

**THE SWINDLER**

**by**

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FADE IN:

EXT. WESTERN TOWN - DAY

The sun beats down on an old western town. Tumbleweeds bounce across a dirt road lined with shops in varying states of disarray.

One shop displays a sign in a window reading Bob's General Store.

Across the street from the general store is an abandoned building. The front door and windows have been boarded shut. In front of the abandoned building sits a wooden railing running the building's length

INT. BOB'S GENERAL STORE

Every last corner of the general store is stocked with a supplies ranging from barrels containing dried beans and grains to an arsenal of rifles mounted on the wall behind the checkout counter.

BOB, 70s, stands behind the counter. He is a bald, bespectacled man with a white mustache.

Three men stand in line for the checkout counter. The man at the front of the line is CLETUS, 50s. Cletus is fat, bald, and wears a worn white shirt stained with bodily secretions. He is purchasing a large quantity of moonshine.

CLETUS

I'm gettin' tanked tonight.

BOB

I wish you wouldn't say that, Cletus. You know how you're wife feels about you drinkin'.

CLETUS

Ha! That old bag! She runs her mouth again, I'll show her a beatin' she ain't never gonna forget.

A young man, GARTH, 20s, standing behind Cletus scowls at the comment. Garth is clean-shaven with short, blonde hair. He is dressed in cowboy garb.

GARTH

That ain't no way to treat your wife,  
Cletus.

At this, the man standing behind Garth leans close to whisper in his ear. This is TOBY, 20s. Toby is a nervous looking man with a brown mustache and short, brown hair. He is dressed in cowboy garb.

TOBY

(nervously)

Garth, I think you better stay out of  
this one.

Cletus turns to face Garth.

CLETUS

(to Garth)

What'd you think about keepin' that  
nose of yours out of other people's  
business?

GARTH

Let me ask you somethin', Cletus...

TOBY

Garth...

GARTH

You stay out of this, Toby.

CLETUS

I think you better listen to your  
friend there, slim.

BOB

Now, Cletus. Don't you go startin' no  
fights in my store.

GARTH

Let me ask you somethin', Cletus. What

GARTH

kind of self-respectin' man has to beat his wife just because he spends every night gettin' drunk and makin' an ass of himself?

CLETUS

You wanna make somethin' out of it?

TOBY

Garth, Cletus'll lay you out flat.

GARTH

Quiet, Toby!

BOB

I said take it outside, Cletus!

CLETUS

I said you wanna make somethin' out of it, boy?

GARTH

What if I do?

TOBY

Garth...

GARTH

Shut your mouth, Toby!

BOB

Cletus!

CLETUS

Boy, you in for a world of hurt.

STRANGER (O.S.)

Hey!

All four men turn to see a STRANGER, 50s, standing at the doorway smoking a cigarette. Stubble covers his chiseled features and cold, gray eyes stare out from beneath the brim of a cowboy hat covering long, blonde hair. The stranger wears a brown trench coat.

CLETUS

Who the hell are you?  
(a beat)

STRANGER

They call me... Six-Shooter Sam.  
(a beat)

TOBY

Well, I'll be. Six-Shooter Sam... the  
fastest draw in all the West.

SAM

You better believe it.

BOB

Take it easy, now. We're not lookin'  
for trouble.

SAM

Neither am I.

GARTH

What are you lookin' for...

CLETUS

Now, wait just a goddamn minute! How  
do we know that's the real Six-Shooter  
Sam?

No sooner have the words left Cletus' mouth, Six-Shooter  
whips his pistol out of its holster and unloads into every  
jug of moonshine on the counter.

TOBY

That's the real Six-Shooter alright.

BOB

You're payin' for those!

CLETUS

Quiet, old man! He's payin' me.  
(to Sam)

That was my moonshine, you horse's  
ass!

GARTH

What do you want, Sam?

SAM

I'm here for a challenge.

TOBY

What kind of challenge?

SAM

I'm here to challenge the fastest draw in town.

GARTH

That'd be me!

TOBY

What're you doin', Garth? You'll be killed!

SAM

Not a duel. A challenge.

Sam points across the street.

SAM

We're going to line up six jugs of moonshine on that there railin' across the road. Each cowboy gets to shoot. Whoever breaks all six jugs in the shortest time wins.

(a beat)

GARTH

You're on, Six-Shooter.

(a beat)

Cletus suddenly bursts out laughing.

CLETUS

I got three bucks says this twirp...

(gestures to Garth)

is goin' down.

TOBY

I got four.

GARTH

(offended)

I thought you'd be on my side, Toby!

TOBY

Sorry, Garth but that's Six-Shooter Sam, the fastest draw in all the West. Besides, we might be able to go something out of this. C'mon, Garth. I'll buy you a drink later on.

GARTH

Well... I gotta try. Six-Shooter... I accept your challenge.

Sam smiles.

SAM

They always do.

CLETUS

(laughs)

Try all you want, boy. Three bucks says the Six-Shooter's gonna put a bullet through your pride.

BOB

Darnit, the whole town's gonna be in on this.

EXT. BOB'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

A huge crowd has gathered in front of Bob's General Store. Garth and Sam stand side-by-side facing the railing across the road. Six jugs of moonshine have been placed on the railing.

A BET TAKER, 30s, stands in the crowd taking money from people betting on Six-Shooter Sam. He wears a black coat and bowler hat.

BET TAKER

Place your bets! Place your bets!  
Six-Shooter Sam, the fastest draw in  
all the West versus... Garth.

Someone taps Garth on the shoulder. He turns around to see an INDIAN CHIEF, 60s, in full ceremonial garb. The chief places his hands on Garth's cheeks and looks deep into his eyes.

INDIAN CHIEF

(Native American accent)

You are pure of heart. Trust your  
heart, know the wind is your friend,  
and you will find what you are looking  
for.

Before Garth can respond, the chief disappears into the crowd. Toby stands at the front of crowd waving at Garth.

TOBY

Good luck, Garth.

GARTH

You don't mean that.

TOBY

No, I don't. But it'll be better in  
the long run if you lose.

Sam turns to Garth.

SAM

Good shooting, cowboy.

GARTH

Likewise.

The Bet Taker suddenly appears between the two opponents and turns to the crowd.

BET TAKER

Alright, alright! Settle down, settle  
down! The match is about to begin! Now,  
to flip a coin to see who shoots first.



BET TAKER  
(to Sam)  
Heads or tails?

SAM  
Let the cowboy go first.

Sam winks. The bet taker removes a stopwatch from his coat.

BET TAKER  
May the best cowboy win! Shooting  
first... Garth!

Only Toby and the Indian chief clap.

BET TAKER  
Tough crowd.  
(a beat)  
On the count of three... one... two...  
three!

Garth draws and fires at all six jugs sitting on the railing. They explode, spraying moonshine in front of the abandoned building.

BET TAKER  
Four seconds, let's hear it for Garth!

Again, only two people clap.

BET TAKER  
Set up another six jugs, Cletus!

Cletus runs across the road and sets up six more jugs on the railing then returns to the crowd.

BET TAKER  
Thank you, Cletus.  
(to crowd)  
Shooting second... Six! Shooter! Sam!

The crowd bursts into applause.

BET TAKER  
On the count of three... one... two...

BET TAKER

three!

Sam draws and destroys the jugs of moonshine. BANG! BANG!  
BANG! BANG! BANG! A click issues from his pistol instead of  
a sixth shot. The crowd roars with disapproval.

BET TAKER

(awestruck)

Still one jug left! The winner is  
Garth!

CLETUS

Six-Shooter, my ass! I had three bucks  
on you!

(to crowd)

Get him!

The angry crowd rushes towards the Six-Shooter, led by  
Cletus. The Six-Shooter runs towards several horses stabled  
beside a saloon. He leaps onto one of them and is gone in a  
flash.

CLETUS

Don't you ever come back, you lousy  
son of a bitch!

Toby has stayed at the general store to congratulate a  
dumbstruck Garth.

TOBY

You did it, Garth! I can't believe you  
actually beat Six-Shooter Sam!

GARTH

Yeah.

(a beat)

I guess I did.

(a beat)

I just thought about what that Indian  
fellow said to me and I did it.

TOBY

What Indian fellow?

GARTH  
The one right...

Garth turns around to point only to discover the chief has disappeared.

GARTH  
There.

TOBY  
I don't see no Indian fellow, Garth.

GARTH  
I guess he left.

TOBY  
(to Bet Taker)  
Hey, you see an Indian fellow earlier?

BET TAKER  
You mean the chief? Yeah. He was the only one who didn't bet on the Six-Shooter. I gave him his money and he rode off on his horse as fast as the crowd was after Sam.  
(a beat)

TOBY  
(to Garth)  
Say, you don't think that Indian knew Six-Shooter Sam only had five bullets, do you?

The angry crowd in the distance has now turned around and is rushing towards the three men in front of Bob's General Store.

CLETUS  
Give us back our money, you bastard?!

BET TAKER  
(running)  
I can't! Garth won fair and square!  
Boys, I think you better start running!

Garth and Toby follow after the Bet Taker as they are chased by the mob.

EXT. FIELD - TWILIGHT

Six-Shooter Sam rides on his horse as it trots into the sun set. Suddenly, the Indian chief appears behind him riding a horse.

INDIAN CHIEF

How, stranger!

Sam stops his horse and turns around to face the chief. A long silence passes before both men starts to laugh.

SAM

Rich again!

INDIAN CHIEF

(no accent)

Five bullets instead of six.

SAM

Works every time!

INDIAN CHIEF

They say Six-Shooter Sam never misses.

SAM

Unless it's on purpose. That's why my friends call me Sam the Swindler.

Both men laugh and continue on together, horses side-by-side.

SAM

So what's next, Chief? Moonshine, Peyote, damsels?

INDIAN CHIEF

If you're looking for Peyote, I know some people in the mountains who'll have what you want.

SAM

Peyote it is, then! Next stop?

INDIAN CHIEF

Brokenback Mountain.

Six-Shooter Sam and the Indian chief disappear with the red sun beneath the horizon.

FADE OUT:

THE END