

# HELL BENT

by

Louis No'mour

123/456-7890  
phobia@rip.com

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**FADE IN**

**EXT. SONORAN DESERT - SUNSET - ESTABLISHING**

An Arizona sunset casts hues of purple, red, and orange across saguaro cactus and mesquite trees.

Steep rocky ridges surround a long valley. Through it winds a deep dry wash with steep banks.

**EXT. DRY WASH - CONTINUOUS**

A thunder of galloping horses breaks the desert silence.

Three men on horseback ride recklessly, hell-bent for leather, through the ravine followed by a cloud of dust.

Their attire and menacing appearance hints that they've been up to no good. They're bandits.

Moments later, a posse of eight riders pass. They're badged, determined, and have guns drawn.

**BANDITS**

The bandits ride hard and fast. They're dirty and dusty, and their horses froth with sweat.

In front, with leather pouches tied to his saddle, is the leader, JAKE (30). With long blonde hair and fair complexion, he looks confident and rides with eyes forward.

The other gang members are TICO (35), in a wool poncho and sombrero, and YUMA (30), an Apache in a faded blue Cavalry vest and red headband.

Both Tico and Yuma look frequently over their shoulders. Yuma's look is watchful. Tico is downright scared.

TICO

Jake, we got to get out of this arroyo. A blind man could track us in this sand!

JAKE

Quit your bitchin', Tico. You gotta trust me on this.

YUMA

I hope you right, Jake. They are near.

JAKE

Yuma, how many and how far?

YUMA

They must have split up a ways  
back. Only six, maybe eight, now.

JAKE

Good, we're almost there.

The bandits round a bend and the terrain changes drastically  
to a red rock stream bed and vertical rock walls.

TICO

Gracias a Dios! They can't track us  
on rock in the dark.

JAKE

We should lose them just ahead.

They approach a confluence of three slot canyons. Jake turns  
into the narrowest and they ride single file.

As they ride, the walls gradually lower until they  
eventually exit into a meadow below a mountain pass.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN MEADOW - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

On both sides of the meadow, steep walls rise to the ridge.  
The only way out is dead ahead to the pass.

JAKE

That's it, boys. Across that flat,  
through the pass, and drop into  
Mexico.

As the bandits trot forward, a full moon crests the ridge.  
The flat glows in the bright moon light.

Yuma tenses and reins to a quick stop.

YUMA

No. No good.

Jake and Tico stop and turn to Yuma.

JAKE

What's no good?

TICO

Que pasa, amigo?

Yuma's scared. He stares past his partners in fear.

YUMA

We must turn around. Find another  
way.

JAKE  
What gives, Chief? There ain't no  
other way.

YUMA  
There.

Yuma points beyond and the others turn to see what has  
spooked their partner.

Ahead is a wooden platform on posts. Laid on top are  
skeletal remains in a headdress. A spear and shield hang on  
one of the posts.

TICO  
No, no, no! I can't go through  
there!

JAKE  
Yuma! Tico! Get your shit together!  
It's just a bunch of dead injuns.

YUMA  
It's sacred ground. I will not  
cross.

TICO  
Shit, Jake! You know how I am with  
cemeteries. I hold my breath  
whenever I pass a white picketed  
graveyard during the day. There's  
no way in hell I'm going through  
that!

JAKE  
You two are pathetic. There's no  
other way. It's either ride through  
to the pass or fight it out with  
the law.

YUMA  
I'll make my stand. At least I'll  
have a fighting chance. If you were  
smart, you would too.

Yuma pulls out his rifle and turns to leave.

JAKE  
Yuma, hold up.

Jake takes two leather pouches off his saddle and tosses  
them to Yuma.

JAKE

Your cut. Find your way out of this  
and we'll see you in Mexico. You  
know where we'll be.

YUMA

Go quickly, yet quietly. Don't stop  
until dawn.

Yuma trots towards the slot canyon. No goodbyes.

JAKE

What about you, Tico? Time's a  
wastin'.

Tico looks to the canyon. The flicker of the posse's torch  
light reflects off the walls. They still follow.

He squirms in his saddle and does the sign of the cross.

TICO

Okay. Let's do this.

JAKE

Good man. Hee-yah!

**EXT. BURIAL GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS**

Jake and Tico trot through the sacred grounds. More and more  
platforms appear.

The remains perched atop are in varying degrees of decay.  
From rotten corpses to bare bones.

JAKE

Hey, Tico. They got a name for this  
fear of cemeteries, you know.

TICO

Oh, yeah? What's that?

JAKE

Chicken shit. Heh, heh.

Tico glances at a skeleton on a platform as they pass. The  
skull looks to the sky with mouth agape in a silent scream.

As he stares, the skull slowly closes its mouth and turns to  
face Tico.

TICO

Jake. Jake! Did you see that?

JAKE

See what?

TICO  
That skull. It moved. I swear it  
looked right at me.

Jake's had enough. He turns his horse and sidles up next to the platform. He kicks the post hard.

TICO  
What are you doing?!

The skeleton falls apart and the skull rolls off to shatter on the ground.

JAKE  
They're just bones. Come on.

A gust of wind kicks up that causes a low moan as it passes over the Indian remains. Tico is scared stiff.

TICO  
What was that?!

JAKE  
The wind, Tico. Just the wind.

BANG!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Tico almost jumps off his saddle from the distant gunshots.

A furious gunfight echoes up the valley from the direction of the slot canyon. It's fierce but short.

JAKE  
Yuma's choice.

TICO  
(sign of cross)  
He might be okay. Maybe he  
surprised them?

JAKE  
Maybe. Let's go.

They ride through the maze of platforms. Tico rides with one eye closed and shoulders hunched, as if ready to be scared.

Every time Tico's eyes veer from the path, he locks eyes with another dead Indian.

TICO  
(softly)  
They're only bones. They're only  
bones. They're only---

Tico cocks his head and listens with intent. The clip-clop of their horses trot is off tempo.

TICO  
Jake, hold up.

JAKE  
What now?

When the horses come to a stop, there is an extra couple of clip-clops before silence.

Tico whips his head about to search for another horse.

TICO  
What the---? Yuma? Is that you?

JAKE  
Get a hold of yourself, man! It's only an echo.

Jake kicks his mount and trots ahead. Tico reluctantly follows and resumes his mantra.

As they ride, the platforms get fewer and fewer. They made it through the sacred grounds.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - CONTINUOUS**

They finally reach the mountain pass and look down upon the lights of a small town. Jake is all smiles.

JAKE  
See, Tico? There it is. La Paz, Mexico.

TICO  
Never has a shitty little border town looked so lovely.

JAKE  
Nothin' to it, right?

He slaps a relieved Tico on the back.

TICO  
Sorry for letting my fear get the best of me.

Jake's smile suddenly turns to an expression of disbelief. He slumps forward with an arrow in his back.

TICO  
Jake!

Tico nudges his horse closer to steady Jake. When he grabs him, the arrow vanishes and leaves a bleeding wound.

TICO

Dios, no!

JAKE

Tico, what's happening?

Tico looks back towards the sacred grounds.

A line of spectral images are lined up. Skeletons and rotten corpses are mounted on ghostly horses.

One of the spectres nocks another arrow.

TICO

Don't look, Jake. Just hold on and ride like the Hell!

Tico slaps the hind end of Jake's horse and it takes off on a gallop.

Tico spurs hard to follow as an arrow stabs a saguaro cactus nearby and disappears.

A haunting war cry echoes down the canyon and a thunder of hoofs begin chase.

Jake struggles to stay in the saddle. Another arrow hits him in the shoulder and vanishes.

As they round a bend, they encounter a sharp drop off. They both rein hard and come to a stop.

JAKE

Tico, you'll have to dismount and walk your horse down the talus.

TICO

What about you?

JAKE

I can't. I'll hold them off as best I can.

TICO

No, I'll stay with you.

JAKE

I'm done for, amigo. Take these and go.

Jake gives him all the pouches.

JAKE

You can give me back my share when  
I see you again.

TICO

Vaya con Dios, my friend.

Tico dismounts and starts to scramble down the hillside  
in a cloud of dust.

Jake turns his horse towards the oncoming horde of dead,  
draws both pistols, and puts the reins in his teeth.

JAKE

Time to send you back to whence you  
came! Hee-yah!

Jake rides headlong into the stampede with guns ablaze.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Bones shatter and rotten flesh splatters. Unaffected, the  
dead ride forward.

Arrows pierce Jake in arms, legs and torso. They disappear  
seconds after impact.

He's riddled with holes. Some flow dark red, others spurt  
arterial streams of bright crimson. He finally falls.

A towering skeleton leaps off his horse and stands over  
Jake. He reaches down and grabs his long blonde hair.

JAKE

Come on.... Is that all you got?

With a swing of his tomahawk and a quick tug, he holds the  
blonde scalp high and lets out a howl of victory.

**EXT. TALUS SLOPE - CONTINUOUS**

Tico slides down the slope on his heels. He catches his foot  
and starts to tumble.

He realizes now that it's not rock talus, but a hillside of  
skulls and bones.

It's near the bottom of the slope when the victory cry  
reaches him.

The pitch and volume is soul-splitting. Even with hands over  
his ears, it causes blood to flow from his ears.

TICO

Oh, Jake, you poor bastard.

He catches and mounts his horse at the bottom of the hill and begins his gallop towards La Paz.

The spirits give chase and ride effortlessly down the hill.

**EXT. ROAD TO LA PAZ - CONTINUOUS**

Tico's horse is just as spooked as him. It puts all effort into each stride.

It's twilight now. The ridge behind him on the eastern horizon gets brighter every second.

Not too far ahead, the sun west of town slowly creeps towards Tico.

TICO

Sunlight. Got to get to the sunlight.

The Indian horde gets closer and closer. The arrows start to get uncomfortably close to Tico.

From not too far behind, a spear is thrown that lands right in front of his horse.

His horse veers and Tico is thrown through the air. He hits hard and tumbles to a stop. He faces right at his pursuers.

Dozens of dead close in with spears ready and arrows drawn.

The sun rises over the eastern horizon and POOF! The horde disintegrates into thin air.

Tico sits in daylight. He raises his arms, arches his back, and let's out his own victory howl.

**EXT. MAIN STREET, LA PAZ - DAWN**

Tico rides into town. He dismounts and leaves his horse at the water trough.

He grabs his saddlebag and the pouches. He looks up at the sign on the building front: LA PAZ HOTEL - DESCANSE EN PAZ.

TICO

Rest in peace. Heh. That's bad marketing.

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

The room is sparse with a single cot, rickety dresser, and a wash basin. Stained curtains blow by the open window.

The lock rattles and the door swings open. Tico walks in and throws the saddlebag and pouches on the bed.

YUMA

Hola, Tico.

Tico swings about and draws his pistol towards a chair in the dark corner.

TICO

Wh-who is that?

YUMA

It's only me, amigo.

Yuma leans forward from the dark shadows just enough to calm Tico's nerves.

TICO

Yuma! You made it!

Tico starts towards Yuma and stops.

TICO

Wait... How in the hell did you get here before me?

Yuma stands and steps closer. He avoids the sun that beams through the window.

YUMA

I told you not to go through the burial grounds.

Yuma is covered with bullet holes and the back of his head is missing.

Yuma throws his Bowie knife and sticks Tico in the chest. The knife quickly disappears.

YUMA

Descanse en paz, amigo.

Tico falls to the floor and Yuma vanishes.

FADE TO BLACK