

JUST 'CAUSE

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EXT. DESERT - MID-DAY

In an clear azure sky, the glowing hot sun burns fiercely, high in the noon sky. Panning down, we see nothing for miles around, except for two men standing face to face with each other. Both are dressed in late 19th century 'cowboy' apparel; dust stained shirts that once were white, dark leather waistcoats, well-worn denim jeans, and well-travel boots.

Standing just metres away from the two men is an old and tired looking tobiano mare, tied to a solitary cactus. She looks on, sensing the tension in the hot air.

The man to the horses right breaks the silence:

BARRETT

It don't need to end like this.

BURNET

Of course it does!

BARRETT

It don't! Plans change; people change. We don't have to go through with it. We don't have to kill that poor girl.

BURNET

You know the situation, friend. We don't kill her, we're as good as dead ourselves.

BARRETT

But look at us! We're in the middle of this god forsaken desert, with only one horse; I think we'd be forgiven for not carrying out a kill.

BURNET

Are you forgetting who we work for?

BARRETT

Of course not!

BURNET

Then you concede that if we don't kill her, we both die?

BARRETT

I guess so but...

BURNET

Do you agree that one of us
surviving is better than none?

BARRETT

(Uncomfortable)

Well...

BURNET

Do you understand that the way
things stand, right now, only one
of us is making it out of this
place alive?

Barrett says nothing but looks down towards the ground.

BURNET (CONT'D)

This is the way it has to be.

Barrett looks at his fellow traveller with an emotional melting pot of fear, regret, and resolve. Both men breathe heavily, the sweat almost blinding them. Burnet licks his chapped lips one last time and draws his heavy pistol, straining under it's weight, to raise it towards his friend.

At the same time, Barrett pulls his pistol and, without aiming, fires at the horse. As he stares at his companion a bullet strikes him in the chest, sending him staggering backwards. After clutching at his wound, he grimaces, collapses to his knees and eventually falls to the ground dead.

Burnet too stares at his former friend but the sound of the old mare falling to the ground draws his gaze away. The acrid smell of gun smoke mixing with the scent of blood and shit stings his nostrils and his frown slowly turns to a wry smile in realization of what has happened.

As we zoom out, Burnet, too, falls to his knees, looks down at his gun, and pulls back the hammer; cocking it. As we pan up towards the sky, we hear Burnet's quickening breath. As we reach the mid-day sun once more, Burnet takes one deep breath then silence for a moment or two, then a final shot is heard ringing out.

FADE TO BLACK