Dust and Roses
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FADE IN:

EXT. NEVADA DESERT TOWN - DAY - EST.

SUPER: 1847

Wind whips sand across the faded buildings. Not a single person strolls through the streets.

INT. HAROLD’S SALOON - DAY

A single patron, JIM CURTIS, sits at the bar. He holds an amber glass to the light and admires the scars on his fingers.

He exhales a long stream of cigarillo smoke. The saloon door flaps open, but no one enters.

His hand slips down to the revolver on his hip. He relaxes and downs the whiskey.

EXT. SALOON - SAME

A HORSE lays dead on the ground. A flap of its skull hangs open from a bullet wound.

A BOY (12) steps brazenly into the street. His voice drols slowly, he is mentally disabled.

    BOY
    You yellow coward, quit yer hiding!

INT. HAROLD’S SALOON - SAME

The sound of the Boy’s voice startles Jim. He looks away from the bar mirror.

Lightening quick, his hand yanks the revolver from his hip. He thumbs the hammer in a single shot.

EXT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS

A red hole, like a third eye, opens in the Boy’s forehead. He coughs once, falls backwards and dies.

A WOMAN screams from behind a door.
INT. HAROLD’S SALOON

Three shots ring out. Each one strikes randomly within the saloon. The stool next to Jim splinters as a bullet strikes it.

He runs his fingers over the lump where the bullet has lodged.

    JIM
    Hmph.

Dull footsteps on the planks outside.

Jim keeps his gun trained on the door.

    HAROLD(O.S.)

HAROLD RICH, skinny like a preacher, steps in. Harold’s shirt is covered in blood stains.

    HAROLD
    Connor didn’t make it.

Jim pours himself another shot.

    JIM
    Good.

Jim replaces his spent shell and retrain the gun on Harold.

    HAROLD
    Oh, come on. You know me, I’m no fighter. I’m a talker.

He spies the whiskey bottle.

    JIM
    You want a nip?

Harold shrugs and accepts the bottle. He takes a long pull.

    JIM
    Never a dry day for you, eh?

    HAROLD
    Not since we lost Margaret.

He hands the bottle back to Jim.

(CONTINUED)
HAROLD
Jim, you got everybody scared crazy. The whole town’s shut up and boarded down. No one meant her no harm, it was just an accident -

JIM
An accident? Then where the fuck’s her marker, huh?

HAROLD
We were gonna tell you, I swear -

THREE MEN rush through the door, guns drawn. They begin firing wildly at Jim.

A bullet strikes Harold in the back. He flails forwards into Jim’s arms.

Jim fires three precision shots.

Two of the Men fall against each other. The last Man spins wildly through the window.

Jim quickly drops three fresh rounds into his gun. He sets Harold’s dead body onto a stool.

He feels his stomach. A small spot of blood begins to slowly spread on his shirt.

INT. HAROLD’S SALOON - DAY

Jim has his shirt open and is examining the wound on his gut. He reaches into the hole and PULLS a slug out.

He groans and takes a long pull from his cigarillo. He pours some whiskey on the wound and cinches up his shirt. The bleeding has slowed.

INT. HAROLD’S SALOON

He CRAWLS across the floor towards the dead Men. He retrieves their revolvers and fresh shells from their belts.

He scoots back over to the bar and fills a shot glass.

JIM
Oh, sorry Harold.

He fills another glass and wraps Harold’s dead fingers around it.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JIM
To Rosy.

He downs the shot.

JIM
What?

He pokes Harold’s chest with his gun.

JIM
I don’t never wanna hear you say nothing like that about her again.

He cocks the trigger. Harold’s dead body remains still.

JIM
Hmph. I guess dead men don’t have much use for fear.

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

A group of Men are gathered in the store. All of them continually glance back through the window where the Saloon sits.

In the center of them stands the SHERIFF. He fumbles with loading his gun.

SAM ROSE, a sturdy ranch owner, slams his fist down.

SAM
What’re you gonna do, Sheriff?

SHERIFF
Well, me, uh, we don’t know who killed that whore?

Nobody says anything.

SHANNY, toothless, dumb, and drunk, stumbles forward.

SHANNY
You’re our damn sheriff, sheriff. Why don’t ya act like it?

SHERIFF
Shut up.

He pushes him.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SAM
Anybody see what he’s doing?

No one moves to the window, except Shanny.

SHANNY
Damn fool’s passed out at the bar.

SAM
Now’s our chance if we got one.

In the corner sits CARLOS. He calmly loads his rifle.

CARLOS
He’z jez one dirty gringo, bullets make holes in him the same as us.

The Sheriff turns to him.

SHERIFF
You don’t know. He’s the best I’d ever seen with a pistol. I only had one occasion seeing him use it, and he did it in defense. Wendall Locke, that was the guy’s name. He fell for Jim’s woman, Rosy. Now, Wendall had him more than something of a reputation, killed upwards of a dozen men. He was fast, quick as a flick, but he never stood nothing close to a chance ’gainst Jim. Jim killed him without flinching. . .over Rosy.

The Sheriff looks out the window.

EXT. HAROLD’S SALOON – SAME

Light flickers in the bar next to Jim. He sits quietly at the bar.

SHERIFF(O.S.)
And now she’s dead. Dumb thing it was, an accident. But we knew Jim would wanta know when he got back. So, we made quick work and buried her without a marker.

A wolf howls in the lonely night.

(Continued)
SHERIFF(O.S.)
And sweet Jesus help us, he found her. He found her.

INT. GENERAL STORE

The Sheriff SWALLOWS audibly in the silent room.

SAM
I ain’t gonna die for this.

CARLOS
Me neither, let’s go kill us a killer, boys.

Everybody unholsters their guns and files out into the street.

Shanny stays behind and watches them go.

INT. HAROLD’S SALOON - NIGHT

Jim SLEEPS at the bar. His head resting next to a bottle of whiskey.

The air is deathly still.

The Men scream and RUSH into the bar. They FIRE wildly as they enter. Smoke billows into the air.

Bullets strike Jim and his body FLIPS from the stool. It lands on the floor, legs SPLAYED.

They gather around him, still firing. Bullets pound into his dead flesh in tufts of blood and skin.

The battle frenzy dies down and they stop firing. The Sheriff kneels down and turns the body over.

SAM
Well, that was eas -

It is Harold dressed in Jim’s clothes.

Jim SPRINGS up from behind the bar. A gun in each hand. He begins firing into the crowd.

Carlos is shot. He staggers forward and accidentally shoots Sam in the groin. Sam begins to scream but Jim fills his mouth with a bullet.

(CONTINUED)
MAN 3 gets a lucky shot and strikes Jim’s hip. It spins him around, but does not slow him down. He FLINGS a spent gun to the ground and YANKS another from his waistband.

He is SCREAMING in blind rage as he fires.

One by one the men fall in a scattered circle.

In the end only the Sheriff is left.

    SHERIFF
    I’m sorry, Jim, I’m so sorry.

    JIM
    Yes, you are.

The Sheriff closes his eyes.

BLACK

A shot rings out.

The Sheriff opens his eyes.

Jim lays on the floor before him. His throat is TORN open. He GAGS as he tries to breathe.

Shanny stands in the doorway. He shakily holds the revolver in front of him. Smoke leaks from the barrel.

The Sheriff stands up as Jim gasps his last breath.

    SHERIFF
    Shanny, let me buy you a drink.

    SHANNY
    How about two?

    FADE OUT