

Dead or ~~Al~~ive

An Original Screenplay

OPENING CREDITS (ANIMATED, COOL, RETRO FEELING MUSIC, LIKE IN A SPAGHETTI WESTERN)

FADE TO BLACK

CAPTION: 8 YEARS LATER

FADE IN

EXT. DODGE CITY - CITY LIMIT - AROUND NOON

Desert. Heat. Wind. Dust.

The hanging signpost of the city limit sways back-and-forth in the wind. It creaks. It stops in the air for a second... yes, a horseman appears in the distance. In the moment he appears a guitar starts playing. He is coming closer and closer.

The horseman stops upon reaching the city limit, and squints from under his hat at the shabby figure sitting beside the dusty road playing the guitar. Their eyes meet and the guitarist stops playing. The stranger (Ned Hawk) moves on and the guitarist starts carefully playing again.

EXT. ON THE STREETS OF DODGE CITY

There are ordinary but not too intensive signs of life on the streets of the town. Everyone, who can, escapes into the shade from the hot and flaming sun. The stranger rides in. He jumps off his horse in front of the saloon and ties it up. There is a drunken man sleeping, sprawled on the porch of the saloon.

INT. SALOON

Ned enters the saloon and dusts himself off (a whole lot of dust). As if he entered the smoky place in a cloud of fog. There is the usual merry atmosphere in the saloon; people drink, play cards, and talk. His entrance doesn't draw much attention. The stringy man with a scar on his face (NED) walks up to the bar, leans over to the bartender and whispers something into his ear.

NED

I'm lookin' for Goose. It's important.

BARTENDER

Adam Goose?

NED

(he nods slowly)

BARTENDER

I can call him. Want me to call  
him?

NED

(he nods slowly)

We cannot hear their conversation because they whisper. The bartender leaves Ned chewing on a match impassively and leaves the venue.

EXT. STREET

The bartender hurries across the street, straight to the barber's.

INT. AT THE BARBER

The barber is giving someone a shave when the bartender steps close to him and whispers something into his ear. After a few seconds of hesitation the barber leaves the client and runs out.

EXT. STREET, AN OPEN SMITHY

He runs to the smith and whispers the news to him. The smith quickly raises his head, puts down the hammer and runs on.

INT. ROOM

Taking off his hat, the smith enters the room with his eyes closed. A family, husband and wife, guests, all dressed in black, is getting ready. An old man's photograph is on top of the coffin. The wife is weeping and the husband (Adam Goose) hugs her with reserve. He notices the smith who steps close to him and whispers something into his ear. The man's face turns sullen and he buckles a gunbelt and holster, with a pistol in it, on top of his glad rags. Then he waves to the others and lifts the coffin with them.

EXT. STREET

The smith runs back to his smithy. The barber runs back to his shop from the smithy. The bartender runs back to his saloon from the barber's.

INT. SALOON

The bartender returns to the saloon. There are two glasses and a bottle of whiskey in front of the stranger. The bartender looks at the glasses in front of him and then at the stranger. He shakes his head, puts one of the glasses away and pours into the other. The man drinks the whiskey, he tips his hat towards the bartender as a sign of acknowledgement, and heads towards the door.

EXT. STREET

His spurs are clanking as he comes down the stairs, and he stops in the middle of the street.

Soon there is a funeral procession on the other side of the street. A few people carry a coffin and others follow them. The silence is broken by the sound of the church bell. The procession is slowly crossing the street. In the meantime - while carrying the coffin -, Goose is eyeing Ned who stands in the distance. Ned is doing the same.

They put down the coffin on the other side of the road, and Goose walks back to the middle of the street. Ned puts the match into his shirt pocket. They face each other. Wind, tension, the bell tolls louder and louder. The mourners watch numbly; a bearded man is chewing his lip, another is picking his nails. After a long pause two shots ring out. The bearded man bites his lip and it bleeds. Goose goes sprawling in the dust. The bearded man slowly reaches for his gun. Ned looks at him from the corner of his eye, turns his gun towards him and shoots. The bearded man's gunbelt and holster fall on the ground, his hand freezes, and he stops chewing his lip.

Ned twirls his gun and slips it into the holster, puts the match back in his mouth, and starts walking up to his rival. When he gets there he checks out the dead guy and notices his clothes. He takes off his hat as if offering condolences. Then he places it on the dead man's chest and picks up Goose's hat from the ground. He dusts it and puts it on.

He turns towards the mourners standing on the side, steps close to the coffin, helps them lift it and carry it to the

grave nearby. They put down the coffin, lower their heads and mourn. Ned stands by the woman and takes his hat off.

NED  
Sorry for your loss!

Ned goes away. Back to his horse. The shooting awoke the old drunk.

OLD MAN  
Was it heavy?

NED  
Killing's easy.

OLD MAN  
I meant the coffin.

NED  
That was heavy.

OLD MAN  
You do it a lot?

NED  
I don't carry coffins a lot.

OLD MAN  
I meant the killing.

NED  
I dunno.

OLD MAN  
From here it seemed you got experience.

NED  
(he is checking him out suspiciously)  
...Enviably hat, isn't it?

OLD MAN  
True, but I don't suppose that's why he had to die, or was it?

NED  
I don't know why he had to die.

OLD MAN

Good reason... after all he was a  
dirty rat. This is a bright day  
for this town. Ain't no loss,  
sheeeiit!

(he spits)

Where you comin' from?

NED

From down there.

(he points)

OLD MAN

Where you goin'?

NED

Don't know yet.

OLD MAN

Then you're goin' real far...  
Better yet, rest a spell before  
you head out. Up the next  
corner is a hotel, big huge  
building, got HOTEL written on  
it. Not a bad place. The beds  
are shit, the food's shit, but  
their whiskey is divine. Right  
across the street there's  
another lodging, a nice little  
nest, good beds, good food, but  
shit whiskey. Tried it once,  
but that rotgut made me puke  
all over the food and the bed.  
Sheeeiit!

(he spits again)

Well, don't mix 'em up!

NED

I won't. Thankya!

(he walks away with the  
horse, the Old Man keeps on  
wallowing)

Ned stops in front of the hotel with the HOTEL sign on it. It  
looks a little run down but will do. He enters.

INT. HOTEL, RECEPTION

NED

Got a room?

HOTEL OWNER

(he deals a deck of cards,  
and puts one card turned up  
in front of the arriving  
guest, and one in front of  
himself, he is apparently  
playing Blackjack. Ned  
wins)

We do. Bed or cot?

NED

Whichever.

HOTEL OWNER

(he deals again, Ned wins  
this time, too)

Ok, bed... dinner perhaps?

(Ned cannot even say a word  
before the owner deals a  
new hand, Ned's lucky  
again)

Dinner between 6 and 8. Would  
you like it in your room?

(he quickly deals, Ned is  
paying attention, and wins)

I'll get it brought to your  
room. Would the gentleman  
require anything else?

NED

You got whiskey?

HOTEL OWNER

(he deals the cards as  
usual but this time he  
wins)

I'm sorry, but this I can't  
offer!

NED

Well, then I guess I better go  
somewhere else.

HOTEL OWNER

Wait, good sir, maybe we can  
try one more time...

(he is trying to be affable  
and deals again, Ned wins)

I'll send a bottle up to the  
room! Will that be alright?

NED

Great.

HOTEL OWNER

My wife will show you to your room. Sweetheart!

(a beautiful woman appears)

Please, show this gentleman his room!

WIFE

Right this way!

HOTEL OWNER

Oh, just one more thing!

(Ned turns back puzzled,

the owner deals another

round, and wins this time)

Never mind. Good night!

INT. HOTEL, CORRIDOR ON THE FIRST FLOOR, ROOM

Ned and the wife go upstairs. The woman opens the door of the room for the guest. Ned enters.

WIFE

(from the door)

If you need anything at all, just call!... And let me apologize for my husband's behavior. Gambling is everything to him, you know. His big dream is to have a saloon with a gambling house, but until then this is what we've got.

(she shrugs and looks around the room)

The money for the rest... he always gambles away.

NED

Lucky he hasn't lost you to the cards.

WIFE

(she smiles reservedly)

No, he won me... playing craps.

(she leaves)



INT. ROOM

Ned settles down, he pushes the famous bed a little, then he puts his stuff on the table. He unbuckles his belt, and puts down his bag. He sits down at the table, and delves in his bag. He takes out two crumpled pieces of paper. Wanted posters. One shows Adam Goose's picture with the following text:

"ADAM GOOSE \$4000 - DEAD OR ALIVE".

A handwritten notice on the paper says: "DODGE CITY"

The other poster shows Ned and reads:

"NED HAWK \$6000 - DEAD OR ALIVE".

He is staring broodingly at the posters, until his eyes get caught by the hat he captured recently. He picks it off the table and examines it.

FLASHBACK

The young Adam Goose dusts off the same hat by his hand and puts it on.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. ROOM

A knock on the door. The wife arrives with the dinner and the whiskey. She puts them on the table, picks up the posters, and leans against the wall while checking them out.

WIFE

Were you partners?

NED

Supposedly.

WIFE

Ned Hawk. That's a pretty name.

NED

Thanks, errrrr...

WIFE

Mary

NED

...Mary

WIFE

It's not so nice a name as Hawk, but does the job. When I was younger I wanted to change it. I always wanted to be a Virginia. It's so musical. I just melt when I hear it. But I guess I'll just stay Mary. Are you married?

NED

I dunno, don't remember.

WIFE

Pity... I wonder if your wife was satisfied with her name... and your mother? Does she like her name?

NED

Sorry, but I don't remember her either.

WIFE

Well, what do you remember?

NED

The last 7-8 years. My ranch, where I worked, where I lived, north of here, next to a little town where the grass was always green and the sunsets spectacular.

WIFE

What'd you tend to up on the farm that hurt you like that?

NED

It's not from the animals. 8 years ago I was in an accident. I was just a bag of bones shot full of bullet holes. S'far as I know animals don't bear arms.

WIFE

I wouldn't bet on that. You're saying 8 years ago you had an accident. The type of accident you had with that feller out in the street?

NED

Something like that.

WIFE

Why?

NED

I don't know. The accident took away my memory. I can't remember anything about who I am or my past.

WIFE

Then what you lookin' for here?

NED

A few months ago, one day when I was leaving town they jumped me. I thought I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time, but then I found this on them...  
(he points at the piece of paper in the woman's hand)  
The only trace of my past.

WIFE

So you're an outlaw.

NED

Seems so.

WIFE

Well, you were good with your gun.

NED

Lemme tell you a secret. Until those guys came on me, I didn't know I was so good. I took care of them in a matter of seconds.

WIFE

Just like that man today. You're an expert in accidents. I don't think that's gonna be your last accident.

NED

(he shakes his head)

WIFE

So, who else is gonna have an accident?

NED

Whoever caused my accident 8 years ago.

WIFE

I figured as much. But who are they?

NED

I don't know. Not yet.

WIFE

Then you must have a long road ahead of you. I'll let you rest, but just tell me one more thing. In the last 7-8 years have you met anyone else who didn't like their name?

NED

(he is thinking hard, the woman is about to give up and leave resignedly)  
Wait... yes, I once saw a guy who was screamin' "no, that's not me, that's not my name"... he was on his way to the gallows...  
(they both smile)

WIFE

Good night, Mr. Hawk!

NED

Good night, Mary!

Mary leaves and the door is shut. Ned tastes his dinner. It is so bad he nearly spits it out.

NED

(disgusted)  
Man, you were right!  
(he takes a sip of the whiskey, surprised)  
Man, you were so damn right!

FADE TO BACK

FADE UP

INT. HOTEL RECEPTION - NEXT MORNING

Ned comes down the stairs, out to the street, the owner stops him.

HOTEL OWNER

Excuse me, sir, have you got a minute?

NED

Yes?

The owner, with a smile, gives him a cup and two dice. Ned takes them, shakes them impassively and then throws. 6 and 5. He wins.

HOTEL OWNER

This is your lucky day.  
(he whips out an envelope  
and smiles)  
Some news has arrived.

Ned takes the envelope. It says:

"TO THE MAN WHO KILLED ADAM GOOSE"

He opens it and finds a crumpled wanted poster inside, just like his own. It shows a portrait, a name and the reward:

"MIKE PECKER \$5000 - DEAD OR ALIVE"

NED

Where did this come from?

HOTEL OWNER

I don't know. I didn't receive it.

NED

When did it arrive?

HOTEL OWNER

(he is thinking)  
About four or five years ago ...

NED

And why didn't you show me yesterday?

HOTEL OWNER

As I remember, yesterday you weren't so lucky after all.

NED

(he takes a deep breath  
angrily)

I'm goin'. How much?

The owner hands him the dice with his usual smile. Ned is obviously tired of this game but he throws. It's 6 again.

HOTEL OWNER

You were our guest.

NED

(mumbling)

If I woulda lost, I woulda had  
to pay the lucky customer's  
room from last week too, eh?

HOTEL OWNER

(kindly)

The whole month to boot, be  
sure. Until we meet again, sir!