

Blindsights

Written by

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Homestead on the Corner  
Story 06

EXT. MOUNTAINS OUTSIDE SANTA LUCIA - NIGHT

A dry wind rattles dead leaves on brittle branches. Owls hoot some way off, sounding tired and worn out.

Two horses walk over the dry ground, closer and closer until coming to a halt. A church bell rings in the distance.

Someone swings out of the saddle, boots grinding in the dirt.

ECKART

(whispered)

How long?

JACOB

(whispered, incredulous)

Town like this? Five minutes, tops.

ECKART

(whispered, skeptical)

That's opt'mistic.

JACOB

(whispered, annoyed)

Oh, you know how these people think: turn the other cheek, and all that. Get 'em scared enough and they'll let me walk off with their wedding silver. Nothin' easier.

ECKART

(whispered, unsure)

Dunn won't be happy about that.

JACOB

(whispered, braggadocios)

Dunn can kiss my wrinkly backside. We haven't had an easy score in two years on account of her.

ECKART

(whispered, worried)

Shouldn't talk about the boss like that, Jake.

JACOB

(whispered, irritated)

Oh come on, Eckart! It's not like anyone can hear us! Five minutes! I get in, find the best target, and then I'm out. Simple.

ECKART  
 (whispered)  
 Still don't like it...

JACOB  
 (whispered)  
 ...And that's why I'm not asking  
 your opinion. I mean, just look at  
 this place! What's the worst that  
 can happen?

Without waiting, he turns and marches off into the woods. As  
 his footsteps fade, an owl lands on a nearby tree.

ECKART  
 (to owl, low)  
 Think this'll end well?

The owl hoots once, then flutters off.

ECKART (CONT'D)  
 (to himself)  
 Nah. Didn't think so.

FADE TO THEME  
 SONG

FADE IN:

INT. SANTA LUCIA SALOON - BAR - NIGHT

A quiet evening in the bar - very quiet. A creaky pair of  
 batwing doors swing open as Jacob swaggers in.

JACOB  
 Hello! Anybody home?

There's no answer. Jacob saunters forward, tapping his  
 fingers against the bar. It sound hollow.

JACOB (CONT'D)  
 (sarcastic, disdainful)  
 Hmm. Nice.

He meanders further down the room, letting his finger run  
 over tables and chairs.

JACOB (CONT'D)  
 At least its clean. Better than  
 most saloons I've seen out...

He stops mid-step.

JACOB (CONT'D)  
 (stunned)  
 Well hello there, beautiful.

He takes a few steps forward.

JACOB (CONT'D)  
 (confused and amused)  
 Now what's a girl like you doing in  
 a place like this?

Jacob depresses a key on the upright piano in front of him. A soulful note escapes into the silence.

JACOB (CONT'D)  
 (disbelieving)  
 Holy shit, you're still in tune?

SAM  
 (flat, understated threat)  
 Of course she is.

JACOB  
 Ah!

Jacob jumps back from the piano, drawing his pistol instinctively.

SAM  
 (as if he doesn't notice)  
 And I would appreciate it if you  
 didn't touch.

JACOB  
 (spooked, but calming)  
 I... damn, you're one sneaky  
 sunuvabitch.  
 (holstering gun)  
 I didn't even see you come in.

SAM  
 (walking to piano)  
 I could say the same.

Sam plays a quick series of chords.

SAM (CONT'D)  
 (satisfied)  
 Hmm.

JACOB  
 (curious)  
 What do you mean, you could say the  
 same?

SAM  
 (ignoring the question)  
 You play?

JACOB  
 (on the backfoot)  
 What? Oh. Well, I used to. A long  
 time ago. Back east. Never seen a  
 piece like this out here, though.  
 (beat)  
 Beautiful.

SAM  
 (slight annoyance)  
 Is she?

He plays another chord.

SAM (CONT'D)  
 (musing)  
 Huh. Suppose she is.

Sam sits down on the bench and begins to play a fast and  
 jaunty barroom tune.

JACOB  
 (admiringly)  
 Damn, you're not even looking at  
 the keys.  
 (pause)  
 I'm looking for the barkeeper. You  
 know where I can find him?

Sam begins to play louder, punctuating the notes harshly.

JACOB (CONT'D)  
 (charisma slipping)  
 Hello? Can you hear me? I said I'm  
 looking for...

CYRUS  
 (blustering in)  
 For goodness' sake Sam, I'm here,  
 I'm hear! I'm not half as deaf  
 as...  
 (suddenly noticing Jacob)  
 Oh! Sorry, I didn't hear you come  
 in. Welcome to Santa Lucia,  
 stranger.

JACOB  
 (ingratiating)  
 Why thank you, Mister...

CYRUS  
Pierson. Cyrus Pierson.

JACOB  
Thanks Cyrus. Sorry to intrude --  
it looks like you were having a  
quiet evening...

CYRUS  
(welcoming)  
Not at all! Not at all! Here, take  
a seat at the bar.

A wooden stool scrapes back.

JACOB  
You're too kind. I don't want to  
trouble you, but I was just riding  
by when...

CYRUS  
(a little too welcoming)  
Want something to drink?

JACOB  
(slightly annoyed)  
What? No, but thank you. See, my  
horse...

CYRUS  
(desperate to play host)  
Are you sure? There's some very  
nice bourbon going to waste back  
here.

SAM  
(quietly)  
Cyrus...

CYRUS  
(nodding)  
Kentucky straight. Bought it off a  
traveling salesman who came through  
last month. Been saving it for a  
special occasion.

JACOB  
(musing)  
Oh, well in that case, I think I  
*will* have a drink.

CYRUS  
(pleased as punch)  
Excellent!

Cyrus opens the bottle and pours a glass, setting it on the table in front of Jacob. Jacob picks it up.

JACOB  
(charming as hell)  
*Salud.*

CYRUS  
(smiling)  
And good health to you as well.

Jacob takes a sip.

JACOB  
(as he finishes drinking)  
Now, as I was saying, my horse...  
(COUGHS)  
Oof... Whatever that salesman told you, that's not Kentucky straight.

CYRUS  
(worried)  
No?

JACOB  
(trying to get the taste out of his mouth)  
I don't think it's even whiskey. Anyway, like I was saying, my horse...

CYRUS  
(barman gossip)  
Oh, it must have thrown a shoe out on the road. It's terribly uneven on the way up the mountain you know, especially right after the snow melts. It's a shame. Spring's one of the most beautiful seasons up here.

JACOB  
(thrown off)  
Uh... yeah. That's what he did. The horse threw a shoe.

CYRUS  
(CLAPS)  
Well, we'll just have to find you a place to stay tonight... and somewhere for your poor horse! Were you coming to visit someone? Relatives at the tin mine, maybe?

JACOB  
 (surprised)  
 What? No, no I wasn't coming to  
 visit anyone.

CYRUS  
 (slight suspicion)  
 Really? Then what were you doing  
 out on the road?

JACOB  
 (scrambling, but still  
 charismatic)  
 I was, uh... just passing through.  
 You know how it is.

CYRUS  
 (satisfied)  
 Ah, yes. You must've gotten lost on  
 the main road.

JACOB  
 (darkly)  
 Why would you think I was lost?

As he talks, Cyrus begins rummaging behind the bar.

CYRUS  
 (oblivious)  
 Well, the road dead-ends in town.  
 There's nowhere else to go from  
 here.

JACOB  
 (a little nervous)  
 Oh. Right.

CYRUS  
 (distracted)  
 We don't get many visitor, and most  
 of them end up here on accident.  
 After all, that's how Sam over  
 there ended up in Santa Lucia -- he  
 couldn't see the sign, and his  
 horse went the wrong way.

JACOB  
 (genuinely curious)  
 What's his problem, anyway?

CYRUS  
 (defensive of his friend)  
 Oh, well he's just had a bad go of  
 life.

(MORE)

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Terrible trouble and hard choices,  
like everybody else... though most  
of his ended badly. And he does  
have the personality of a cactus,  
which hardly helps...

JACOB

No, I mean... his eyes.

CYRUS

(as if he's forgotten)  
Eyes? Oh. Right. Well, I suppose  
you could say he's -- well, he's  
blind.

JACOB

Really? How'd that happen?

CYRUS

If only I knew. Happened a while  
ago, back when he was still running  
with the old outlaws up in the  
Sierra.

JACOB

(a little worried)  
Really?

CYRUS

(casually)  
The Rueter gang, I think it was.

Jacob's glass slips in his hand, dropping loudly onto the  
table.

JACOB

(voice cracking slightly)  
Really?

CYRUS

(slightly suspicious)  
Well, he *did* tell me that a long  
time ago. Maybe I'm not remembering  
right.

JACOB

(CLEARS HIS THROAT)  
May... maybe not.

CYRUS

(back to host-mode)  
Well, however you arrived, you're  
here, and we'll need to find you  
somewhere to sleep tonight.

JACOB

(back on course)

I was actually hoping I could stay here? You know, if that isn't asking too much.

CYRUS

(cheerful)

Of course!

(beat)

Mind you, the rooms up above are a bit drafty, and it's still awfully cold at nights...

JACOB

I'd feel safer here anyway. I mean, you seem like a decent fellow.

CYRUS

(confused)

Safer than what?

JACOB

(smirking to himself)

Well, you know how it is. Go to sleep in a stranger's house, think you're safe, and then you wake up with your throat cut and the guy who's done it walking off with all your earthly goods.

CYRUS

(a little uneasy)

Oh. I suppose that... makes sense.

JACOB

Can't be too careful these days, you know.

CYRUS

(CLEARS HIS THROAT)

Right. Well, if you'd follow me, I'll just show you to your...

He's cut off by a revolver cocking. Neither of them noticed, but Sam isn't playing the piano anymore.

SAM

(flat)

Cyrus, take three steps back.

CYRUS

(uneasy, but not worried)

Sam? What are you...?

SAM  
(flat)  
Cyrus. Three steps.

Cyrus hesitates, then takes three slow steps backwards.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Good. Now then, on the subject of  
caution...

JACOB  
(terrified)  
Are you insane? Put that down  
before you hurt someone!

SAM  
Don't worry. I'm only going to hurt  
someone if that *someone* doesn't  
keep his hands still.

JACOB  
(surprised)  
What? What are you talking about,  
my hands are...

CYRUS  
(whispering)  
I wouldn't lie to him if I were  
you, son.

JACOB  
(whispering back)  
You said he was blind!

SAM  
(annoyed)  
I am. Your jacket creaks every time  
you move. You really should take  
better care of it.

JACOB  
Oh, that's some bullshit...

CYRUS  
Let's all just -- take it easy.

JACOB  
Oh, come on, don't tell me you  
believe he can hear...!

SAM  
I think your five minutes are up,  
Jacob.

He stops fidgeting.

JACOB  
(disbelieving)  
How... how did you know my name?

Sam doesn't answer.

JACOB (CONT'D)  
(paranoid)  
You were out there in the woods,  
weren't you! Listening in on us!  
You sneaky blind sunuva...

Sam shifts his aim and fires. The bottle of "whiskey" shatters. Jacob yelps and scrambles back.

SAM  
(flat threat)  
Reach for that pistol again, and  
I'll put two in your heart.

JACOB  
YOU IDIOT! You almost shot me!

CYRUS  
(trying to seem confident)  
Listen Jacob, if Sam *almost* wanted  
to shoot you, you'd have a bullet  
in your knee right now. That was a  
warning.

JACOB  
(done with everything)  
Are you *both* insane? He's BLIND!  
How could he possibly...

Sam's aim shifts again, and the glass on the table explodes. Jacob YELPS and hits the deck.

CYRUS  
(just a little smug)  
You were saying?

JACOB  
(panicked)  
How in hell did you...!?

SAM  
(at the end of patience)  
You dropped that glass there a  
minute ago. Pretty loudly, I might  
add. Now -- have I made my point?

JACOB  
 (squeaking)  
*Yes!*

SAM  
 Then I suggest you and Eckart ride  
 out of town the way you came. And  
 don't try circling back. I'll know.

With that, Sam sits down at the piano and begins playing as if nothing had happened. Jacob rises, SEETHING.

JACOB  
 You think you'll get away with  
 this?

Sam doesn't respond.

JACOB (CONT'D)  
 Oh, I get it. You think I'm scared.  
 You think I'm...

Sam turns slightly on the bench, and Jacob YELPS, ducking. Sam SCOFFS and continues playing.

JACOB (CONT'D)  
 (rising and backing  
 towards the door)  
 This isn't over, you hear? No one  
 insults the Dunn gang! No one!

CYRUS  
 (trying to calm him)  
 I think he hears you just fine,  
 mister Jacob. Now, if you wouldn't  
 mind...

JACOB  
 (pretense gone)  
 Get your wrinkly old hands off me!  
 Oh, don't think you're safe because  
 you gave me some shitty moonshine.  
 I'm going to burn this place down  
 when I come back, you understand?  
 BURN IT TO THE GROUND!

Sam stops playing. There's a long, tense silence.

CYRUS  
 (friendliness gone)  
 Yeah. I understand. Have a pleasant  
 ride home, Jacob.

Jacob SCOFFS in disbelief, turns, and marches out the door. It creaks shut behind him.

After a moment, Sam starts playing again. Cyrus goes to the table and picks up a piece of a bottle.

CYRUS (CONT'D)  
(TUTING)  
Waste of good bourbon.

SAM  
It wasn't bourbon, Cy.

CYRUS  
Oh. Right.

Sam CHUCKLES, and continues playing. Cyrus picks up the shattered pieces of glass.

THE SOUND FADES OUT UNDER THE MUSIC, WHICH FADES TO...

DREAMSCAPE - NIGHT

A washed out, echoing soundscape. Voices drift in and out.

RUETER  
...bright young man like you  
deserves better than a deputies  
badge...

SHERIFF  
...Sam! They're coming for him...!

RUETER  
...I'm going to get out of here  
anyway, you know...

SHERIFF  
...think they can just ride into  
this town and take whatever they  
want...

RUETER  
...may as well make the most of the  
situation...

A cell door unlocks and swings open.

SHERIFF  
...Sam! What are you doing...?

The sheriff GRUNTS as he's punched, then GROANS on the floor.

RUETER  
 ...here Sam -- show us what you've  
 got...

SHERIFF  
 (desperate)  
 ...No... Sam, please, don't...

GUNFIRE shatters the dream.

INT. SANTA LUCIA SALOON - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam sits bolt upright. He's been SCREAMING -- it echoes in  
 the room as TRIES TO CATCH HIS BREATH. The door bursts open.

CYRUS  
 (ready for a crisis)  
 Sam? Sam, are you alright?

SAM  
 I...  
 (SWALLOWS)  
 I'm alright. Just another dream.

CYRUS  
 (worried)  
 A dream about...?

SAM  
 (defensive)  
 That's none of your business,  
 Pierson.

CYRUS  
 (SCOFFS)  
 You only call me that when you  
 don't want to talk.

SAM  
 And yet, you never seem to take the  
 hint...

CYRUS  
 (shifting again)  
 If I did, then you and I would  
 never have started speaking at all.

Sam considers that a moment, then answers.

SAM  
 (reluctant, halting)  
 I was back in Bodie. Before...  
 (MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)  
before. First time I met Reuter.  
First time I...

CYRUS  
(without judgement)  
The first time you killed someone.

SAM  
(SIGHS)  
Yeah.

CYRUS  
(gently)  
You want to talk about it?

SAM  
(SCOFFS)  
Still not there yet, Cy. Sorry.

CYRUS  
(defensive)  
That's not what I...  
(calms down)  
You haven't shot at anyone since  
you came here. Just those targets  
you set up behind the bar. And when  
Jacob comes back...

SAM  
(deflecting)  
*If* he comes back...

CYRUS  
(turning it back to him)  
*When*. You know these kinds of  
people better than I do. Do you  
think this *Dunn* will just turn the  
other cheek?

SAM  
(can't escape it)  
No.

CYRUS  
(more confidently)  
No. We need to be ready. And if  
that means fighting...

SAM  
(bitter)  
Cyrus... I'm blind.

CYRUS

(quoting)

"And I will bring the blind by a way they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known."

SAM

(holding back anger)

Look Cyrus, I've been listening to your spiel the last five years now. I seriously doubt God's going to pick this moment to start handing out miracles.

CYRUS

(patient)

I didn't say he would. But he makes a way. He always does.

SAM

(bitter)

Not always.

Sam lies back down on the bed. After a moment of silence...

CYRUS

(gently)

Do you think you'll be able to get back to sleep?

SAM

(SCOFFS)

What do you think?

After a moment, Cyrus turns and opens a nearby drawer, pulling something out. Pages flip for a moment.

CYRUS

(reading)

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples said unto him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, I will not believe." And after eight days the disciples were again within, and Thomas was with them.

(MORE)

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Then came Jesus and stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be unto you." Then said He to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger and behold My hands." And Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said unto him, "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are those that have not seen, and yet believe."

His voice grows further away, as the scene shifts to...

EXT. SANTA LUCIA - STREET - DAY

A gentle wind blows down the mountains. Mules fidget nervously, braying occasionally. Nervous energy mounts.

SAM

This is a bad idea.

CYRUS

It was *your* idea!

SAM

No, my idea was to run. You wanted to stay.

CYRUS

I built that bar with my own two hands! I'm not going to let them burn it down.

SAM

Still. This isn't going to end well.

CYRUS

(SIGHS)

You're probably right. You know, times like this, I actually wish we had a sheriff.

SAM

(ignoring the comment)

Did you close the shutters down there like I asked?

CYRUS

What? Oh, Yeah. It's so dark in the sanctuary I almost couldn't find my way back up.

SAM  
And everyone else?

CYRUS  
Hiding in the mines, just like you  
said. Though if they have to wait  
much longer, it'll get awfully cold  
up there.

SAM  
Not as cold as they'd be otherwise.

CYRUS  
(nervously)  
Oh.

A long ways off, the pounding of horse hooves is heard.

SAM  
They're coming.

CYRUS  
What? I don't see anyone.

SAM  
Huh. I guess... Is the sun setting?

CYRUS  
Yes, it is. Rather beautiful  
tonight, actually.

SAM  
(SCOFFS)  
They're riding out of the sun. You  
figure Jacob forgot to tell them  
that I'm blind?

CYRUS  
(amused)  
Probably left that little detail  
out. Wouldn't want anyone knowing a  
blind man scared him off.

SAM  
Probably not.

The horses are getting louder. Suddenly, TIME SLOWS.

Sam BREATHES IN, holding it. His heartbeat is heard as the  
sounds of individual hoofbeats separate. He pauses, then...

SAM (CONT'D)  
I count eight.

CYRUS  
 (disbelieving)  
*Eight?* For this town?

SAM  
 That's what I'm hearing. Two at the front and three riders on either side. Can you see them yet?

CYRUS  
 No, I... wait. Yes! There they are!

SAM  
 (urgent)  
 Keep your voice down!

The horses grow louder as the gang rushes down the street. Dunn WHISTLES, and they draw up.

DUNN  
 (air of authority)  
 Hlllllo? Anybody home?

SAM  
 (whispered)  
 That's Dunn.

CYRUS  
 (whispered)  
 Really? Not what I was expecting...

SAM  
 (whispered)  
 It's her.

The batwings open, and someone walks out of the bar, GRUMBLING.

JACOB  
 Who the hell are you?

DUNN  
 Now now, Jacob, let's *try* to be polite.  
 (to the stranger)  
 Good evening, sir!

DOC TOLBERT  
 (mildly irritated)  
 Evening.

DUNN

I was wondering if you might be able to help us? We're looking for the barkeeper?

DOC TOLBERT

(SCOFFS)

Ja? You and me both. Can't a man at least get a drink in this town at the end of a long day of work...?

DUNN

(understated menace)

Now what could you mean by that?

DOC TOLBERT

I mean, I have been looking all over town for Cyrus and his lackey. Not a sight of them anywhere.

SAM

(whispered, worried)

Tolbert's laying it on a bit thick.

DUNN

(edge of anger)

Any idea where they might be? If they were to, I don't know, decide to skip town?

DOC TOLBERT

*Nien.* Now if you'll excuse me, I have a liquor cabinet at home that requires my immediate attention...

Dunn draws her gun, aims, and fires. The warning shot glances off the church bell next to Sam. He CRIES OUT in pain.

CYRUS

(voice rising)

Sam! Are you alright?

JACOB

What was that?

TOLBERT

*Verdammt!* Why are you shooting at me...!

DUNN

(commanding)

Quiet!

Silence falls in the street -- except the ringing of the bell. After a moment...

RUETER  
It came from the church tower,  
boss.

Sam GASPS when he recognizes the voice.

CYRUS  
What is it?

SAM  
(whispered)  
*That's... Rueter.*

The ringing in Sam's ears increases, washing over into...

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DAY

Vultures circle. Sand crunches. Sam limps forward. The ringing is still there: the first warning of heatstroke.

Sam stumbles, collapsing with a GRUNT. He scrambles for a canteen, unscrews the lid, and gulps down water.

SAM  
(hoarse)  
And that's... the last of it.  
Great.

A ways off, horses whiney. Sam turns to look.

SAM (CONT'D)  
Shit.

Fumbling, he screw the lid back on his canteen, then stands and runs. The ground is uneven, and he stumbles again.

The horses are almost on top of him. With no choice left, he draws his pistol and aims.

BANG. A CRY OF PAIN from the left.

BANG. A horse brays and falls, throwing its rider.

BANG. His shot whistles in the air, going wide.

BANG. He hits home, sending a rider tumbling.

BANG...

One of the riders pulls out a whip and strikes Sam's gun hand. He CRIES IN PAIN as he drops the gun.

The gang is on him before he can pick it up -- seven different guns cocking as they're aimed at him.

RUETER

Well well well, Sam. I must say...  
I am impressed.

SAM

(defeated)  
Fuck off Rueter.

RUETER

(CHUCKLES)  
You always were a prickly son of a  
bitch.

SAM

Just get it over with, Rueter.

RUETER

Why so eager, Sam? Feeling a little  
guilty for ratting us all out?

SAM

You shot a kid.

RUETER

(shrugging)  
They got in the way.

SAM

(getting angry)  
So you killed them?

RUETER

So what? You never complained  
before. People get hurt all the  
time in our line of work. That's  
just business.

SAM

(disgusted)  
Maybe for the rest of us. But I saw  
your face this time. The way you  
smiled. You *enjoyed* it.

RUETER

Oh, grow up Sam. Why do you think  
we're all doing this? You wouldn't  
be here if you didn't enjoy it just  
a little bit, deep down inside.

Sam doesn't have an answer for that. After a moment...

SAM

(SIGHS)

If you're going to shoot me, shoot me. At least then I won't have to listen to your bullshit anymore.

RUETER

(CHUCKLING)

Shoot you? Oh no, Sam, I'm not going to shoot you.

(pause - then, with menace)

I'm going to hang you.

SAM

(suddenly panicked)

What?

Before he can react, a noose is dropped over his head. He grabs for it, but it's pulled tight before he can get it off.

The rope creaks, and Sam GASPS for breath. The other bandits LAUGH, low and cruel.

RUETER

(sadistic)

There. That's better. Hope you don't mind if I just leave you here, Sam. I know how much you hate being alone.

Rueter LAUGHS, then CLICKS his tongue, and he and his gang ride off.

SAM

(choking)

*Wait...*

But they're gone. Sam GASPS, struggling at the rope. The ringing in his ears grows louder and louder until...

EXT. SANTA LUCIA - STREET - DAY

The church bell is still ringing.

CYRUS

(worried)

Sam...?

Sam doesn't reply. Instead he stands, draws his pistol, and fires six shots in rapid success.

UTTER PANDEMONIUM. Bandits topple from their horses, crying in pain. Too sudden for anyone to realize what's going on.

JACOB  
(in the chaos)  
There, in the tower -- AH!

He falls, SCREAMING.

RUETER  
Get down!

The few remaining bandits scramble through the dirt for cover, then begin firing at the bell tower.

Sam ducks, opens the cylinder, and begins reloading.

SAM  
How many?

CYRUS  
(taken aback)  
Christ alive...

SAM  
How many are left?

CYRUS  
(still stunned)  
Only... only three, I think.  
How...?

SAM  
(annoyed)  
Dammit, I missed one.

CYRUS  
How did you do that?

SAM  
They're noisy.  
(beat)  
Where's Tolbert?

CYRUS  
I... I don't know. I think he got away.

DUNN  
(calling up)  
Hey! You in the bell tower!

SAM  
Yeah?

DUNN  
I hope you know I'm going to kill  
you for that.

SAM  
(arrogant)  
Oh yeah? Well I'm going to make you  
work for it, Dunn!

DUNN  
So you're our blind marksman, huh?  
Heard you used to run with Rueter.

SAM  
(overplaying his hand)  
And I hear he's running with you  
now. Oh, how the mighty have  
fallen...

RUETER  
(angry and confused)  
Who the hell are you?

Sam doesn't answer, but pops up and fires five shots in the  
direction of his voice.

Return fire sings through the air, and Sam ducks. The gunfire  
echoes a moment before...

RUETER (CONT'D)  
(sarcastic)  
Someone who isn't too fond of me, I  
guess.

Someone below scrambles forward. Sam rises slightly and fires  
his last round, and Eckart GRUNTS, falling in the dirt.

SAM  
(goading him on)  
Now it's just you, me, and your  
boss, Rueter.

RUETER  
(fuming)  
She's not my boss...

DUNN  
Rueter, get inside that church and  
shoot him down!

RUETER  
And end up like Eckart? No, I'm  
good here, thanks.

Dunn fires three rounds straight at the church bell. Sam YELLS in pain again, dropping his gun.

DUNN  
(not to be questioned)  
GO!

Rueter runs for the chapel, but we can barely hear: the ringing in Sam's skull is almost unbearable

CYRUS  
Sam? Sam, are you alright?

SAM  
(pained)  
I... I'm fine. Just... help me down  
from here...

Cyrus lifts the trap door and helps Sam to the stairs. The sound of the ringing bell fades.

INT. SANTA LUCIA - SANCTUARY - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Cyrus stumble down the stairs. Below them, the church doors creak open.

SAM  
(urgent, pained whisper)  
Wait... wait!

CYRUS  
What is it?

Sam listens for a moment. As the ringing in his ears fades, he hears two sets of hurried footsteps.

SAM  
They're inside. Both of them.

CYRUS  
Oh god...

SAM  
(commanding)  
Get out of here. Use the back boor.  
If I'm not out in ten minutes, take  
my horse and run. *Don't* let them  
see you.

CYRUS  
(stubbornly loyal)  
I'm not going anywhere.

SAM  
 (just as stubborn)  
 Yes, you are.

CYRUS  
 I'm not leaving you here!

SAM  
 Pierson!  
 (beat)  
 I'm not giving you a choice.

CYRUS  
 You're blind!

SAM  
 And with the shutters closed, so  
 are Dunn and Rueter.

CYRUS  
 (digging in his heels)  
 And if they open the shutters?

Sam raises his pistol, cocking it.

CYRUS (CONT'D)  
 Uh, Sam... why are you pointing  
 that gun at me?

SAM  
 Like I said. I'm not giving you a  
 choice.

A long silence passes between them.

CYRUS  
 You really are a stubborn fool,  
 Sam.

SAM  
 (trying to make light)  
 I learned from the best.

Cyrus turns and walks slowly away. Sam BREATHES DEEPLY, then listens.

TWO SETS OF FOOTSTEPS IN THE CHAPEL: One heavy, the other light and stealthy. They both stop. A MATCH IS LIT.

Sam raises his gun, every movement making a faint ringing as his pistol shifts in his hands. EXHALES.

A CANDLE FLAME FLICKERS TO LIFE. The amplified sound fades, and Sam pulls the trigger.

BANG. Rueter jumps back with a CRY OF ALARM.

RUETER  
What the hell...!

DUNN  
(amazed)  
Did you see that?

RUETER  
(annoyed)  
Kind of hard to miss!

DUNN  
(disbelieving)  
He shot the candle in half...

RUETER  
Yeah, and he's going to shoot us  
next!

DUNN  
(without fear)  
Who the hell is this guy?

RUETER  
(angry)  
He's...  
(suddenly realizing)  
Oh no.

SAM  
(voice echoing in the  
sanctuary)  
Figured it out, Rueter?

Dunn and Rueter raise their guns at the same time.

DUNN  
(hissed whisper)  
Where is he?

RUETER  
I don't know...

SAM  
(voice echoing)  
Funny thing, ain't it? Having your  
sight taken from you....

RUETER  
(amazed)  
It can't be...

DUNN  
 (curious)  
 Rueter -- what the hell's going on  
 here?

RUETER  
 (disbelieving)  
 I tied the noose myself -- I  
 watched you die.

SAM  
 I got better.

RUETER  
 (incredulous)  
 How in hell...

DUNN  
 (done with this)  
 Rueter, I don't care about whoever  
 it is you *didn't* kill back in the  
 day. Bring him to me. *Alive*.

RUETER  
 (pissed off)  
 Yes... boss.

Rueter raises his pistol and marches into the dark. Much more  
 quietly, Dunn sneaks away.

Rueter takes a few steps, then stops. He SCOFFS.

RUETER (CONT'D)  
 Come on Walsh. If you were just  
 going to shoot me, you'd have done  
 in already. Come on out where I can  
 see you.

SAM  
 (voice echoing all over  
 the place)  
 I don't think so.

RUETER  
 (CHUCKLES)  
 Well, I suppose it wouldn't be a  
 fair fight if I could see you and  
 you couldn't see me.

SAM  
 (reverse meaning)  
 No. It wouldn't be.

RUETER  
(still not buying it)  
Jesus. Sam Walsh. Never thought I'd  
be having this conversation. How'd  
you manage to get out of that  
desert alive?

SAM  
Luck. Luck, and a six shooter.

RUETER  
(SCOFFS)  
You were always too good with that  
thing. Should've grabbed it before  
I left. Easy mistake.

(beat)  
But how in hell did you get off  
that rope in the first place? You  
have a knife on you or something?

SAM  
I...  
(pause)  
I...

RUETER  
You what?

SAM  
(clearly struggling)  
The rope just... broke.

RUETER  
(incredulous)  
Like hell it did.

SAM  
(convincing himself)  
That's what happened.

RUETER  
You sure about that?

Sam doesn't answer. Rueter SIGHS.

RUETER (CONT'D)  
You always were a moody prick,  
Walsh.

SAM  
I don't have anything else to say  
to you.

RUETER

Then why am I still standing here?

Another silence.

RUETER (CONT'D)

(SCOFFS)

You still can't do it, can you?  
Can't shoot someone down in cold  
blood -- not even someone who  
*already* tried to kill you.  
Pathetic.

SAM

No.

Sam steps forward. Rueter raises his gun.

RUETER

There you are.

SAM

I'm not pathetic. You are.

RUETER

(almost amused)

Excuse me?

SAM

Maxwell Rueter, terror of the  
Eastern Sierra. Taking orders from  
some upstart bandit no one's ever  
heard of.

RUETER

(that hurt)

Shut up.

SAM

I wonder... just how much do you  
hate yourself every time you have  
to call her *boss*...?

RUETER

(seething)

I didn't have a choice! Everything  
went to shit after you...

(beat)

Lost the whole gang in a Pinkerton  
ambush. Rest of us had to push  
north. We were completely out of  
money by the time we found Dunn.

SAM  
 (cloying, sarcastic)  
 And she took you in? How sweet.

Rueter cocks his gun.

SAM (CONT'D)  
 Ah, wait... Boss wants me alive,  
 remember?

RUETER  
 (growling)  
 I might just forget that little  
 order if you don't shut up.

SAM  
 (goadng him)  
 Come on, Max -- you really think  
 you can pull that trigger before I  
 shoot you down?

Rueter's gun shifts.

RUETER  
 Let's find out.

GUNFIRE -- but not from Rueter. It comes from across the  
 sanctuary. After a moment, Rueter COUGHS, then drops his gun.

Sam's turns, pistol raised.

SAM  
 (angry)  
 DUNN!

DUNN  
 (sarcastic)  
 Oh, sorry, were you hoping to kill  
 him? How rude of me.

Sam FIRES in the direction of her voice. Something on the  
 altar shatters.

DUNN (CONT'D)  
 (from a different  
 direction)  
 Oh! You're cold! You're very, very  
 cold.

Sam spins around and FIRES AGAIN. A window shatters and the  
 shutter swings open.

DUNN (CONT'D)  
(from yet another  
direction)  
Well look at that -- now I can see  
you.

SAM  
(panicked)  
Where are you?

DUNN  
The better question is... where's  
your friend?

SAM  
(worry shifts)  
Cyrus?

DUNN  
Is that his name? Well, tell him to  
lose some weight. It's very hard to  
drag him around like this.

SAM  
(furious)  
WHAT?

DUNN  
(sarcastic)  
Oh, I'm sorry -- was he supposed to  
get away without me noticing?  
(darkly)  
I'm not half as blind as those  
idiots who worked for me.

SAM  
(threatening)  
If you've hurt him in any way...

DUNN  
Just a little bump on the head --  
enough to make sure he doesn't  
interrupt us while we have a little  
chat.

SAM  
I've got nothing to say to you.

DUNN  
Really? Pity. I was hoping your  
friend might live through this. Oh  
well...

Dunn cocks her gun.

SAM  
(desperate)  
Wait! Wait! I -- I'll listen.

DUNN  
(pleased)  
Huh. I thought you'd make the smart  
move.

SAM  
What do you want?

DUNN  
(straight to it)  
I want you to work for me.

SAM  
What?

DUNN  
Well I'm going to need a new gun-  
hand, what with Rueter pushing up  
the daisies.

SAM  
(flatly)  
Not a chance.

DUNN  
Oh for godssake Sam, don't be so  
naive. You think you belong in a  
town like this? With your talents?

SAM  
(resolute)  
I'm not going back.

DUNN  
No. You're not. You'd be going  
forward. Second in command to  
Catelyn Dunn? Your friend only  
hated it because he didn't know  
what he had.

SAM  
(haunted)  
I can't do that anymore. Not after  
what I saw.

DUNN  
(pause as she thinks)  
Huh. Then I guess you and the  
bartender both have to die.

Sam raises his gun, cocking it.

SAM  
Touch a hair on his head and I'll  
put a bullet in yours.

DUNN  
(amused)  
Really? You think you can hit me  
without hitting him? He is the  
wider target by far...

SAM  
(bluffing)  
I can.

DUNN  
(CHUCKLING)  
Well, this I have to see.

Dunn GRUNTS as she lifts Cyrus's body.

DUNN (CONT'D)  
(genuinely curious)  
I'm holding your friend out in  
front of me with my pistol to his  
head. I'm going to count to ten. If  
I'm still alive when I reach it --  
your friend won't be.

SAM  
Don't try me, Dunn, I...

DUNN  
One.

SAM  
Dunn...

DUNN  
Two.

SAM  
Dunn, I'm warning you...

DUNN  
Three.

SAM  
(panic creeping in)  
Even if you shoot him...

DUNN  
I will. Four.

SAM  
Even if you do, I'm still going to  
kill you.

Dunn hesitates a moment.

DUNN  
(you can hear the shrug)  
Five.

SAM  
Are you listening to me, Dunn?

DUNN  
(getting excited)  
Six.

SAM  
Dunn!

DUNN  
(almost gleeful)  
Seven.

SAM  
DUNN!

Dunn pauses.

DUNN  
I'm listening.

SAM  
(desperate)  
Please don't do this.

Dunn waits a moment, then...

DUNN  
Eight.

SAM  
Stop this!

DUNN  
(sadistic glee)  
Nine.

SAM  
DUNN!!

TIME SLOWS. Sam's heart hammers in his ears, then fades. The sound of ringing metal as he raises his gun.

Water drips somewhere nearby. A bird takes flight. A second of silence stretches into eternity -- then Dunn BREATHES OUT.

DUNN

Ten...

GUNFIRE like a cannon exploding. Dunn CRIES OUT, tumbling backwards. Cyrus drops to the floor.

Sam listens for a long moment. Dunn finally COUGHS, laughing painfully.

DUNN (CONT'D)

(impressed and content)

Magnificent.

She COUGHS once more, then BREATHES her last.

Sam drops his gun, BREATHING RAGGEDLY, almost crying. After a moment, he rushes over to Cyrus, kneeling down.

SAM

(desperate)

Cyrus? Cyrus, can you hear me?

(beat)

Cyrus?

Sam's ears are ringing again, and it fades to...

INT. SANTA LUCIA - SALOON - BEDROOM - MORNING

The church bell is ringing outside. A general hubbub is heard through the walls as life returns to normal.

A pocket watch flips open, ticking for a few seconds.

SAM

(worried)

Is he going to be okay?

DOC TOLBERT

His pulse is still slower than I'd like. Dunn gave him a nasty blow on the head.

SAM

But will he...

DOC TOLBERT

(exasperated)

Yes, Sam. Like I told you before, he will recover, but only with time.

Sam breathes a sigh of relief.

DOC TOLBERT (CONT'D)  
 Now, if you'll excuse me -- a few  
 other folks have what sounds like  
 the beginnings of bronchitis from  
 hiding in that cave overnight.

Tolbert closes the pocket watch and gathers his things.

SAM  
 One question, Doc.

DOC TOLBERT  
 (SIGHS)  
 Just one?

SAM  
 (hesitant)  
 How... how long can someone survive  
 being hanged? If they're just --  
 left there?

Tolbert is taken aback at the question, then chuckles.

DOC TOLBERT  
 (amused)  
 You know, I always did wonder where  
 those burns on your neck came from.

SAM  
 (closing off)  
 Doc...

DOC TOLBERT  
 (reassuring)  
*Entspann dich*, Samuel. I won't ask  
 how it happened -- I don't have the  
 time.  
 (pauses to think)  
 Hmm... theoretically -- five  
 minutes or so? After that the loss  
 of bloodflow would cause  
 irreparable damage to the brain,  
 and eventually...  
 (beat)  
 Are you alright, Sam?

SAM  
 (hiding his distress)  
 What? Oh, yeah -- fine.  
 (beat)  
 You'd best get going.

DOC TOLBERT

Oh, *ja*.  
 (gathers his things)  
 Take care, Sam.

SAM

(distracted)  
 You too, doc. You too.

Tolbert almost jogs out of the room.

Sam sits next to Cyrus in silence, listening to him BREATHING. After a long moment he SIGHS, stands and walks out without another word.

FADE TO:

EXT. SANTA LUCIA - STABLES - CONTINUOUS

A couple of mules bray quietly. Footsteps crunch across the hay and dirt until they reach the one horse in the stable.

SAM

(whispering)  
 Hey there, Ruya girl. Did you miss me?

Ruya whinnies, then nuzzle him.

SAM (CONT'D)

(smiling sadly)  
 Whoa, whoa, take it easy -- I'm still blind, remember?

Ruya snorts, as if to say she does.

SAM (CONT'D)

Sorry I left you here so long. Even if the hay was really good.

Ruya brays quietly ("I don't mind"), then starts eating the hay.

SAM (CONT'D)

(mostly to himself)  
 Guess we both got stuck here.

After a moment, he opens the gate and leads Ruya out.

SAM (CONT'D)

I think it's about time you and I get back out there. See the world.

Ruya whinnies, and Sam CHUCKLES -- a melancholy sound.

SAM (CONT'D)  
You know what I mean.

Sam swings up into the saddle, waits a moment, then CLICKS his tongue.

Ruya trots forward, down the road, and into the unknown. The sun might be setting -- but Sam doesn't care.

ROLL END THEME  
AND CREDITS