

DEVIL'S DUE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. SALOON - DAY

A two-story den of iniquity.

GUNFIGHTERS drink. The BARTENDER serves. A PIANO player tickles the ivories. In the middle of it all, WALT, 54, crusty and dusty, gambles.

Poker is his game.

The saloon doors swing open as a PREACHER, 62, shuffles into the room, his collar more dirt brown than white.

The room falls SILENT.

The Preacher moves first to the bar, holds out a large burlap sack, already heavy with coins.

PREACHER

The treacherous and the lecherous
shall go to hell, 'less they be
saved first.

The Bartender tosses in a few coins. The Preacher holds steady, a move that says: More.

The Bartender reluctantly obliges with additional coins.

The Preacher moves down the line, then snakes around the room, gathering coins from sinful Patrons.

PREACHER

For deeds done, or about to be
done.

He reaches Walt's table. The GAMBLERS toss coins from their stacks--all, except Walt.

Walt, eyes straight ahead, tosses two cards onto the table.

WALT

I'll take two.

None of the Gamblers move. Not even the DEALER.

The Preacher reaches for a large stack of Walt's coins--one of many. But, Walt intercepts him, slamming his hand on top of the Preacher's.

Still, his eyes are on the Dealer.

WALT
Two, please.

The Preacher leans in, whispers to Walt...

PREACHER
There are them that give, them that
take. But, the devil always gets
his due.

Walt finally breaks his gaze, cocks his head to the Preacher.

WALT
He'll have to be satisfied with
just one.

He tosses a single coin into the bag.

The Preacher turns, slinks up the stairs, down the hall.

Slowly, the saloon ramps back to life.

As Walt's game continues, two men slide into the saloon:
DIRK, 32, his face as twisted as his teeth, and MARVIN, 33,
prettier than Dirk, but only because his hat rides so low.

They eye the poker game.

Dirk sidles up to watch, while Marvin saunters to the bar.

A Gambler smiles, fans his cards on the table. The Players
react: Damn, that's a good hand. But, not Walt.

He calmly tosses his cards to the middle: An even better
hand. He gathers the pot as several of the now-poorer
Gamblers head for the bar.

Marvin slides into one of the empty seats, tosses cash onto
the table.

MARVIN
That enough?

WALT
Depends on how much you want to
give me.

Marvin smiles. Walt deals.

LATER

Walt grabs a coin from his now much smaller pile of
cash/coins. He tosses it into the pot.

Walt nervously fingers the cards in his hand as Marvin calmly surveys his own. Walt looks up, just in time to catch: Marvin's sly, sideways glance.

Without giving himself away, Walt follows the glance, to Dirk, now situated a distance behind Walt, but clearly in position to see Walt's cards.

Walt ponders for a moment, then...

WALT

I believe I'll go all in.

He pushes the last bit of his money to the center.

Marvin smiles, matches him.

MARVIN

Call.

Walt tosses his cards on the table. Marvin joyfully lays his on top.

WALT

You've got an angel on your shoulder tonight.

Marvin takes the money as Walt leaves the table, passes Dirk.

WALT

(to Dirk)

Next time, you ought to join us.

Walt heads outside.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

Marvin and Dirk stumble from the saloon, turn the corner. Dirk falls, catches himself, sits his drunken butt on the porch. Marvin joins him, laughing, mocking...

MARVIN

Then he says, you've got an angel--

Pistols press into the flesh behind each man's ear.

WALT (O.S.)

--You boys strike me as the "something for nothing" type--

DIRK

We'll give yer money back.

Walt lowers the guns, steps in front of the men.

WALT

--Just the type I'm looking for.

Dirk and Marvin exchange glances: What the hell?

WALT

There's a preacher. New in town. Comes in every day, converts the town's guilt into money. It's a shakedown. Plain and simple. But, it's a good one. Very lucrative. I need you boys to help me steal that big bag of shame he carries.

DIRK

Shame?

MARVIN

Money, you idiot. It's a bag of money.

WALT

We split it three ways. You up for it?

They nod.

WALT

Great. He takes the money in the morning. Hides it upstairs. Comes back for coffee about an hour later. I'll distract him. That's when you guys hit.

MARVIN

That's a good plan.

WALT

Simple plan. That's what makes it good. Now, you boys too drunk to remember this conversation?

DIRK

No, sir. We'll be there.

WALT

Good.

Walt heads back into the saloon.

Marvin and Dirk stumble away.

INT. SALOON - WALT'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Walt sleeps.

The bedroom door creeps open. A large snake slithers in.

It climbs the bedpost, slides under the covers, creeps up Walt's leg.

He bolts awake. Sees the snake.

WALT

Holy--!

He leaps from the bed as the snake drops to the floor, scoots out of the room.

Walt stumbles. He looks at his hand: Blood drips from a large bite wound. He stumbles again, drops face first onto the bed.

DREAM--BETRAYAL--QUICK FLASHES

--Dirk with Marvin, outside the saloon. "Why do we need the old man?"

--Dirk grabbing the bag of money from under a bed.

--The two men, on horses, riding away.

--The men sleeping in a field, the bag of money between them.

END DREAM

INT. SALOON - WALT'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Walt wakes, doused in sweat.

WALT

Those sons of bitches.

He stumbles to his boots, slides them on.

He stands, reaches for the door--collapses to the floor.

He's out cold. Doesn't see: the shadows under the door--two men sneaking past.

INT. SALOON - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dirk and Marvin turn a corner.

INT. SALOON - PREACHER'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dirk cautiously opens the bedroom door to see: The Preacher's bed. Empty.

Marvin slips past Dirk, searches the room. Dirk looks under the bed. He smiles.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

Dirk and Marvin, bag of money in hand, rush to their horses.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Marvin and Dirk sleep under the stars, the bag of money between them.

Something in the bag moves.

INT. SALOON - WALT'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Walt stirs awake.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

The snake slithers out of the bag.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

Walt examines the ground, finds tracks leading away.

He swings into a saddle atop his horse.

He whips the reins, kicks his heels into the horse's sides.

WALT

Let's go!

The horse rears, takes off in a cloud of dust.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

The snake slithers to Marvin, coils, bites his hand.

Marvin doesn't wake. He just shakes off the bite, rolls over.

The snake turns for Dirk.

DREAM--MORE BETRAYAL--QUICK FLASHES

--Marvin sleeps in the field. Dirk sits up, looks at Marvin:
"You awake?"

--Dirk quietly slips the bag of money into a saddlebag.

--Dirk approaches the sleeping Marvin.

--Dirk points his gun at Marvin. Pulls the trigger.

END DREAM

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Marvin and Dirk bolt upright.

They each grab their guns, quickly turn it on the other,
sweat poring from both their brows.

The men stand, the money bag on the ground between them.

Their hands shake with fear, anger, sickness--snake bites
visible on both.

DIRK

I saw you. In my dream.

MARVIN

I saw you.

DIRK

You're going to shoot me, take the
money.

Both men dive for the money. They wrestle.

The guns FIRE. Both men slump over the bag of money. Dead.

LATER

Walt nears the camp, pulls his horse up. Dismounts. Looks at
the two dead men. Kicks them, just to make sure.

He rolls them off the money. Smiles.

He doesn't see...The snake coiling behind him.

It strikes. Once. Twice.

He spins, tries to fight it off.

It strikes again. He slumps to his knees.

Another strike. He drops face down.

Again. Again. Again.

Finally, it stops. Stares at Walt's lifeless body.

It slithers to the bag of money.

Slowly, it transforms...into the Preacher.

The Preacher takes the bag of money, climbs into the saddle, atop Walt's horse.

He pours the coins onto the three dead bodies.

His eyes--snake eyes, slits for pupils--narrow.

PREACHER

More coins for thee. Three souls
for me.

He jabs the horse with his heels.

The Preacher calmly, happily, rides away.

FADE OUT.