

Dust and Roses

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEVADA DESERT TOWN - DAY - EST.

SUPER: 1847

Wind whips sand across the faded buildings. Not a single person strolls through the streets.

INT. HAROLD'S SALOON - DAY

A single patron, JIM CURTIS, sits at the bar. He holds an amber glass to the light and admires the scars on his fingers.

He exhales a long stream of cigarillo smoke. The saloon door flaps open, but no one enters.

His hand slips down to the revolver on his hip. He relaxes and downs the whiskey.

EXT. SALOON - SAME

A HORSE lays dead on the ground. A flap of its skull hangs open from a bullet wound.

A BOY (12) steps brazenly into the street. His voice drolls slowly, he is mentally disabled.

BOY

You yellow coward, quit yer hiding!

INT. HAROLD'S SALOON - SAME

The sound of the Boy's voice startles Jim. He looks away from the bar mirror.

Lightening quick, his hand yanks the revolver from his hip. He thumbs the hammer in a single shot.

EXT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS

A red hole, like a third eye, opens in the Boy's forehead. He coughs once, falls backwards and dies.

A WOMAN screams from behind a door.

INT. HAROLD'S SALOON

Three shots ring out. Each one strikes randomly within the saloon. The stool next to Jim splinters as a bullet strikes it.

He runs his fingers over the lump where the bullet has lodged.

JIM

Hmph.

Dull footsteps on the planks outside.

Jim keeps his gun trained on the door.

HAROLD(O.S.)

Jim, don't shoot. It's Harold,
Harold Rich. You know I ain't got a
gun.

HAROLD RICH, skinny like a preacher, steps in. Harold's shirt is covered in blood stains.

HAROLD

Connor didn't make it.

Jim pours himself another shot.

JIM

Good.

Jim replaces his spent shell and re-trains the gun on Harold.

HAROLD

Oh, come on. You know me, I'm no
fighter. I'm a talker.

He spies the whiskey bottle.

JIM

You want a nip?

Harold shrugs and accepts the bottle. He takes a long pull.

JIM

Never a dry day for you, eh?

HAROLD

Not since we lost Margaret.

He hands the bottle back to Jim.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

Jim, you got everybody scared
crazy. The whole town's shut up and
boarded down. No one meant her no
harm, it was just an accident -

JIM

An accident? Then where the fuck's
her marker, huh?

HAROLD

We were gonna tell you, I swear -

THREE MEN rush through the door, guns drawn. They begin
firing wildly at Jim.

A bullet strikes Harold in the back. He flails forwards into
Jim's arms.

Jim fires three precision shots.

Two of the Men fall against each other. The last Man spins
wildly through the window.

Jim quickly drops three fresh rounds into his gun. He sets
Harold's dead body onto a stool.

He feels his stomach. A small spot of blood begins to slowly
spread on his shirt.

INT. HAROLD'S SALOON - DAY

Jim has his shirt open and is examining the wound on his
gut. He reaches into the hole and PULLS a slug out.

He groans and takes a long pull from his cigarillo. He pours
some whiskey on the wound and cinches up his shirt. The
bleeding has slowed.

INT. HAROLD'S SALOON

He CRAWLS across the floor towards the dead Men. He
retrieves their revolvers and fresh shells from their belts.

He scoots back over to the bar and fills a shot glass.

JIM

Oh, sorry Harold.

He fills another glass and wraps Harold's dead fingers
around it.

(CONTINUED)

JIM

To Rosy.

He downs the shot.

JIM

What?

He pokes Harold's chest with his gun.

JIM

I don't never wanna hear you say
nothing like that about her again.

He cocks the trigger. Harold's dead body remains still.

JIM

Hmph. I guess dead men don't have
much use for fear.

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

A group of Men are gathered in the store. All of them
continually glance back through the window where the Saloon
sits.

In the center of them stands the SHERIFF. He fumbles with
loading his gun.

SAM ROSE, a sturdy ranch owner, slams his fist down.

SAM

What're you gonna do, Sheriff?

SHERIFF

Well, me, uh, we don't know who
killed that whore?

Nobody says anything.

SHANNY, toothless, dumb, and drunk, stumbles forward.

SHANNY

You're our damn sheriff, sheriff.
Why don't ya act like it?

SHERIFF

Shut up.

He pushes him.

(CONTINUED)

SAM

Anybody see what he's doing?

No one moves to the window, except Shanny.

SHANNY

Damn fool's passed out at the bar.

SAM

Now's our chance if we got one.

In the corner sits CARLOS. He calmly loads his rifle.

CARLOS

He's jez one dirty gringo, bullets
make holes in him the same as us.

The Sheriff turns to him.

SHERIFF

You don't know. He's the best I'd
ever seen with a pistol. I only had
one occasion seeing him use it, and
he did it in defense. Wendall
Locke, that was the guy's name. He
fell for Jim's woman, Rosy. Now,
Wendall had him more than something
of a reputation, killed upwards of
a dozen men. He was fast, quick as
a flick, but he never stood nothing
close to a chance 'gainst Jim. Jim
killed him without flinching. .
.over Rosy.

The Sheriff looks out the window.

EXT. HAROLD'S SALOON - SAME

Light flickers in the bar next to Jim. He sits quietly at
the bar.

SHERIFF(O.S.)

And now she's dead. Dumb thing it
was, an accident. But we knew Jim
would wanta know when he got back.
So, we made quick work and buried
her without a marker.

A wolf howls in the lonely night.

(CONTINUED)

SHERIFF(O.S.)
And sweet Jesus help us, he found
her. He found her.

INT. GENERAL STORE

The Sheriff SWALLOWS audibly in the silent room.

SAM
I ain't gonna die for this.

CARLOS
Me neither, let's go kill us a
killer, boys.

Everybody unholsters their guns and files out into the street.

Shanny stays behind and watches them go.

INT. HAROLD'S SALOON - NIGHT

Jim SLEEPS at the bar. His head resting next to a bottle of whiskey.

The air is deathly still.

The Men scream and RUSH into the bar. They FIRE wildly as they enter. Smoke billows into the air.

Bullets strike Jim and his body FLIPS from the stool. It lands on the floor, legs SPLAYED.

They gather around him, still firing. Bullets pound into his dead flesh in tufts of blood and skin.

The battle frenzy dies down and they stop firing. The Sheriff kneels down and turns the body over.

SAM
Well, that was eas -

It is Harold dressed in Jim's clothes.

Jim SPRINGS up from behind the bar. A gun in each hand. He begins firing into the crowd.

Carlos is shot. He staggers forward and accidentally shoots Sam in the groin. Sam begins to scream but Jim fills his mouth with a bullet.

(CONTINUED)

MAN 3 gets a lucky shot and strikes Jim's hip. It spins him around, but does not slow him down. He FLINGS a spent gun to the ground and YANKS another from his waistband.

He is SCREAMING in blind rage as he fires.

One by one the men fall in a scattered circle.

In the end only the Sheriff is left.

SHERIFF

I'm sorry, Jim, I'm so sorry.

JIM

Yes, you are.

The Sheriff closes his eyes.

BLACK

A shot rings out.

The Sheriff opens his eyes.

Jim lays on the floor before him. His throat is TORN open. He GAGS as he tries to breathe.

Shanny stands in the doorway. He shakily holds the revolver in front of him. Smoke leaks from the barrel.

The Sheriff stands up as Jim gasps his last breath.

SHERIFF

Shanny, let me buy you a drink.

SHANNY

How about two?

FADE OUT