SHADOW OF DEATH

By

Tanner Moody

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tannerm553@gmail.com
INT. SALOON - NIGHT

SEBASTIAN, 40’s, RILEY, 30’s, JUDE, 60’s, and CHARLIE, 20’s, sit at a table playing poker. All the men have holstered revolvers on their sides.

The Saloon is quite large, filled with a dozen tables scattered around the room, a large bar on the far left, and a giant staircase leading to a second balcony level, occupied by three bedroom doors. The saloon is lit with many kerosene lamps.

There are a few bystanders at the bar, and several more at tables all around the saloon.

Sebastian takes a careful peek at his cards.

SEBASTIAN
Call.

JUDE
Read em’ an’ weep, Sebastian. Three fours.

SEBASTIAN
That’s a beauty hand, Jude, but unfortunately for you I aint fond of losin’. Full house.

Sebastian pulls the small pile of coins closer to him with a smile. Jude has to double check the cards a few times, a look of disbelief refusing to leave his face.

JUDE
You cheated.

RILEY
He didn’t cheat you old bag. Whose dealer?

Charlie starts dealing the cards out.

The center door at the top of the stairs opens, and the Saloon’s prostitute, PAULA, mid 20’s, exits with her long amber curls bouncing on her shoulders. A MAN walks out behind her, buttoning his shirt. She strides down the stairs, her head held high.

PAULA
Any more takers?

She gets a few whistles and curious glances, but nothing more.

(CONTINUED)
PAULA
Come on, boys, a gal’s gotta get her whiskey somehow!

JUDE
Hell, honey, you can just have my whiskey.

Paula approaches him and whispers in his ear.

PAULA
These clothes aint comin off if those pockets aint full.

JUDE
I reckon you give me five minutes, they’ll be full again.

PAULA
You sure bout that, partner?

SEBASTIAN
We aint interested, Paula.

PAULA
Fuck you, Sebastian. This aint got nothin to do with you.

SEBASTIAN
These boys promised me some information over our private game of poker. I aint gonna get it if they got you ridin em like an apache.

Paula walks around the table to Sebastian, slowly pushes her hand down his arm, and then snatches a coin from his pile.

PAULA
I’m thirsty.

She strolls over to the bar.

SEBASTIAN
So, boys, let’s have it.

RILEY
Listen, Sebastian, we’ll tell you what’s been whispered round, but I can’t promise you its got any sense of truth about it. They just whispers.
SEBASTIAN
Riley, you said there’s someone lookin’ for me. I don’t give a damn if it is just whispers, I need to know.

RILEY
Alright. Some say he’s a bounty hunter. And then there’s those that say he’s, well, somethin else.

SEBASTIAN
What do you mean, “somethin else?” Like a Lawman?

JUDE
No. Not like a lawman.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT
The trees sway slowly and quietly in the dark of night.

JUDE (V.O.)
They say he’s like the black night’s wind. You don’t see him, and you don’t hear him, but he’s there.

There is a fast and sharp movement.

INT. SALOON
Sebastian fingers his coins as he peers cautiously at the story tellers.

SEBASTIAN
You reckon he aint a bounty hunter, and he aint a lawman, so what is he?

RILEY
Again, Sebastian, this is just whisper. But the stories are that he aint even a man.
EXT. PATH - NIGHT

PREACHER, 50’s, a rough looking man dressed all in black, with twin revolvers holstered around his belt, moves calmly along a path on the outskirts of the forest.

    RILEY (V.O.)
    Legend tells that he descended from Lucifer himself. And he aint seekin justice. He’s seekin due payment.

INT. SALOON

Sebastian scratches at his beard, eying the men fiercely.

    JUDE
    They say when he comes, he don’t bring mercy.

EXT. PATH

Preacher continues to move through the night, the Saloon now visible in the distance.

    JUDE (V.O.)
    He’s the judge, the jury, and the executioner.

INT. SALOON

Sebastian’s hand is now resting on his revolver. He looks from Riley to Jude, back to Riley.

    SEBASTIAN
    This sounds like a load of horse shit.

    JUDE
    That may be. But for not believin in it, you sure as shit look awful pestered about it.

    RILEY
    Give him a break, Jude, we just told the man that death was knockin on his door. Listen, Sebastian, Whether the story’s true or not, we still don’t even know if you’re the one he’s lookin’ for. There aint

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
RILEY (cont’d)
only one Sebastian in the entire town.

SEBASTIAN
What’s this man’s name?

EXT. PATH
Preacher is very close to the saloon now.

JUDE (V.O.)
They call him Preacher.

INT. SALOON

SEBASTIAN
Preacher?

RILEY
I reckon it’s cause after every soul he takes, he crosses his chest and prays.

SEBASTIAN
Prays for what?

RILEY
Redemption maybe.

CHARLIE
I gotta piss.

Charlie approaches the Saloon exit.

EXT. SALOON
Charlie exits the Saloon just as Preacher arrives. Without warning, Preacher smoothly pulls out a revolver and SHOOTS Charlie in the head.

INT. SALOON
Everyone in the saloon jumps with a start, and pulls out their revolvers. Suddenly, a gust of wind blows out the kerosene lanterns and the room goes black. The doors of the saloon slowly CREAK open, and CREAK closed.

(CONTINUED)
SEBASTIAN
Get those god damned lamps lit!

Several lamps go on around the Saloon, but when Riley lights his lantern, Preacher is standing behind him. He grabs Riley’s head and snaps his neck.

Sebastian and Jude FIRE at Preacher, but he is gone. Suddenly, there are two gun SHOTS and Jude crashes to the ground as Sebastian SCREAMS in agony: he was shot in his firing hand.

The BARTENDER pulls a shotgun out from under the bar as Preacher shoots the remaining bystanders in the saloon. Preacher appears behind the bartender and CRACKS him in the head with his elbow, the shotgun sliding out of his hands onto the bar. Paula, trembling in the corner, see’s a revolver on the ground in front of her and picks it up.

As she aims it at Preacher, he picks up the Shotgun in one hand and shoves it in her face.

PREACHER
You aim that at me, you best be ready to pull the trigger.

The pistol shakes violently in her grip, and she drops it.

PREACHER
Get outa here.

Whimpering, she stumbles over bodies and broken bottles and other various objects as she moves as fast as she can out of the Saloon, not looking back.

Suddenly, the far left door upstairs bursts open, a young MAN wearing only his undergarments and holding a pistol charging out. As he takes aim at the only man left standing, Preacher swiftly shoots him in the chest, dead.

Preacher calmly approaches Sebastian who is clambering away from him, maneuvering around objects, and holding his bloody hand. He finally finds an upright chair and pulls himself into it, quivering in pain and fear. Preacher sits down beside him and places his revolver on the table, the barrel aimed at Sebastian’s heart.

PREACHER
You ready?
SEBASTIAN
Why? Why me? Why now?

PREACHER
You had a path, and you strayed from it. I don’t make the rules, Sebastian. I just enforce ’em.

SEBASTIAN
I don’t deserve this.

PREACHER
There comes a time in your life when you hit the very bottom, and there ain’t no diggin your way out. You drop to your knees, press your hands together, and call out to the heavens, "Please, God, help me." And he looks down at you. And then he looks away.

SEBASTIAN
What does that even mean?

PREACHER
It means you don’t matter to him anymore.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

There is a gunshot and approaching footsteps heard from inside the saloon before preacher exits the saloon holstering his revolvers. He walks away crossing his chest.

PREACHER
As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil.

THE END