

IDEAL TRUTH

By

John Staats

(520) 301-5089
jestaats@hotmail.com

Copyright (c) 2017
WGAW Registered #1875579

FADE IN

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

An epic mid-summer monsoon reigns over the desert in a grand torrent. The dark clouds are frequently ripped apart with bolts of lightning and deafening thunder.

The narrow road is bordered with mesquite trees, cholla, and saguaro cactus.

SUPER: Arizona Territory - 1864

A covered wagon, pulled by a single mule, struggles to maintain forward momentum through the muck and mire.

The wagon's cover advertises 'DOC SULLIVAN'S MIRACLE TONIC'.

The driver is DOC (50's). The collar of his slicker is pulled up, his shoulders are hunched, and his hat pulled low. He is soaked to the bone and is visibly miserable.

A sign on the side of the road reads ROSEMONT 3 MILES. Doc snaps the reins to encourage the mule's progress.

DOC
Come on, Nelly.

From the rain curtain ahead, the image of a horse and rider emerges. The rider approaches at an incredible speed.

Doc squints as the rider gallops closer.

He appears featureless in the rain. Just a silhouette of a man and barely audible mad laughter.

Doc holds up an open hand.

DOC
Excuse me, pard, but could you tell
me---

The rider neither slows nor acknowledges the greeting.

Doc turns as he passes for a better look, only to get mud kicked up in his face.

DOC
(fist raised)
You bastard! Come on, Nelly,
hee-yah!

He drives his wagon slowly on through the deluge.

Ahead is the city limit sign of ROSEMONT. A small town with a mix of clapboard and adobe buildings.

EXT. ROSEMONT MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

The wagon struggles down the middle of main street. Not a single person in sight. The town looks deserted.

The rain has created deep ruts in the street and the wagon ride is rough.

Near the center of town stands an old dead skeleton of a cottonwood tree. A FRAYED ROPE sways in the wind from one of the remaining stout branches.

Doc spits a long stream of tobacco juice and barely does a double-take of the rope.

DOC
Hee-yah, mule!

Doc drives on to the SALOON at the top of the street.

DOC
Whoa, Nelly, whoa!

He sets the brake, grabs a carpetbag of wares, and jumps off the wagon into the muddy street.

SPLASH!

He cusses as he sinks to near the top of his boots.

DOC
Gol-darn, son of a---

With great effort, he slops through the mud, runs up the steps to the boardwalk.

As he walks into the saloon, the wind tries to rip the door from his hand.

INT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Doc slams the door shut behind, stomps his boots, and shakes off as much rain as he can as he walks to the bar.

At one of the tables sit the only two patrons in the saloon. From appearances, a MINER (30) and a PREACHER (50).

They hardly acknowledge Doc's appearance.

Doc overhears their conversation as he walks by....

MINER
I just don't get it. Not at all.
How could she?

PREACHER

And how could he?

MINER

And don't forget him, too!

He reaches the bar and whistles softly through his teeth to get the BARKEEP's attention.

The Barkeep saunters over from the far end and looks over the bar at a long trail of mud. He forces a welcoming smile.

BARKEEP

Afternoon, sir. How are you this fine day?

DOC

Fine day? Have you looked outside? She's a real turd floater out there.

BARKEEP

Yes, sir, that be the truth. But we're living and breathing, hey?

DOC

I suppose it's all in your perspective, yes.

BARKEEP

So, what'll it be?

DOC

I don't suppose you got any coffee, eh?

BARKEEP

I most certainly do...might be a bit on the stout side by now but she'll warm ya up.

DOC

Sounds good. Hey, ah, go ahead and throw in a shot a whiskey or two while you're at it.

BARKEEP

Will do.

Doc leans with his back to the bar and looks around the saloon. Classic old west. Piano in the corner and stairs to the working women's rooms.

MINER (O.S.)

Nope, I just don't get it.

The Barkeep returns with a steaming tin cup of ink.

BARKEEP

Two bits.

Doc drops some coins on the bar, toasts the Barkeep and turns towards the only occupied table.

DOC

Pardon me, gents, Doctor Sullivan
at your service.

(bows to the table)

You may call me Doc.

(handshake offered)

The Miner and Preacher are wide-eyed for a moment. The Preacher makes the first move and stands to shake hands.

PREACHER

(slight Irish accent)

Father McCabe. Pleased to meet you.

DOC

The pleasure is all mine, Father.
And you, sir?

The Miner remains motionless. McCabe finally kicks his chair and startles him to react.

MINER

Jackson.

DOC

Well, it's an honor, Mister
Jackson.

Doc takes off his slicker and drapes it over a nearby chair. He motions to an empty chair at their table.

DOC

May I?

Doc doesn't wait for approval. He sits and makes himself comfortable.

DOC

I couldn't help but overhear that
you have a bit of a conundrum of
sorts. What befuddles you, my
friend?

JACKSON

It's just that I've never heard of
anything so strange.

DOC

Strange? You, sir, are in luck.
Strange is right up my alley. You
see, I've been around, and seen a
thing or two over the years.

JACKSON

But this just don't make no sense.

DOC

Well...I've got some time...why
don't you tell me all about it?

Doc takes a sip of the coffee and grimaces. It's nasty but
it's hot. He looks to McCabe.

DOC

Father, you look like a smart
fellow...maybe you could chime in
to help this gent with his
confusion?

MCCABE

Hmmm...I'm not sure that even the
Pope could figure on this one.

DOC

Ahh...so you know what troubles our
friend?

MCCABE

I heard it with my own ears and saw
it with my own eyes...and just this
morning, too.

DOC

And where did this confusion take
place?

MCCABE

Right here...you see, we use the
saloon here as the town's court
room.

DOC

A trial, eh? This gets better and
better.

MCCABE

A man was murdered.

DOC

Just one? Now, don't get me wrong
but, you know, these days it ain't
(MORE)

DOC (cont'd)
 that much of a rarity...what makes
 this one so special?

Doc gets up, picks up his soggy duster and gives it a shake
 as he walks it over to the rack by the door.

McCabe looks up at Doc.

MCCABE
 Oh, I know...Gun fights, Civil War,
 mining accidents, bandits,
 robberies...yes, sir, you name it.
 (beat)
 I've seen a hundred men dying and
 killed like animals.
 (beat)
 Yet, still...I've never heard
 anything as horrible as this
 before.

Jackson, who has been listening, turns to McCabe, and he to
 Jackson.

JACKSON
 Horrible, I tell ya, horrible.

MCCABE
 There's never been anything so
 terrible. Never. This is worse than
 wars. Worse than...I don't know.
 (beat)
 Jesus said "But I say to you, Love
 your enemies and pray for those who
 persecute you, so that you may be
 sons of your Father who is in
 heaven;...
 (stands and raises a hand
 to the heavens)
 ...for he makes the sun rise on the
 evil and on the good, and sends
 rain on the just and on the
 unjust."

DOC
 Hey, now, whoa. Don't get all
 preachy on me...I just wanted to
 hear an amusing little story while
 I wait out the storm...if you're
 going to start preaching, I think
 I'd rather go sit and listen to the
 rain.

Doc moves over and squats next to an old potbellied stove to
 warm up and dry out.

Jackson gets up and stands next to Doc.

JACKSON

Maybe you can figure out what it
all means. I don't understand it.
Not one bit.

He squats down.

JACKSON

All three of them...

DOC

All three of who?

JACKSON

It's them three I want to tell you
about.

DOC

All right. The rain's not letting
up anytime too soon.

Doc pulls two chairs from a nearby table to the stove.

DOC

We might as well be comfortable...
now don't get too excited...

Doc holds up a hand for pause, takes a big gulp of coffee,
and grimaces again.

DOC

...okay...shoot.

JACKSON

Well, it was three days ago. I'd
just picked up some supplies here
in town and was headed back up to
my claim in the Santa Rita
mountains...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

Jackson leads a pack-mule up a rocky trail through mesquite
trees, agave and cactus.

The day is a striking contrast as the sun is high in a clear
blue sky.

He hums and whistles as he walks. Occasionally, he sips from
a whiskey flask and shudders. He holds his liquor well but
at times it shows in his walk and manner.

Jackson stops and looks over a low ridge. Below is a desert oasis spring surrounded by towering cottonwood trees.

He leads his mule down the hill to water.

OASIS SPRING

While his mule drinks, Jackson moves just upstream to cool off and fill his water bags.

He dunks his head under the water. As he rises, something catches his eye across the pool and up on the hillside.

Curiosity gets the best of him. He wades across the pool and climbs up the hill side.

BRUSHY HILLSIDE

It's a woman's bonnet snagged on a low branch.

He approaches and examines the hat. He looks to the right and left. Seeing no one, he picks up and smells the hat.

JACKSON

Mmm, lilac.

As he sets the hat back on the bush, he notices something else farther up the hill.

He makes his way uphill through the thicket.

He reaches down and picks up a short length of rope with frayed ends.

As he examines the rope, his eyes suddenly focus on yet another object further uphill still.

He throws down the rope, walks further on into a clearing.

CLEARING

He picks up a small leather medicine pouch. It's beaded with an Apache Indian pattern.

He shrugs, turns casually and suddenly jumps back in horror.

Behind a large mesquite tree lies the body of a U.S. Cavalry officer. His eyes are open and seem to look right at him.

Jackson drops the pouch, turns and runs back to the pool.

JACKSON (V.O.)

I grabbed my mule and ran back to town as fast as I could.

The panicked Jackson grabs his mule and runs back up the trail.

JACKSON (V.O.)
That was three days ago. The Sheriff called on me today to testify.

CUT TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

Jackson sits in a saloon chair, a make-shift 'stand'. He's dressed in the same outfit as his present.

Behind Jackson on the left sits McCabe.

Further behind and to the right sits the handcuffed defendant. He's a Mexican/Apache bandit, that answers to TUCO (30's).

Sitting on one side of Tuco is the SHERIFF (50's) and, on the other, a DEPUTY (30's).

Jackson looks up, as if to answer to a JUDGE seated in a higher position.

JACKSON
And that's when I ran back to town and got the Sheriff.

JUDGE (O.S.)
I see. And as far as you know, you were the first to find the body?

JACKSON
Yes, sir. I was the first to find the body. Least as far as I know.

JUDGE (O.S.)
Did you find anything else in the area? A pistol or other weapon?

JACKSON
Was there a pistol? No, sir...not that I seen. Just the woman's hat and that piece of rope...oh, and that leather pouch.

Jackson starts to look a bit fidgety during a long pause.

JUDGE (O.S.)
Nothing else? No other belongings in the area?

JACKSON
 Yes, sir. I mean, no, sir.
 (shifts uncomfortably)
 That's all I seen. I swear it.

JUDGE (O.S.)
 Alright then. That'll be all.

JACKSON
 Thank you.

Jackson gets up and moves to an empty chair by McCabe.

JUDGE (O.S.)
 Ok, let's see. Ah, is there a
 Father McCabe here?

McCabe points to himself as if to say "Who, me?"

JUDGE (O.S.)
 Please take the stand.

He rises nervously and goes to stand by the chair. He holds up his right hand.

JUDGE (O.S.)
 Do you swear to tell the truth, the
 whole truth, and nothin' but the
 truth?

MCCABE
 So help me God.

JUDGE (O.S.)
 I would expect so. You may be
 seated.

McCabe sits to testify.

There is a rustle of papers O.S. and the Judge clears his throat before he continues.

JUDGE (O.S.)
 So, Padre. I hear that you may have
 been one of the last people to see
 the victim alive, is that right?

MCCABE
 Yes, sir. I saw the Captain and his
 wife. It was about three days ago.
 Sometime before noon.

JUDGE (O.S.)
 And this was where? The Santa Rita
 trail?

MCCABE

Yes, it was on the Santa Rita trail. It was such a lovely day.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

The trail is similar to Jackson's testimony except that the color of the sky and plant life seem overly vivid and a bit surreal for McCabe's account.

McCabe walks down the narrow trail. He appears to be in deep thought and seems overly pious with Bible in hand.

Two riders approach from the opposite direction. A U.S. Cavalry CAPTAIN (mid-30's) is in the lead. He sits tall in the saddle and looks very noble and heroic.

Behind the Captain follows his wife. A beautiful WOMAN (late 20's) dressed in white with a veiled bonnet. She appears heavenly and angelic.

McCabe steps aside to allow them to pass and does a subtle bow to the riders.

The Captain tips his hat in appreciation and the woman smiles as they ride past.

MCCABE (V.O.)

...They looked so happy.

JUDGER (V.O.)

Could you tell, in the Captains passing, if he was armed?

MCCABE (V.O.)

Yes, he was armed. A pistol, at least.

JUDGER (V.O.)

Anything else? A long blade or saber?

MCCABE (V.O.)

No, I didn't see any saber or knife.

JUDGER (V.O.)

And the woman? Any weapons?

MCCABE (V.O.)

Not that I could tell.

McCabe watches the two riders disappear around a bend in the trail. He turns and continues his walk.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

McCabe is still in the chair. His expression is elsewhere and his smile fades to a look of sorrow.

MCCABE

I never really gave it a second thought where they were riding, or if I'd ever see them again, for that matter. But then to hear of his death like that. Horrible. Life is so fleeting. No one should die like that.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Yes, yes, very sad. If that's it, I think that'll be all. You may step down.

MCCABE

Yes, thank you, your Honor.

McCabe rises and returns to his previous seat.

JUDGE (O.S.)

(stifling a yawn)
Sheriff, you're up.

The Sheriff walks forward and immediately sits down to testify. He crosses his legs and gets comfortable.

SHERIFF

Morning, Judge...

JUDGE (O.S.)

Uh, uh...

SHERIFF

Oh, yes, of course.

The Sheriff stands back up and raises his right hand.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothin' but the truth?

SHERIFF

Help me God.

The Sheriff nods and sits back down.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Alright, Sheriff. Why don't you tell me how you apprehended the defendant.

SHERIFF

Oh, no, sir. A bounty hunter brought TUCO in.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Tuco?

SHERIFF

Yes, sir, TUCO BENEDICTO PACIFICO JUAN MARIA RAMIREZ.

JUDGE (O.S.)

The Rat?

SHERIFF

Yes, sir, also known as the Rat.

Tuco, in the background, sneers when he hears the nickname Rat. He spits on the floor and the Deputy elbows him.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Tuco has quite the reputation, doesn't he?

SHERIFF

Yes, sir. He's been implicated in the robberies of both the Bank of Tucson and the Yuma stage line.

Now with that comment, Tuco sits tall, nods his head, and grins proudly.

JUDGE (O.S.)

A bit of a cheater too, if I recall.

SHERIFF

Yes, sir. In his marriage and cards.

Tuco shrugs and nods his head in agreement. He's a goofy sort.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Okay, well, I think we have a pretty good first impression of our friend here. So, how did Tuco come into your custody?

SHERIFF

Well, sir, it was early yesterday morning. I had just gotten to my office when---

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHERIFFS OFFICE - YESTERDAY MORNING

The office has a wood stove and a desk with chairs. On the wall is a gun rack and bulletin board with wanted posters.

A man snores loudly from the one cell in the background.

The Sheriff stands by the stove and pours himself a cup of coffee. Just as he takes a sip...

BANG, BANG, BANG!

The knocks on the door startles him and he spills coffee all over his shirt.

SHERIFF

Damn it! Yeah, yeah, hold on!

He brushes off what he can from his front as he goes and opens the door. He's none too happy.

SHERIFF

Yeah, what is it?

Filling the doorframe is the BOUNTY HUNTER (30). The cigarillo clenched in his teeth causes him to squint his blue eyes.

He wears a straw flat-crown hat, a long duster coat, and has a saddlebag over one shoulder.

BOUNTY HUNTER

And a good morning to you too, Sheriff.

He walks in the office and kicks the door shut.

From the saddlebag, he pulls out a rolled up wanted poster and hands it to the Sheriff.

BOUNTY HUNTER

I think I have someone you might be interested in.

The Sheriff unrolls the poster. It has a likeness of Tuco grinning like an idiot.

SHERIFF

Tuco, eh? You may have just saved me a whole lot of trouble, my friend.

BOUNTY HUNTER

Saved you a bit of trouble, and cost you a pretty penny, I figure.

SHERIFF

Alright, alright, I just need to verify that it's him and I'll get you paid.

The Sheriff opens the door and steps out to the boardwalk.

TUCO (O.S.)

Who the hell is that? One bastard goes in, another comes out.

SHERIFF (O.S.)

Cut it out!

The sound of a hand slap or punch is heard O.S.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

The Sheriff enjoyed telling the story of Tuco's arrival to Rosemont. He laughs and slaps his knee.

Tuco eyes the Sheriff from behind with a cold stare.

SHERIFF

Haw, haw! You should have heard Tuco. Never heard such big talk from someone hog-tied over the back of a mule before!

The Judge pounds the gavel one time. It's enough to startle the Sheriff and get his attention.

SHERIFF

Yes, sir, sorry...I'll get on with it.

JUDGE (O.S.)

So, this Bounty Hunter, he still around?

SHERIFF

No, sir. He took off before I could bring him in to testify.

JUDGE (O.S.)
That's a shame. Go on.

SHERIFF
So anyway, this Bounty Hunter goes
on to tell me how Tuco was
apprehended...

In the background, Tuco's expression changes to a far away
stare. As if he were looking up at the sky...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. APACHE WELLS - DUSK - TWO DAYS AGO

The well is nothing but a small retention pond of old,
stagnant, algae filled water from the last monsoon.

The waterlines along the edge show the water's recession
since the last storm.

Tuco lies on his back next to the water's edge. He looks at
the storm clouds that build on the horizon.

SHERIFF (V.O.)
Apparently, the Bounty Hunter had
been on Tuco's trail for some time.
When he finally caught up to Tuco,
it was near dark, day before
yesterday, by Apache Wells.

He suddenly grimaces and cringes as he holds his belly.

As he writhes on the ground, the Bounty Hunter appears from
behind a rocky outcrop with his pistol aimed at Tuco.

He gives a short WHISTLE through his teeth that gets Tuco's
attention.

Tuco rolls over, gets on his knees, and starts to go for his
pistol.

BOUNTY HUNTER
Uh, uh...I wouldn't do that if I
were you.

Tuco slowly raises his hands.

As the Bounty Hunter walks closer to Tuco, he sees that it's
a Government issued gun belt and pistol.

BOUNTY HUNTER
Tsk, tsk. You've been busy,
Tuco...toss the gun.

Tuco pulls the pistol and drops it by his side.

The Bounty Hunter steps up and kicks it away.

BOUNTY HUNTER
How much are you worth now?

TUCO
(shrugs)
Mmm...two thousand?

BOUNTY HUNTER
That's right. Two thousand dollars.

TUCO
Hijo de puta que te pario!

Bounty Hunter pistol-whips Tuco on the side of the head.

BLACK SCREEN

It's lights out for Tuco.

SHERIFF (V.O.)
The pistol belt and horse tack were
all Government issue.

JUDGER (V.O.)
The Bounty Hunter brought the
belongings back with him?

SHERIFF (V.O.)
Yes, and it all belonged to the
murdered officer...funny, though...

CUT TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

The Sheriff grins.

SHERIFF
(slight chuckle)
...a fierce bandit like Tuco being
bucked off and done in by the
officer's stolen horse.

Tuco snaps out of his trance-like state, turns and hisses
through his teeth at the Sheriff.

TUCO
No fui el caballo! Pinche pendejo.

The Deputy next to Tuco elbows him in the side of his head.
Tuco turns, sneers and then breaks out in laughter.

The threat of a raised rifle butt by the Deputy finally quiets Tuco.

SHERIFF

As the Bounty Hunter says, Tuco was all balled up on the ground. Hurtin' I suppose. The horse was smarter than Tuco and didn't drink the water.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Sounds like he came in pretty easy.

SHERIFF

Yes, he said it was an uneventful arrest.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Ok. That's it for now. Thank you Sheriff.

SHERIFF

Sure thing.

The Sheriff gives a two finger salute, rises and walks towards his seat.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Sheriff, please bring the defendant up to the stand.

The Sheriff and deputy escort Tuco to the stand. It's a struggle to get Tuco to cooperate.

The deputy handcuffs him directly to the chair.

Tuco squirms and rattles his handcuffs for a few moments before he settles down.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothin' but the truth?

TUCO

Oh, si.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Mister Ramirez, could you tell us where you were three days ago?

TUCO

Soy Tuco. Mi Papa es Senor Ramirez.
(beat)
Que dicho, no fui mi caballo.

JUDGE (O.S.)
In english, please!

TUCO
Que? En ingles?...it wasn't the
horse! We were so thirsty...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. APACHE WELLS - DUSK - TWO DAYS AGO

Tuco rides slowly through the thicket with his head down. He looks weary and his head bobs from side to side.

He rides out into the open and the horse stops by the stagnant water. Tuco looks up, sees the water and all but dives into the pool.

TUCO (V.O.)
...we riding so long...When you're
that thirsty, even the murkiest
water runs clear to the mind...

Tuco drinks and wallows in the stagnant pool.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

Tuco sits and shakes his head.

TUCO
...I should've known better but I
drank the pinche agua...sorry...I
drank the fucking water!
(he laughs aloud)
No bueno...it hurt real bad...

Tuco sneers at the Sheriff.

TUCO
And you thought I'd fallen off the
horse. Stupid Sheriff. It's never
as simple as it appears.

JUDGE (O.S.)
Are you saying that your
apprehension occurred differently?
It didn't happen the way the Bounty
Hunter told the Sheriff?

TUCO
Oh, no. If that's the way Blondie
said it happened, then that's the
way it happened.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Blondie?

TUCO

Lo siento, I meant the Bounty Hunter.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Mister Ramirez, the truth, please!

TUCO

No! I tell you the truth! Why lie...you're going to hang me sooner or later. If not for this, for something else.

(beat)

It was me, Tuco Benedicto Pacifico Juan Maria Ramirez, that killed that man.

A collective gasp from the trial attendees fills the court room as Tuco sits up straight and smiles.

The Judge pounds his gavel as Tuco pounds his chest proudly with his un-cuffed fist.

TUCO

Si, I did it. It was so hot. You know, so hot you can almost hear it crackle...and if it wasn't for that damn breeze, we wouldn't be sitting here today.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

Tuco's testimony takes on yet another appearance from that of Jackson and McCabe's.

The environment is monochromatic, almost sepia tone. It screams hot and dry. Cicadas sound a constant undertone.

Tuco lies under a mesquite tree along the Santa Rita trail. His sombrero covers his eyes as he takes a siesta.

The cicadas suddenly cease and are replaced by clip-clop of HOOF BEATS.

Tuco wakes and he sleepily lifts the brim of his hat. The Captain and his wife approach on horseback.

Tuco's version of the Captain is more disheveled, almost sleazy in appearance.

The Captain sees Tuco and slowly moves his hand to his pistol as they near.

TUCO (V.O.)
I wasn't looking for any trouble
that day. I just wanted to get back
to my siesta.

Tuco takes notice of the Captain's movement. He holds both hands out as if to say 'don't worry about me'. He looks and acts so innocent.

TUCO
Buenos tardes!

The Captain tips his hat, gives a low volume GRUNT and looks a bit put-out for having to even acknowledge Tuco.

CAPTAIN
And to you, sir.

Tuco returns the tip of the hat.

The woman smiles at Tuco. His version of her is that she's very flirtatious and a little trampy.

TUCO (V.O.)
She was muy bonita, si...but I was
not interested...until they passed.

The horses pass and Tuco lies back down. As he lowers his hat over his eyes, he suddenly stops.

The branches and dry grass blows in the wind.

Tuco sniffs the air.

He sits up on one elbow and looks to the woman. She now radiates with a new-found beauty as she sways with the movement of the horse.

At the last moment, just before going around a bend, the woman turns her head, smiles, and gives Tuco a wink.

Tuco's hand moves to a beaded leather pouch that hangs from his neck. He lightly caresses it between his thumb and index finger while he thinks.

He looks again and they're out of sight.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

Tuco shakes his head.

TUCO

As if the perfume wasn't
enough...she had to turn and look
at me...angelica...

He laughs. His eyes crazed once again.

TUCO

I had to have her...even if I had
to kill her man, I would have her.

(beat)

But if I could do it without
killing him, all the better. So I
decided to get her alone and I knew
just the place.

BACK TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

Tuco gets up, gathers a small bedroll and slides a machete
across his back. He runs into the thicket.

He races up a short hill and, as he crests, he sees the man
& woman on the trail below.

Tuco runs down the slope and lands on the trail just behind
the riders.

The Captain hears rubble slide onto the trail and reins the
horses to a stop.

The Captain is on his guard and is prepared to draw his
pistol. He turns to face Tuco.

CAPTAIN

What do you want?

Tuco raises and waves his hands in the air. He walks
innocently towards the riders with a toothy grin.

CAPTAIN

Stop where you are!

Tuco continues to walk.

TUCO

No, no, no...I am your friend!

CAPTAIN

What do you want?

The Captain moves his horse over to position himself between
Tuco and his wife.

Tuco makes a subtle move for his pistol and the Captain quickly draws his pistol first. He holds aim at Tuco.

Tuco laughs heartily.

TUCO

Oh, senor, no...you
misunderstand... I want to show you
what I found!

(beat)

After you passed, I thought "Now
there goes a man that would
appreciate my discovery." Hey?

Tuco very slowly draws his pistol with just two fingers and hands it to the Captain.

TUCO

Here, take it. Look at it.

The Captain makes no move to accept it.

TUCO

I found it, and many more just like
it. I am but a poor farmer and have
no need for them. I thought you
might like to buy one, or all of
them. I make you a good price!

The Captain hesitates for a moment. He suspiciously takes the pistol from Tuco. His own pistol never wavers from Tuco's direction.

The Captain examines the pistol. It's a beautifully engraved Remington New Army revolver with gold inlay.

The Captain seems to relax and holsters his pistol. He examines the pistol and measures up Tuco in a long glance.

He looks to his wife and scratches his chin.

CAPTAIN

It's a very nice piece. You say
that you found this? Where?

TUCO

Not far from here...in an old mine,
very strange...maybe they were
forgotten? Stolen? I don't know...I
took them and hid them just on the
other side of that hill.

Tuco waves his hand in a non-specific direction.

TUCO
Come with me. I show you.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

Tuco laughs and stamps his feet. He's very proud of himself.

TUCO
You see? Tuco can be very
convincing...I lead them to that
very pretty pool in the
cottonwoods. His wife was happy to
stay behind to watch the horses
while I took the man up the ridge
on foot...

BACK TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

BRUSHY HILLSIDE

Tuco leads the Captain through the brush, cactus and mesquite. They zig-zag up the side of the hill and near the top of the crest.

After some distance, Tuco stops suddenly and draws the machete off his back.

The sudden movement startles the Captain and he draws his pistol nervously.

Tuco sees this and laughingly pokes the machete towards him. He throws his head back and laughs heartily.

Tuco turns and starts to slash at the brush ahead.

The Captain sheepishly holsters his pistol.

TUCO
It's just through here.

CAPTAIN
I'll follow you...go on ahead.

Tuco hacks his way through the brush to an opening on the other side while the Captain follows.

TUCO
It's just over there.

Tuco returns the machete to his back and points.

The Captain moves past and in front of him with his back facing Tuco.

Tuco moves quickly and attacks the man. He knocks him to the ground and they wrestle.

As they fight, they roll down the hillside a ways until they land in a clearing on a level bench.

CLEARING

When they come to a stop, they both jump up and go for their pistols.

Tuco draws first while the Captain barely gets his hand to the grip.

TUCO

Uh, uh...I got you mi amigo...take
off your belt and throw it to my
feet...slowly!

He unbuckles his gun belt and throws it at Tuco's feet.

CAPTAIN

You won't get away with this.

Tuco sticks the barrel right in his face menacingly.

TUCO

Now sit down on the ground. Back to
that tree.

The Captain slowly backs to the tree trunk and slides to the ground. All the while with eyes locked on Tuco's.

Tuco circles around and subdues the man. He ties the man's hands behind his back and to the base of a mesquite tree.

Lastly, he gags him with a bandana.

Tuco is a bit crazed. He laughs and points at the tied up man. Really quite obnoxious.

He suddenly turns and runs back down the hill to the woman.

As he approaches, he stops and watches her from the bushes.

OASIS SPRING

The woman kneels next to the pool of water. She takes off her hat and bends over to drink from her cupped hand.

She takes her wet handkerchief and rubs it around her neck. Her hair shines in the sunlight. She extends and washes a

bare leg.

Tuco watches and is overwhelmed with her beauty. He begins to breath rapidly and bites a knuckle to regain composure.

She senses something and stops suddenly. She looks cautiously about and goes to cover herself.

Tuco sees that she suspects something. He exits the bushes and rushes towards the woman.

TUCO
 Something terrible happened! Your
 husband! He's been bitten by a
 rattlesnake!

The woman stands up and backs away a short distance. She stares skeptically at Tuco.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

Tuco looks to the floor and pauses. Deep down, he looks troubled, even embarrassed. He squirms.

JUDGE (O.S.)
 Mister Ramirez? What is it? Go on.

Tuco fidgets and picks at the armrest with a fingernail. He stares at the floor with faraway eyes.

TUCO
 She knew...somehow she knew...and
 it scared me a bit. No one ever
 doubts Tuco!
 (deep sigh)
 It's like when you joke with a
 child. They may go along with it
 but deep down, they know your not
 being truthful.

He bangs his fist on the armrest and looks up angrily.

TUCO
 No...it made me jealous. At that
 moment, I hated the man. I wanted
 to show her what he looked like all
 tied up and beaten. Cruel, si...but
 for me it was necessary.

BACK TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO**BRUSHY HILLSIDE**

Tuco drags the woman through the thicket by her wrist. She resists and falls to her knees repeatedly.

WOMAN

Slow down! You're hurting me!

TUCO

He's just up here.

Her hat is snagged by a branch and pulled from her grasp.

CLEARING

They come to the clearing where the Captain is bound to the tree. The woman stops abruptly.

As the woman stares at her husband, Tuco moves forward to stand between.

He looks back and forth with a sadistic grin. He breaks out in a psychotic laughter.

The woman is suddenly enraged. She reaches under her skirt and pulls out a double-barrelled small caliber deringer.

Tuco's eyes go wide when he sees the weapon. He lunges at her just as she aims and pulls the trigger.

BANG!

The shot misses Tuco and the deringer is knocked from her grip to the ground.

Tuco and the woman wrestle. He laughs and is excited about the woman's spirit.

She fights like a wild banshee.

TUCO (V.O.)

She fought bravely...relentless...

He pins her down. She snarls and bites him on the wrist.

TUCO (V.O.)

She fought like a wild animal...a mountain lion.

Tuco stands up and licks his wound.

She jumps back up, lunges at him and knocks him down. She pounces on top of him and starts to hit him.

She pulls the medicine pouch from Tuco's neck and it drops to the ground.

Tuco grabs her wrists and rolls over on top of her. She finally tires and sobs uncontrollably.

Through her struggles, Tuco kisses her. He turns and looks to the Captain.

The Captain bows his head and looks to the ground.

Tuco continues to sloppily kiss the woman while she turns her head from side to side in avoidance.

The woman eventually goes still and stares blankly up at the sky. Her eyes slowly close.

She checks out from reality.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

Tuco laughs and stomps his feet.

TUCO

And that's how I did it...I had her just like I planned, and without killing her husband. Besides, I never intended to kill him.

(beat)

But then...

BACK TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

CLEARING

Tuco adjusts his clothing and starts to walk away from the violated woman and captive husband.

The woman suddenly sits up and turns to Tuco.

WOMAN

Wait. Stop! One of you must die. Either you or my husband.

Tuco stops in his tracks but does not turn.

The Captain lifts his head and stares at his wife.

WOMAN

Turn around and look at me!
(MORE)

WOMAN (cont'd)

(beat)

Either you or he must die. To be
disgraced before two men is more
than I can bear.

Tuco turns and walks slowly back while trying to absorb the
turn of events.

WOMAN

I want...no...I will belong to
whoever kills the other.

She looks up as if to plead with Tuco.

Tuco paces in deep thought. Back and forth. He kicks at the
ground and strokes his chin.

Decision made, he turns and walks to the Captain. He reaches
down, removes the gag, and cuts his binds.

Tuco steps back a few paces to where the gunbelt lies. He
tosses the gunbelt to the still seated Captain.

TUCO

It's you and me, amigo...

The Captain sits a moment longer. He stares at his wife, not
Tuco. Finally, he stands...

CAPTAIN

Gladly.

...reaches down and slowly dons the gunbelt. He stands,
ready for the slightest move from Tuco.

TUCO

Your move.

The two men face-off. A long pause and stare-down.

A FLY lands on Tuco's face and he involuntarily twitches.

The Captain draws first...

BANG/BANG!

...gunsmoke flares from both pistols and fills the screen.
When the smoke clears...

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

Tuco stares at the floor and is quiet for a moment while he reflects on the moment.

TUCO

Since I had to kill him, I wanted to kill him. He fought well. I've been in many duels in my life and, I must say, he came closest to beating Tuco than anyone...but I killed him!

Tuco laughs again and stomps his feet.

The Judge pounds the gavel to settle Tuco.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Order! Order! Settle down, Tuco. Now what about the woman?

TUCO

What's that? The woman? Oh, she wasn't around anymore. I was so focused on the fight that I did not see her slip away. I walked back down to the pool and only one horse remained there grazing...the horse that I was found with.

(beat)

That woman...it was her passion that did me in...I've never seen anything so attractive...but then she turned ugly. So ugly. I couldn't even look at her.

JUDGE (O.S.)

What can you tell me about the missing pistol?

TUCO

What? His pistol? The Sheriff should have it.

JUDGE (O.S.)

No, no. Her deringer. Did you take that as well?

TUCO

The deringer? Muy bonita, probably could have gotten a lot of money for that, but I forgot to take it. It's probably still there...my mistake.

Tuco shrugs and busts out into a crazed laughter.

JUDGE (O.S.)
 (banging the gavel)
 Order! Order! Sheriff! Get this son
 of a bitch out of my court room!

The Sheriff and Deputy rush forward and drag Tuco out the saloon doors and down the boardwalk kicking and laughing.

CUT TO:

INT. SALOON - PRESENT TIME

A lightning flash lights up the saloon and the rain continues to pour down. Thunder follows a second later.

Jackson sits near the stove and warms his hands while Doc stretches and yawns.

DOC
 That Tuco, he's a bad one for sure.
 Your story doesn't surprise me one
 bit. It wasn't too long ago those
 two whores were found killed near
 here. Tuco must've done that too.

Doc grabs a log off the pile and opens the stove door. He pokes the embers before he throws it in.

Doc gets up from the stove and walks about the saloon to stretch his legs.

DOC
 He's says that the woman got away.
 I bet he killed her too and they
 just haven't found the body yet.

MCCABE
 Oh, no. The woman ended up in jail
 too, you know.

Doc stops short and turns incredulously.

DOC
 You don't say? Well, she should set
 the story straight, right? What did
 she have to say?

BARKEEP (O.S.)
 She lies!

Doc circles back around and steps up to the bar. He motions for a refill of coffee.

DOC

Well, well...another opinion!

BARKEEP

It's crap! They're all lies! In my line of work, I've learned to read people... Tuco's confession, the woman's story...all lies!

The barkeep fills the mug, turns and puts his hand in the air like he's already said too much.

DOC

I must say, this gets better and better. I can't wait to hear her side of the story.

Doc returns to his seat by the stove. He pulls a small flask from his pocket and adds some of his own elixir to his cup.

MCCABE

It seems that she sought refuge at the San Xavier mission. One of the Deputies found her and brought her back.

DOC

Well, Tuco's a man and men lie. Men aren't even truthful to themselves.

MCCABE

That may be true but it's because they're weak. That's why they lie. That's why they try to deceive... no, convince themselves of a greater truth.

DOC

Ugh...not another sermon.

(beat)

I don't mind a lie as long as it's an embellishment to the truth. What kind of story did the woman tell?

MCCABE

It was completely different than Tuco's story...everything was different.

McCabe gets up and moves to a chair near the stove to join the others.

MCCABE

Tuco talked about her temper, her strength and passion. I saw nothing like that at all. I found her pitiful. I felt a great empathy for her.

CUT TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

The woman sits in the stand with her head lowered. She looks rather plain in what looks like a borrowed dress.

WOMAN

From the first moment I saw him, I knew he was trouble. You could just see it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

The Captain and his wife look happy and content as they ride. The Captain looks back to his wife and smiles. In her version, she looks very modest and wholesome.

As they ride around a bend in the trail, Tuco comes into view and she GASPS.

Tuco lays on his side, propped up on one elbow and looks absolutely sinister.

WOMAN (V.O.)

The way he looked at us when we passed. I was sure he was going to try and take us right then and there.

Tuco is portrayed as if he was laying in wait. Evil and dastardly, like a highwayman.

The Captain acknowledges Tuco while the woman keeps her eyes forward. She is scared and does not dare look at Tuco.

WOMAN (V.O.)

After we passed, I got the nerve up to look back one last time just to be sure that he wasn't following us.

She looks back over her shoulder discreetly to see Tuco peer around the base of the mesquite tree. A bit of a creeper.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

The woman breaks down and cries. She dabs her tears and blows her nose.

JUDGE (O.S.)

Now, now, Ma'am. Take your time.

WOMAN

Do I need to tell you about...what he did to me?

JUDGE (O.S.)

No, Ma'am. No need to recount that. We need to hear about what happened to your husband.

WOMAN

Okay, then, after...taking advantage of me, he told me that he was the famous bandit Tuco. He was so proud of himself. And then he turned and sneered at my husband.

She lifts her head and her eyes are far away; as if to relive the experience.

WOMAN

How terrible it must have been for him. Every time he struggled, the ropes got tighter. I couldn't stand it. Without thinking, I ran to him, or tried to.

BACK TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO**CLEARING**

The woman gets up and runs to her husband. She holds what's left of her dress together as she runs.

Tuco sees the rush and knocks her down. He stands over her and laughs at her and then points and laughs at her husband.

He picks up the Captains gunbelt, waves a hand in disgust and trudges off down to the pool.

As he mounts the Captain's horse and rides away, the woman crawls over, removes the gag, embraces her husband and sobs.

The husband sits there stiff and unresponsive. He stares off in the opposite direction.

The woman feels the rejection and sits back.

He's disgusted and can't stand the sight of his wife.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

Same as before, except there's a tinge of anger and resentment in her eyes.

WOMAN

I can still see his eyes...he did not feel for me. There was no pity. He was not angry at Tuco. It was a stone cold hatred of me.

BACK TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

CLEARING

She backs away slightly but still kneels at his side.

WOMAN

Don't look at me like that! Stop! Beat me, kill me if you must, but don't look at me like that!

She lowers her head to the ground and sobs. But not for long. Suddenly calm, she lifts up, looks around, and rises.

She searches, finds, and picks up the deringer. She walks back to her husband and calmly unties the rope.

She kneels in front of him and offers him the deringer with an open palm.

WOMAN

Go ahead. Kill me.

Long pause. She screams in his face.

WOMAN

Here! Do it!

The Captain does not waver. He still stares with the cold hatred but does not respond.

She rises and begins to back away.

WOMAN

What's wrong with you? Stop it! Don't look at me like that!

As she absently waves the deringer around. He continues to stare with unbridled loathing.

WOMAN

Don't! What's wrong with you?

She rushes to him. She hits him in the chest with balled fist and then embraces him.

BANG!

Both husband and wife collapse on the ground.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

Now there's a hint of remorse in her expression.

WOMAN

I must have fainted. When I woke, I saw him there...dead...with a gunshot in his chest.

She begins to weep.

BACK TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

OASIS SPRING

She runs through the thicket to the pool and mounts her horse.

WOMAN (V.O.)

I didn't know what to do. I ran back, got on my horse and rode to...I don't know where...I wanted to kill myself...what else could I do?

She rides back up to the trail and disappears into a cloud of dust.

CUT TO:

INT. SALOON - PRESENT TIME

Lightning crashes closer without any delay between flash and deafening thunder.

Doc stands and stares out the saloon window at the deluge. He spits tobacco into a spittoon.

P-TING.

He turns back to rejoin the group by the stove.

DOC

I see...no...I don't. With each story I get more confused.

JACKSON (O.S.)

See? See what we mean?

He sits back in his chair.

DOC

Padre...you tell me about the lies men tell...what do you know about women, eh? And you felt compassion for her?

(beat)

The lies women tell, especially when they turn on the water works, even fool themselves. If I, for one second, believed her story, I'd be really mixed up.

MCCABE

But according to the husbands story...

Doc looks like he was just slapped in the face and almost gags on his tobacco.

DOC

Whoa, whoa, whoa...what? I thought he was dead!

MCCABE

He, ah, spoke through a medium.

BARKEEP (O.S.)

Bullcrap!

(beat)

Nothing but lies.

MCCABE

Dead men tell no lies.

Doc shakes his head to clear the cobwebs and waves his arms.

DOC

Okay, okay, you've lost me. What medium?

MCCABE

You see, Tuco's half Apache. His Nation insisted that their MEDICINE MAN conduct a reading on the dead man.

DOC

Tuco confessed! What the hell's the point?

MCCABE

Dead men cannot lie. To them, death is our purest state and the dead speak only truth.

DOC

This ought to be good...after all, who's honest these days? Look, everyone wants to forget unpleasantries, so they make up stories. History is written in lies...it's easier that way.

Doc bites off another plug of tobacco.

DOC

Alright then...let's hear what the Captain had to say...

Another FLASH of lightning brings us back to...

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

An Apache Medicine Man stands at the front of the court. He is an impressive character and very menacing.

Two Apache DRUMMERS sit on the floor behind him and pound out a steady rhythm.

He begins to step and dance in place.

He starts to chant.

He shakes a bison horn rattle in one hand and holds Tuco's leather pouch high in the other.

Jackson is wide-eyed and McCabe does the sign of the cross.

The Medicine Man begins to turn in circles. He gradually accelerates until he's almost a blur.

He suddenly stops and the drums go quiet.

He drops the rattle and looks like a man possessed. He sways gently.

He lifts his head high and, when he speaks, it is the faraway voice of the Captain spoken by the Medicine Man.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN

I am in darkness now. I suffer in darkness. Cursed by those who steered me into this hell of darkness.

The Medicine Man drops to his knees and his head lowers.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN

The bandit, after attacking my wife, sat down with her and tried to console her...

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

CLEARING

Tuco kneels next to the woman and tries to comfort her. He pats her leg and caresses her hair.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN (V.O.)

She sat there on the ground, staring at nothing. The bandit was cunning.

The Captain sits still bound to the tree. He stares at the interaction being acted out in front of him.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN (V.O.)

He told her that after she had given herself, she would no longer be able to live with her husband.

Tuco goes through the motions with muted speech as the Medicine Man narrates.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN (V.O.)

He said that she should go with him, the bandit, rather than remain behind to be unhappy with her husband. He said that he had only attacked her because of his great love for her.

She looks at Tuco, actually looks UP to Tuco, as if he is her only hope and salvation. She looks far away.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN (V.O.)
 My wife looked at him, suddenly
 radiant yet like she was in a
 trance from the trauma. As if Tuco
 was her only hope.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

The Medicine Man is still on his knees.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN
 Never, in all our life together,
 had I seen her more beautiful.
 (beat)
 And what did she say to the bandit?
 Right in front of her helpless
 husband?

BACK TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

CLEARING

The woman looks up to Tuco.

WOMAN
 Take me. Take me away with you.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN (V.O.)
 But that's not all she did, or else
 I would not be in this hell.

Tuco rises, walks over and grabs the gunbelt. He looks at
 the Captain and sneers before turning back to the woman.

He grabs her arm to walk back to the horses and she jerks
 him to a stop.

WOMAN
 Wait! You need to kill him!

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER

Kneeling as before...

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN
 I can still hear those words. They
 burn hotter than the hell I'm in.
 Has anyone ever uttered such
 (MORE)

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN (cont'd)
 pitiless words? Even the bandit was
 shocked to hear them spoken.

BACK TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

CLEARING

She continues to pull on Tuco's arm.

WOMAN

Kill him!

She steps towards her husband and points. She is crazed.

WOMAN

Kill him! Kill him!

Tuco pulls the woman close and stares in her eyes with
 disgust and disbelief.

Now the woman tries to get away but Tuco pushes her down and
 places a foot on her back to hold her down.

Tuco speaks to the Captain.

TUCO

What would you have me do to this
 wretched woman? Kill her? Spare
 her? Just nod if you agree.

The Captain looks up.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN (V.O.)

For those words, I almost forgave
 the bandit.

Tuco continues to immobilize the squirmy woman.

TUCO

What do you want me to do? Kill her
 or let her go?

When Tuco steps toward the Captain, she springs up and runs
 into the thicket screaming. Tuco gives chase.

The Captain remains seated and makes no effort to release
 his binds.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN (V.O.)

Hours later...I don't know how
 many...

Tuco returns from the thicket and walks behind the Captain. He pulls his machete and cuts the ropes.

TUCO

Well, she got away. Now I'll have to worry about her talking.

Tuco turns and walks back into the thicket.

The Captain watches him go. He sits and takes in the surroundings.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN (V.O.)

It was so quiet. Peaceful.

(beat)

Then I heard someone crying.

It's the Captain that cries. He gets painfully to his feet and rests his head against the tree in grief.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN (V.O.)

It was me.

After a moment, he calms and begins to wander off. Something glimmers on the ground that gets his attention and he stops.

The sunlight glints off the nickel plate of the deringer in the grass.

He walks over and picks up the deringer. He handles the small pistol like an object of curiosity - turning it and looking at it from all angles.

BANG!

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON (COURT ROOM) - EARLIER THIS MORNING

The Medicine Man falls forward as if he were shot.

Jackson and McCabe are awestruck.

The Medicine Man slowly sits up.

MEDICINE MAN/CAPTAIN

Peace at last. It grew dark and as I lay there in the quiet stillness. Then somebody seemed to approach me. Softly, gently...who could it have been?

(beat)

Then someone removed the pistol from my grip.

The Medicine Man falls forward again.

CUT TO:

INT. SALOON - PRESENT TIME

Lightning flashes and thunder rumbles long and loud.

Jackson paces back and forth while Doc stokes the stove.

McCabe and the Barkeep sit near the stove.

DOC

So the Captain killed himself. What
a shame.

Jackson shakes his head.

JACKSON

That's not true either. I don't
understand...why must they all lie?
(beat)
Oh, it was Tuco that shot him, but
not like he said.

Doc is startled and looks up from tending the stove.

Jackson seems agitated and moves to another table to sit. He
realizes that he said too much and gets nervous.

DOC

Now it's starting to get really
interesting.

Doc walks over to Jackson's table. Standing opposite, he
leans on the table with both hands and looks at Jackson.

DOC

You saw the whole thing, didn't
you? Why didn't you tell the
Sheriff?

Jackson turns away in his seat.

JACKSON

I didn't want to get involved.

DOC

But NOW you want to talk about it?
Well, let's hear it. This might be
the best yet.

MCCABE

I don't want to hear. I've heard
enough atrocity already today.

Doc moves to McCabe. It's his turn to preach.

DOC

Listen, Padre. Stories like this are common place anymore. Your stories of demons and devils are nothing now compared to the evil men do. Stick around and hear a living scripture. The gospel according to Jackson.

Doc goes back to Jackson and sits.

DOC

Tell us what you know.

JACKSON

I found the woman's hat...

DOC

You already said that.

Jackson has the faraway stare as he recounts his story.

JACKSON

Then, when I walked about twenty paces further, I heard a woman crying. I looked out from behind a bush and saw the Captain tied up. There was the woman crying...and Tuco.

DOC

Wait a minute. You lied about finding the body?

JACKSON

I didn't want to get involved.

DOC

Yes, we know. All right, then. Go on. What was Tuco doing?

JACKSON

He was on his knees begging for the woman's forgiveness...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SANTA RITA TRAIL - THREE DAYS AGO

CLEARING

Jackson hides behind a boulder and watches the scene.

The woman looks horrible after her ordeal with Tuco. This is the most vivid version of what really took place.

She sobs while Tuco kneels beside her. He begs forgiveness.

TUCO

You must believe me. Until now,
I've always done whatever I wanted.
Living for the moment. Whatever is
best for Tuco.

(beat)

This is different. Now I want more.
Go away with me...if you want, I
will marry you.

Tuco bows down before her and continues...

TUCO

I am Tuco Benedicto Pacifico Juan
Maria Ramirez, the famous bandit,
and, look, I'm on my knees before
you.

Tuco puts his hand on her in an attempt to console her. The woman continues to sob relentlessly.

TUCO

If you want, I'll stop being a
bandit. I've plenty of money hidden
away. We can move to a city and
live comfortably. If you don't want
me to steal, I'll get a job and
work hard. I'll make you happy.
I'll do anything to make you
happy... come away with me... Marry
me.

(beat)

Please say yes. If you don't, I'll
have to kill you.

She does not react. Tuco starts to get desperate. He is close to grovelling.

TUCO

Don't cry. Please answer. Tell me
you'll be my wife.

Tuco gets impatient and pushes her. He immediately regrets this and begs again.

TUCO

Tell me.

She finally stops sobbing and goes quiet. She slowly sits up and looks at Tuco.

WOMAN

How can I answer a question like that?

She gets to her knees and crawls to the deringer. She aims it at Tuco.

Tuco goes still and on his guard.

With deringer still aimed at Tuco, she crawls to her husband, unties the rope and removes the gag.

She backs away stumbling and sobbing.

TUCO

You mean to have us fight it out?
To duel for you?

The Captain shakes off the ropes and stands wearily. He backs away nervously.

Tuco slowly advances.

CAPTAIN

(holding his hands out in
front of him)

No, stop! I refuse to risk my life
for her.

Tuco stops curiously. The woman sits up and stares in disbelief at her husband.

The Captain walks with purpose at his wife and stares down at her.

CAPTAIN

You shameless whore! You would have
me fight, and possibly die, for
you? Why don't YOU kill yourself? I
saw how you looked at him back on
the trail. You brought this on
yourself!

(to Tuco)

If you want her, take her. I won't
stop you. I'll miss my horse more
than the loss of this woman.

The Captain turns and steps back.

The woman is shocked and looks to the bandit; the bandit to the Captain and back to the woman.

Tuco has a look of distaste when he looks to the woman.

All three are more and more visibly nervous.

Tuco finally turns to go back down to the pool and horses. Possibly with the thought that she's not worth it?

The Captain remains still while the woman gets up to go after Tuco.

WOMAN

Wait!

TUCO

Go back! Don't try to follow me.

She falls to the ground and begs.

CAPTAIN

Don't waste your time crying. No matter how hard you cry, no one is going to believe it.

Tuco stops short and turns to the Captain.

TUCO

And don't you talk to her like that. Have you no respect? You're such a big man talking down to her. After all, women can't help crying. They're naturally weak.

The woman's crying stops and a low chuckle begins.

It quickly turns to laughter and escalates to a hysterical shriek.

WOMAN

It's not me that's weak... It's the two of you!

She walks over to her husband.

WOMAN

A good husband would defend his wife's honor and kill this man. Only then can you tell me to kill myself. That's what a real man would do. But you're not a real man. That's why I cry, I'm tired of this thing you call a marriage!

She turns hurriedly to Tuco and gets in his face.

WOMAN

And I thought that the great Tuco would figure some way out of this little predicament. I would have
(MORE)

WOMAN (cont'd)
done anything for you if you only
saved me from him.
(she spits in his face)
But no, you're not a man either.
Just like my husband.

She backs away and laughs hysterically.

Tuco looks ashamed and nervous. Very, very, nervous.

TUCO
If you were a man, I'd...I'd... cut
you down where you stand for doing
that!

WOMAN
Why not cut me down? I'm more of a
man than the both of you!

Tuco shakes with anger and nerves...and fear?

WOMAN
Just remember, a woman only loves a
real man.

She moves closer to Tuco once more.

WOMAN
And when she loves, she loves
madly, forgetting everything else.
(she's face to face now)
But a woman can only be won by the
strength of a real man.

She is right in front of Tuco. She reaches over and puts her
hand on his holstered pistol.

Tuco begins to fall under her spell.

The Captain sees this and rushes forward to his gunbelt on
the ground.

All three are wide-eyed with heightened awareness and
jittery nerves.

The woman smiles.

The two men pull their pistols and fire at each other.

BANG/BANG!

The woman screams, drops the deringer, and crawls for cover.

Both men had fired wildly and missed their marks.

The two men panic and act as if they have forgotten any training or experience they ever had.

They fire their pistols again...

BANG!

...and again...

BANG!

...without aiming and cower.

The Captain hides behind a tree and Tuco moves erratically about, almost comically, in the open.

Shots continue to ring out...

BANG!

BANG!

BANG!

...going in all directions. The two men are terrified.

BANG!

A bullet ricochets on the boulder by Jackson.

BANG!

Splinters fly from the Captain's tree and dirt jumps from the ground in front of Tuco.

Tuco stumbles and falls flat on his face. He looks up with the fear of impending death etched in his face.

The Captain runs out from the tree, stands over Tuco and pulls the trigger.

CLICK!

Empty. He throws his pistol at Tuco and backs away.

Tuco picks up the empty pistol and stares at it in disbelief.

In a reversal of roles, the Captain is in sheer terror and trips.

CAPTAIN

I don't want to die! I don't want
to die!

Tuco gets up, aims his pistol and pulls the trigger.

CLICK!

Shocked and in disbelief, Tuco dives on top of the Captain and the two fight ferociously.

They take turns having the advantage on the other.

Tuco has the Captain in a headlock at one moment, then roles reverse and the Captain strangles Tuco.

After a long struggle, Tuco gets kicked off the Captain and falls back in the grass.

He sees the deringer next to him, grabs it, aims and fires as the Captain approaches.

BANG!

The shot hits the Captain in the center of his chest. He drops to his knees and dies.

He turns triumphantly, yet stunned, to the woman that cowers behind him.

He stumbles from the adrenalin rush and ends up seated next to her.

They stare at the body of the Captain with idiotic expressions.

Tuco finally stands and takes the hand of the woman.

She pulls away and crawls/runs to her dead husbands side.

She sobs, horrified of the outcome.

WOMAN

NO! How could you?

Tuco crawls to her side.

TUCO

What's wrong? I don't understand? I did what you asked!

The woman turns, looks at Tuco with disgust and screams. She gets up and runs into the thicket.

Tuco gets up to chase and trips again. He aims the deringer into the thicket and pulls the trigger.

CLICK!

Tuco drops to his knees, throws the deringer, then sits stupefied. He stares at the body.

After a long beat, Tuco gets up, grabs the Captain's gunbelt and pistol, and limps away towards the horses.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON - PRESENT TIME

Doc stands in the doorway of the saloon and looks out. The rain has slowed slightly.

He finally turns.

DOC

And I suppose this is the truth?
This is what really happened?

JACKSON

I saw it with my own eyes. I don't
tell lies.

DOC

That I doubt. You lied under oath
just this morning.

JACKSON

I don't tell lies. Not now.

DOC

Well, as far as that goes, no one
tells lies after he has said that
he's going to tell one.

MCCABE

But it's horrible... If men do not
tell the truth, do not trust one
another, then the earth becomes a
kind of hell.

DOC

You're right, Padre. The world we
live in is a hell on earth.

MCCABE

No... I trust men...and I don't
want to believe that this world is
a hell.

DOC

(laughing)

No one will hear you, no matter how
loud you preach. Just think now...

(MORE)

DOC (cont'd)
Which one of these stories do you believe?

Before McCabe can answer, Jackson speaks up.

JACKSON
I don't understand any of them.
They don't make any sense.

DOC
And this coming from the only man that witnessed the crime.
(beat)
Well, don't worry. It isn't as if men are reasonable.
(beat)
Does it matter? The killer, regardless of which story is closest to the truth, has been hanged for his crimes. Case closed.

McCabe, Jackson, and the Barkeep all cringe and turn to Doc.

BARKEEP
Well... not necessarily.

Doc falls back into a chair.

DOC
Heh, heh...this oughta be good.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HANGING TREE - JUST HOURS EARLIER

Dark clouds form in the distance and there's a low rumble of thunder. The monsoon nears.

Tuco sits on the back of a horse with hands bound behind his back and a noose around his neck.

His expression is half smile/half sneer and his eyes shift back and forth like he's surveying the crowd.

The Sheriff stands behind Tuco with a rifle in one hand and the reins of his horse in the other.

The hangman reads his sentence.

HANGMAN (O.S.)
Wanted in fourteen counties of this State, the condemned is found guilty of the crimes of murder,
(MORE)

HANGMAN (O.S.) (cont'd)
 rape, armed robbery of citizens,
 state banks and post offices, the
 theft of sacred objects, arson in a
 State prison, perjury, bigamy,
 deserting his wife and children,
 inciting prostitution, kidnapping,
 extortion, receiving stolen goods,
 selling stolen goods, passing
 counterfeit money, and, contrary to
 the laws of this State, the
 condemned is guilty of using marked
 cards and loaded dice. Therefore,
 according to the power invested in
 us, we sentence the accused before
 us, Tuco Benedicto Pacifico Juan
 Maria Ramirez...

CUT TO:

INT. LIVERY HAY LOFT - CONTINUOUS

The door to the loft is open. The Bounty Hunter leans
 against the door frame and lights a cigar.

BOUNTY HUNTER
 Known as the Rat.

CUT TO:

EXT. HANGING TREE - CONTINUOUS

Tuco continues to nervously survey the crowd.

HANGMAN (O.S.)
 ...and any other aliases he might
 have, to hang by the neck until
 dead.
 (beat)
 Do you have any last words?

TUCO
 (grunts)
 There are two kinds of people in
 this world: The kind that suffer
 through life, or marriage for that
 matter, with the hand they're
 dealt; and the kind that bring
 their own cards to the table.
 (eyeing the unseen crowd)
 And what's wrong with that? That's
 the way we are, the way we live.
 Most of you envy the lives that
 dogs lead. You just can't live
 (MORE)

TUCO (cont'd)
 unless you're what you call
 'selfish'.
 (smiles)
 Go ahead...be you're own martyr...
 I brought my own cards.

Tuco nods and grunts that he's done. He squints and frantically scans for...something.

HANGMAN (O.S.)
 May God have mercy on his soul.
 Proceed!

CUT TO:

INT. LIVERY HAY LOFT - CONTINUOUS

The Bounty Hunter quickly raises a rifle, aims, and...

CUT TO:

EXT. HANGING TREE - CONTINUOUS

As the Sheriff's hand slaps the rear of Tuco's mount, a rifle shot sounds.

BOOM!

The rope is nicked just above Tuco's head. The horse starts to buck and he struggles to remain in the saddle while the rope tightens around his neck.

The townspeople GASP collectively and look in all directions for where the shot came from.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVERY HAY LOFT - CONTINUOUS

The Bounty Hunter's eyes go wide as he quickly reloads the rifle for a second shot.

CUT TO:

EXT. HANGING TREE - CONTINUOUS

Tuco panics and starts to gag.

BOOM!

The rope snaps and the horse takes off. Tuco's laughter intermixes with the screams and shouts of the townspeople as he rides out of Rosemont.

With a blinding flash of lightning and boom of thunder, it begins to rain.

BACK TO:

INT. SALOON - PRESENT TIME

Doc leans against the saloon wall and belly laughs until he starts to gasp for air.

DOC

Let me get this straight... Are you telling me he got away?

MCCABE

It seems Tuco has a guardian angel.

DOC

Unbelievable. Turns out Tuco was the only honest man here today!

Doc walks back to the table.

DOC

I presume everyone agrees on what they saw at the gallows, eh? No other versions? I've a feeling that it won't be too long until Tuco's caught again.

MCCABE

It's the murdered man that's still the issue.

JACKSON

I know what I saw.

DOC

Exactly...you know what you THINK you saw. And you believe what you saw to be true. A wise man once said "that the conflict of man is between good and evil. The real conflict is between truth and lies."

(pointing at Jackson)

What you witnessed was without context.

JACKSON

Context?

DOC

Context. It's the why...why they did what they did or said what they said. And only they know the reasons.

MCCABE

But who told the truth?

DOC

Does it matter? Or perhaps every story WAS accurate from their own truths and beliefs. Each version was relative...an opinion of their own perspective... Tuco was honest to himself as he sees himself... The woman was honest to how she truly felt about her marriage...

JACKSON

And who are YOU to talk about truth? You're a shyster...a carpet-bagger selling snake oil.

DOC

Me? Ah! I'm an honest businessman. Do you think I could make a living selling elixirs and tonics by telling truths? What I do is...embellish.

(he bows)

People hear what they want to hear...and believe what they want to believe. And I believe Tuco did the same thing.

(addressing Jackson)

You, on the other hand, are as dishonest as the next man.

Jackson stands abruptly with the first hint of anger in his voice.

JACKSON

Watch it, mister...

Jackson moves to reach in a pocket.

DOC

You may have fooled the Sheriff but you don't fool me... You see, there's still the matter of the missing deringer. It just... disappeared? Or perhaps it was stolen?

(MORE)

DOC (cont'd)
(leans in closer to the
Jackson)
Someone could get a nice bit of
cash for that, don't you think?

Jackson looks a bit uncomfortable yet does not answer. He pulls an empty hand from his pocket and sits back down.

A long pause.

The sound of hard rain stops.

A beam of sunshine suddenly brightens the bleak saloon.

Doc notices the improved weather, walks over to the window and looks out.

DOC
Would you look at that. Today may
not be a complete wash after all.
(turning to the group)
Now, gents, I've had a lovely
afternoon but, if you'll excuse me,
I need to go make an honest living.

Doc grabs his slicker and hat from the rack.

DOC
I should be open for business in
about ten minutes and I'd be
delighted to show you my wares.
Good day!

With a quick wave, Doc exits the saloon.

The Barkeep gets up, goes back behind the bar and resumes the cleaning of glasses.

BARKEEP
Like I said. It's all crap.

McCabe and Jackson sit silent in the same seats as we first saw them.

JACKSON
I just can't understand it. Not at
all.

MCCABE
(shaking his head)
It's horrible...a man was murdered.

FADE TO BLACK.