

BLOOD AND DUST

by

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EXT. MAIN STREET - BANNON, ARIZONA - NIGHT

A dusty, ramshackle horse town. A few businesses line Main Street: mercantile, livery, hotel, undertaker. A small merchant wagon, with horse still attached, sits in front of Black Mary's saloon.

A colorful, hand-painted mural on the wagon reads, "The Great Zanter Thal! Mystic Healer, Teller of Fortunes." A myriad of stars and moons surround the words.

SUPER: 1868

INT. BLACK MARY'S SALOON - NIGHT

ZANTER THAL, 40's, stares at BILLY STRODE, a six year old boy who lies unconscious on one of the tables. Zanter's dark eyes look the boy up and down.

Behind Zanter stands ELLEN STRODE, 36. She wrings her hands nervously as she watches Zanter examine her son. Nearby, SHERIFF SAM BARNES, 45, stares daggers into Zanter.

MAYOR ELMORE HASKINS, 50, finally breaks the silence.

ELMORE

You gonna help this boy or not?

Zanter feels Billy's forehead, checks his pulse at the wrist. He then turns to Ellen.

ZANTER

(thick Romanian accent)

Your son's blood is weak. It needs to be restored.

Zanter reaches into a large case, bound in cracked leather. He opens it, revealing hundreds of vials and sachets. His fingers skim over the medicines, then pull out a small brown vial.

Zanter opens the lid, then carefully pours a few drops over Billy's lips. He then hands the vial to Ellen.

ZANTER

Give your son this every two hours. He will recover in a day's time.

ELLEN

Thank you.

Zanter closes his case, then turns to Ellen.

ZANTER

My fee is three dollars.

ELLEN

That's all I got, but it's yours.

She fishes into her pocket, pulls out three bills.

SAM

You ain't payin' him nothin.'

ELLEN

But, I rode twenty miles to see this man.

Sam pushes Ellen's hand back into her pocket.

SAM

Don't care where you came from.  
This man's a damn snake oiler. I seen  
plenty a his kind before.

ZANTER

My powers are real.

Sam quickly draws his Colt revolver, levels it at Zanter's forehead.

SAM

So's my bullets. Get the hell outta my town.

With that, Zanter slightly bows his head to Sam, grabs his case and exits the saloon.

ELLEN

Sorry, mister.

Elmore looks uneasily at Sam.

ELMORE

Don't think ya oughta done that, Sam.

ALICE, 20, a comely saloon girl, steps forward.

ALICE

Them gypsies can hex ya.

Sam scoffs, walks to the bar, summons the BARTENDER with a couple knocks on the maple counter.

SAM

Whiskey.

EXT. HILLTOP CEMETERY - NIGHT

Zanter steers his wagon along the cemetery that overlooks the town. He stops the wagon and gets off.

He walks to the old wooden picket fence, looks out over the tombstones. He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a small satchet.

He opens it, dumps the white powder in his hand, then blows it into the air. The wind takes it, and the powder drifts over the graves.

Zanter gets back on the wagon, looks to the cemetery, grins. With that, he's off. Within the cemetery, next to a tombstone, the ground seems to shift.

INT. BLACK MARY'S SALOON - NIGHT

Sam downs a shot of whiskey.

SAM  
Damn charlatans.

He wags his finger.

SAM  
Hell, you let one of them four flushers in town, by next week we'll have a dozen. Ain't a one of 'em worth his weight in spit.

ELLEN  
I'm takin' my boy home. Got a long ride.

Elmore helps Ellen lift Billy off the table and they carry him outside.

JOSIAH PEATE, an old stumblebum drunk, staggers toward the bar.

JOSIAH  
Bartender, one redeye, if'n ya please.

SAM  
Josiah, go home.

JOSIAH  
Ain't got no home.

SAM  
Then find somewhere to sleep it off. I ain't wastin' my only jail cell on your pickled liver.

JOSIAH  
Huh...can't treat an old forty-niner like this.

Josiah pushes through the swinging half doors and exits.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Josiah trips down the wooden walkway and lands in a heap on the dusty street. He sees Ellen ride past him on a buckboard. Billy lies in the

back.

JOSIAH

Ma'am, could I trouble ya for a ride to--

She rolls by him without stopping.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Josiah wanders through the cemetery. He stops before a tombstone. The epitaph reads, "Gwendolyn Peate. 1828-1863. Loved here and in Heaven."

JOSIAH

Hello, my beloved. Miss ya terrible, like always. Think I just might sleep with ya tonight. No one else'll have me.

Josiah lays on the ground in a fetal position. He touches his fingertips to the tombstone.

JOSIAH

G'night, Gwen.

He closes his eyes. Within moments, a nearby sound causes his lids to flutter open. Josiah sees several dark figures walking towards him.

JOSIAH

Who--

A decayed arm bursts from the ground next to Josiah's head. A wedding ring rattles on one of the bony, rotten fingers. The hand clutches Josiah's throat and holds him down.

The figures move closer. Moonlight reveals them to be the walking dead, in various states of decomposition.

Josiah screams as his wife's head emerges from the grave. She rips his ear off with her teeth.

He rolls away as blood sprays from the gaping hole where his ear used to be. As his dearly departed wife struggles to free herself, three zombies descend on Josiah.

Three gunshots. Three zombie skulls blown apart. As they fall, a lone figure emerges from the curtain of darkness.

JESSE MCCLATCHY, 30's, wears a long duster and wide-brimmed Stetson.

Josiah grips his wound as blood squirts between his fingers. He gawks at Jesse, then at his wife, who crawls from the dirt.

JOSIAH

Gwendolyn! My God!

JESSE  
Apologies, ma'am.

He puts a bullet in her head. She drops. Congealed black brains spill from the hole.

Josiah wheezes and sputters, speechless from horror. Throughout the cemetery, the dead rise. Jesse twirls around, retreats.

JESSE  
Reckon you better run, old timer.

Jesse disappears into the darkness. Josiah struggles to his feet, staggers away in the opposite direction.

INT. BLACK MARY'S SALOON - NIGHT

A piano plays. Cowboys sift at their shots while saloon gals sit upon their laps. The music stops. Double doors squeak back and forth.

A decrepit boy, maybe 10, stands in the doorway. Several patrons rise from their seats.

Alice approaches. She kneels.

ALICE  
You...you been in an accident or somethin' child?

She dusts off his shoulders. He stares at her vacantly. She studies the earth on his fingertips.

ALICE  
Child? Do you know yer name? Why yer here?

The boy vomits into her bosom. A conglomerate of soil and worms. Alice falls back. Screams. Smacks the mess from her chest.

The child lunges. Breaks it's rotten teeth on her forehead.

Jesse walks in. Grabs the boy by his neck. He tosses him to a clear part of the floor and fills him with lead.

He watches him squirm, then grow still. He turns to the patrons.

JESSE  
Y'all's got bigger problems comin' this way.

INT. BLACK MARY'S SALOON - 2ND FLOOR BEDROOM - NIGHT

A small, cramped room with an old twin bed. FRANK, 47, lies in the bed, folds his arms behind his head. A satisfied smile crosses his lips.

MARY, 29, a dark-haired beauty, slips her corset back on.

MARY  
That'll be a dollar, Frank. Tip not included.

A gunshot from below pierces the floor and blows a hole in the ceiling. Frank instinctively ducks under the sheets.

FRANK  
Damn!

MARY  
Every Saturday night, I swear to God.

Mary quickly slips on a dress, then reaches into the bed-side drawer, pulls out a six-shooter. She puts on her high heels as she opens the door.

INT. BLACK MARY'S SALOON - NIGHT

Mary slowly descends the stairway. She sees Sam and Jesse with guns drawn on each other. A startled crowd cowers against the back wall.

MARY  
What's goin' on here?

JESSE  
Just some killin.'

SAM  
This gutter-scrapin' cur just shot a child.

Mary approaches the boy's body, sees the worms wriggling from his decayed lips.

MARY  
He...boy looks like he's been dead fer a fortnight. At least.

JESSE  
Now yer catchin' on, sweetie. Lot more where he came from.

Shaken, Mary looks to Alice.

MARY  
Alice, go wake the undertaker.

Jesse keeps his gun trained on Sam's head. Alice nervously steps between the two men.

JESSE  
Hey, Alice.

She turns to him.

JESSE

Tell him it's gonna be a long night.

Alice scurries out of the saloon.

SAM

I know all about you, McClatchy. Got yer ugly mug hangin' on the wall of my jail. Killed a man in Red Rock. In cold blood, from what I hear. And now...now you murder this child--

JESSE

Man in Red Rock had it comin.' Was a fair fight. And as for this young'un, well...the boy was already off this mortal coil.

SAM

What kinda bosh you spoutin' you--

JESSE

You folks encounter a gypsy man tonight?

Elmore steps forward.

ELMORE

Yes.

JESSE

Past him on the road a few miles back. Tried to sell me some tonic. Told me he didn't take kindly to the good folks of Bannon swindlin' him. Warned me to stay away. But, I never did heed no warnin's.

Sam takes a step closer.

SAM

Drop that weapon, boy.

JESSE

What's it gonna take to make you listen?

Josiah Peate bursts through the swinging doors. Drooling, ravenous, he sinks his teeth into the throat of one of Mary's working girls.

He rips away the soft flesh and blood erupts from the massive wound like a geyser. She spins away before collapsing. Her spraying blood paints the horrified crowd in streaks of wet crimson.

Sam empties all six of his rounds into the Josiah's chest. No effect. The zombie lunges for him.

The bullet from Jesse's gun blows a clean hole through the zombie's forehead. It collapses instantly.

Sam backs away, lower lip slightly trembling. He gazes at Josiah, then up at Jesse.

JESSE

Let's just say you owe me.

Alice enters.

ALICE

Undertaker's comin.' He's powerful  
angry 'bout--

She gasps when she sees the river of blood on the floor, along with the two new bodies.

Jesse turns to the terror-stricken townsfolk.

JESSE

Any man or woman here who can hold  
a gun, arm yourself or get to prayin.'

Sam wipes his trembling lips as he stares at Josiah's corpse.

SAM

Can't be.

Alice nearly faints, steadies herself against the bar.

BARTENDER

You alright, Alice?

She holds a hand to her forehead.

ALICE

I s'pose. Just...burnin' where the boy bit me.

The UNDERTAKER, 45, throws open the doors.

UNDERTAKER

Who the hell called me outta--

Two zombies jump on the Undertaker's back, drag him into the street.

Sam runs to help him, but freezes at the doorway. He watches in horror as a swarm of zombies storms into town. Some run, some stagger, depending on their state of decay.

SAM

Christ...

Sam retreats into the saloon. Three zombies pile in through the doors. Two more crash through the windows.

Jesse and Sam open fire. The Bartender pulls out a shotgun and takes a zombie's head clean off.

The initial wave goes down with lead in their heads. But they keep coming. Screams. Blood. Gunshots.

Frank runs down the stairway, pistol in hand. He stops halfway down. His eyes widen at the apocalyptic sight before him.

FRANK

What...

Alice stands at the bar, head in hands. She suddenly whips her head up, her eyes a milky white shade of death. She lets out a mindless scream, then turns to the nearest source of food: Frank.

She runs up the stairs and leaps for him. Frank stumbles backward. Alice's mouth lands right in his crotch. She sinks her teeth in and rips out the whole package.

Frank bellows in agony and empties his Colt revolver into her head.

Total bloody bedlam erupts as a fresh wave of zombies surges through the doors and windows. As the bullets fly, the teeth gnash and the flesh rips, the floor of the saloon becomes a sloppy stage of blood, guts and assorted human viscera.

Jesse and Sam stand back to back, firing their pistols with almost machine-like speed.

The Bartender aims his double-barreled shotgun point blank at a severely skeletonized female zombie. Click and click. Outta ammo.

In desperation, he swings the butt of the rifle at her head and the rotten noggin detaches and skitters along the floor.

Three male zombies pile on him and he disappears behind the bar, to the blood curdling sound of his own screams.

Elmore uses a broken table leg to bash in the skull of a young male zombie. He pounds and pounds until the head breaks into pieces.

Breathless, he steps away, then slips on a stray spleen. He goes down hard. A mass of zombies descend on him like hogs on a trough.

Mary fires two six-shooters from halfway up the stairs. The zombies keep coming, relentless. She calls to Sam and Jesse.

MARY

Get up here!

The three of them ascend the stairs, firing, killing, reloading.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - BLACK MARY'S SALOON - NIGHT

Sam steps out of a window and onto a rickety wooden fire escape. No zombies in the dark, narrow alley.

Jesse and Mary follow him. They make their way to the alley.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

They catch their breath and reload as they watch the groaning zombies wander along Main Street about twenty feet ahead of them.

A croaking bellow from above shocks them back to the moment. A zombie flings himself from the fire escape. He lands with a thud inches from Mary.

Another zombie jumps. Then another. The next one comprehends, and stumbles his way down the stairs. More follow, stepping on each other as they go.

SAM

Come on!

Sam runs toward Main Street. Jesse and Mary follow.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The three of them run down Main Street, guns blazing. Zombie brains litter the air as they dump their ammo into the risen dead.

The dinner bell has been rung. Starving zombies converge on the trio.

Sam runs to the jail, flings open the door.

SAM

C'mon, move!

Mary and Jesse run in, Sam slams the door shut behind them.

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

Sam runs to his desk, grabs a ring of keys. He can't help but glance at Jesse McClatchy's "Wanted" poster. Murder. One thousand dollar reward. Dead or alive.

Zombies smash out the windows. The door begins to give way.

SAM

Into the cell!

The three of them run into the jail's solitary cell. Sam inserts the key, locks the cell. The zombies break through the door.

They rush the cell. Their arms flail and grasp through the bars. They roar in hunger.

Sam, Jesse, and Mary back up in the cell. They sit on a cot.

Jesse lights a match. Brings it to the fat cigar in his mouth.

JESSE

Looks like we're gonna be here a bit.

MARY

This was a bad idea.

A zombie squeezes his head through the bars. ROARS. Its expression changes when it tries to back away. Head stuck. It pulls til it pops off. Rolls in. Jesse stops it with his boot.

JESSE

Any odds we could get em' all to do that?

He rolls it around till it looks at him. A wide eyed, opened mouth expression. A gold tooth. Jesse plucks it. Pockets it. Kicks the head away like a soccer ball.

SAM

Murderer and a thief. Get used to these bars.

Jesse blows smoke in his face.

JESSE

You plannin' on gettin' out?

The zombies continue to rattle the bars. The nails begin to pull from the floor. Mary dumps empty shells from the cylinder of her revolver.

MARY

How much ammo you's got left?

Sam checks his gun.

SAM

Empty.

JESSE

Three.

How do you know? You didn't even look.

JESSE

I always know.

MARY

I ain't goin' out like this.

Jesse nods. Hands her his pistol. She puts it to her forehead. Her hands tremble. She pulls the trigger.

SNAP. A dud. Jesse grabs the gun. Pulls out a bullet and studies it.

JESSE

Packed these myself.

He looks at the remaining two in his spindle. Then to Sam.

JESSE

Looks like you're gonna have to stick  
this one out, Sheriff.

He snaps the cylinder back into the revolver. Hands it to Mary.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

A familiar wagon pulls up outside the jail. Zanter Thal holds a talisman in his hand. Several crystals attached to the metal disk glow red. It emits a faint whine.

ZANTER

Asculta puterea!

The zombies seem strangely placated by the talisman's power. Zanter calmly steps down from his wagon, walks through the throng. He enters the jail. Several zombies follow him like lapdogs.

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

Zanter strolls to the cell. Sam snarls when he sees him.

SAM

Sumbitch. Shoot him McClatchy!

ZANTER

I have returned to collect a debt.

SAM

You know what you done?! You know what you done to  
this town?!

Zanter pays no heed to Sam's rant.

ZANTER

Upon fulfillment of the debt, the current situation will be amended.

MARY

What do you want?

ZANTER

Simply what is owed me. Three dollars.

SAM

We ain't payin' you a goddam thing, warlock.

JESSE

Use the brains God gave ya, Sheriff.  
Pay the man.

Sam burns a stare into Zanter, slowly reaches into his pocket. He holds three bills out, Zanter takes them and turns to the door.

SAM

Where you goin'?!?

MARY

Mister, you promised! You promised!

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Zanter calmly walks back through the zombies. He climbs atop his wagon, reaches into his pocket, pulls out a small sachet. He opens it, dumps the powder into his hand and blows it into the air.

As Zanter steers his wagon down Main Street and out of town, the powder settles over the zombies. One by one, they drop like marionettes with their strings cut.

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

Sam, Jesse and Mary watch as the zombies within the jail crumple to the floor. Mary makes the sign of the cross, looks to the heavens. Sam inserts the key into the cell door, opens it. They walk out.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The three of them walk out into the street, stepping over corpses.

JESSE

Lord a mercy. Don't ever cross no gypsy.  
Well...it's been a time, y'all.

Jesse turns, walks away.

SAM

Yer still a wanted man, McClatchy.

Jesse turns to face him. Sam breathes deeply, exhales.

SAM

Don't ever come back.

JESSE

Shame. Such a lovely place.

Jesse turns back, accidentally plants his boot through a rotten ribcage. He shakes his head, scrapes the guts off as he walks into the darkness.

Mary looks around at the ungodly carnage.

MARY

What do we do now?

Sam removes his Stetson, wipes his brow. He puts his hat back on.

SAM

Grab a shovel.

FADE OUT.

THE END