A man for all times

By

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INT. GALLOWS - DAY

SUPER: MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA 1880

The gallows is set on the first level, in a corner of the building. NED KELLY (25) walks to the wooden platform, accompanied by a priest, altar boy, a doctor and the prison sheriff.

NED (V.O)
I arrive at the scaffold on a November morning. My limbs ache from the wounds received at the Last Stand. Soon I will be free of such worldly bothers.

MONTAGE:

Images of the Kelly gang, clad in primitive armor, shooting it out with police in front of the Glenrowan Hotel...

Ned walks into a hail of gunfire, and topples to his knees. Police swarm over him, ripping off his steel helmet...

The hotel burns, as a priest drags out bodies...

NED (V.O)
My brother and mates perished in the final battle, and I was taken, battered and torn, barely alive. The authorities ensured the best physicians treated me, and I recovered over time.

A stern faced judge, with black cloth on his wig, stares back at a defiant Ned in the dock.

NED (V.O)
I was brought to trial and sentenced to death for killing the police troopers who had hunted me...

A tired and sad woman works in a laundry...

NED (V.O)
My poor mother languishes still, in this same prison, awaiting the news of my death. The power-that-be have denied our kin my remains after
NED(V.O) (cont’d)
execution. Even my clothes are to
be burnt...

END OF MONTAGE

Ned steps onto the trap and the processes of legal murder
begin.

NED(V.O)
Ah well, I think, as I step onto
the drop. I suppose it had to come
to this. The execution party look
at me and I realise I have spoken
aloud.

The hangman appears from a side door, dressed in prison
garb. His head is shaved, his visage rough, giving the scene
a grotesque feel.

NED(V.O)
The hangman is a fellow prisoner, a
chicken thief no less. He binds my
ruined arms behind my back. I
protest - not from the pain, but at
the need for it. I will go quietly,
without struggle. But it is all
part of the official procedure to
kill me. Now my legs are pinioned
and I stand helpless on the
trapdoor.

The hangman continues his work methodically, under the
scrutiny of the doctor; he needs to ensure that death is
instant and humane. The priest intones prayers. Below the
scaffold, a group of witnesses watch impassively.

NED(V.O)
The noose is fitted around my neck.
I move my head slightly to assist.
As the white hood is pulled over my
face, I glance up at the skylight
in the ceiling, a final look at the
world. Then I am in darkness.
Waiting...

The hangman steps back to an iron lever connected to the
trap. The doctor reaches out, as if to adjust the rope.

NED(V.O)
There is an echoing crash as the
lever is pulled. The floor opens
beneath my feet and I am falling. I
(MORE)
NED(V.O) (cont’d)
tense, preparing for the abrupt
halt that will break my neck, and
usher me through to a higher court.

Ned’s body comes to a stop with a sickening THUD. the
onlookers stare as he slowly turns at the end of the rope.

NED(V.O)
My fall ceases, but there is
nothing! No pain, no feeling of
hanging or swinging, no anything.
My conscious mind begins to shut
down and I drift into a peaceful
oblivion.
(beat)
But not for long...

EXT.BOAT - PRE-DAWN

Ned sits, eyes closed, against the side of the long boat. He
is dressed in a uniform, as are the rest of the men in the
boat. JOE BYRNE (23) leans across and kicks Ned’s leg.

JOE
Come on, Ned, wake up!

NED(V.O)
I open my eyes slowly, aware of a
rocking motion beneath me. My neck
aches...Joe Byrne, my best mate,
who I last saw lying dead in the
front bar of Jones’s Hotel, is
smiling at me. Next to him is Steve
Hart, my brother’s comrade. He was
alive when I was captured, but his
body was later dragged from the
ruins of the pub, reduced to a
burnt of meat...

DAN
Leave him alone. He’s saving his
strength.

NED(V.O)
Another welcome voice, this time
next to my ear. I turn to see my
beloved brother, watching me with
his customary warmth. There is no
sign of the fiery end he shared
with Steve. A great mystery is
unfolding here, of which I seem to
be a mere spectator.
The sky above begins to lighten. Ned looks down at the uniform he wears then around at the other men.

NED(V.O)
My restored friends do not seem surprised at my presence. Indeed, to them I have only been asleep. The past few minutes have seen me experience extreme stress, enough for several lifetimes. But strangely, I feel no fear. Rather, I feel a sense of belonging...

Steve leans forward and vomits on the wooden floor of the boat. Other men follow suit as they near shore. The boat shudders as waves crash. An officer rises at the front.

OFFICER
Rifles ready, men. When we land on the beach, make your way to the foot of the cliffs, and wait for further orders.

The soldiers prepare their weapons. Ned takes his rifle and huddles with the others. He lifts his head to look over the side of the boat.

NED(V.O)
A new shock hits me! We are just one of many boats gliding into the beach. Away out to the ocean, I can see huge ships of iron, bristling with guns. A barrage of noise begins as the ships fire at the cliffs.

On land, many guns open up in reply. The air over the water churns with shells and smoke.

NED(V.O)
A boat nearby is hit and the explosion makes my eyes shake. A large spout of water erupts, flinging debris across the ocean. The boat is reduced to chunks of wood, the men ripped to pieces. What manner of hell is this?

Dan grabs Ned’s hand, his body trembling. Ned whispers to him instinctively, assuring him.
Joe looks at me and smiles. Good old Joe, always there with a joke and a smile during the worst of times. Steve shuffles towards us and once again we are the Kelly Gang, bonded by fate and circumstance.

The officer peers forward as the boat RASPS on the sand. He leaps over the side, splashing through the water. The din is enormous.

Then we are all up and scrambling out of the boat. Bullets whiz by our heads and the water is churned into a bloody fury. Men are falling, shot before they can get to shore. The four of us manage to stay upright and we make it to the cliffs. Our weapons remain unfired.

Joe looks at Ned in bewilderment.

Gallipoli peninsula. On the coast of Turkey. Where else would we be? Are you alright, Ned? You haven’t been wounded...?

I shake my head and ask another question. Turkey? How did..?

The date, Joe. What date and year is it?

Again he examines my face, concerned for my sanity.

It’s April twenty fifth. 1915.

I close my eyes...
The End.