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NIGHT GALLERY

"DR. STRINGFELLOW'S REJUVENATOR"  
(formerly: #33527)

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#A-33578

NIGHT GALLERY

"DR. STRINGFELLOW'S REJUVENATOR"

CAST

DR. STRINGFELLOW  
ROLPHO  
MAN  
GIRL  
SNYDER .  
BARTENDER  
UNDERTAKER

SETS

INTERIOR:

MEDICINE WAGON  
HOTEL DINING ROOM/BAR  
UNDERTAKER'S PARLOR

EXTERIOR:

DESERT TOWN  
HOTEL

NIGHT GALLERY"DR. STRINGFELLOW'S REJUNVENATOR"

FADE IN

1 EXT. DESERT TOWN (CIRCA, 1880's) - DAY 1

We're looking at a four-building "village", dusty white in a boiling sun. Outside of some errant cactus, some creosote, and a couple of scrawny shrubs, there is no vegetation at all -- just four wooden frame buildings representing a hotel, a general store-post office-undertaking parlor, a blacksmith's barn, and a combination church-and-meeting hall. Atop the general store is a large sign reading: "BARTLEBY & SONS - 1ST CLASS BURIALS - SERVICES FOR THE DEAD - PICKUP AND DELIVERY - SATISFACTION GUARANTEED." There are a few wagons pulled up, but the focus of attention is on one in particular - a garishly-colored "traveling medicine show" with flamboyantly curlyqueued lettering which reads, "Dr. Stringfellow's Rejuvenator;" and standing on the platform of the wagon is Dr. Ernest Stringfellow himself. Alongside is his assistant, Rolpho -- a giant, baldheaded oaf with a walnut-sized brain and a muscular body gone to flesh. He's in the process of lugging out a giant carton filled with bottles. Stringfellow is in his 50's - skinny, bony, frock-coated, hatched-faced, and a conniver from his crotch to where he parts his hair. At the moment, he's banging on an ancient drum, looking out at the country people -- the farmers and their families who start to move toward him, wide-eyed, ingenuous - a convocation of sucker bait.

2 FAVORING STRINGFELLOW 2

as his eyes dart around the faces of the farmers. In all things he is a judge of men - and he waits for the moment when the annual fleecing game can commence. When a crowd of perhaps fifteen people are gathered, Stringfellow stops beating the drum, rises, picks up a bottle from the box, holds it up, addressing his audience in a stentorian tone:

STRINGFELLOW

May I have your attention, ladies and gentlemen? Your attention, please?

(points to bottle)

I call your attention to Dr. Stringfellow's Rejuvenator. A strengthening cordial that invigorates the stomach, stimulates the liver, regulates the kidneys, restores the

CONTINUED

2

CONTINUED

2

STRINGFELLOW (Cont'd)

health and vitality of the blood, gives new life and vigor to all the tissues of the body. It promptly removes all diseases of the organs peculiar to both male and female. An absolute cure for eruptions of the skin. It is a most excellent remedy for dizziness, chills and fevers. Additionally, it prevents cholera and all manner of epidemic diseases -- fevers of every kind, particularly that great scourge: Yellow Fever! It is the consumptive's Rejuvenator -- the greatest purifier in the world! It strengthens and supports the system like braces of iron.

3

PANNING THE AUDIENCE - STRINGFELLOW'S POINT OF VIEW

3

reacting wide-eyed and open-mouthed. These are normally tight, taut people of the soil - reticent and reluctant - but Stringfellow moves them from palm to palm.

STRINGFELLOW

Now, ladies and gentlemen, in any sizeable city, this incredible rejuvenator would cost easily ten dollars a bottle -- that is, were it available. The fact is, however, that it is not available. I am its creator and sole proprietor. And because I am not a man who seeks to profit from the illness, the pain, the anguish of my fellow men -- I offer it to you for just pennies more than its production cost. One dollar per bottle. Six bottles for five dollars. The supply is limited, friends, so please hurry and make your purchase.

4

TWO SHOT - STRINGFELLOW AND ROLPHO

4

as Rolpho picks up a box full of bottles and is about to leave the platform with them.

STRINGFELLOW

Now, ladies and gentlemen -- my assistant will pass amongst you

CONTINUED

4 CONTINUED

4

STRINGFELLOW (cont'd)

and, please -- no jostling -- and  
no more than six bottles to a  
customer, please --

(to Rolpho, through  
his teeth, sotto  
voce)

And give the right change, dummy!

Rolpho carries the box of bottles into the crowd and we see several people begin to buy them. As Stringfellow stands watching the procedure, his eyes lift to fix with interest on a point o.s. He frowns.

5 STRINGFELLOW'S POINT OF VIEW - TO BUCKBOARD

5

On the fringe of the crowd, a farmer sits on the seat of a buckboard wagon - a haggard, graying man with the seamed face of a beaten down desert dweller. He is staring back at Stringfellow, watching and listening with a very special intensity.

6 CLOSEUP - STRINGFELLOW

6

who narrows his eyes, gnaws on his lower lip for a moment as an instinct warns him, then he straightens up, turns abruptly, walks over to the shabby drum set, picks it up and lugs it into the wagon.

7 INT. MEDICINE WAGON - DAY

7

Aside from primitive living accountments like a cot and a couple of basins, the only other things that grace the compartment are several vats of whatever is the guk put into "Dr. Stringfellow's Rejuvenator." Stringfellow moves to a small window, parts the curtains and stares out.

8 EXT. DESERT TOWN - TO BUCKBOARD - DAY

8

From Stringfellow's point of view, we see that the man in the buckboard is talking to Rolpho. We see, in pantomime, Rolpho nodding, pointing toward the wagon, nodding again, then winding up his sale of the last bottle.

9 INT. MEDICINE WAGON - DAY

9

Stringfellow leaves the window, moves back into the interior of the wagon. After a moment, there's a brief tap on the

CONTINUED

9 CONTINUED

9

door and then Rolpho enters. There is a smile on the big oafish face which quickly vanishes upon seeing Stringfellow's mood.

STRINGFELLOW

(after a beat)

Before I find out how much money we've lost because you don't know how to add and subtract -- you tell me who you were talking to out there.

Rolpho blinks.

ROLPHO

I don't know who he was ---

STRINGFELLOW

You don't know who he was -- but by heavens, he asked questions and you answered them!

ROLPHO

He just --

Stringfellow interrupts Rolpho's confused search for words --

STRINGFELLOW

He just asked who I was, where I was from, and what was in the medicine we're selling -- that's all he asked! And you don't know who he was!

Rolpho gasps again, shakes his head, tears in his eyes.

ROLPHO

No, sir -- I don't. And all he wanted was to know how long we was gonna stay here.

STRINGFELLOW

(clutching him tighter)

And you told him what?

ROLPHO

I told him...I told him I didn't know.

Stringfellow relaxes a little bit, releases his grip on Rolpho.

CONTINUED

STRINGFELLOW

A revelation! At last -- from this big, hairless gawk comes the proper response!

(goes to window, pulls curtain aside, peering out)

I'll tell you about these assorted desert dwellers and, for that matter, all the citizenry of the soil in every burg on earth. They's got short tempers and a long memory -- and that's a combination that can send a man out into the night on a greased pole, wearing equal parts of tar and feathers.

Rolpho opens his mouth to say something. There is a knock on the door of the wagon. Rolpho jerks up spasmodically, eyes wide with fear. Very softly, through his teeth:

STRINGFELLOW

Gently, Goliath -- gently...wipe that guilty look off what passes for a face and open the door.

Rolpho lumbers over to the door and opens it.

10  
and  
11

OMITTED

10  
and  
11

12

FAVORING THE DOOR

12

The man from the buckboard stands revealed, hat in hand, shifting from one foot to the other.

MAN

Can I see Dr. Stringfellow?

Stringfellow pushes Rolpho aside, wary but brazenly cool.

STRINGFELLOW

That would be me, sir. And how may I help you?

MAN

(wets his lips nervously)  
I...I was wondering if --

He stops in silent agony. Stringfellow beckons to him.

STRINGFELLOW

Come in, sir, come in. Why stand out there in the desert sun and get your brains addled?

CONTINUED

STRINGFELLOW (Cont'd)

(as the Man enters)

Now, what service can I perform?

MAN

(looks around  
briefly)

I got a sick kid. Real sick. There ain't no doctors around here. Then I seen your wagon. You call yourself ---

STRINGFELLOW

(interrupting)

"Doctor." That's correct, sir. I have a medical degree from the Vienna Academy and several others from equally prestigious universities.

MAN

(blinks at him)

Could you...could you look at her? She's in terrible pain. And I ain't got no medicine or anything ---

STRINGFELLOW

Unfortunately, sir, I've retired from active practice.

The man reaches into his threadbare pants and pulls out a crumpled fistful of banknotes.

MAN

I got money, Doc.  
(to Rolpho, sensing  
a kindred soul)  
I was savin' it for a new plow  
and some fixin' on the barn ---

He holds up his hands, his face taking on the look of a vulture about to swoop.

STRINGFELLOW

Please, sir -- it isn't a question of money. I have never healed for profit. I have too much compassion for my fellow man --

(coughs lightly)

However -- suppose I take a look at the child and perhaps at least I could prescribe something.



13 CONTINUED

13

MAN

(dripping gratitude)

I'd be obliged, Doc, I really would.  
Her maw died about a year ago, then  
a sister the year before. She's  
all I got.

Camera in tight on Stringfellow. For just one fleeting and spasmodic moment we see another look cross his face - a much more human one - and this is replaced almost immediately by the same beady-eyed avarice that is the mark of the man.

STRINGFELLOW

Indeed, indeed. Rolpho -- good  
lad -- hand me one of the bottles  
of Rejuvenator.

14 WIDER ANGLE

14

As Rolpho takes a bottle of the Rejuvenator from a box, the Man leaves the wagon. Making certain he's gone, Stringfellow looks to Rolpho and mutters through his teeth, sotto voce:

STRINGFELLOW

Start packing up. Hide the cash  
box and water the horse. This  
won't take long.

Stringfellow takes the bottle of Rejuvenator and leaves the wagon.

14A EXT. MEDICINE WAGON - DAY

14A

The Man is walking towards his buckboard, Stringfellow follows behind.

15 FAVORING THE BUCKBOARD

15

A black little oven is suddenly illuminated by the white glare of the sun as the canvas is pulled back, revealing the Man and Stringfellow, as well as the small, white-faced, teen-age Girl lying on a blanket, her face a mask of pain, her eyes underlined by dark hollows as death works its way out. Stringfellow reacts, then leans over the Girl, studying her for a moment.

GIRL

Paw? Paw, is that you?

CONTINUED

15 CONTINUED

15

MAN

(takes her hand)

It's me, honey. And I brung this good doctor here. And he's gonna make you well.

The girl half opens her eyes, glazed with pain.

GIRL

It hurts so bad, Paw. It hurts so terrible bad ---

STRINGFELLOW

Where is the pain, child?

GIRL

(pointing to her side)

Right here. But growin'. Growin' all over.

16 ANOTHER ANGLE - FAVORING STRINGFELLOW

16

He wets his lips, turns toward the Man.

STRINGFELLOW

Abdominal disorder.

MAN

(blinking)

What can you do, Doc? Is there any way you can stop the pain?

STRINGFELLOW

(handing him the bottle)

A tablespoon of the Rejuvenator every two hours. It should start taking effect by early tomorrow morning.

MAN

(regarding bottle)

And it'll cure her?

STRINGFELLOW

Without doubt, sir. Without doubt. (pats him on the shoulder)

Just give her the dosage I've prescribed and she should be up and around in a week's time.

CONTINUED

16 CONTINUED

16

MAN  
(blurting it out)  
God bless you, Doc!

17 CLOSEUP - STRINGFELLOW

17

For a moment his face goes taut, as if some deep nugget of conscience was being dug into and dislodged, then his face assumes its usual avarice and cupidity. He coughs politely, raises an eyebrow expectantly.

18 ANOTHER ANGLE - TWO SHOT

18

as the man takes from his pocket the wad of greasy, dirty bills. Stringfellow reaches across to extract one of the banknotes with a brittle professional smile.

STRINGFELLOW  
Just a dollar, sir, for the bottle,  
(then, hurriedly reaching for another bill before the Man can put them in his pocket)  
And a small honorarium for my time.

19 LONG SHOT - THE SCENE

19

as Stringfellow turns away from the buckboard, starts toward camera. A building wind starts to grow, spiraling sand across the scene and darkening it. The onlookers begin to return to their various wagons except for one man, Snyder, a bearded, disheveled drunk who has been watching Stringfellow intensely. As Stringfellow reaches f.g. of shot, Snyder steps in front of him. He wears a funny, knowing little smile as he puts out a hand to stop Stringfellow.

SNYDER  
It's Doctor Stringfellow?

STRINGFELLOW  
You have the advantage ---

SNYDER  
Doubtful. I ran out of advantages a long time ago.  
(beat)  
But the name is Snyder. It used to be...Doctor Snyder.

CONTINUED

19 CONTINUED

19

STRINGFELLOW

(thin little smile)

What is it now?

SNYDER

Now, it's rummy. I hocked my  
medical bag a long time ago.

STRINGFELLOW

(a vast pretense  
of thought)

Snyder...Snyder...

(opens his eyes)

I knew a surgeon named Snyder. In  
the Paris Institute where I was  
studying at the time. And there  
was another Snyder who was a collea-  
gue of mine when I was brought to  
Bulgaria to perform surgery on the  
then-King ---

Snyder stands there and guffaws in his face.

STRINGFELLOW

The joke eludes me, sir.

SNYDER

Does it? A phony pitchman and a  
discredited sawbones joined by  
one common denominator -- a desper-  
ate incompetence.

(voice turns  
cold)

But I'll tell you something, "Doctor,"  
Stringfellow. Whereas my shaking  
hands could no longer be trusted  
to remove a sliver -- I can still  
diagnose death when it knocks at  
the door.

(points to buckboard)

That little girl in there, bathed  
in sweat, the right side of her  
body one giant pit of agony. Now,  
Dr. Stringfellow, listen to this  
diagnosis. If the pain is on the  
right side, it's appendix. And if  
the face is gray and the pain is  
insufferable -- it's probably peri-  
tonitis. And if it is the appendix,  
and it's been going on for a week  
-- all that's needed now is a shovel  
and a small plot of earth.

CONTINUED

19 CONTINUED - 2

19

Stringfellow very fastidiously removes Snyder's hand from his lapel, enunciating with vast superiority:

STRINGFELLOW

A diagnosis from a drunk ---

Snyder stumbles a little as he moves backwards.

SNYDER

Doubtless. But with a far sight more truth than the labels on those bottles of yours. We're neither of us very exemplary citizens, but at least, "Doctor" -- I only lie to myself.

20 ANGLE - STRINGFELLOW

20

as he stalks past Snyder toward his wagon.

21 INT. MEDICINE WAGON - DAY

21

Rolpho is corking bottles and packing as Stringfellow enters. The wind is a continuing droning howl outside. Preoccupied, Stringfellow moves to the cash box, opens it, takes the two bills he's just received, adds them to the contents of the box and proceeds to count the take. Rolpho watches him.

STRINGFELLOW

Nine dollars!

(flings the  
money back in  
the box)

That's what you get for three hundred miles, sweating your flesh off. Nine dollars!

ROLPHO

What about the little girl?

STRINGFELLOW

(absently)

Little girl? Oh, that little girl. That little girl will be dead in under forty-eight hours. Said demise is hardly a testimonial to Dr. Stringellow's Rejuvenator, so after a quick supper we'll be on our way, and hopefully fifty miles from here when the sad event takes place.

CONTINUED

21 CONTINUED

21

ROLPHO

Couldn't you do nothing for her?

STRINGFELLOW

(turns to him)

Short of a resurrection, Rolpho,  
lad -- nothing.

ROLPHO

What's a resurrection?

STRINGFELLOW

The bringing back of the dead.

ROLPHO

(wide-eyed)

Could you do that? Could you  
bring her back from the dead?

22 CLOSEUP - STRINGFELLOW

22

STRINGFELLOW

I'll put it to you this way,  
moon-struck boy -- if there was  
money it it, I'd sure give it one  
powerful try.

(steps to window,  
stares out at the  
swirling sand, the  
darkened sky, musing)

And this would be the night for  
it!

23 INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM/BAR - NIGHT

23

Even through closed door and windows, there's the continuing banshee wail of the wind and the rattle of sand against the glass. The place is almost empty save for Rolpho and Stringfellow sitting at a table, a deadly bored Bartender who serves as a waiter, and a couple of farmers at the bar, Snyder amongst them. Camera closes in on Stringfellow's table. He's just finishing killing a bottle of very bad booze. Rolpho sits quietly alongside, looking at him side-eyed and always fearful. Stringfellow is obviously deep in his cups. He looks across the room at the Bartender, holds up the empty bottle.

STRINGFELLOW

Bartender -- another, if you will.

Bartender nods, takes a bottle from behind the bar and carries it over to the table.

CONTINUED

BARTENDER

A buck eighty.

Stringfellow throws two bills on the table, which the Bartender scoops up and returns to the bar. Stringfellow uncorks the cottle, takes a long swill, grimaces.

STRINGFELLOW

This swill that passes for whiskey!  
A dollar eighty to curdle your  
insides.

ROLPHO

(eyes downcast;  
mumbles)

Lot better'n what we sell.

STRINGFELLOW

(trying to focus)

How was that?

ROLPHO

Nothin'.

STRINGFELLOW

(arches eyebrow)

Come now, Rolpho -- a judgment in  
passing perhaps? Some critical  
comment apropos of something or  
other dredged up from that thin  
ditch you call a brain?

ROLPHO

(softly, eyes  
lowered)

You keep tellin' people how it cures  
all them things. Them diseases and  
sicknesses. Even that sick little  
girl. But it's just a little cara-  
mel color and wood alcohol and a  
little burnt cork.

(look up)

It don't seem fair ---

Stringfellow rises and, in the process, knocks over the bottle drunkenly, quickly righting it. Rolpho flinches and tries to back away in the chair, as if anticipating Stringfellow's anger. Stringfellow simply reaches out and dusts off the giant's lapel, speaking in a very soft voice:

STRINGFELLOW

Rolpho -- you don't understand, do  
you?

CONTINUED

STRINGFELLOW (Cont'd)

(leans over table)

So it doesn't cure dyspepsia! So it has no effect on a boil or yellow fever or the dropsies. So what? Do you know what's in Dr. String's Rejuvenator? Dreams! It should be on the label. One part wishful thinking -- one part ignorance -- one part the sweat of little men who want immortality and are dumb enough to think it can be bottled. I should charge a hundred dollars a swallow for this stuff! And I should get a medal at the same time. Because I sell hope to the hopeless -- dreams to the dreamless -- and an illusion of health to every doomed yokel with a dollar in his jeans! I let them look out over the top of their pig sty and get a view of heaven!

CLOSE SHOT - MAN

who has entered and stands just inside the door, his face streaked with tears and sand. His eyes dart around until he finds Stringfellow, then he moves, camera accompanying him, directly to Stringfellow's table.

MAN

Doc...she's so weak. She can't hardly say anything now. She just lies there whimperin' with the pain. And she ain't hardly breathin' ---

Snyder, having left the bar, teeters into shot.

SNYDER

Take some advice, friend. Keep her covered and warm. Give her enough whiskey to make her numb.

(beat; touches the man's arm with infinite compassion)

And find a Reverend.

The Man stares at Snyder, then whirls toward Stringfellow.

MAN

You said she'd be well again --- !

CONTINUED



24 CONTINUED

24

SNYDER

Who the hell d'you think he is --  
St. Francis? This is Medicine Man,  
Mister -- and he'll break your  
heart for a fifty-cent piece.

The Man, wavering, looks from one to the other - his big,  
narrow-boned hands out in front of him, fists clenching and  
unclenching.

MAN

What about my kid? What'm I  
gonna do?

(looks from one  
to the other)

She's out there on that buckboard,  
dyin' an inch at a time.

(clutches Stringfellow's  
lapels)

What am I gonna do???

Stringfellow looks down at the Man's hands, then up into his  
face, speaking in a very even voice:

STRINGFELLOW

Rolpho -- bring me another bottle  
of the Rejuvenator.

SNYDER

(disbelieving,  
reverently)

My dear God -- haven't you ---

STRINGFELLOW

(overlapping)

Go ahead, Rolpho.

25 WIDER SHOT - FAVORING ROLPHO

25

With a vast indecision he rises, starts across the room  
toward the door. Snyder turns as if to move to him.

STRINGFELLOW

(very loud)

Just keep your distance, Dr. Snyder.

(then, to the Man)

Dr. Snyder here is the protector  
of the Common Good. A drunk and a  
sot and an unhealed healer -- but  
he claims to speak for the speech-  
less. You know what I do, brother?  
I sell faith. I'll pump enough

CONTINUED

25 CONTINUED

25

STRINGFELLOW (Cont'd)

belief into that child of yours to  
make her kick her way out of a  
pine casket, if need be!

(grabs the Man)

You understand? I'm telling you  
that if that child crosses over  
into the shadows -- I'll bring her  
back to life! Now go get her!

Slowly, the Man turns, wide-eyed, believing and disbelieving  
at the same time. He turns back, stops, exchanges a look  
with Snyder, then continues on out the door.

26 FAVORING SNYDER

26

as he turns to Stringfellow

SNYDER

Why don't you just bushwhack him  
out there in the storm and knife  
him for his wallet? Compared to  
what you're doing, that would be  
an act of Christian charity!

STRINGFELLOW

(very softly)

For a soused-up wreck, you've got  
a lot of judgments in you. But,  
at the moment, you either go back  
to your bottle and shut up -- or  
go outside to that mournful man  
and read him the Latin out of the  
medical book. Explain to him with  
charts how irrevocable is death.

(beat)

And see which one of us he'll be-  
lieve!

27 EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

27

Hours have passed and the storm has abated, leaving behind  
only sporadic, eddying little gusts of wind. Parked in front  
of the hotel is a black horse-drawn hearse, its rear doors  
open. After a moment we see a black frocked Undertaker  
come out of the hotel, carrying the blanket-covered lifeless  
body of the little Girl. He puts the body gently inside the  
hearse, closes the doors, looks briefly toward the hotel as  
the Man comes out, his face illuminated by the lights from  
inside and sufficiently to reveal the mask of grief. The

CONTINUED

27 CONTINUED

27

Undertaker moves around the hearse to climb up to the driver's seat, then the hearse creaks off into the darkness. The Man stands there motionless for a moment, then walks down the steps of the hotel porch across the street toward the buckboard.

28 INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM/BAR - NIGHT

28

Rolpho sits alone at a table. He looks toward the stairs as Stringfellow descends. Stringfellow moves to the table. Rolpho contemplates him, his face twisted with sadness.

ROLPHO

She's dead.

STRINGFELLOW

Another of your razor-sharp perceptions!

(looks toward stairs,  
voice quieter)

But, not an unworthy effort on my past. I just played the long odds. If she'd lived, they'd be speaking my name down to the Texas border -- and that caramel-colored guk would be going for fifty dollars a sip!

(a beat)

As it is --

(turns to Rolpho)

As it is...we did some fleecing and the Grim Reaper did some reaping...and it was ever thus. Let's go, Rolpho, lad -- there are other towns...and other sheep.

As he turns toward the door, he sees Snyder coming down the steps carrying a bottle and almost totally hors de combat.

SNYDER

You're leaving us, "Doctor?"

STRINGFELLOW

I'm a traveling man.

SNYDER

(nods)

And you'll never run out of places to travel to, will you? Or poor, ignorant people to rob. Or deep pools of misery to go wading into with your dirty feet.

CONTINUED

28 CONTINUED

28

SNYDER (Cont'd)

(a beat)

What a prince of a fellow you are,  
Medicine Man. But there's a service  
you perform. Whoever stands next  
to you -- and it could be the Devil  
himself -- you make him look like  
God!

29 HIGH ANGLE - THE SCENE

29

Snyder carries the bottle over to the bar, sits down and  
starts to drink.

30 EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

30

Stringfellow comes out the door, stands on the porch for a  
moment, takes out a cheroot, scratches a match on his pants.  
Camera zooms in tight on his face, illuminated by the match  
as his eyes go wide. Whip pan away from him toward the  
road where we see, through the fog-like dust raised by the  
howling windstorm, in indistinct outline, the figure of the  
little girl just standing there, staring.

31 REVERSE ANGLE - STRINGFELLOW - GIRL'S POINT OF VIEW

31

Finding his voice, he takes a step toward the little girl.

STRINGFELLOW

Is this a haunt...or a resurrec-  
tion?

(another step)

Did you kick yourself out of that  
pine coffin...or are you just a  
floating spirit to point a finger  
at me?

32 ANOTHER ANGLE - MOVING WITH STRINGFELLOW

32

as he advances toward the little girl.

STRINGFELLOW

Well, I'll tell you something,  
child...if it's the former...if  
that caramel colored nothing that  
I bottle performed a miracle...we  
can both get rich! I don't mean  
just rich...I mean we can own the  
earth! Stay there, child...just  
stay there ---

- 33 SHOT - TOP OF GENERAL STORE - FAVORING SIGN 33  
 reading: "Bartleby & Son - 1st Class Burials - Services For the Dead - Pickup and Delivery - Satisfaction Guaranteed." Caught by the wind, it is wrenched loose, swaying precariously.
- 34 DOWN ANGLE - STRINGFELLOW AND LITTLE GIRL 34  
 He continues to walk toward her. She holds out her hands to him. Suddenly, as if instinctively warned of his peril he blanches upward, freezes, camera zooming in on his horror-stricken face.
- 35 STRINGFELLOW'S POINT OF VIEW - FALLING SIGN 35  
 as it comes hurtling downward. A throttled scream!  
 ABRUPT CUT TO
- 36 INT. UNDERTAKER'S PARLOR - NIGHT 36  
 Toward the Undertaker as he lowers a casket lid, then turns to survey Rolpho who stands a few feet off. A single kerosene lantern burns on a crate.
- UNDERTAKER  
 You a kin?  
 (as Rolpho shakes head)  
 Well, I'll leave you in here...to pay your respects. Bring the lantern when you come out. He ain't gonna need it.
- He moves to the door, pauses, looks back, frowning puzzledly.
- UNDERTAKER  
 Can't understand it. That sign missed him by a good foot. Heart just quit on him, I reckon....
- He exits. Rolpho takes a few slow steps to the casket, then slowly lifts the lid and looks down at the lifeless face of Stringfellow.
- 37 UP ANGLE - ROLPHO - FROM CASKET 37  
 He stares down.
- ROLPHO  
 Fool old man...thought you was smart...thought everybody else was

CONTINUED

37 CONTINUED

37

ROLPHO (Cont'd)

sheep. Turns out, you're the dumbest of all. And the biggest sheep of the flock!

Then he very slowly lowers the casket lid, turns, moves out of the room.

38 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

38

Rolpho comes out of the undertaking parlor, carrying the lantern. He moves over to Stringfellow's wagon, stares at it for a moment, lays the lantern aside, unhitches the horse, then picks up the lantern and flings it into the interior of the wagon. There is a puff of smoke and flame as kerosene ignites and the wagon starts to burn. Camera closes in on Rolpho as he stands staring at it, his face criss-crossed by the pattern of flames. Snyder comes out of the hotel with other people to stare. Snyder moves to Rolpho, looks toward the burning wagon, then to the big giant.

SNYDER

What'd you do that for?

ROLPHO

(turns, very softly)

Why not? Nothin' in there worth anything.

(looks toward Undertaker's parlor)

Nothin' in there worth anything either.

Then he turns back to watch the burning wagon. Camera pans over to the wagon and we see the flamboyant lettering start to shrivel and brown like dying snakes until it is totally obliterated. Panning on, camera holds the sign lying in the street where it was toppled by the wind. It is all but sand. Only one line is readable: "Services For The Dead."

FADE OUT

THE END