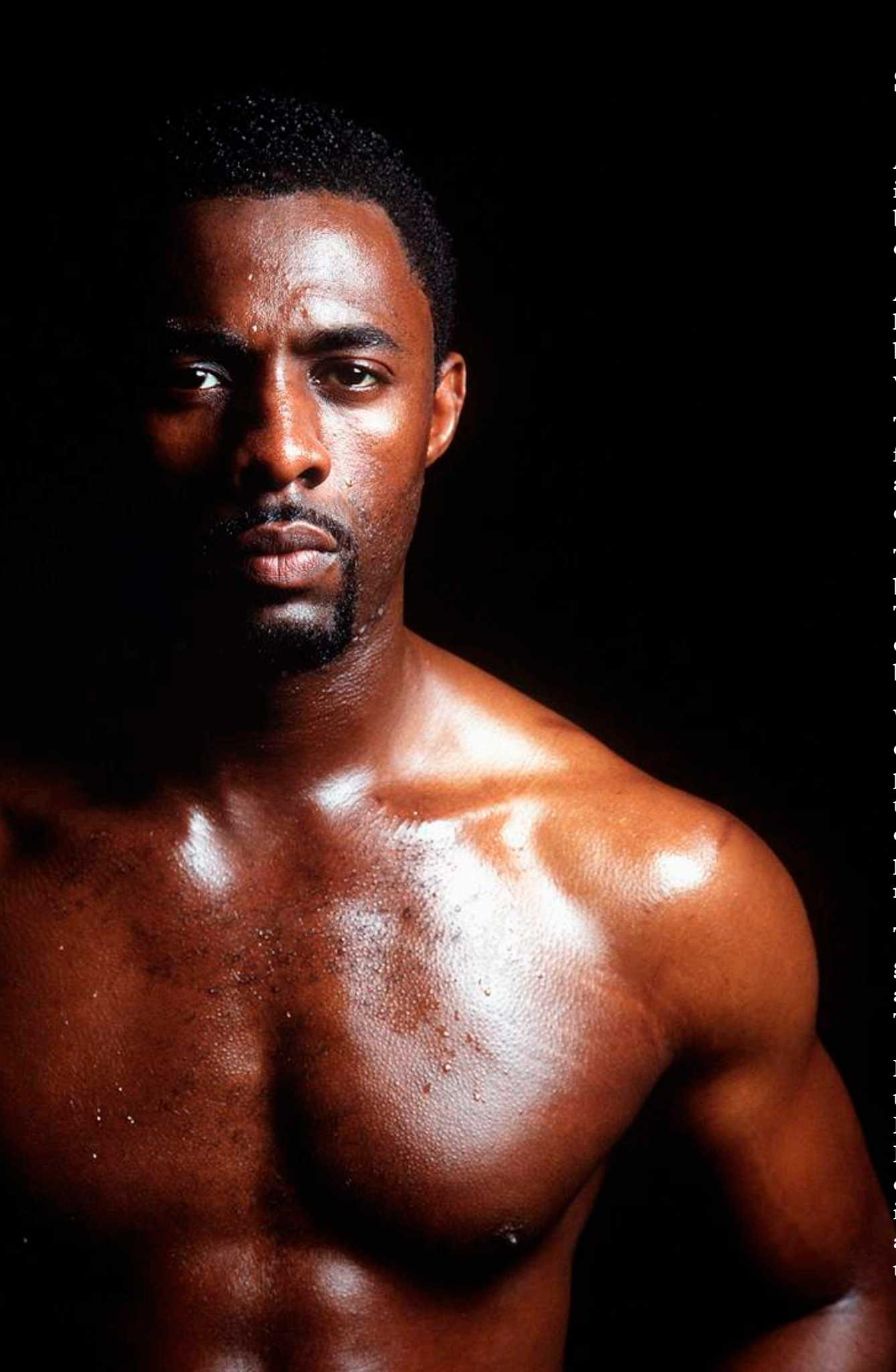
Commissioner Conway deploys Agent Twitchell to the violent region of Coushatta, Louisiana. He travels there with four black troopers and sets up in the courthouse. Twitchell informs both whites and blacks of the new Reconstruction laws and establishes contracts for black workers, dealing with everything from unjust incarceration to blacks that refuse to work for their former masters. He's introduced to the white aristocracy, including Thomas Abney, one of the wealthy elite who begins organizing angered whites into a faction that will become the White League. A black woman that Twitchell frees after wrongfully being jailed is murdered.

Twitchell enlists black minister and mechanic Andy Bosley as his Justice of the Peace and connection with the local black community. Twitchell sets up a deal with Jewish merchants Julius and Marks Lisso to gain connections in the business community in exchange for black labor. Twitchell establishes a black school near Coushatta, prompting the murder of one of his troopers by Abney's business partner, who is then brought to trial.

Bosley convinces Twitchell to induct more former slaves as Constables, giving them access to weapons. As tensions rise, whites complain of unfair distribution of food and medicine to freed men. Twitchell reunites Bosley with his wife and daughter, who he had been separated from during slavery.

Twitchell meets and begins courting southern belle Adele Coleman. Her brother comes after Twitchell and threatens his life if he attempts to marry Adele. After getting pressured by Abney into using government provided Reconstruction funding to help local white businesses, Twitchell gains respect by certain whites and Adele's family, and proposes to her. As reports of the fourteenth amendment's proposal and black voting rights trickle into the community, a series of violent attacks by the White League begin. The season culminates with blacks showing up to vote at the polls in the parish's first Reconstruction election.





SEASON TWO (1866-1868) - Blacks Gain Power

As we begin our second season, Twitchell has just married Adele Coleman, inheriting land in the area from her family, using his Yankee enterprise to bring improvements to the town, expanding it in the process. More northerner carpetbaggers migrate to Coushatta, buying up land and starting businesses.

Abney is threatened by Twitchell's rising power and business ventures, while his own businesses, which relied on free black labor, are beginning to fail. He begins militarizing the white league, providing the grassroots terrorist group with modern weapons, money, and other resources.

The infamous black codes are enacted by the southern legislature, stripping freed men of recently gained rights, causing a backlash. Twitchell takes action, standing firm against the black codes and vowing to local blacks to extend voting rights when he travels to the State Convention that month.

The results of the election at the end of season one come in, and Bosley has been elected (by a majority of black votes) as State Senator. He travels with Twitchell to New Orleans to attend the state constitutional convention and deal with turmoil brought upon by the black codes and disenfranchisement of blacks around the South.

While at the convention, Twitchell and Bosley find themselves at ground zero of the New Orleans riot of 1866, where Southern whites attacked blacks parading outside the convention. Twitchell and Bosley barely escape with their lives, while over 200 blacks are killed. Federal troopers respond as the city is put under martial law. At the convention itself, Twitchell becomes a public figure as he rallies fellow whites against the black codes, while Bosley meets other black delegates from all around the South.

The Coushatta police jury, which was a key institution in the local government, has now primarily been filled by blacks. As White League attacks amp up, culminating in the burning down of the school for blacks that Twitchell had helped build, the police jury responds forcefully.

In response to the quickly escalating conflict, Commissioner Conway comes to Coushatta himself, bringing with him another Freedmen's Bureau agent, Ed Dewees, to support Twitchell. Dewees and Twitchell become fast friends, Dewees' more aggressive nature giving quick necessary support in quelling conflicts. As the season draws to a close, the two carpetbaggers are successful in passing a bill Twitchell introduced into the senate, incorporating Coushatta and neighboring towns into one united parish with new laws. Adele delivers the news to Twitchell that she is pregnant.

SEASON THREE (1868-1873) - The Rise of the White League

Political boundaries are redrawn and a new parish is created. Adele gives birth but becomes sick. Twitchell brings down his sister and brother in law, Homer, to Coushatta to assist him. Twitchell becomes the kingpin of the parish, controlling the entire region as a political boss.

A civil rights act passes in congress, ending the black codes and guaranteeing voting rights to all black men. Twitchell, Bosley, Dewees, and their followers unite in celebration.

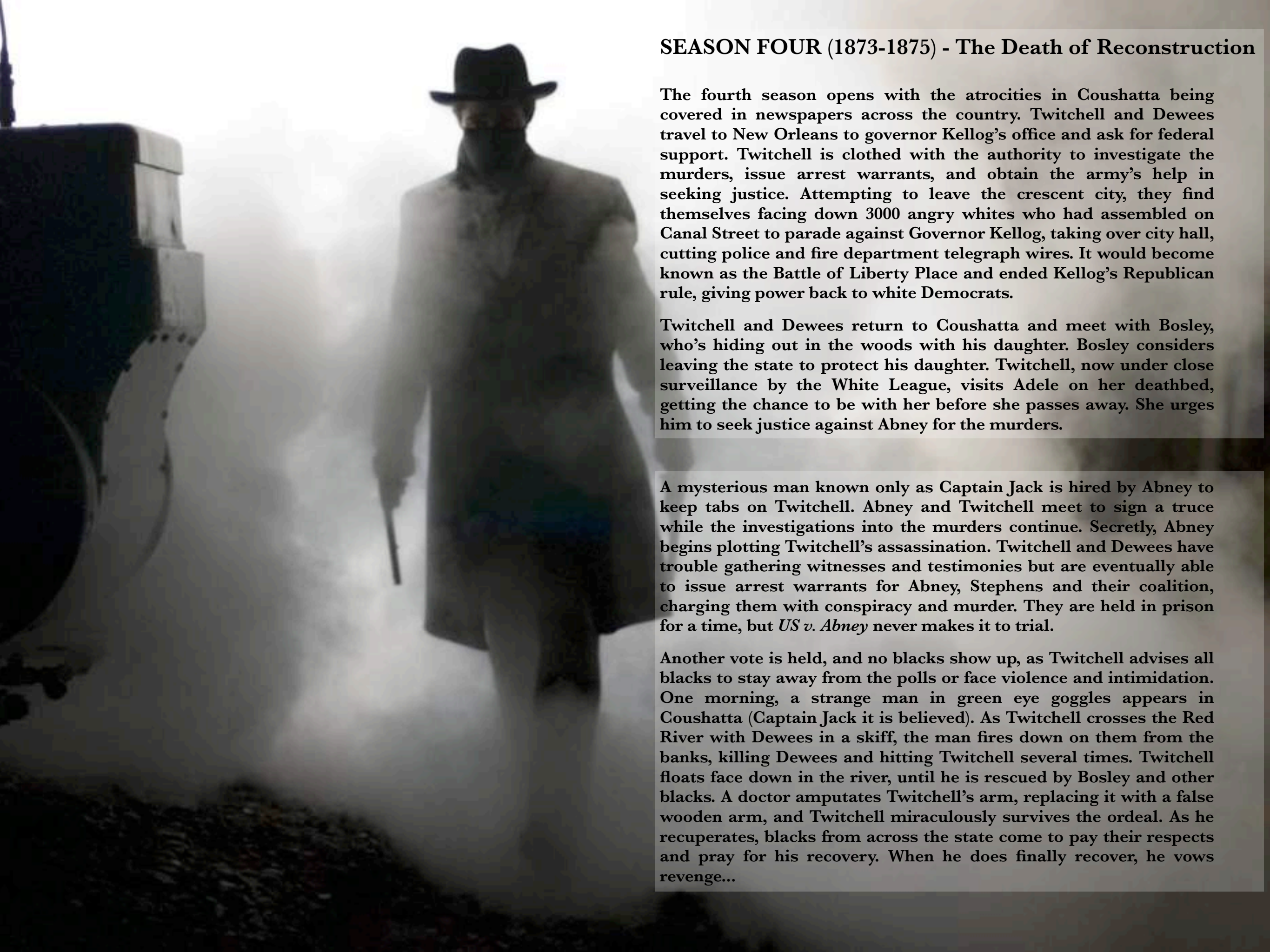
Targeted attacks on blacks and carpetbaggers by the White League begin occurring as they ramp up support, drilling, and public meetings, vowing to end reconstruction. Abney outwardly becomes the White League's executive president, and Marston drafts a White League program for the parish. The insurgents intimidate and scare off black men from voting that November through physical violence, while Twitchell and Dewees struggle to maintain control.

Twitchell's allies begin turning on him, condemning him as a tyrant and accusing him of carpetbagger misrule. Marks Lisso dies of yellow fever and his brother Julius joins the White League, becoming a traitor. Worst of all, Twitchell's military records from his time commanding colored troops are revealed to Bosley, confirming that Twitchell did indeed mistreat his black troops and lead them to their deaths.

Without Twitchell's consent, Bosley leads blacks away from the violence to the nearby town of Colfax, setting up in the courthouse. Armed whites are gathered to retake it, resulting in what would come to be known as the Colfax massacre- the worst instance of racial violence during Reconstruction. Bosley's wife is killed, and Bosley barely escapes with his life and reluctantly joins back up with Twitchell, who is staying underground for the time being.

An accidental fire burns down one of Abney's buildings, and Abney seeks vengeance on Twitchell directly, believing him to be the culprit. A threat is sent to Dewees, asserting that the White League will exterminate all carpetbaggers if they do not leave the state. "The hour of Red River's redemption is at hand." Twitchell's brother in law Homer finds himself and black allies cornered by White Leaguers and a gunfight occurs. They are taken prisoner by Abney and interrogated. They are then sentenced to exile and escorted out of town by armed guards, who execute them in the forest.



A man in a dark coat and hat walking through a misty, foggy street. The man is wearing a dark hat and a long, dark coat. He is walking towards the camera. The background is a misty, foggy street with a building on the left and a street lamp. The overall atmosphere is dark and mysterious.

SEASON FOUR (1873-1875) - The Death of Reconstruction

The fourth season opens with the atrocities in Coushatta being covered in newspapers across the country. Twitchell and Dewees travel to New Orleans to governor Kellog's office and ask for federal support. Twitchell is clothed with the authority to investigate the murders, issue arrest warrants, and obtain the army's help in seeking justice. Attempting to leave the crescent city, they find themselves facing down 3000 angry whites who had assembled on Canal Street to parade against Governor Kellog, taking over city hall, cutting police and fire department telegraph wires. It would become known as the Battle of Liberty Place and ended Kellog's Republican rule, giving power back to white Democrats.

Twitchell and Dewees return to Coushatta and meet with Bosley, who's hiding out in the woods with his daughter. Bosley considers leaving the state to protect his daughter. Twitchell, now under close surveillance by the White League, visits Adele on her deathbed, getting the chance to be with her before she passes away. She urges him to seek justice against Abney for the murders.

A mysterious man known only as Captain Jack is hired by Abney to keep tabs on Twitchell. Abney and Twitchell meet to sign a truce while the investigations into the murders continue. Secretly, Abney begins plotting Twitchell's assassination. Twitchell and Dewees have trouble gathering witnesses and testimonies but are eventually able to issue arrest warrants for Abney, Stephens and their coalition, charging them with conspiracy and murder. They are held in prison for a time, but *US v. Abney* never makes it to trial.

Another vote is held, and no blacks show up, as Twitchell advises all blacks to stay away from the polls or face violence and intimidation. One morning, a strange man in green eye goggles appears in Coushatta (Captain Jack it is believed). As Twitchell crosses the Red River with Dewees in a skiff, the man fires down on them from the banks, killing Dewees and hitting Twitchell several times. Twitchell floats face down in the river, until he is rescued by Bosley and other blacks. A doctor amputates Twitchell's arm, replacing it with a false wooden arm, and Twitchell miraculously survives the ordeal. As he recuperates, blacks from across the state come to pay their respects and pray for his recovery. When he does finally recover, he vows revenge...



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