

THE DARK TOWER

"The Gunslinger"

Written by

Glen Mazzara

Based on the novels by

Stephen King

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THE DARK TOWER

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

A lone RIDER crosses the desert.

WE WATCH from a distance. He looks insignificant against the desolate Monument Valley-type landscape.

CLOSER -- His horse trots along.

EVEN CLOSER -- The rider's head is down. His body bounces with each step the horse takes.

TIGHTER -- His eyes burn from under the brim of his hat. He scans this apocalyptic landscape. Taking in every detail. He's looking for something.

SOMEONE.

As he moves, water sloshes in the leather skin slung across his back. It rests on his side, just above--

HIS GUNS.

They're worn. Ancient.

He's a GUNSLINGER.

This is ROLAND DESCHAIN, both a hunter and a hunted man.

Actually, on the verge of being a man. Maybe sixteen or seventeen, yet already carrying the weight of the world.

He scours the desert. His eyes squint in the sun. His forehead glistens with sweat.

His lip is split. His cheek is swollen and bruised from a fight a few days ago.

The gunslinger continues on his way.

EXT. DESERT - LATER

The sun begins to dip. The shadows of the horse's legs look like a giant black spider crawling across the desert floor.

EXT. DESERT - EVEN LATER

Roland rides TOWARD CAMERA. He dismounts, then approaches--
A PILE OF STICKS.

He looks around cautiously, then examines the ground. After a beat, he SEES --

A BOOTPRINT.

He pulls his guns. The grips are polished sandalwood. Their weathered gray metal barrels glint in the sun.

Roland scans --

THE HORIZON.

It's barren.

He holsters one gun then kneels beside the sticks. He pokes through them then digs in the hard dirt. He removes --

A CHARRED LOG. A remnant of a campfire.

Roland looks over his shoulder. He feels he just missed his prey. He sees something else in the sticks. He reaches in and pulls out a charred piece of BACON. He sniffs it, then pops it in his mouth.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

INSERT -- A flint strikes a steel rod. The SPARK falls onto some devil-grass and begins to smoke.

LATER. Roland sits beside a small campfire. He's lost in thought.

A wildcat YOWLS in the distance. Roland listens intently, then decides that it's not a close threat. He's got worse things to fear.

Roland sits by his twinkling fire, dwarfed by the blackness of the desert and the immense, star-filled sky.

EXT. DESERT - THE NEXT DAY

Roland rides across the desert.

EXT. DESERT - LATER

Roland has stopped.

IN THE DISTANCE --

An awkward-looking FIGURE stands on the horizon.

Roland stares at it. He pulls his gun and takes aim.

TIGHTER ON the figure. Its head SWIVELS toward Roland. It's a TAHEEN, a human figure with the head of an eagle.

Roland realizes what it is. He lowers his gun.

The taheen runs off.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

A SANDSTORM rages full gale. The sound is deafening. The wind and sand hit Roland and his horse with such force, they are almost blown sideways. Roland drives his horse straight into the storm.

EXT. DESERT - AFTERNOON

The sun blazes in the sky.

Roland's shirt is drenched with sweat. His lips are cracked and caked with dust. He raises the water skin to his mouth. It's empty.

LATER -- Roland pushes his horse across the desert.

The horizon SHIMMERS in the heat.

The sun FILLS THE SCREEN, burning white hot.

Roland has heatstroke. He's half-conscious, half-dead.

The horse GRUNTS then WHEEZES. It COLLAPSES on its side, crashing down on top of Roland.

Roland hits the ground hard. He tries to push the horse off, but can't. It's too heavy and he's too weak. He looks up at the sun.

It bears down on him.

Roland realizes this is how it ends.

TIGHT ON ROLAND --

He may be playing the part of a grizzled gunslinger but he's just a kid. Frightened tears well up in his eyes.

He forces them back. He's determined not to show weakness now, even to himself.

The sun beats on him like a gravedigger's shovel.

He passes out.

ON Roland, buried beneath the horse--

CUT TO:

BLACK.

EXT. THE GOLGOTHA - NIGHT

Roland finds himself standing beside the desiccated horse.

A huge BLOOD RED MOON fills the sky.

There's the sound of strange SINGING somewhere in the distance.

Human and animal SKELETONS litter the plain. Arms, hands, claws, the spines and ribs of humans and monsters of all sorts. And skulls, thousands of skulls.

The entire landscape is made of heaps of bones, like a landfill, as far as the eye can see.

Roland looks around bewildered.

CUT TO:

The SINGING continues as Roland crosses this wasteland.

He looks up at --

The blood red moon. It casts an eerie light and is surrounded by countless stars.

As he watches, one STAR'S PATH traces itself in the night sky. It leaves a white TRAIL permanently behind it.

Another star leaves a PINK TRAIL.

The next leaves one of BLUE. The next GREEN. PURPLE.

Each star's trail leaves a different color, all colors, and soon the sky above Roland looks like a painting.

He continues on his way. As we follow him, it feels like he is on a great TURNING WHEEL, one with an infinite amount of spokes.

He is. This is the WHEEL OF KA.

He looks up in awe but keeps walking. As he takes a step, the SUN RISES quickly. Too quickly. It launches into the sky then races across overhead, as if hurtling itself at him.

He ducks.

It shoots over him like a rocket.

The moon rises and launches toward him. It streaks overhead.

It's followed by the sun again, then the moon.

Soon, they are streaking continuously across the sky above him. One after another.

The desert turns from day to night and back as if someone is flicking a switch on and off.

Roland can't make sense of it. He steadies himself. With the sun, moon, and stars streaking furiously across the sky every few seconds, each leaving trail after trail, the effect is dizzying.

The world is turning.

Roland runs but it's like he's running in place. He's trapped. Can't get off. Like a hamster on a wheel. Finally --

A WHISTLE cuts through the silence.

The spinning STOPS. The stair trails dissipate like smoke.

ON THE HORIZON --

A MAN IN BLACK stares at Roland. He has a pale white face and even at this distance, we can tell he's smiling.

Roland glares. He draws his gun and FIRES.

The Man in Black doesn't move. The bullet misses him and cracks into some bones. The Man in Black turns and runs.

Roland gives chase.

CUT TO:

Roland's feet sink into the layer of bones as if he's running in soft sand.

THROUGH THE HEAT

A shimmering VISION of the Man in Black races toward the horizon.

Roland runs hard after him.

WIDE SHOT - The Man in Black flees across the desert and the gunslinger follows. THE DARK TOWER looms in the b.g., its shadow hanging over the desert like a pall.

The Man in Black heads for a large rock jutting from the desert floor.

Roland aims his gun but --

The Man in Black slips behind the rock.

Roland runs toward it but as he reaches it, he slows.

He leans against the rock, trying to catch his breath, to steady himself. He's so close now.

He notices a single RED ROSE a few feet away, the only sign of life on this barren landscape. It's the source of the SINGING.

He crouches low then silently makes his way around the rock.

ROLAND'S POV -- The Man in Black sits with his back to him.

Roland inches forward.

He kicks a bone into others.

ROLAND'S POV - The Man in Black doesn't move.

Roland draws close.

Reveal that the Man in Black is sitting atop a pile of bones.

Roland comes up behind him. Puts the gun right to his head.

ROLAND
Turn, Marten.

No response. Roland spins to face the Man in Black but --

He's a SKELETON, grinning up at him.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Roland startles awake. Instead of being buried under the horse, he now sits atop its dismembered parts. The ground beneath him is moving.

Roland reaches for his guns.

They're GONE.

He pulls himself up to FIND --

He's in the back of a mule-drawn cart crossing the desert.

A MAN drives it. This is BROWN, 20s, red hair.

Roland throws his arm around his neck. Brown screams and falls from the cart.

Roland pounces on top of him.

BROWN

Please, I don't mean any trouble.

He's terrified. Roland SEES --

His guns in the driver's seat.

He grabs them.

Brown cowers his eyes, sure he's going to be killed.

Roland looks down on him with pity.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Roland sits atop a pile of dismembered horse as the cart jolts then creaks off into the night.

TIGHT ON WHEEL - It turns.

EXT. BROWN'S HUT - NIGHT

Brown leads Roland in.

INT. BROWN'S HUT - NIGHT

Roland looks around and watches him warily.

BROWN

Here ye go, sai.

He runs out.

Roland takes in the small dwelling. It's sparse.

A RAVEN stares down at him from his perch.

Brown returns with a jug and hands it to Roland.

BROWN (CONT'D)
The land may be cursed but at least
the well is clean and cold.

Roland drinks desperately.

BROWN (CONT'D)
Sai --

Too late. Roland VOMITS the water.

BROWN (CONT'D)
That sun is the devil's fire. When
I found ya, I thought ye had passed
onto the clearing at the end of the
path. Drink slow.

Roland does then turns and looks at him gratefully.

BROWN (CONT'D)
Long days and pleasant nights,
stranger.

ROLAND
May you have twice the number.

BROWN
Unlikely. I don't have nobut corn
and beans.

The raven SQUAWKS then--

ZOLTAN
Beans, beans, the magical fruit.
The more you eat, the more you
toot.

Roland studies the bird. Brown indicates Roland's gun.

BROWN
I haven't seen one of those in a
nigh. Pistol like that is not for
hunting.

ROLAND
(menacing)
It is.

BROWN
You hail from Gilead.

Roland nods.

BROWN (CONT'D)
Are ye an apprentice?

ROLAND
I'm a gunslinger.

Brown looks at him in disbelief.

BROWN
Kind of young, ain't ya?

Roland cuts him a look.

ROLAND
Old enough to earn my guns.

ZOLTAN
Screw you and the horse you rode in
on.

Brown laughs nervously.

BROWN
He means no harm. Speaking of
horse, I see well your mount was
tough, but a night on the fire
should have him soft enough for
breakfast. You're welcome to stay
if you don't mind eating steed.

Roland sees how nervous he makes Brown but does nothing to
put him at ease.

Zoltan flies out of the hut. Brown sets up at the fire,
tosses meat in the stew, stirring it occasionally, adding
kindling, etc.

ROLAND
I seek another. I've been tracking
him since Gilead. Have you seen
him?

BROWN

If you mean the one who came through here days ago, aye. I saw him.

Roland sits forward, listens eagerly.

BROWN (CONT'D)

Dressed in black he was. But I can't remember his face, even after our palaver. It was bone white but everything else --

(shakes his head)

It's like he was something from the back of a dream.

Zoltan's footsteps scratch on the roof above them. Roland reaches for his gun.

BROWN (CONT'D)

It's just the bird.

ROLAND

What did he say?

BROWN

I don't remember.

ROLAND

How many days ago did you see him?

BROWN

Time stretches. Two, maybe three. I don't think any more than that.

ROLAND

(frustrated)

Where did he ride? For your father's sake, answer me.

Brown shakes his head, disappointed with himself for not remembering. Then --

BROWN

He said Hambry is where travellers rest their tired bones. It's just another day's ride.

Roland makes a decision.

BROWN (CONT'D)

But hear me well, there's no love for gunslingers there.

Zoltan's scratching gets faster and faster. THUD. Zoltan's scratching stops. Roland and Brown look up then at each other.

FOOTSTEPS ON THE ROOF. Not a bird's. Heavy. Clearly the footsteps of a man. Roland draws his guns and runs out.

EXT. BROWN'S HUT - CONTINUOUS

Roland points his guns at --

THE ROOF.

No sign of Zoltan or anything else.

Roland hurries around the other side of the hut, never taking his eyes off --

THE ROOF. Still nothing.

Roland holsters a gun, reaches up for the roof, and pulls himself up.

ON THE ROOF. Roland sees Zoltan on the far corner. He steps toward it.

WIDE SHOT -- Roland crosses the roof.

Roland reaches Zoltan. The bird looks around.

Roland raises his gun, trains it on the raven, cocks the hammer. His face twitches. He's dying to pull the trigger.

ROLAND

Is that you, Marten?

Zoltan looks around nonchalantly. He doesn't give a shit what Roland thinks.

INT. BROWN'S HUT - A MINUTE LATER

Roland enters, his guns reholstered. Brown sits at the fire, his back to Roland.

BROWN

He's a sorcerer, ain't he?

ROLAND

Among other things.

BROWN

And you?

ROLAND
I'm just a man.

Brown cuts him a look.

BROWN
Then you'll never catch him.

ROLAND
I'll catch him.

BROWN
No, you won't, Roland, son of
Steven, of the Line of Eld.

Roland's blood runs cold.

ROLAND
How do you know me?

Brown looks at him, fear in his eyes. It's as if he's frozen. He speaks with a voice of dead calm, as if someone speaking through him.

BROWN
Because I see you. I see you very
well.

He flinches. Roland now notices --

Brown's hand is in the fire. BURNING.

Roland watches him in shock and fear.

Brown looks back at him in panic. FLAMES engulf his hand. His flesh burns away. Tears stream from his eyes.

ROLAND
Pull your hand from the fire.

Brown is paralyzed.

BROWN
I CAN'T!

A chunk of flesh drops and SIZZLES in the fire.

BROWN (CONT'D)
(desperate)
Please... help me.

Roland crosses to him to pull him free but before he can reach him --

BROWN (CONT'D)
I will meet you in the Golgotha,
gunslinger, the land of bones.

He pulls a jagged BONE from the pot and lunges at Roland.

Roland tries to step aside but Brown slashes at him with the bone.

ROLAND
Stop it, man. Marten, leave him be!

Brown barrels into Roland, knocking him into the wall. He slashes at Roland's eyes with the bone.

Roland clumsily knocks each blow away. He may be trained, but he's not battle-tested. Brown tries to drive the bone into his eye. Roland pulls his gun, wrestles it up under Brown's chin, and FIRES.

BOOM! The blast shatters Brown's head. Blood SPLATTERS everywhere.

ON Roland, he's never killed a man before. Actually, he has. Once. But that's another story.

EXT. BROWN'S HUT - SECONDS LATER

FROM THE ROOF -- Roland steps out. He looks around.

EXT. BROWN'S HUT - NIGHT

Roland mounts Brown's mule, kicks it, and makes his way away from the hut.

HIGH SHOT FROM ROOF -- Zoltan watches Roland ride off into the night.

EXT. GILEAD - SUNRISE

The sun rises over the City of a Hundred Castles. It is surrounded by rolling green hills.

INT. GILEAD - PALACE - GREAT HALL - DAY

Banners displaying coats of arms line the Hall of the Grandfathers. Tapestries depict heroic scenes from the life of Arthur Eld, the first and greatest gunslinger.

At the far end of the hall stands STEVEN DESCHAIN, dwarfed by the immensity of the hall around him. He solemnly stares out the window. He's only 40 but the worry on his face makes him look ancient.

A door on the far end of the hall opens. Three men enter and hurriedly approach Steven. They are his friends and comrades-in-arms. Fellow gunslingers. ROBERT ALLGOOD, CHRISTOPHER JOHNS, and ABEL VANNAY, a bit older and wiser.

Steven rushes to them.

VANNAY

We found survivors from Cressia.

Steven blows past that.

STEVEN

What of Roland?

CHRISTOPHER

We're still looking.

STEVEN

You went to Garlan?

ROBERT

We never got there. Found the survivors first and brought them here.

CHRISTOPHER

And a prisoner. One of Farson's men.

STEVEN

You must go back. Find Roland.

VANNAY

My dinh, our hands are not empty. These people tell tales of Farson's attack. They need our aid.

STEVEN

Of course. But so does my son. Send a search party south to Lud.

His three men are frustrated. Vannay speaks carefully.

VANNAY

We will find him. And Marten. I swear by the face of my father. But now, your people need you.

ON STEVEN, torn --

INT. GILEAD - PALACE - DAY

Dozens of poor COUNTRY FOLK pack a courtyard. They look like they've barely escaped a war. They're dirty, hungry, exhausted, and scared. Hollow-eyed children cling to their parents. Many of these people are infirm and covered with bandages. All are angry.

They yell their protests at Steven, Robert, Christopher, and Vannay.

WOMAN 1

Farson tears through the Western Baronies while you hide safe behind castled walls.

STEVEN

We're searching everywhere for him.

MAN 1

He ain't that hard to find. He left Cressia in ashes!

MAN 2

Hundreds of people killed in the streets. Strung up from the street lamps.

STEVEN

He will pay. I have gunslingers in every part of that barony.

MAN 2

Then your gunslingers are either blind or corrupt.

The crowd voices its support. Robert leans forward.

ROBERT

Watch how you speak to the dinh.

WOMAN 2

When the buildings burned, we said, the gunslingers'll save us. They'll ride here from Gilead on high blazing with glory and it will be a rout. When the Big Coffin Hunters rounded people up in the square, I thought, here they come now. The mighty Line of Eld. Surely, there they are, just over that hill.

(MORE)

WOMAN 2 (CONT'D)
Then the blood started spilling.
Throats cut. Still no gunslingers.

Steven has no answer.

MAN 2
Tell them. Tell them what they did
to you before you got away.

She can't go there but it's clear what happened.

MAN 2 (CONT'D)
(to Steven)
While you hid here. Well-defended
and well-fed.

Vannay steps toward him. Man 2 clenches his fists. Steven
steps in to diffuse the tension.

STEVEN
Since the time of the Eld, we have
sworn to protect the Affiliation
and defend against the Outer Dark.
This is an attack on all of us.

MAN 3
(scoffs)
How can you defend the Affiliation
when you can't keep your own house
in order?

The room stops cold. Robert, Christopher, and Vannay shift
uncomfortably. Man 3 realizes he's stepped in shit. Steven
glares at the man until the man looks down at his feet.
Steven meets everyone's look. He commands so much power, they
all look away.

STEVEN
Hear me, I beg. Hear me very well.

The crowd murmurs begrudgingly.

ALL
We hear ya. Hear ya well.

STEVEN
Do you see us for what we are, and
accept us for what we do?

ALL
Aye, aye.

STEVEN
And do you seek our aid?

ALL

Aye.

STEVEN

Then you shall have it.

He locks eyes with Woman 2. She wants to believe it.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Let us now tend the wounded, bury the dead, and comfort each other. I swear on the name of Arthur Eld himself that we will burn his Coffin Hunters and bear Farson's head back here on a pike.

AS he speaks, his words PLAY OVER --

EXT. DESERT - DAY

STEVEN (V.O.)

The Affiliation will stand. No one can hide from the gunslingers.

Four riders cut through the night.

STEVEN (V.O.)

All traitors will be brought to justice.

CAMERA MOVES THROUGH THEM TO REVEAL --

Two boys, CUTHBERT ALLGOOD and ALAIN JOHNS, and two girls, ILEEN RITTER and JAMIE DeCURRY. They're only sixteen but already hardened.

Jamie sees something in the distance. She signals then breaks formation and circles toward it. The others follow.

The band rips through the night.

They each grip their reins tight. They're determined. Filled with youthful intensity. Soldiers on a mission.

Jamie pulls to a halt and dismounts before her horse even comes to a full stop. The others ride up behind her.

Jamie carefully approaches a SITE. Even though the surrounding desert is undisturbed, impressions and tracks reveal this area experienced a great deal of activity.

This is where the horse fell on top of Roland.

Jamie studies the area where Roland lay.

Alain joins her. A wave of sensation washes over him. He can FEEL Roland was here.

He nods for the others.

Cuthbert points out trails of bugs feasting on the dried blood of the butchered horse.

Ileen searches in the dust. The trail is a mixture of where the horse parts were dragged and Browns' footprints. Finally, she finds --

The cart tracks.

She WHISTLES and points.

They trade excited, determined looks. They're getting close.

They mount their horses and head off, following the tracks.

EXT. DESERT - WEST OF HAMBRY - DAY

Something catches the sunlight and reflects it back to Roland. He keeps trudging toward it.

WIDE SHOT -- Roland heads toward an abandoned TRUCK STOP/GAS STATION, partially buried, the only sign of a lost civilization. It's two miles ahead but already the red white and blue of its AMOCO sign casts an eerie glow in the fading sun.

EXT. TRUCK STOP/GAS STATION - WEST OF HAMBRY - DAY

As Roland rides through, he looks up at the AMOCO sign.

HIGH SHOT -- Roland passes the sign.

BACK TO ROLAND -- Roland looks out into the desert.

ROLAND'S POV -- SOMETHING moves very far off in the distance. Maybe a mile off.

ON Roland -- Did he really see that?

ROLAND'S POV -- The desert is empty.

ON Roland -- His prey must be ahead of him. He drives the mule into the desert.

EXT. SUSAN'S HOUSE - DAY

ESTABLISH a modest house on a small parcel of land. A decrepit HORSE stands in a corral in the side-yard.

SUSAN DELGADO, 17, carries a bucket of water from a well. She enters the corral.

A VOICE calls out from within the house.

CORDELIA (O.S.)

Susan?

Instead of responding, Susan pours the water into a trough.

The front door opens and a woman, CORDELIA, 50s, steps out onto the porch. She speaks IN SPANISH WITH SUBTITLES.

CORDELIA (CONT'D)

SUSAN! Don't you hear me calling you?

She holds a bright, blue dress in her hand.

CORDELIA (CONT'D)

You're supposed to be ready. The witch won't wait on you, you know.

Susan answers so the entire conversation is IN SPANISH WITH SUBTITLES.

SUSAN

(re: horse)

Poor thing hasn't had water all day.

CORDELIA

Stop fiddling and be on your way. If she doesn't see you tonight, we'll have to wait a whole other month.

Susan doesn't move. Cordelia storms off the porch and charges toward her.

CORDELIA (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? You must leave straight away.

She hands her a coin.

CORDELIA (CONT'D)

Give her this *after* she gives you the paper. She's not to be trusted.

Susan takes that in.

CORDELIA (CONT'D)
Here's the dress I made.

SUSAN
It doesn't fit.

CORDELIA
It doesn't--? Of course, it does.

She holds out the dress.

CORDELIA (CONT'D)
Here. Hurry your bath. Can't have
you smelling like a stablehand.

SUSAN
Why not? That's what I am.

CORDELIA
And what you'd remain if it weren't
for me. Do you know all I have to
do tonight?

SUSAN
No, exactly what do you have to do?

CORDELIA
My brother would be ashamed to hear
you talk like that.

SUSAN
He would be ashamed of me?

CORDELIA
For your ingratitude, aye, he
would.

She waves the dress in Susan's face. Susan glares at her then
pulls off her dress, snatches the dress from Cordelia and
puts it on.

CORDELIA (CONT'D)
No bath.

Susan smells the blue dress.

SUSAN
The stench isn't mine.

She pushes past her and sets out on the road, leaving
Cordelia behind.

EXT. BAD GRASS - DAY

Roland rides the mule through scrub bush. There are outcroppings of rock behind him.

He comes to a stream and stops. He dismounts and looks around then crouches and examines the water. He cups his hands and drinks. It's good. He drinks again.

He splashes water on his face, neck, and chest.

CLINK.

He stops. He hears something. He looks around but sees only rocks and brush.

The wind stops blowing. All is silent.

CLINK. CLINK.

He stands slowly and draws his gun. He's terrified but forces himself to remain calm. He steps behind some rocks, continuously scanning his surroundings.

CLINK.

Fainter than before but still there.

He starts to move to higher ground. He steps quietly and cautiously, climbing over rocks. Just as he's about to reach the top --

On the far side of the rock, he HEARS the mule BRAY, then the sound of a COMMOTION. The mule SHRIEKS in panicked terror. Its hooves pound the sand.

Roland steps up to a small rise to SEE --

A group of FIGURES attacking the mule with knives, sticks, and bats. They are beating it to death.

Roland aims his gun but realizes it's too late to save the mule. A shot would only give him away.

CLINK.

He spins.

Sneaking up behind him is a MUTANT WITH TWO HEADS. Its skin is GREEN and it's covered with OOZING SORES. One head snarls as it charges Roland, swinging a chain. Roland is stunned, frozen in fear.

BOOM! He shoots one of the heads. It explodes like a melon but the mutie keeps charging.

The mutants around the dead mule REACT to the shot. They are all putrid, grey/green, horribly deformed, and covered with blood. They were feeding.

The mutie grabs Roland. BOOM! He shoots the second head and the mutie falls to the ground DEAD. Roland studies the creature. Can't believe his eyes.

The other mutants, five in all, charge at him. They're fast.

Roland OPENS FIRE, but he can only drop ONE, then ANOTHER before the other three reach him.

One hits him in the chest with a bat, knocking him to the ground. As he falls, he blows the mutant off its feet.

MUTIE #3, this one with giant INSECT EYES, swings a hatchet down on him. Roland rolls out of the way. Insect Eyes kicks at him then lifts the hatchet and swings it again. Roland catches the handle with his hand. Insect Eyes tries to wrest it away. Roland shoots upward through the creature's jaw. The bullet tears through one of its eyes, spilling GOO all over Roland.

He yanks the hatchet free and as the fifth mutant crosses to him, he throws it into its face, killing it. It drops like a stone.

Roland scrambles to his feet. The gunsmoke curls all around him as he takes in the wreckage.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

The dead mule blocks the stream so its blood has pooled. Roland picks up his pack and hurries off.

EXT. BROWN'S HUT - DAY

Four riders enter frame and pull to a stop.

Cuthbert, Alain, Jamie, and Ileen take in the hut then dismount.

Cuthbert removes a small bird skull from the front of his saddle and slips it around his neck. This is his ROOK'S SKULL.

As the four pass the cart, ANGLE ON its wheel.

They approach the door, Cuthbert in the lead. They listen. There's a HUMMING coming from inside the room. As he puts his hand on the latch, they pull their guns. Cuthbert opens the door.

INT. BROWN'S HUT - INTERCUT

The room is FILLED WITH FLIES.

The group cover their mouths with bandanas then enter. They look around. Brown's corpse is covered with flies and maggots.

Cuthbert crosses to it to inspect it. He notices Brown's burnt hand.

Alain clutches his stomach in pain. He SWOONS. CAMERA TILTS. He holds onto the stable to steady himself but the room seems to shift on its own. He staggers, then catches himself. Something in the room is affecting him. After a moment, things settle. He looks at the others in confusion but no one has noticed.

Ileen and Jamie are all business. Jamie crouches near the fire, sees the scraps of horse meat crawling with flies, sees the scuff of Roland's boot in the dust, the cup he drank from. She's confident he was here.

EXT. BROWN'S HUT - DAY

The four step out. They lower their bandanas and take in the fresh air.

JAMIE

Roland was here. We're about a day behind.

ILEEN

Why would he send that man to the clearing at the end of the path?

CUTHBERT

I guess he hates horse stew.

The others ignore him.

CUTHBERT (CONT'D)

Roland wouldn't spill blood needlessly.

ILEEN

He spilled Cort's. And took David's
life.

CUTHBERT

He did what he needed to.

The others shoot him looks. They don't buy that.

ALAIN

Marten must have met them here.

JAMIE

There's no sign of a third man in
that hut.

ILEEN

If Marten was here, Roland would
have emptied his guns. Looks like
only one bullet was fired.

ALAIN

He must have been. I felt it.

The others nod knowingly.

Jamie notices something on the roof of the hut. She examines
it.

JAMIE'S POV -- It's a mark where Roland pulled himself up.

Jamie does the same.

ON THE ROOF --

Jamie sees Roland's footprints and traces them. She crosses
to the far end where she finds --

ZOLTAN, the raven.

She doesn't pay him any attention. As she turns to leave --

ZOLTAN

Is that you, Marten?

Jamie spins and looks at the bird in surprise.

ZOLTAN (CONT'D)

Beans, beans, the magical fruit.
The more you eat, the more you
toot.

OFF Jamie, not sure what to think --

EXT. BROWN'S HUT - DAY

Cuthbert looks back toward the hut then crosses to his horse. Ileen and Alain trade unsatisfied looks. Jamie leaps from the roof and joins them.

MINUTES LATER -- They get on their horses and ride off, leaving the cottage and cart behind.

Zoltan flies off in another direction.

EXT. RHEA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

A giant moon hangs in the sky. Susan approaches a small cottage. She looks around nervously then knocks.

No answer.

She's about to knock again when the door flies open.

RHEA OF THE CÖOS, a warm, grandmotherly type smiles at her.

RHEA

There you are. I thought you had lost your nerve.

She waves her in. Susan enters.

INT. RHEA'S COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

It's small and simple. Lots of candles. Bowls with dried herbs. Sticks tied into bundles. Plants strung up to dry by the hearth.

SUSAN

If it please ya, forgive my lateness. I stopped to look at the Kissing Moon. It gets into my blood as my da would've said.

Rhea studies her.

RHEA

Aye, your father. Dear ol' Pat Delgado. Could have been mayor, he was so respected.

Susan smiles proudly.

RHEA (CONT'D)

Such a sad day, when I heard what happened.

Tears well up in Susan's eyes but she holds them back and stands tall.

RHEA (CONT'D)

Well, then, come, daughter of Pat,
let us be about our business. You
know what that is?

Susan nods.

RHEA (CONT'D)

You have something for me?

Susan reaches into her pocket and removes the coin. She hesitates, remembering what Cordelia told her.

SUSAN

I'm to give this to you after I get
the paper.

RHEA

It's an offering.

Susan hesitates but Rhea smiles warmly then takes the coin anyway. She puts it on a table next to a candle, then strikes a match and lights the candle. She mutters a silent prayer to herself then turns to Susan.

RHEA (CONT'D)

Let's get to it, shall we?

EXT. ROAD INTO HAMBRY - NIGHT

Roland has been walking for ages but shows no sign of tiring. He follows a path that merges with a road leading straight ahead to a seaside TOWN.

He studies the town from a distance. He breathes in the salt air and feels the sea breeze on his face.

He walks along then slows when he hears a loud WHINING. An eerie noise way off in the distance.

He stops and listens. The sound is both unsettling and enchanting.

TIGHT ON ROLAND, trying to make sense of it.

He SEES something coming from the town racing in his direction.

He watches in fascination as the thing kicks up a trail of smoke behind it. Its whining gets louder as it gets closer.

The thing speeds toward Roland. He can't take his eyes off it.

As it approaches, he can make out a metal vehicle bearing down on him. Its RIDER leans forward in its saddle. Roland doesn't realize it, but it's a MOTORCYCLE, heading straight toward him.

The rider guns the engine hard. The motorcycle picks up speed, headed straight for Roland.

At the last second he steps out of the way. The rider glares at him as the motorcycle blasts past.

Roland stares after it, dumbfounded, then continues toward the town.

INT. RHEA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Susan looks at Rhea nervously.

RHEA

Don't be afraid. You're not the first virgin I've seen. You are unknown to men, aren't you?

She smiles then waves her hand, indicating for Susan to remove her dress.

RHEA (CONT'D)

Go on.

Susan unbuttons her dress and steps out of it. She stands before Rhea in her slip. Rhea cuts her an impatient look.

RHEA (CONT'D)

All of it.

Susan hesitates then removes her slip, so she stands naked. Rhea studies her.

Susan folds her arms to cover herself. Rhea approaches her slowly and puts her hands gently on her arms.

RHEA (CONT'D)

Do not fear.

She pulls Susan's arms down to her side so she stands exposed. Susan looks away.

SUSAN'S POV -- A STRANGE PINK LIGHT starts to emanate from underneath Rhea's bed.

Susan covers herself again.

SUSAN
What is that?

Rhea looks over. She's surprised to see the pink light.

RHEA
Don't pay it any mind.

She walks over to the bed. The light seems to be coming from a trap door in the floor. Rhea pulls the blanket from the bed and lets it drift to the ground so it covers the light. Satisfied, she returns to Susan.

RHEA (CONT'D)
It's only a trick. The dancing
light of the Kissing Moon.

Susan isn't so sure.

Rhea takes Susan's chin and turns her head to face hers. Susan trembles. Rhea leans forward and sniffs Susan's breath. She then runs her fingers along her mouth then gently opens it. She looks in.

The PINK LIGHT begins to shine again.

Rhea caresses Susan's ears then gently pries her eyes open, looks up her nose, then runs her fingers through Susan's hair.

She squeezes Susan's shoulders then her breasts.

Susan notices the pink light again, she pulls away.

SUSAN
I feel like something's watching.
Someone.

RHEA
There's no one here. Just you, me,
and the pets.

Susan notices for the first time a SIX-LEGGED CAT watches from the corner. A SNAKE is coiled on a table top.

THE PINK GLOW by the bed deepens in color.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Be not shy. Rhea's seen it all.

She squeezes Susan's hips, this time rougher, then crouches so that she's at the girl's waist.

She runs her hands up and down Susan's legs, then spins her around. She's no longer the gentle, grandmotherly type.

As the PINK glows a brighter and deeper color, Rhea's mood darkens, as if some black magic is affecting her.

Susan bends over. TIGHT ON her face as Rhea pushes and prods her from behind.

RHEA (CONT'D)
(curt)
Turn around.

Susan stands and turns.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Now, we've come to where honesty
must be proved. Hold still.

She puts her hands on Susan's stomach then slides them down to her crotch.

SUSAN'S POV -- The PINK GLOW bathes the room.

ON SUSAN -- as Rhea examines her. She grimaces, trying unsuccessfully to hold back tears.

SUSAN'S POV -- The PINK glows furiously.

Rhea looks up at her and smiles.

The PINK fills the room like a spotlight.

ON SUSAN, what the fuck is happening?

She SLAPS Rhea's hand away.

SUSAN
Enough!

She grabs her dress and holds it up to cover herself, then charges toward the pink light.

RHEA
Don't go near that!

Susan bends down and grabs a small chain, and --

RHEA (CONT'D)
I said stop!

Susan opens the trapdoor.

THE PINK LIGHT glows from within but WE NEVER SEE WHAT CAUSES IT.

Susan stares at it in awe.

Rhea rushes forward, shoves Susan out of the way and SLAMS the door shut.

The PINK LIGHT stops.

SUSAN
What glammer is that?

RHEA
Do you dare call me a witch,
impudent girl?

Susan's dazed by seeing whatever was beneath the trap door. Rhea grabs her face tightly.

RHEA (CONT'D)
Get dressed and get out. And
remember nothing.

Susan looks at her frozen, as if Rhea is putting a spell on her.

ANGLE ON RHEA - You do not fuck with her.

She shakes her head as if waking from a dream. She looks around confused.

SUSAN
No, old mother, I mean no offense.
It's just that it's late and I must
be at the fair. My aunt awaits the
paper.

Rhea smiles warmly.

RHEA
Of course, the fair. Where you'll
dance around the Charyou Tree.
(sings)
Charyou Tree! Charyou Tree! Come
Reap! Charyou Tree!

She holds her with her look then crosses to a table. Susan dresses hurriedly. Rhea uses a quill to write a single word on a piece of paper. Her hand shakes.

Rhea holds out the paper. Susan curtsies.

SUSAN
I say thankee.

RHEA
Of course, dear.

She holds out her arms for Susan to hug her. Susan wants to get the hell out of there but needs that paper.

She hugs Rhea. Rhea pulls her close, smells her hair and kisses her head.

RHEA (CONT'D)
He's lucky. Make sure you take only
him. Hear me well, lie with no
other man.

Susan, her dress still unbuttoned, takes the paper then heads to the door. She opens it, gives Rhea once last look, then exits.

EXT. RHEA'S COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

She bursts into tears then runs from the cottage.

INT. RHEA'S COTTAGE - INTERCUT

Rhea stares at the door. Then, sure Susan is gone, opens the trap door.

THE PINK LIGHT glows from within.

Rhea looks at it, mesmerized.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Cuthbert, Ilene, Alain, and Jamie pull their horses to a stop. They jump off. Jamie examines some track. Cuthbert moves a little ahead of her. He picks up one of Roland's spent SHELLS.

Ilene leapfrogs over him to find:

-- The first mutants killed by Roland.

Alain pushes ahead of her. He discovers:

-- The mutant with the hatchet in its face.

The others join him. They take in:

-- Dead Insect Eyes.

Ileen crouches beside it and examines the wounds closely. She's impressed with the gunshot that ripped through its eye.

Cuthbert stands over the two-headed mutant. He lets out a deep sigh.

BY THE CREEK --

Jamie steps toward the mule. A scavenging CRITTER scurries away, into the bush.

The others join her. She points to --

ROLAND'S TRACKS.

Single-file, they follow them toward Hambry.

INT. GILEAD PRISON - NIGHT

Steven, Robert, Vannay, and Christopher walk down a stone hallway lit by gas lamps. Their footsteps echo throughout the dungeon.

They reach a door. Robert steps forward.

INSERT -- He forces a heavy KEY into the lock.

Robert unlocks the door. He trades looks with the others then opens it.

INT. PRISON - CELL - NIGHT

They enter, Steven in the lead. He glares at --

A PRISONER, 20s, filthy and beaten. He struggles to his feet as the others enter behind Steven. A long chain tethers him to the wall.

Steven steps to the prisoner.

STEVEN

You have forgotten the face of your father.

PRISONER

My father serves the Good Man.

ROBERT

Then he will hang, too.

PRISONER

Your nets will remain empty. John Farson routs your spies in the western baronies. The people sing his praises.

STEVEN

People are gathered in my courtyard screaming for blood.

That makes the prisoner nervous but he tries to save face.

PRISONER

They fear the coming tide. The Affiliation's days are numbered. Gilead will fall.

The prisoner spits. Robert steps forward, fists clenched. Steven touches his shoulder, stopping him.

STEVEN

Where is the Good Man now? Tell me.

He pulls his gun. The prisoner takes a deep breath. This is his execution.

Steven removes a bullet then holsters the gun. The prisoner watches, surprised.

Steven moves his knuckles up and down as the bullet passes over them like a wave, like a magician's trick.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Where is he now? Farson. Tell me.

PRISONER

I don't know.

STEVEN

Where does he ride next?

PRISONER'S POV -- The bullet dances hypnotically across Steven's knuckles.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Look at it. Watch and speak true.

The prisoner tries not to answer but can't resist.

PRISONER

He will keep riding east for Gilead.

STEVEN

How big is his army?

PRISONER

Hundreds. Thousands by the time he gets here.

STEVEN

How is he so well-armed?

PRISONER

He has found war machines.

The gunslingers listen intently.

PRISONER (CONT'D)

Grenados, light-sticks that kill at a touch, flying metal ravens, canons with atomic shells.

ROBERT

He's robbed the graves of the Old Ones.

PRISONER

He has taken the machines, learned how to use them, yes. And more.

STEVEN

What else?

No answer.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Tell me.

ON the prisoner -- resistance breaking.

PRISONER

Magic.

PRISONER'S POV -- The bullet continues to dance.

PRISONER (CONT'D)

He has one of the Bends o' Maerlyn's Rainbow.

Steven and his gunslingers trade looks. They are fucked.

EXT. GREAT ROAD - NIGHT

Roland looks up at the bright KISSING MOON. He sees a FIGURE approaching him from the far end of the road.

They walk toward each other, each watching the other out of the corner of their eye.

SUSAN passes him. She's rattled. They lock eyes as they pass.

Roland taps his throat, a sign of respect.

ROLAND

Goodeven.

Susan continues past a few steps then stops and calls to him tentatively.

SUSAN

Sai?

Roland stops and turns to her.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Are you hurt?

ROLAND

(surprised)

No. Why?

SUSAN

You're covered with blood.

Roland looks down at his clothes. He's been so focused on other things, he hadn't paid any attention to how he looks.

ROLAND

I had some trouble in the desert.

Susan waits for more of an explanation but when he doesn't offer one --

SUSAN

Do you need help?

Roland shakes his head.

Susan isn't sure what to make of him.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Well, then, may your days be long upon the earth.

ROLAND

(absent-minded)

May yours be long also.

She turns and begins to walk away. Roland watches, thinking to himself, then --

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Miss?

ANGLE ON SUSAN, beginning to regret ever speaking to him. She keeps walking. Roland follows.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Obviously, I'm a stranger here in --

She stops and turns. The moonlight catches her perfectly.

SUSAN

Hambry.

ROLAND

I could use an inn for the night.

SUSAN

You may have trouble finding one.
The town will be full. Tonight is
the Feast of the Kissing Moon.

He looks up at the moon. It's bright and full.

ROLAND

That it is.

She looks up at it as well.

As the world spins, a star leaves a white TRAIL behind it, the same as Roland saw in his hallucination. Another green trail is traced beside it, then another, this one pink. Soon, the sky is lit up by countless trails of all colors.

Susan watches in awe. The stress of her visit to Rhea drains away.

Roland looks up.

WIDE SHOT - they stand under the Kissing Moon and the trail-filled sky.

SUSAN

I've never seen anything like that.

Roland considers her, surprised. He wasn't sure if this is real or not.

ROLAND

So you see it, too?

SUSAN

Of course. How could I not?

ROLAND
I saw something like this once.

SUSAN
Where?

ROLAND
It was in a... dream.

SUSAN
And what happened in that dream?

ROLAND
(lies)
I don't remember.

They take in the sky for a moment and then Susan breaks away.

SUSAN
I must be going.

Roland looks down at the road ahead of her. It leads to her modest house.

ROLAND
Would it please ya I walk with you?
(off her look)
So you're kept safe.

SUSAN
I can take care of myself.

He believes her.

ROLAND
Then thankee, we are well met...

SUSAN
Susan. Susan Delgado.

ROLAND
And I am --
(thinks)
Will Dearborn.

She curtsies.

SUSAN
Thank you, Will Dearborn.

He taps his throat and smiles. There's another moment between them.

WIDE SHOT -- She continues on her way as he continues on his. The moon and star trails fill the sky.

HOLD ON MOON as the trails twinkle then fade away.

The earth SPINS so the moon now hangs over --

EXT. GILEAD - NIGHT

Establishing.

INT. GILEAD - PALACE - NIGHT

Steven approaches a door at the end of a corridor. He reaches it, takes a breath to steady himself, then enters --

INT. GILEAD - PALACE - PRIVATE CHAMBERS - CONTINUOUS

The room is dark. A FIGURE sits by the window, bathed in moonlight. This is GABRIELLE DESCHAIN, early 30s.

GABRIELLE

Have you found him yet?

Steven shakes his head.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

And Marten?

STEVEN

He's disappeared, too.

GABRIELLE

He's baiting Roland. When our son finds him, one will kill the other.

(beat)

What about the others? Will you send after them? At least spare their parents the grief that awaits us.

STEVEN

I would spare the grief but not more gunslingers. Farson cuts through the western baronies like a scythe. We must be at the ready.

GABRIELLE

A man must keep a watchful eye o'er his house.

STEVEN

That's something I should have been better at.

GABRIELLE

Ka is a wheel and the world moves on.

They look at each other, a chasm between them.

STEVEN

You and Marten, I never saw what was before my own eyes. Say true, it was --

GABRIELLE

I told you what it was.

He nods. He wants to believe her. But then his fear and anger kick in. He takes another beat then pulls something from his pocket.

STEVEN

Gabrielle.

She turns to him.

GABRIELLE'S POV-- A bullet dances across Steven's knuckles. He's using the gunslinger hypnosis trick.

She shuts her eyes and turns away.

GABRIELLE

How could you?

STEVEN

Look at me.

GABRIELLE

Am I some traitor to be interrogated? I'm your wife, Steven, not your prisoner. Or don't you know the difference?

STEVEN

A week ago I did. Or thought I did. But now... I don't know what to believe.

He looks at her pleadingly. She looks at him sympathetically. His world's been turned upside-down. She turns away.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Look at me. You owe me that.

She doesn't respond.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

(stern)

Hear me well. You will look at me.

She does. Sadly. And she immediately glances at the bullet. She tries to resist but can feel her will breaking.

GABRIELLE

Steven--

The bullet dances.

STEVEN

Tell me--

She fights against the hypnosis.

GABRIELLE

It was...

The suspense is interminable.

Steven STOPS the bullet and squeezes it in his closed hand.

STEVEN

No. I won't use tricks on you, not in matters like this. That's the sorcerer's way. Not the way of Eld.

(beat)

You speak true it was magic and magic alone?

GABRIELLE

I do.

He nods. And like that, they agree to believe what they both know is a lie.

She looks at him sorrowfully then exits.

EXT. GILEAD - PALACE - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Gabrielle heads toward a small cottage at the far end of the immense palace complex.

INT. GILEAD - PALACE - PRIVATE CHAMBERS - INTERCUT

Steven watches from the window.

INT. CORT'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Gabrielle slips in. The room is dark. She takes a beat by the entrance.

The sound of a RESPIRATOR fills the room.

It's an IRON LUNG. Steampunk feel. An accordion-style respirator moves up and down rhythmically.

The machine holds the massive figure of CORT. He's tall and has a great, big belly so his body seems to be crammed into the device.

Gabrielle stands beside him. She looks at his face sorrowfully.

It's been savagely beaten. His nose is broken. His cheeks have been deeply clawed. His eyes have been sliced to ribbons.

Her son did this.

OFF Gabrielle, Cort, and the sad sound of the machine --

EXT. HAMBRY - HIGH STREET - NIGHT

Roland walks along and stops. He's stunned to SEE --

A raucous tavern. The sign above it reads --

TRAVELLERS' REST

ON ROLAND, thinking of Brown's words. He moves toward --

EXT. TRAVELLERS' REST - NIGHT

The motorcycle is parked near a wall a few yards away from the tavern door.

Roland doesn't know what to make of it. He's never seen anything like this. He inspects it carefully. Feels the body and the seat.

He crouches beside it to examine the engine.

He stands and feels the handlebar. Checks out the headlight. He turns the front wheel and --

The bike FALLS OVER.

Roland tries to catch it but it hits the ground with a loud crash. He looks around nervously then lifts it.

It's fucking heavy.

It falls again.

He lifts it once more, steadies it in place and takes a beat, hoping it doesn't fall. When it doesn't, he rushes into --

INT. TRAVELLERS' REST - CONTINUOUS

This post-apocalyptic, western/medieval dive bar is packed with GAMBLERS, BANDITS, and HOOKERS. They're playing cards, throwing darts, and drinking hard.

A piano player, SHEB MCCURDY, pounds on a piano. Sweat pours down his face. A heavysset singer, PETTIE, stands on a stool belting out a SONG. Anyone paying attention is either staring at her cleavage or waiting for her to fall.

A bartender, STANLEY, pours whiskey for some cowpokes at the bar.

INSERT -- The whiskey splashes over ICE CUBES.

Roland fixates on the ice.

The cowpokes slam down coins. Stanley immediately scrapes them into his pocket.

Roland steps up to the bar. Stanley looks at him impatiently. Roland points to the whiskey. Stanley pours him a glass. Roland puts down --

A GOLD COIN, big and shiny.

Stanley looks up at him, surprised.

Roland realizes his mistake but commits to playing it cool. Stanley takes Roland's coin, puts down some change.

STANLEY

From the western baronies, are ya?

To avoid answering, Roland downs the whiskey then signals for another. Stanley pours.

ROLAND

If a stranger came through here in the past day, would you tell me?

Roland puts down another coin. Stanley stares at it then scoops it up and pockets it.

STANLEY

Haven't seen any strangers.

Roland realizes he was just played. Trying to save face, he picks up the drink and turns to take in the action. Stanley watches him out of the corner of his eye.

TIGHT ON ROLAND, raising the glass to his split lip --

EXT. STREETS OF HAMBRY - NIGHT

Cuthbert, Alain, and Jamie wait on a corner.

COSTUMED REVELERS stream past on their way to the town square. The costumes are odd. Exaggerated characters. Mythological beasts. Lots of people dressed as scarecrow-like STUFFY GUYS. Faces are painted. Grotesque masks. It's Halloween/Mardi Gras in Hambry.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - INTERCUT

Ileen pays a STABLEHAND to care for the four horses. She gives the young girl a coin. The girl looks at it in surprise then nods gratefully.

BACK TO -- Cuthbert, Alain, and Jamie people-watching. Ileen joins them. They are swept along by the growing crowd.

INT. TRAVELLERS' REST - NIGHT

Roland sits at a small table in the corner watching the scene.

Sheb bangs out another song on the piano while Pettie plays to the crowd.

Roland fixates on a card game on the other side of the bar.

ROY DEPAPE, 25, redhead, plays with CLAY REYNOLDS, 30s. He's got long black hair, a well-kept mustache, and immaculate clothes. A bit of a dandy.

They sit with other bandits at the table. Everyone wears guns.

A young man, SHEEMIE, mentally disabled, enters from a back room. He wears an apron and carries a bucket marked with two handwritten words:

Camel Piss

Sheemie removes half finished drinks from the bar and spills them into the bucket. He then puts the empties into another bin and wipes down the bar with a cloth that he puts back in his apron. He makes his way to the next table.

Reynolds slams downs a winning hand. His fellow players shout in protest. Depape snaps for another drink. Reynolds laughs as he rakes in the winnings.

Pettie sashays over to some drunks standing in front of the bar. She steps in front of one and sways as she sings her song. He grabs her ass. She slaps his hand sternly then moves away. The man feigns disappointment then laughs with his buddies.

Roland keeps his eyes on the card game.

Reynolds drops his hand to his side.

INSERT -- A card slides down from his sleeve into his hand. So fast, we're not sure we even saw it.

A waitress, GERT, carries a bucket of steamed clams past Reynolds' table. Depape snatches one, opens it, and slurps down the clam.

Gert puts the bucket on another table where a COWPOKE swigs from a bottle of whiskey. She crosses to Roland. There's nothing in front of him except one empty glass.

GERT

You know how this works, doncha?

ROLAND

If you want me to lie with you, I only have so much coin.

GERT

I'm the waitress, cully. Food. Drinks. You want something more than that, I can send over the Countess --

She points to COUNTESS JULIAN, flirting at another table.

GERT (CONT'D)

Or ye can go fuck yourself.

ROLAND

I cry your pardon.
(off her look)
Whiskey.

She heads off. Roland SEES --

Reynolds win again. Depape slams back another drink.

Sheemie crosses behind them carrying the bucket of Camel Piss. One of the men at Reynolds' table, MCCREEDY, sticks his foot out so Sheemie stumbles.

He DOUSES Reynolds with Camel Piss.

Reynolds shoots to his feet.

SHEEMIE

Sorry, I go trippy-trip.

MCCREEDY

The hell you did.

Reynolds brushes the drinks off himself. He's pissed.

REYNOLDS

Look at this, you damned feeb.

Sheemie watches him nervously.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

My boots. Ye've drenched them.

Depape laughs, pissing Reynolds off even further.

Roland watches intently.

Another man, RUIZ, steps forward with a cloth to help dry Reynolds.

RUIZ

Sai Reynolds, the boy meant no ill.

He starts dabbing Reynolds.

REYNOLDS

Stop.

RUIZ

I'd be happy to buy you --

BAM! Reynolds pistol whips him in the mouth with his gun. Ruiz falls to the ground. He spits out blood and teeth. Reynolds draws on Sheemie. The entire place is frozen.

REYNOLDS

Clean my boots.

Terrified Sheemie pulls his bar rag from his apron.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
 No. Put that nasty clout back where
 it came from.

Sheemie returns the cloth to his apron.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
 Lick em.

Sheemie hesitates. Ruiz staggers to his feet and collapses in
 a chair. His mouth, neck, and chest are covered with blood.
 Reynolds gestures toward him.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
 (to Sheemie)
 You'll be far worse if you don't
 lick my boots dry.

SHEEMIE
 I'm so sorry...

Reynolds looks around. He has an audience. Everyone is frozen
 in fear and contempt.

REYNOLDS
 Lick, you feeble-minded donkey.
 Every drop of that Camel Piss.

He cocks his gun. Sheemie starts to cry then slowly kneels
 beside Reynolds.

INSERT -- The boots gleam with Camel Piss. One drop rolls off
 and hits the floor.

Reynolds doesn't lift his boot so Sheemie has to bend all the
 way down to the floor.

Sheemie sticks his tongue out and begins to lick the boot.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
 That's it.

DePape, McCreedy, and some others laugh. Sheb, Stanley, and
 Gert watch in disgust.

ROLAND (O.S.)
 Stop.

Reynolds turns.

ROLAND is on his feet, his gun aimed straight at Reynolds.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
 That's enough. Let him be.

REYNOLDS

Better put that toy down, cully,
before ye hurt yeself.

ROLAND

Your cardmate tripped the boy. You
were too busy pulling kings from
your sleeve to notice.

REYNOLDS

Stranger, you don't talk that way
to Clay Reynolds, one of the Big
Coffin Hunters.

ROLAND

If it's your coffin you hunt, I'll
be happy to help.

They glare at each other.

REYNOLDS

This ain't your business. Hell, you
didn't even know to get out of the
way of my moto.

Roland now recognizes Reynolds as the rider of the
motorcycle.

ROLAND

Leave the boy in peace. 'Twas just
misfortune he spilled on your fine
cloak.

DEPAPE

(laughs)

Clay, why are you waiting? Kill the
cully and be done with it.

Reynolds considers it.

Roland stays focused.

Everyone in the bar holds their breath.

Reynolds is ready to kill.

ON ROLAND, wheels turning --

The cowpoke at the table nearest him raises the whiskey
bottle to his lips. Roland spins and SHOTS it in half.
Before the bottom of the bottle can hit the ground, Roland
snatches it from mid-air and throws it across the bar,
hitting Reynolds in the temple.

Reynolds drops to the floor UNCONSCIOUS.

Roland trains his gun on Depape. Depape puts his hands up.

A beat. No one makes a sound or moves. They've never seen anything like that.

Roland crosses to the door, stepping over the unconscious Reynolds and his boots.

Sheemie looks at him gratefully. Roland nods then gives one last look around before exiting.

OFF the bar, in stunned silence --

EXT. TRAVELLERS' REST - NIGHT

Roland checks that no one's coming after him. When he's sure, he holsters his gun then lets out a deep breath.

He looks around and is startled to see the streets filled with revelers.

Roland joins the stream of pedestrians, happy to put distance between him and the tavern.

EXT. GREEN HEART SQUARE - HAMBRY - NIGHT

Roland joins what must be the entire population of Hambry, maybe a thousand people. He looks around, scanning the crowd.

Costumed revelers are packed into the square. Several people in stuffy guy costumes ON STILTS walk among the crowd.

A BAND plays on a dais lit by gas lamps.

The stilt-walkers DANCE.

In the middle of the square Roland SEES --

THE CHARYOU TREE.

A blackened, charred tree trunk with only a few dead branches reaching into the night sky. No leaves. A symbol of death.

Strapped to it is a giant scarecrow figure, THE STUFFY GUY. Women and children fill its clothes with hay.

Roland studies it.

FIREWORKS go off. The crowd CHEERS.

Roland surveys the crowd. He picks out --

MAYOR HART THORIN, 60s, short, stuffy, mean but trying to hide it.

He has several high-powered STUFFED SHIRTS around him, both men and women. Hambry's ruling class.

His dutiful wife, OLIVE THORIN, 50s, laughs at all his jokes but there's something sad about her.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SQUARE - INTERCUT

Susan argues with Cordelia, who is berating her. Susan does not want to listen but Cordelia grabs her by the arm and drags her toward the mayor.

Roland spots Susan. His face lights up but then he clocks Cordelia. He can tell something's going on.

Cordelia leads Susan to a few people behind those greeting Mayor Thorin. She waits her turn anxiously.

Thorin shakes a few hands then spots Susan. He's happy to see her and cuts through the crowd, waving her to him.

Roland watches.

SUSAN'S POV --

Thorin heads straight for her. When he reaches her --

Susan reaches into her pocket and hands him Rhea's note.

Cordelia pushes her way through the crowd to join them. She watches as --

Thorin reads the note. It has only one word:

onnest

He cuts Susan a salacious look.

She drops her eyes.

The mayor smiles.

Cordelia steps forward to shake his hand but he ignores her. He puts his arm around Susan and swings her into a dance line with other dancers.

They waltz.

Roland watches, confused.

INT. TRAVELLERS' REST - NIGHT

The bar has emptied out except for the staff and Reynolds holding an ice pack to his temple. Depape slaps down cards, as if playing solitaire.

Some of the Big Coffin Hunters drink, sleep, play darts, and shoot dice.

ELDRED JONAS, 60s, grizzled, outlaw, comes down the stairs and pours himself a drink.

Sheemie bussess a table far from Reynolds, never taking his eyes off him. Reynolds glares at him murderously.

JONAS
(to Reynolds)
And what happened to you?

Reynolds cuts Sheemie another look. Sheemie slinks away.

REYNOLDS
I fell.

Depape laughs.

DEPAPE
After some gunbunny laid him out flat.

He bursts out laughing.

REYNOLDS
Shut it.

DEPAPE
Shoulda seen it. Shot a bottle in half and flung a chunk straight at him, hit him right here.

He flicks Reynolds' wound. Reynolds slaps his hand.

DEPAPE (CONT'D)
Went down like Lord Perth himself.

JONAS
What gunbunny?

DEPAPE
A babbie. Couldn't even have had whiskers on his cockles yet.

McCreeedy and the other Big Coffin Hunters laugh. Reynolds stands and pulls his gun.

REYNOLDS
I said don't be pert.

JONAS
(without flinching)
Put that away or I'll it take it
from ye myself.

Reynolds doesn't like it but he complies.

JONAS (CONT'D)
Where was this bunny from? If you
say true, ain't no pube in town can
do that.

REYNOLDS
He wasn't from Mejis.

JONAS
And he laid ya flat without putting
a bullet in ya.

REYNOLDS
I never saw a gunner move that
fast. Faster than even you, Jonas.

Jonas considers that. He has his suspicions.

JONAS
What did you do with it?

REYNOLDS
With what?

JONAS
His body.

Reynolds and Depape trade looks. Oh shit.

JONAS (CONT'D)
You let him walk out of here?

Everyone in the bar listens closely. Jonas addresses all of
them.

JONAS (CONT'D)
You let a pube knock down one of
the Big Coffin Hunters in front of
the whole bar and you didn't take
his head?

He pulls his knife.

JONAS (CONT'D)
You shoulda cut it right off there
and then and put it right here!

He jams the knife into the table. Bottles go flying.

JONAS (CONT'D)
Now everyone thinks you can take
down a Big Coffin Hunter and get
away with it.

Reynolds, Depape and the others are humiliated.

JONAS (CONT'D)
Where is he?

Reynolds looks at the door.

Jonas shakes his head then charges out of the tavern. The others scramble out after him, pulling their weapons as they go.

EXT. HAMBRY - TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Roland watches Susan dance with Mayor Thorin.

Susan forces a smile.

Thorin beams, looking at everyone but Susan. He's showing her off.

Cordelia holds her head up proudly.

Roland is fixated on Susan.

She and Thorin swing past him.

As they do, Roland slides his arm between Susan and Thorin, cutting in. It's flawless, smooth. Susan doesn't miss a step.

THORIN
Hey!

Roland swings Susan away from the befuddled mayor.

Susan is shocked.

SUSAN
Mayhap --

She's surprised to see it's Roland. Then she smiles.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Will.

ROLAND

Susan Delgado. I hope your gran-
pere doesn't take lather.

SUSAN

Oh, he's not my... he's the mayor.

ROLAND

Did I give offense?

SUSAN

No, not at all.

She smiles. They dance off.

Cordelia watches from across the square. She is furious.

Roland and Susan dance.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I didn't take you for a dancer.

ROLAND

(laughs)

I'm the worst of my friends. We all
learned the steps back in --

He catches himself.

SUSAN

Where are you from?

To avoid answering, he spins her.

The band plays. The townsfolk are all celebrating.

Thorin goes back to his business.

Cordelia fumes.

TIGHT ON ROLAND AND SUSAN looking into each others eyes.

ONE SIDE OF THE SQUARE --

Cuthbert, Ileen, Jamie, and Alain enter. They take in the
celebration.

ANOTHER SIDE OF THE SQUARE - INTERCUT

Jonas, Reynolds, Depape, and their crew push their way through the crowd, knocking someone in a BILLY BUMBLER costume off their feet.

JONAS

Find him.

Roland and Susan keep dancing. They're both smiling.

Alain scans the crowd. HE SEES --

Roland and Susan on the far end of the square.

ALAIN

(points)

There.

Cuthbert sees Roland dancing. He can't believe his eyes.

Depape climbs up onto a FLOAT to survey the crowd. He spots --

Roland and Susan.

Depape WHISTLES to --

Jonas

-- and waves.

Jonas, Reynolds, and crew head toward Roland.

Roland and Susan continue dancing.

Cuthbert, Jamie, Alain, and Ileen cut through the crowd.

Jonas, Reynolds, Depape, McCreedy, and the other Big Coffin Hunters barrel through. Reynolds knocks over a stilt-walker.

Roland and Susan spin, looking into each others eyes. Smiling. Falling in love. They spin once more. Roland SEES --

MARTEN.

In the crowd grinning directly at him. His face is GHOSTLY WHITE. (We SAW this face in the desert earlier.)

Roland is startled.

Susan notices Roland is distracted.

SUSAN

Something wrong?

ON ROLAND -- stunned.

Marten disappears into the crowd. (From this point on, WE DON'T SEE Marten's face.)

Roland starts to move.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

What is it?

He races after Marten.

Cuthbert sees Roland running off.

CUTHBERT

Where's he going?

Jonas looks around. He lost track of Roland.

MARTEN (if it IS him) pushes through the edge of the crowd. He exits the square.

Roland pushes through the throngs of the crowd. The revelers are so thick, they're like a solid wall of people.

Susan watches Roland trying to make his way through the crowd. She's hurt and annoyed with him.

Roland keeps pushing his way through.

ROLAND'S POV -- Marten disappears down a street. He's swallowed up by the blackness.

Cuthbert, Jamie, Alain, and Ileen elbow their way through the revelers.

Jonas, Reynolds, Depape and the rest of the Big Coffin Hunters bulldoze their way through. People protest but when they see Jonas and his men, they get the hell out of the way.

Roland runs after Marten.

Cordelia grabs Susan by the arm.

CORDELIA

How dare you?

Susan pulls her arm free then pushes her way out of the square in the opposite direction Roland and the others are moving.

Cordelia looks over at --

Mayor Thorin. He's chatting up another pretty, young GIRL.

Olive looks at Cordelia.

Cordelia forces a polite smile.

Cuthbert, Jamie, Alain, and Ileen elbow their way through the revelers. They end up right next to Jonas, Reynolds, Depape and the rest of the Big Coffin Hunters also bulldozing their way through. People protest but when they see Jonas and his men, they get the hell out of the way.

Roland runs after Marten.

JONAS

Split up. Find this cully. We'll string him up for every asshole to see.

Cuthbert, Ileen, Alain, and Jamie trade chilled looks.

Marten crosses through a plaza. As he EXITS FRAME, a THICK CLOUD OF FOG rolls into the plaza.

The Big Coffin Hunters exit the square. Reynolds runs down one street, Depape takes another. Other Big Coffin Hunters head in other directions.

Jonas limps down the same street as Roland.

CUTHBERT

Who are they?

Ileen pulls her gun.

CUTHBERT (CONT'D)

Find Roland.

They split up, each taking a different street.

Roland enters the plaza.

ROLAND'S POV -- THE WALL OF FOG rolls straight toward him. It's weird, eerie.

WIDE SHOT -- The fog ENGULFS Roland.

ROLAND'S POV -- The fog is so thick, he can't see a thing.

He pushes into it.

SHOTS of the fog engulfing: --

-- Cuthbert

-- Jamie

-- Depape

-- Alain

-- Ileen

-- Reynolds

-- McCreedy and several Big Coffin Hunters

-- Jonas stares at the encroaching fog like it's a magical force. His eyes widen then he scoffs and plunges in.

Roland slowly works his way through the fog. He stops near the well. Listens.

Marten passes behind him but Roland doesn't see him. He continues in the direction he was headed.

SHOT FROM ABOVE THE CITY -- The fog rolls through Hambry like a monster.

Roland looks for Marten. He's completely unaware two posses are chasing him.

Reynolds makes his way down a street. He staggers along like a blind man. After he passes a doorway, WE SEE Jamie, staying out of his way. She heads in the other direction.

Jonas comes around a corner, gun drawn. CRACK! Something ricochets off the wall right next to him. He pulls back.

REVEAL --

Cuthbert across the street, a slingshot in his hand. He disappears into the fog alongside Ileen and Alain.

McCreedy splits off from his group. He swings his gun wildly, trying to see more than a foot in front of him.

ROLAND SEES --

A FIGURE up ahead.

He goes after it.

McCreedy SEES --

Roland going after the first figure.

He clutches his gun and follows.

Roland presses on.

Marten stares at Roland, coming at him through the fog.

McCreedy steps into the street behind Roland. WE CAN barely make him out through the thick fog.

Roland peers into the fog.

ROLAND'S POV -- The wall of grey swirls.

SLO-MO: MARTEN emerges and heads straight for him.

Roland's eyes go white. He raises his gun and FIRES.

The bullets miss Marten then disappear into the fog.

Roland keeps FIRING. He's fueled by hatred.

CAMERA 180s INTO THE FOG TO REVEAL --

Cuthbert, Ileen, Alain, and Jamie pinned down, the bullets ripping up the street and buildings all around them. Windows SHATTER.

McCreedy and another Big Coffin Hunter rush into the scene. A bullet tears off the BCH's head.

Another shot hits McCreedy in the chest. As he falls, Ileen grabs him to use as a shield for her and the others. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! Roland's bullets rip through him. Blood splatters.

ROLAND'S gun runs out of ammo. He reloads, determined to kill Marten, whatever it takes.

The fog lifts in front of him.

QUICK CUT TO:

Cuthbert, Ileen, Jamie, and Alain pinned down. Still. Covered in blood.

ROLAND takes in the sight, horrified as what he's done. Has he killed his friends?

TIGHT ON ROLAND as Marten's VOICE PLAYS IN HIS HEAD.

MARTEN

Do you hear me well, gunslinger?

Roland looks around and doesn't see Marten.

ROLAND

I hear.

MARTEN (O.S.)
You will send them all to the
clearing at the end of their paths.
Your ka-tet, your father, your
mother, every last one of them.

Roland sees his friends checking to see if they've been hit.

MARTEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You and I have a long road ahead of
us. Take it and that's the price
you'll pay.

ON ROLAND, full of doubt, hatred, and terror. Is that true?
What has he gotten into?

Behind him, over his shoulder, a FACE emerges.

Roland doesn't see it. Neither do the others. But it's there.

Marten smiles then steps back and disappears into the fog.

OFF ROLAND, never realizing his enemy was right behind him.
Close enough to touch. Just one step away.

Always just one step ahead.

THE END