

TWO BITS & A BROKEN PROMISE

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FADE IN:

EXT. OKLAHOMA PRAIRIE, LATE 1800'S - DAY

A beautiful prairie is lined by deep woods. A steam engine barrels through billowing smoke. The fireman is shoveling coal into the furnace when he stops suddenly and looks at the engineer.

ENGINEER

What?

FIREMAN

Elizabeth is pregnant.

ENGINEER

Well Goddamn.

The engineer jumps up from his seat and hugs the fireman. He unclips the noisy keys on his belt and throws them to him.

ENGINEER (CONT'D)

Go check in the boxcar. I think there's a case of cigars in there.

EXT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE

Dust billows up the street as a lone rider approaches. People in the street make way for the rider as a haggard dog scampers to safety.

EXT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DOG P.O.V.

Dusty boots dismount and walk toward the office steps. Coming into frame is a tall white man with broad shoulders and a look of anguish in his face. He is DICK HARDIN, 47 - Rancher and father of three.

INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE, DARK - POORLY CONSTRUCTED

A frail man with wire rim glasses quickly transcribes Morse code as it clicks through the speaker. The door to the office opens flooding it with daylight.

DICK

What does it say?

OFFICE ATTENDANT

Just a minute.

Dick closes the door and remains silently anxious. The clicking stops and the attendant scribbles a few seconds more before handing it to Dick.

Dick slowly takes the transcription and stares at it for several seconds. Sensing his difficulty the attendant stands to his feet.

OFFICE ATTENDANT (CONT'D)  
Would you like me to read it to...

Dick pulls his .45 and levels it at the attendant.

DICK  
You tryin' to say I can't read?

OFFICE ATTENDANT  
No Sir! Just --that if you don't read Morse code a lot it can be-- difficult --with the stops and all.

Dick hesitates and then tosses the message at the attendant.

DICK  
Git to readin'.

The attendant is frazzled. His hands shake as he reads.

OFFICE ATTENDANT  
More cattle dead. Stop. Emmy not good. Stop. Need you home. Cholera is worse. Stop. Bank says note due. Stop. You promised me. Stop. You promised. Stop.

Dick stares into space. Dust particles float through the air as time seems to stop.

DICK  
(pointing the .45 again)  
Did I tell you to stop reading?

OFFICE ATTENDANT  
(shaking)  
That's it. That's the end of the message.

Dick squints and stares.

OFFICE ATTENDANT (CONT'D)  
The only cure for Cholera is opium. Lost my son last year.

Dick lowers his gun as he stares at the attendant. He begins to speak. SUDDENLY --another patron enters. Dick holsters his gun and quickly leaves the office as the attendant stares at him.

INT. STEAM ENGINE

The engineer feverishly shovels coal into the furnace as his brow drips with sweat. The door to the back of the car opens and an outlaw in a wide brim hat with a bandana covering his face enters.

ENGINEER  
Did you find them?

The engineer turns around and is startled by the outlaw.

OUTLAW#1  
Gimme the keys to the strong box!

The barrel of a .45 is pointed directly at his head. The engineer and the outlaw make hard eye contact.

ENGINEER  
This isn't the bank delivery train.

OUTLAW#1  
I ain'ts going to ask you again.

ENGINEER  
I just have the school--

INT. COACH CAR

GUNSHOT! --all the passengers jump and look around. The conductor runs towards the front of the car.

EXT. TRAIN - ROOF

The Fireman hops from car to car running towards the steam engine.

INT. STEAM ENGINE

Blood and skull fragments decorate the engine's furnace. The outlaw removes his bandana to reveal a black man with deep wrinkles and scars on his face he is CLARENCE GOLDSBY, 34 - outlaw, reactionary and younger brother.

A second outlaw, also a black man, quickly enters the engine compartment and has a look of bewilderment on his face. He removes his bandana to reveal a stern face with defined eyebrows and eyes that have seen too much, he is CRAWFORD GOLDSBY 36 - calm, collected farm hand and older brother.

CRAWFORD  
Why'd you kill him?

CLARENCE  
He was stallin'. We don't have time for games.

CRAWFORD  
You made it worse. You made it worse!

CLARENCE  
As if killing another man is going to matter now.

EXT. OKLAHOMA PRAIRIE - DAY

The engineer-less steam engine barrels down the track. Two dark figures jump from the train and mount two horses tied to a tree. They bolt off into the dust.

EXT. NOWATA TRAIN DEPOT - LATER

The train sits in the station. Barking dogs and lookee-loo's mingle among terrified passengers. A man sells apples from a kart in the center of the platform. A pack of young boys (8-10ish) has gathered several yards from the kart and eyes the fruit suspiciously.

A tall white man with a mouthful of chew approaches a witness. He is BOB HARDIN, 45 rancher and lawman. He is flanked by another tall white and who you recognize as Dick Hardin, from the telegraph office.

Suddenly, one of the boys makes a break for the apple cart. He steals an apple and takes off running. As he passes Bob, Bob trips the boy and he goes down hard. Bob yanks him off the ground by his left arm

BOB  
Come here!

YOUNG BOY  
Ow! --Stop!

BOB  
Stealing is wrong! --you hear me?

DICK  
Let him go, he's just a boy.

YOUNG BOY  
C'mon Mister, I'm hungry.

BOB  
That's no excuse!

DICK  
Hey. We have more important things  
to attend to.

Bob snatches the apple from the boy with his oft hand and drops him to the ground.

BOB  
Gimme that. Now git!

Dick and Bob exchange a hard glance.

INT. STEAM ENGINE

The Lawmen stand and survey the murder scene.

BOB  
Well ain't this a pretty scene.

DICK  
I'm thinking he should have just  
given up the key.

BOB  
(beat) You can't blame a man for  
taking his job seriously.

DICK  
But you can excuse him for getting  
killed and leaving his wife and  
kids to starve? What man does  
that?

BOB  
If a man can't do his job, then  
what good is he? That's all I'm  
sayin'.

An older man with white hair and a disposition of respect struggles to enter the locomotive.

The old man's clothes are clean and new. He is TOM HARRISON hanging judge and all around horrible person.

JUDGE HARRISON  
Jesus Christ! All of this for a key?

DICK  
School salary actually. But we reckon they were looking for the bank delivery. But that train's not 'til tomorrow.

BOB  
Wouldn't surprise me if they rob tomorrow's train. It's not like the next engineer is going to put up a fight.

JUDGE HARRISON  
I cannot have this lawlessness where men are supposedly to settle the land! (beat) Outlaws -- they're worst than Injuns and nigger half-breeds. (beat) I'm issuing an order to bring these men in, dead or alive. Set the bounty at \$500 each and get your posse together.

DICK  
That's barely enough to get horse thieves found let alone track some outlaws.

Judge Harrison shoots Dick a hard stare.

JUDGE HARRISON  
Then triple it! I want these men to swing by the end of the week. Do you understand me?

BOB  
Yes. Judge!

DICK  
Yes. Judge!

Judge Harrison staggers off the train and walks away with a look of disgust. Bob and Dick another exchange a look.

INT. BOX CAR

Bob and Dick inspect the box car that is full of broken strong boxes and packages. Debris and broken bits of lock are strewn across the floor.

DICK  
They shot the look off and threw  
the money out the door.

BOB  
Looks like they've got a routine.

DICK  
It's definitely the same guys.  
They've just decided to start  
killing for some reason.

Bob moves some boxes and debris and finds a lock box that was  
hidden from view.

BOB  
Looks like they missed one.

Dick stares at the box.

DICK  
There was confusion. They probably  
realized this was the wrong train.

Bob stares at Dick.

BOB  
(beat) You'd think these guys  
would check things out more if  
they're so desperate. (beat) It  
would save some killing.

DICK  
If the train company would spend a  
measly two-bits on a real door lock  
that would also save some killing.

Bob draws his six shooter and points it dead at Dick.

DICK (CONT'D)  
What's gotten into you?

BOB  
I should ask you the same thing  
since you're the one that's robbing  
trains.

Dick moves his hand slowly over the handle of his gun.

DICK  
What are you on about?

BOB  
How did you know that the lock is  
cheap? How did you know what train  
they were looking for?

DICK  
Common sense.

BOB  
Common sense that this is an inside  
job.

Dick draws his gun with the quickness. Bob and Dick stand  
inches apart staring at each other's gun barrels.

BOB (CONT'D)  
You gonna shoot me? Bessie May  
will never rest.

DICK  
Leave mom out of it. (beat) Now we  
don't have time for this.

BOB  
You're a lawman! This ain't right!

DICK  
You're one to talk! What about  
them men you killed in Utah? They  
did you no wrong.

BOB  
We had business to settle. And  
Utah is a territory - ain't part of  
the U.S. Them's Indian laws out  
there.

DICK  
Killin' is killin', this ain't no  
different.

BOB  
What happened to you?

DICK  
(beat) Do have any idea how  
difficult homesteading is? Do you?

BOB  
The government gave you the land,  
what more do you want?

DICK

Ha. That's nothing, that's the bait! (beat) The only way you can keep the land is to make improvements. You need horses, cattle, fences, you gotta clear brush. I had to borrow money.

BOB

So hire a farm hand.

DICK

And pay him what? Horse feed? Promises? I had to do everything from sun up to sun--

GUNSHOT! --The sound of rustling horses. Seconds later there is shooting, running and screaming. Footsteps run across the roof of the box car. Suddenly, two outlaws jump into the car wearing bandana's surprising the brothers. Bob trains his gun on one of the outlaws.

CLARENCE

Relax. We just want the lockbox. Nobody need get hurt.

BOB

These your boys! These men on your payroll?

DICK

Shut up!

Crawford removes the bandana from his face and steps inches from Bob's face.

CRAWFORD

It ain't wise to talk about things that don't concern you.

BOB

You gonna kill a lawman, boy?  
(beat) You'll hang for sure.

CRAWFORD

You ain't no kinda lawman. (beat)  
We both know that.

Dick suddenly points his gun at Crawford, STUMBLES on debris as he shoots and hits him in the ELBOW. Crawford scrambles -- opposite way, shooting as he moves - BAM! Crawford takes one in the gut and he goes down.

Clarence shoots Dick in the hip. Dick stumbles --backwards catches two more as his shots miss --WILDLY. Dick goes down. Bob TRAINS on Clarence but he doesn't have it cocked. Clarence shoots him. Dick moans on the floor as Clarence shoots him again. He drags Crawford out the box car door leaving a trail of blood.

INT. BOX CAR

Dick and Bob both lay on the floor, bleeding profusely.

BOB

Was it worth it? Was it worth  
gettin' us both killed?

DICK

If a man ain't got his family, he  
ain't got nothing. So what's the  
difference?

FADE TO BLACK.