

RUSH OF THE DEAD

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAWN

The sky an explosion of purples and oranges as the sun rises on the vast expanse of the plains.

A speck in the centre. A tiny cabin. Two horses stir outside.

INT. CABIN

A YOUNG GUNSLINGER quietly stuffs a duffel bag with objects from the room. He pauses as the floor CREAKS.

Moving on he picks a framed photo from a table and stares. The photo shows two young BOYS and a PRETTY WOMAN, probably their mother.

He shoves it into the bag and turns to the bed. The floor CREAKS underfoot again. He waits. Silence.

He crosses to the bed, dons his hat and holsters his weapon.

Bag slung over his shoulder he grabs the door and opens it.

EXT. PRAIRIE

The Gunslinger creeps from the cabin. He gently pushes the door closed behind him and creeps to the horses.

He tosses his bag onto the back of one of them and plants a foot in a stirrup.

VOICE

Goin' somewhere, baby brother?

The energy fades from the Gunslinger. Sitting in the shadows behind him is FRANK. A little older with an air of menace. The likeness remarkable.

The Gunslinger turns to face him.

FRANK

You wouldn't be plannin on runnin out on me now, would you Cole?

Gunslinger COLE glares at Frank.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I said get back inside.

Cole breaks his stare, grabs his bag and clumps to the cabin.

FRANK (CONT'D)
That's right boy. Got a big night
ahead of us, case you forgot.

Cole pauses. Then steps back inside.

EXT. LONELY RANCH - NIGHT

A tumultuous storm batters the house. Growls of thunder fail to mask the SCREAMS from inside.

INSIDE

Dinner bubbles on the stove as the screams grow louder. Rain beats a rhythm on the roof.

Cole and Frank, bandanas across their faces, point guns at the WOMAN and MAN.

Frank thrusts his gun into the Man's throat. Cole covers the screaming Woman, though it's harder to say who's more scared.

Frank glares over his shoulder at Cole. Thunder rings out.

FRANK
Shut her up or I'll do it for you.

Cole's eyes widen. He leans closer to the hysterical Woman.

COLE
Please be quiet. Shut up, then we
can get the hell out of here.

The petrified Woman nods agreement.

Frank turns back to the Man.

FRANK
Good. Now. You were about to tell
me where you've got it hid.

The Man gurgles a reply over another roar of thunder.

MAN
I told you. I don't know nuthin
about no treasure.

FRANK
Wrong answer.

The Woman screams as Frank hurls the Man across the room at a stack of boxes. Movement behind the boxes catches Cole's eye.

Hiding behind the boxes is a YOUNG BOY, maybe ten years old, eyes wide with fear.

Frank marches to the screaming Woman. Out of Frank's view, the Man looks pleadingly at Cole.

Cole signals to the Boy to stay quiet.

Frank grabs the Woman by the hair. In one slick move he's behind her, arm round her throat, gun at her temple.

His choke stifles the scream.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Let's try that again, huh?

He lifts the hammer on his gun. The screams stop. The only sound now is the raging storm outside.

A huge crack of thunder resounds. Everyone jumps. Everyone except Frank. Cole sweats.

The Man gestures to his meager surroundings.

MAN
Does it look like we got any
treasure?

Frank cases the place.

FRANK
No, sir.

The Man is relieved.

FRANK (CONT'D)
No it does not.

The air is split by GUNSHOT. Frank lets the Woman's lifeless body slump to the floor.

Cole backs away in fear.

The Boy is frozen. The horror unfolds in the reflection of his big, dark eyes. From there we see the MAN storm Frank.

Another BANG. The Boy stares as his father falls.

Cole has seen enough.

He rounds on Frank, grabbing him and throwing him against the wall. His gun pressed into Frank's throat.

COLE
What the hell's wrong with you?

Again silent but for the storm. Then--

FRANK
You gonna shoot me, baby brother?
Huh? That it? You goan shoot me?

The dinner seemingly bubbles to the patter of rain. Cole's anger subsides. The moment it does--

Frank turns the tide. Cole now against the wall, gun at his throat. Cole's weapon on the floor.

FRANK (CONT'D)
That's your problem, baby brother.
You're too soft.

Cole isn't sure if this is it then--

Frank picks up Cole's gun and hands it to him. Frank stares at the chaos around him, then at the dead woman.

He strides over to her and reaches down, ripping something from her dress. He throws it to Cole. Cole catches.

He inspects the item. A big green brooch.

FRANK (CONT'D)
There's your treasure. Come on.

Cole stares at the jewelry.

Frank grabs Cole by the shoulder and frog-marches him to the door, grabbing a bottle of liquor from the table as he goes.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE

Frank shoves Cole towards the horses. He chews the cork stopper from the bottle and spits it to the ground.

As he swigs, Cole runs over to the ranch house and vomits.

Frank walks over and hands him the bottle.

FRANK
Drink this.

Cole gulps down a mouthful.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Let's go.

They mount up and leave.

INT. CABIN - FRANK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Frank grips the whisky bottle as he sleeps, snoring loudly.

CABIN

Cole is wide awake. Frank's snores resound from the next room. Cole swings his legs onto the floor.

Again grabbing his hat he sneaks for the door to the rhythm of the SNORING.

EXT. PRAIRIE - NIGHT

The rain a steady trickle now. The moon lights the stunning surroundings. The beautiful scene ruined by a loud SNORE.

Cole gets on his horse and rides.

RANCH HOUSE - LATER

The sky a light shade of blue as the stars fade out.

Cole approaches on horseback.

INSIDE

Dinner still bubbles on the stove. Cole bursts into the scene of their failed robbery.

COLE
Boy? You here, boy?

Apart from the bubbling pot, there's nothing.

COLE (CONT'D)
Shit.

Cole removes the pot.

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAWN

The sun peeks over the horizon where the black clouds don't reach. We can see a distant TOWN. Here it still rains, black clouds boil over the cabin. Cole trots closer.

Closer still. The silence is broken by a loud SNORE.

Cole stops. The TOWN in the distance, and the cabin close. He stares at the cabin--

Then the town on the horizon, squinting into the sun. SNORE.

TOWN OUTSKIRTS - LATER

Gentle rain falls on a sign for the town - 'SALVATION'. Cole speeds past.

INT. CABIN

Frank snaps awake.

EXT. TOWN HOUSE

Two storeys. The other houses in the row are single storey. Cole approaches on his grey horse.

He dismounts, checks over both shoulders, and tiptoes to the house. His eyes dart, checking the surroundings. He reaches down and grabs a pebble.

It taps off an upstairs window.

The window opens and a sleepy WOMAN appears. Young. A real heart-breaker. This girl is just waiting for cars to be invented so she can stop traffic.

HEART-BREAKER

Cole, what are you doing here? My pop will kill you.

COLE

I can't stay long. I came to tell you. I gotta quit town.

HEART-BREAKER

Quit town?

COLE

Keep your voice down, Emma!

HEART-BREAKER

I'm coming down.

COLE

No!

Too late. She's gone. Cole is nervous. Thunder rips through the sky. The rain really pours.

She reappears outside. Not dressed for the weather.

HEART-BREAKER

Cole, you're soaked. You'll catch your death.

COLE

Baby, listen. We don't have time. I have to go. It's Frank. He's crazy. If I stay with him I'll end up dead or in prison. And if he finds out about you?

HEART-BREAKER

You can't just leave, what about us?

COLE

That's what I came here to tell you. I'm going now, but I swear on my life I'll come back for you.

HEART-BREAKER

How do I know you'll come back? I'll wait for you Cole Calhoun. If you can you prove you love me.

Cole looks guilty. Then--

He reaches into his pocket, producing the GREEN BROOCH. He hands it to Emma. She loves it. She puts it on.

HEART-BREAKER (CONT'D)

Now come here and kiss me.

He leans in close. Eyes closed, lips about to touch--

CLICK. An OLD MAN points a rifle at Cole. He leans back.

HEART-BREAKER (CONT'D)

Daddy!

DADDY

Get your damn hands off my little girl, Calhoun.

Cole raises his hands.

COLE

I didn't come here looking for trouble, Mister.

DADDY

Well, you found some anyways.

HEART-BREAKER

Daddy, he loves me. And I love him.

Daddy seems crestfallen. His eyes harden. He somehow seems to point the gun with more intent.

DADDY

That may well be, but he's a damn crook. He can't take care of you. Not like you deserve.

COLE

Mr. Harrison, I swear my days of stealin are behind me. I want to do right. What Emma said is true. I do love her. I'm going away...

DADDY

Go then!

COLE

I'm going but when I get the money together, money so I can take care of her, I'll be back. I don't care how long it takes...

(turns to Emma)

I promise.

DADDY

I'll believe it when I see it. Now get your soggy sorry behind outta here.

Cole looks at Emma.

COLE

I'll be back, Emma.

Daddy stands between them, still aiming for Cole.

HEART-BREAKER

I love you, Cole.

She cries as he climbs onto his horse. He rides away, turning back for one last look at her.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY

Bright midday sun sears into the vast landscape of the desert. Three small wooden sheds dot the scene.

A caption - SIX YEARS LATER.

INT. SHED

Inside one of the sheds a COWBOY loads his weapon.

COWBOY

Come on now, we can talk about this, can't we?

VOICE (O.S.)

Tell me on the way to jail.

COWBOY

I ain't going to no jail.

VOICE (O.S.)

Then you can tell me on the way to the cemetery.

The Cowboy curses to himself.

OUTSIDE

From behind a rock, looking out to the outhouses a Man reloads his revolver.

COWBOY (O.S.)
Aww, come on Frank...

He flips a loaded cylinder back into his weapon.

COLE
It ain't Frank. It's Cole.

COWBOY (O.S.)
Shit Cole, you had me worried!
What's all this about?

EXT. SHED

Cole stares at the outhouses, unsure of where his quarry is.

COLE
Tell you what I'll do, Charlie. You give me a solid reason why I should let you go an' I'll think about it.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
I can't think of a reason you'd be after me, Cole.

Cole glances down at the crumpled 'Wanted' poster he holds. He eyes the reward--

COLE
(to himself)
I could give you a thousand reasons.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
What was that?

COLE
Come on now, Charlie. I'm a fair man. Talk to me.

Charlie's hard-luck story sounds well rehearsed.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Well now, y'see, I didn't done none of them things they said on that wanted poster of mine you mighta saw.

Cole uses the sound of Charlie's voice to locate him. He stalks to the outhouses.

INT. SHED

Charlie peers out of the window, gun ready, looking for Cole.

CHARLIE
Never robbed nobody of nothing, so
y'see, this is all a big
misunderstandin'.

A gun presses against his temple and a hand reaches and takes his piece away.

COLE
Howdy, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Shit.

EXT. WILDERNESS - LATER

Cole leads Charlie, hands bound, through the desert on horseback. Cole rides a majestic grey horse, a battered saddle-bag on the saddle. He swigs from a hip-flask.

CHARLIE
It's so damn hot. You think you
could give me some of that whisky?

COLE
No chance.

CHARLIE
Why you mean spirited, dirty, son
of a bitch.

Cole pulls the 'Wanted' poster from his pocket.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You're ugly too. I can't say for
sure but you probably don't smell
too good.

COLE
Charlie?

CHARLIE
What?

COLE
This here poster says I get the
same amount of money whether you're
breathing or not, so I suggest you
shut the fuck up.

He does. Peace at last. The silence doesn't last long--

A distant BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM pierces the quiet.

Cole spins round to locate the sound.

A full fifty yards in the distance TWO MEN fight in the river. Cole starts towards them.

CHARLIE
Oh, come on now.

Cole waves the poster at Charlie. He shuts up.

One of the Men is attacking the other.

The SMALL MAN on his back fights off the crazed ATTACKER.

SMALL MAN
Help me! Dear God!

Cole gallops for the fight. He draws his weapon.

The fight continues. The Attacker tries to bite the Small Man. Cole gallops.

SMALL MAN (CONT'D)
Please! Somebody!

Still forty yards away Cole raises his weapon.

The crack of gunfire echoes.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS

The Small Man's forearm thrust into his attackers throat. At the moment we realize there's something wrong with the Attacker, his head explodes.

SMALL MAN
Oh shit! Jesus and God help me.

Cole rushes to the Man and dismounts. He's hysterical.

SMALL MAN (CONT'D)
Holy shit. His fucking head! It
blew up.

Cole drops to a knee in the shallow river by his side.

COLE
Are you OK?

SMALL MAN
Did you ever see a thing like that?

Cole shakes him, but the man doesn't acknowledge him.

COLE
Are you hurt?

SMALL MAN

Bang! Blew up!

Cole weighs up his options, then punches the man out cold.

He turns to see Charlie making a run for it.

COLE

Goddamn it.

He draws his gun again, aims and FIRES.

Charlie's hat flies off. He stops dead and raises his hands.

EXT. RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

Cole and Charlie ride off leaving the headless body in the river. The Small Man draped over Charlie's horse. Charlie inspects the hole in his hat.

CHARLIE

My hat's ruined. And how comes I got the midget?

COLE

Shut the fuck up, Charlie.

In the distance along the river a trail of wagons leads into a dot of a town on the horizon.

The Crazy Man's headless body bleeds out into the river.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Overlooking the small mining town of Lazarus. Its three-by-three street grid in full view. Cole pulls his horse up.

Charlie has finally given up yapping.

EXT. LAZARUS - LATER

Cole rides past a sign 'LAZARUS' into town with Charlie and the Small Man in tow.

Horses draw wagons down the bustling wide main street past wood buildings with high false-fronts. The air crackles with excitement as they pass a fist-fight which could be the first or fifteenth of many this fine day.

Cole turns to see the burly STORE OWNER remove a one-dollar price tag from a display shovel and replace it with a four-dollar sign.

As they ride deeper into town a YOUNG PRIEST preaches to the oblivious townsfolk, his black cassock seemingly impervious to the dust of the desert.

PRIEST

...But they that will be rich shall fall into temptation, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is...

Cole stops alongside.

COLE

'scuse me, Father?

The preacher turns.

PRIEST

Jacob, please. Call me Jacob.

COLE

Would you be so kind as to tell me where the Sheriff's office is?

Jacob casts an untrusting eye over Charlie and the Small Man.

FATHER JACOB

Why of course, turn at left at the Doctor's office and go right to the end. The stone building. You can't miss it.

Cole touches the brim of his hat. Jacob nods.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Just as Jacob described. A neatly handwritten 'Deputy Wanted' sign in the window. Cole dismounts. Touches the saddle bag.

CHARLIE

You're gonna do it, aintcha? Gonna turn me over to the law. You son of a bitch.

COLE

Okay, Charlie. Let's go.

Cole drags Charlie down from his horse.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dimly lit with squares of light blazing the bustling town outside. A grizzled SHERIFF behind the desk. Drinks from a flask, almost certainly booze. Charlie flies into the room.

The Sheriff nearly chokes. Cole strides in. Sheriff sits up.

COLE

Howdy Sheriff. Believe this 'un's
worth a thousand large.

Cole throws Charlie's poster on the desk. The Sheriff peers
up at Cole.

SHERIFF

You're worth quite a bit yourself,
son.

He thumbs over his shoulder at the Wanted poster on the wall.
Cole's eyes turn to it. It reads...

Wanted: Frank Calhoun. For Train robbery, bank robbery and
murder. The reward is four thousand dollars.

CHARLIE

That ain't Frank. That is Cole.

COLE

Do I have to talk to you again or
would you like me to perform some
dental work on ya?

Charlie shrinks back. Sheriff clears his throat.

SHERIFF

Cole Calhoun. Well, there's a
reward of a thousand for yourself.

COLE

That old warrant still out on me?

SHERIFF

You bet. Still runnin' with Frank?

Cole shakes his head.

COLE

Ain't seen him for comin' up six
years now. And that's fine by me.

SHERIFF

You know, with this here gold rush
we have town's getting awful busy,
I could use somebody with your
particular set of skills.

CHARLIE

You ain't really gonna hire...

Cole glares at him. He shuts the fuck up.

COLE
Wasn't plannin' on stayin' that long. I got business in Salvation.

SHERIFF
Could be hard for a man with a warrant on him to do business in a town like Salvation. You help me out, I could make that disappear. Plus there's a few warrants you could collect while you was here.

COLE
I'll think about it. First of all I gotta go back to the Doc's.

SHERIFF
What's wrong with you?

CHARLIE
He's got a tiny little old...

Cole loosens Charlie jaw before he can finish.

COLE
I got a man outside. Some loon was attacking him up the river there.

SHERIFF
Attacking?

Sheriff peers out the door.

COLE
Yeah, bit his arm pretty bad. Best get the Doc to take a look at it.

SHERIFF
Know where you're goin'?

COLE
Passed him to come here.

SHERIFF
Think about what I said now. Could be a lot more where this came from.

Sheriff hands Cole a roll of bank notes. Cole touches his hat and goes. Sheriff watches him leave.

EXT. LAZARUS - OUTSKIRTS

A MAN pulls his horse to a stop by the 'Lazarus' sign. He straightens his hat and scopes the horizons, a hunter looking for prey.

It's Frank.

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Cole shakes his head as he passes another fight in the busy street. He stops outside Doc's blue, two-storey building.

He jumps down from his ride and ties his horse. He grabs the Small, still unconscious, Man.

Cole stares up at the false-front. 'Dr. R. Hendricks'. Cole drags the Man from the horse and stands him against it. Slaps his face to rouse him.

COLE
Come on, mister. We're at the
doctor's office.

The Man grumbles and half opens his eyes.

COLE (CONT'D)
Think you can walk if I help you?

Another moan.

COLE (CONT'D)
Sure you can. Let's go.

Arm around the guy, more carrying than helping, Cole heads for the Doctor's. He turns straight into--

A YOUNG STRANGER. About twenty years old. Eyes angry, looking for trouble. The Stranger glares.

COLE (CONT'D)
Sorry mister.

The Stranger's eyes burning into Cole.

COLE (CONT'D)
Easy now, fella. Got a man hurt
here. Was an accident is all.

The Small Man grumbles. The Stranger still looking. Cole stares back.

The Stranger breaks his stare and strolls away.

Cole stares after him. The Man grumbles again, snapping Cole from his daydream.

COLE (CONT'D)
OK, buddy, let's go.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Cabinets filled with bottles of colored liquids line one wall behind a dentist's chair which dominates the centre of the room. Medical instruments on the wall.

A plump DOCTOR examines an even fatter PATIENT laying on the table in the corner. The Doctor and Patient shrink back a little as Cole enters with the Man.

COLE

You take a look at my friend here
when you're done there, Doc?

The large Doctor nods, dabbing sweat from his forehead before tucking the soggy handkerchief back into his breast pocket.

Cole drops the Small Man onto a chair.

DOC

Well, now Hiram, that looks to be
much better. I think you'll be just
fine. I'll give you some liniment,
use it twice a day and you'll be
right as rain in no time.

The Patient smiles a toothless grin, puts his shirt on, takes the lotion bottle and leaves, eyeing Cole as he goes.

Doc clears his throat before gesturing for Cole to bring the man over.

Cole helps the drowsy Man over to the table.

DOC (CONT'D)

What seems to be the problem?

COLE

He's bit.

DOC

Bit? What was it? A dog? Snake?

COLE

A man.

DOC

A man? Where is he now?

COLE

Well, Doc. Tell you the truth, I
had to shoot him. He was gonna kill
this fella.

Doc inspects the Man who moans in his semi-slumber.

COLE (CONT'D)

You OK Doc? You don't look so good?

Doc mops his brow again. After a while walks to a door.

Gestures for Cole to follow him. They enter--

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - CORRIDOR

Dark and long. One door at the side. One at the end.

DOC
You should see this, mister...?

COLE
Monroe. Cole Monroe.

Doc sighs relief. They stop outside the side door.

DOC
You look like someone else.

Doc stares waiting for Cole to say something. Cole just gestures to the door.

DOC (CONT'D)
Oh, right.

Doc opens it. They enter--

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - SMALL BEDROOM

A small back-bedroom has been turned into a makeshift hospital. Two MEN sleep fully dressed on the double bed, and another PATIENT laying on blankets in the corner.

COLE
Jesus, Doc. What's going on?

Doc points to the Man in the corner.

DOC
This one's bit, just like your friend out there. They all have the fever. The one bit, his is more advanced.

Cole removes his hat to scratch his head.

COLE
Cholera?

DOC
That's what I thought at first, but the symptoms are different. Cold sweats, aching joints... when was your friend bit?

COLE
Bout a couple hours back.

DOC
Hmmm. His symptoms are about the same as these two. (On the bed)

Cole shrugs.

DOC (CONT'D)
They were brought here first thing.

COLE
What's first thing?

DOC
About six hours past.

From the examination room comes a loud NOISE--
Cole and Doc turn to one another.

DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Cole flies into the office. Doc edges behind him.

They stare at the table. It's empty--

Cole turns to the door. The Man leans against the frame, has one foot outside.

COLE
Hey.

The Man turns. His bloodshot eyes half closed.

He turns to Cole and the Doc. He falls.

Cole runs over. Doc stands behind.

SMALL BEDROOM

Cole drops the Man onto the blankets laid out.

DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Cole shakes Doc's hand.

DOC
Not really much I can do for them.

COLE
Well, I appreciate you letting him stay, Doc.

DOC
That's fine. It would cost a small fortune to put him in the hotel.

A crooked smile appears. Cole nods.

Cole realizes what Doc is getting at. He reaches into his pocket. Hands a couple of notes to Doc. Doc smiles.

COLE

I'll come by later, see how he's
doin', if that's OK?

DOC

Of course.

A crack of gunfire resounds outside, then a piercing SCREAM.

INT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Cole rushes into the street. A CROWD has formed around a CRYING WOMAN and her DEAD HUSBAND. Nobody moves. Their eyes shift between the Wife and whoever she screams at.

CRYING WIFE

Why would you do such a thing?
What's wrong with you?

Cole stares trying to catch sight of the killer.

The crowd disperse and Cole locks eyes on the shooter--

It's Frank. Nobody gives him any shit.

Cole freezes. PEOPLE pass in front. Frank turns--

They lock eyes. Frank grins--

Cole bolts.

Frank gives chase. Cole runs into a--

SIDE STREET

Cole rushes between buildings. He turns a corner. Frank appears and just catches sight of Cole as he disappears--

Cole runs further from crowded Main Street. Frank follows--

Cole stumbles. He rounds another corner between buildings--

Frank watches him the whole way--

Cole tries another evasive manoeuvre. Cole turns another corner. He's greeted by a huge DOG, tied, but blocking the way, growling menacingly. Cole stops dead.

This is one angry Dog. Cole turns back and runs--

Straight into Frank. Frank slams him against a wall.

FRANK

I was starting to think I'd never see you again, baby brother.

COLE

Let go of me Frank.

FRANK

So you can run again?

COLE

Where am I gonna run?

Frank scans the surroundings. He releases his grip.

He grins.

FRANK

You couldn't get rid of me if you tried.

Cole straightens his clothes.

COLE

What do you want, Frank?

Frank feigns a sad face.

FRANK

I don't think you're glad to see me.

COLE

I don't have time for this shit.

He walks two steps before Frank grabs him and throws him back against the wall.

FRANK

Easy now, baby brother.

Cole tries to hide his fear. Frank chuckles.

FRANK (CONT'D)

There's a bank in this town. It's a small one, but it's a start. Just like old times. Whaddya think?

COLE

No more banks, Frank.

FRANK

What are you? A good samaritan now?

Cole shrugs Frank's hands away.

COLE

Get your damn hands off me.

Before he knows it, Cole is back against the wall, Frank's gun at his throat. Cole's eyes harden.

COLE (CONT'D)

You gonna shoot your own brother?

Frank pulls back the hammer with a click--

Cole doesn't flinch. Frank smiles.

He releases the hammer and Cole at the same time.

Cole shrugs Frank off, and marches away without looking back.

FRANK

See you around Cole. You can't get away from me!

INT. SECOND STOREY WINDOW - SAME TIME

A hand pulls a curtain back as Cole marches away from Frank in the alley below.

FRANK

We're supposed to be together!

Frank laughs. He turns up at the window. The hand quickly replaces the curtain.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DUSK

Fewer people mill about the town now as the sky takes on a purplish hue. A hand appears in the window. Removes the 'Deputy Wanted' sign.

INSIDE

The Sheriff pins a Deputy badge onto Cole's vest. Charlie's voice barks from somewhere in the back.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

That him? I know it is. I can smell him!

SHERIFF

Christ's sakes Charlie, shut the hell up or I'll loosen your damned mouth again!

Charlie laughs from around the corner.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

What made you change your mind?

COLE

Just wanted to see what it was like
on the right side of the law for a
change.

SHERIFF

Well, we're glad to have you on
board.

He offers his hand. Cole shakes it.

A MAN bursts in, red-faced and out of breath.

RED FACED MAN

There rioting at the camps!

Cole adjusts his hat and heads for the door.

COLE

I'll take care of it, Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Hold your horses now, cowboy.

Cole stops and turns back.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Town's our jurisdiction.

Cole and the Man look at one another.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

We got enough on our plate keepin'
Lazarus in order.

RED FACED MAN

But Sheriff...

The Sheriff shakes his head--

SHERIFF

But nothing. Cole, go out, meet the
townsfolk. Let 'em get to know your
face.

COLE

What if they come to town?

RED FACED MAN

He's right Sheriff.

SHERIFF

There's fightin' at the camps every
couple weeks, if we...

RED FACED MAN

But Sheriff!...

SHERIFF

If we go up there every time
somebody picks a fight over a speck
o' gold this town would be a bigger
shithole than it already is.

The Man is exasperated.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Thank you for the warning, mister.
It's noted. If I could ask you to
go back to doing whatever it is
your doing when you ain't busting
my hump... Or do I have to ask my
new deputy to escort you from the
premises?

Cole takes a half step to the Man.

RED FACED MAN

You're doing wrong Sheriff.

The Sheriff waves him away. Cole takes the Man's arm and
eases him outside.

RED FACED MAN (CONT'D)

This is gonna come back and bite
you!

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Dark now. Cole on his horse. The Man pleads with him.

RED FACED MAN

This is a mistake. It looked like a
helluva lot more than some scuffle
over a speck o'gold, as he puts it.

COLE

Sorry mister. Can't help you. I'll
make sure the regular folks is safe
an in their homes.

RED FACED MAN

That's something I suppose.

Cole tips his hat. He rides away cool as fuck.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A PRETTY WOMAN walking down the lonely dark street. A cute
LITTLE GIRL, about eight years old, holds her hand.

THREE DRUNKS emerge from the shadows. One swigs from a bottle
of whisky. He nudges the guy next to him.

The Woman turns away and quickens her pace.

A Drunk staggers over to her lifting his hat.

 CREEPY DRUNK
Well, howdy m'am!

The Woman pulls the Girl in close.

 WOMAN
 (quietly to girl)
Come on, ignore them.

She doesn't acknowledge him. The 2ND DRUNK blocks her path.

 REALLY DRUNK
That ain't nice lady. My friend
said somethin' to you an' you flat
ignored him.

She smiles without making eye-contact, holding the Girl
impossibly close now. She tries to squeeze past.

The First Drunk put his hand on her pushing her back.

 WOMAN
Please, I'm just looking for my
husband.

 CREEPY DRUNK
Oh just looking for my husband.

They look around. Nobody.

 REALLY DRUNK
Don't look like he's here.

The Third Drunk chuckles.

The little Girl shrinks as they close in around her.

They get close. The First disgusting Drunk reaches out to
touch the pretty Woman with a grubby hand--

BANG! Gunshot splits the air. The Drunks turn--

Cole arrives, gun toted at the Drunk.

The Second shapes to reach for his gun--

 COLE
I'd think real careful bout what
you do next.

 CREEPY DRUNK
You think you can shoot all us
before we shoot you?

The Woman buries the Girl's face in her skirt.

COLE

I know for a fact I can shoot your
friend here before you shoot me,
and looking at him, he don't like
them odds too much.

The Second Drunk leans in to the First--

REALLY DRUNK

That's Frank Calhoun.

Cole's eyes narrow. The Second slowly holds his hands up.

CREEPY DRUNK

We don't want no trouble now
mister. We was just having a little
fun.

Cole edges closer on the horse. The Drunks back away.

COLE

Go on, get out of here. Next time
you're in trouble.

They shuffle away tails between their legs.

Cole climbs down from his horse.

VOICE (O.C.)

LOUISA!

Cole and Louisa turn to see who shouted--

Father Jacob rushes over.

LITTLE GIRL

Daddy!

She runs into his arms. He lifts her high.

FATHER JACOB

Hello there my little lady!

She giggles. He puts her down and stands beside Louisa.

FATHER JACOB (CONT'D)

What are you doing out here?

LOUISA

The baby wouldn't sleep. Where were
you?

FATHER JACOB

I've been trying to teach some of
our new locals the way of the Lord.

Jacob turns to Cole.

FATHER JACOB (CONT'D)
 Forgive me. I owe you thanks for
 protecting my family.

Cole touches his badge.

COLE
 Just doing my job, Father.

FATHER JACOB
 Well, you've done a good thing and
 for that we're grateful. Let me
 introduce my family.

He presents the ladies.

FATHER JACOB (CONT'D)
 This is my wife Louisa. And this
 little insomniac bundle of sunshine
 is Isabel.

ISABEL
 Are you the Sheriff?

COLE
 I'm the Sheriff's Deputy.

FATHER JACOB
 And I'm Jacob.

They exchange a handshake.

COLE
 We met before, but now it's
 official. I'll walk you folks home,
 it's a rough night.

FATHER JACOB
 We're actually very close.

He points to a two-storey house on the edge of town.

COLE
 Nice place you got there.

FATHER JACOB
 Was my father's before he...

VOICE (O.C.)
 Hey!

They all turn. A LOCAL rushes over waving. Jacob pulls the
 women in close. The Local stops at Cole--

LOCAL MAN
 You the new deputy?

Cole stands alert.

COLE
Yeah why?

EXT. SALOON - MOMENTS LATER

The Main Street is again CROWDED. Mostly MINERS unwound after a hard days prospecting. A few LADIES dotted among them--

In the middle of the street a SMARTLY-DRESSED GAMBLER faces off with Frank. The Gambler and Frank motionless, the Sheriff between them.

FRANK
Get out of the way Sheriff. Someone could get hurt.

COLE (O.S.)
Frank!

The CROWD turn to see Cole. Frank doesn't move. Sheriff relieved to see Cole. Cole climbs down from his horse.

FRANK
Stay out of this, Cole. Doesn't concern you.

COLE
While I'm Deputy Sheriff it does.

Frank's eyebrows climb impossibly high on his forehead. He turns around--

FRANK
Say what now?

GAMBLER
Hey! We doin this or not?

FRANK
(still looking at Cole)
Wait a damn minute, will ya?

The Sheriff doesn't know where to put himself. A disappointed murmur ripples through the crowd.

Frank is amused by Cole's badge.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Shit! I've seen everythin now!

GAMBLER
Hey!

Frank turns back to the Gambler with a disbelieving shrug.

FRANK

My baby brother. Deputy!

Frank allows himself a chuckle. Then back to business.

FRANK (CONT'D)

OK, Deputy Calhoun. Would you care to tell your Sheriff to get out of the way before he gets himself shot.

The murmur fades to pin-dropping silence. It's replaced by--

A faint yell. A primal, guttural scream from the dark ages.

The noise rises. The Gambler hears it. He finally breaks his stare from Frank--

The bemused Crowd try to locate the source.

An exchange of glances as it grows louder and louder. What happens next happens so quickly, nobody has time to react--

A CRAZED MAN bursts from between the Saloon and Hotel--

PARTS OF HIS FACE MISSING, the result of a horrific attack. His jittery movements resemble the river lunatic, but this guy we see up close. Eyes burning. He lurches full speed into the street, straight at the Gambler--

Before the Gambler can react, he's knocked down, fighting for his life as the Crazy tries to bite at his throat. Something is clearly wrong with this scene--

WOMEN scream. The MEN all step back.

The Crazy fights his way to a clear bite at the Gambler's throat... and takes it--

Blood arcs onto the street. The Gambler gurgles out a yell to accompany the women's louder screams.

Frank is first to come to his senses. With outlandish speed he produces his gun from its holster and fires--

The shot lands flush between the Crazy man's eyes. The back of his head FLIES APART and the body slumps over the Gambler. The dead body stops the Gambler from staunching the flow of blood from the gaping wound in his neck--

The scene brings everybody back to earth. Silence follows.

Sheriff and Cole rush to help. They throw the dead man aside.

The Gambler's eyes wide with panic, he knows he done for. Cole tries to stop the flow--

COLE
Somebody get Doc Hendricks!

Frank saunters over. Gambler is fading fast--

FRANK
He's done for. Let me put him out
his misery.

The Gambler slips away. Cole steps back, covered in blood--
Cole looks distraught. Sheriff crosses himself.

The packed street falls silent. Then--

A faint noise. Similar to before, but not a single voice--

A chorus. A crowd. It quickly grows much louder--

Everybody freezes - fight or flight. They know what to expect, but they can't possibly be prepared for the scale of what's coming--

The riotous screams grow louder, closer--

The Gambler's eyes spring open. He's reanimated. Undead. He bolts upright gurgling the same primal scream as his killer.

As the screams swell in the air, panic strikes. People run, without direction as the street quickly descends into chaos.

Cole and Frank find themselves next to one another, then--

Among the throng of running people, between the buildings, dozens of UNDEAD pour into the street--

Cole and Frank hightail it. Screaming rises as panicked people fire weapons--

The Undead still come--

Fifty or so in the street. More flooding after them--

Cole and Frank and others run in the same direction chased by a group of lifeless GHOULS. Over a HUNDRED UNDEAD fill the street attacking anybody close enough--

MEN fire weapons randomly, hitting as many people as Ghouls.

Frank fires over his shoulder as he and Cole run.

COLE
Save your bullets!

A crowd of a dozen or so Ghouls follows relentlessly. Popcorn crackle of gunfire fills the air behind them. They reach a--

SIDE STREET

Gunfire bursts as Cole, Frank, and two other RUNNERS sprint for safety--

Cole glances back to see the Ghouls catch one Runner. As he falls he trips the second Runner beside him--

The crowd of Ghouls thins out as they feast on the hapless Runners. SIX UNDEAD still tirelessly chase Cole and Frank--

Fifty yards away at the end of the street Father Jacob peers into the darkness--

COLE

Jacob! Help!

He takes a step back when he sees the situation. He sees the panic and waves Cole and Frank toward him--

Cole and Frank are now twenty yards away. A gun goes off behind them. Frank screams and falls--

Cole turns as the Ghouls close in. He shoots the closest in the chest. It falls--

Cole grabs Frank. He's been shot in the leg.

The Undead reach their fallen ally who scrambles back to his feet. Cole is astonished. He drags Frank up as the Ghouls gain ground, ever closer--

Frank draws his gun and fires. Headshot. The Ghoul falls.

Cole fires. Another headshot. Four Ghouls remain--

Cole and Frank reach Jacob--