

The Road  
By  
Wesley Tallant

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EXT. - BENSON'S TRUCKING CO. OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Two men can be seen through the office window talking.

INT. - BENSON'S TRUCKING CO. OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

MARK JOHNS (31 yrs) is sitting in a chair and his boss, CARSON BENSON (65 yrs) is standing in front of him, red faced, yelling at him.

CARSON

This load needs to get to Yuma, Arizona by Thursday morning. You've got almost 48 hours to get there. If for some reason you miss this delivery deadline, not even the hand of God will keep me from firing you.

Mark swallows and stares at his boss.

CARSON

You've made so many late deliveries that I'm at the breaking point. If you weren't my wife's nephew, I'd have fired you a long time ago. But this is it. You don't make this delivery on time, you're gone.

MARK

Yes sir.

CARSON

I know what's wrong with you. That old Granddad of yours filling your head with all those tails of the old west and you wanting to be just like him...

Carson turns and walks over to his desk. He sits on it as he talks to Mark.

CARSON

Those days are gone boy. Things aren't like that anymore.

MARK

I know, Uncle Carson. It's just, I see an old barn, an abandoned building, or a run down shack, I've just got to explore it. And I wonder about the stories that those walls could tell.

(CONTINUED)

CARSON

(slamming his fist on the desk)

Not this time. Get that load to Yuma. It'll cost me money if you miss the delivery deadline and my contract with these people will be over.

(Carson leans in close to Mark)

And so will you.

MARK

(slowly rising to face his Uncle)

Well that's just fine with me. I never wanted to be a truck driver anyway. If it hadn't have been for my Dad owning this company, I'd have been something else. I was supposed to get this company when he died. But you stole it and put your name on it. I'll make this trip to Yuma but you can have someone else come down and drive the rig back.

Mark turns and hurries out the office door.

EXT. - BENSON CO. LOADING DOCK - LATE AFTERNOON

Mark climbs into the cab of an older model semi truck. He starts the engine and checks his GPS for the best route. He puts the truck in gear and drives out the gate.

INT. - TRUCK CAB - LATE EVENING

Mark pulls the truck into a parking lot of a truck stop in Albuquerque, N.M. and goes in and eats supper.

He returns to the truck, sets an alarm clock for 6 A.M. and climbs into the sleeper, takes off his tennis shoes, and goes to sleep.

INT. - TRUCK CAB - MORNING

Mark wakes up and turns off the alarm clock. He stretches, puts his tennis shoes on and climbs from the cab and goes into the truck stop for breakfast.

He returns to the truck, raises the hood and checks the fluid levels, and closes the hood. He then starts the engine, checks his GPS, and pulls out onto the highway.

INT. - TRUCK CAB - LATE AFTERNOON

Mark pulls the truck into a parking lot for a diner. He sets the brake and exits the truck, leaving the motor running.

He returns with a sack of food and a soda water. He puts the truck in gear and pulls out onto the highway, eating a sandwich and fries while he drives.

INT. - TRUCK CAB - LATE EVENING

Mark is nearing Flagstaff when he hears a funny noise coming from the back of the truck. He pulls off the highway and into the parking lot of a closed garage.

EXT. - TRUCK - LATE EVENING

Mark exits the truck and using a pocket flashlight, walks around looking for the trouble. He finds one of the rear wheels has oil all over it and kneels down beside it.

MARK

(wiping a finger along the  
inside of the wheel and  
talking to himself)

Damn. A busted wheel bearing. Just  
my luck.

He stands back up and wipes his finger on his pants leg.

MARK

(Talking to himself)

Well, this old truck ain't going  
any further tonight.

He walks over to the front door of the shop and reads a sign there.

SIGN

Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Mark looks around at the other businesses within sight. He sees only cafes and convenience stores.

(CONTINUED)

MARK  
(Talking to himself)  
Not another garage in sight. Oh  
well. I guess I'll stay here  
tonight.

He then takes out his cell phone and calls his Uncle Carson.

INT. - HOUSE - LATE EVENING

Carson is reading a news paper in his recliner. The  
telephone on a table beside his chair rings. He answers it.

CARSON  
Hello.

EXT. GARAGE - LATE EVENING

MARK  
It's me, Uncle Carson. The truck  
broke down here at Flagstaff.

CARSON  
(His voice coming loudly and  
sounding upset over Mark's  
phone)  
What?

MARK  
A wheel bearing on this old heap  
went out. There's not a garage in  
sight that's open.

INT. - HOUSE - LATE EVENING

CARSON  
Now you look here. I told you to  
get that load to Yuma on time. If  
you can't get it fixed in the  
morning, and you miss the deadline,  
you'll be sorry.

MARK  
(His voice being heard over  
Carson's phone)  
I'm already sorry I made this trip.

Carson's phone clicks and the dial tone comes on. Carson  
slams down the phone. He picks his paper back up as his wife  
enters the room.

(CONTINUED)

PAULA BENSON (58 yrs) wearing dress and apron.

PAULA  
Who was it, dear?

CARSON  
(Sounding gruff and mad)  
Nothing, just business. You go on  
back to the kitchen and finish my  
supper.

EXT. GARAGE - LATE EVENING

Mark puts his cell phone back in his pocket.

MARK  
(talking to himself, loudly)  
Yeah, Uncle Carson. I'll make the  
deadline because I said I will. But  
I'll never work for you again.

Mark goes back to the truck and climbs into the cab. He  
slams the door behind him and crawls into the sleeper.

INT. TRUCK - MORNING

Mark awakens when he hears a vehicle pull into the garage  
parking lot. He looks out the window and sees a man  
unlocking the door to the garage office.

He slips on his tennis shoes and exits the truck.

EXT. GARAGE - MORNING

Mark walks toward the man opening the garage for business.

MARK  
Excuse me, sir. I've had a bit of  
trouble and need to get my truck  
fixed. Can you do it?

Carlos Martinez (60 yrs) wearing greasy overalls.

CARLOS  
What seems to be the problem?

MARK  
A wheel bearing went out yesterday.  
I need to get to Yuma by eight  
o'clock in the morning.

(CONTINUED)

CARLOS

Can't help you. I got too many other jobs that need to get done. My other mechanic is out with a busted arm. I'm here by myself.

Mark looks around.

MARK

How about this. You let me use your tools and I'll do it myself. I'll even pay you for the use of them.

Carlos rubs his chin in thought.

CARLOS

A hundred dollars for the tools and fifty for the space you're taking up in the drive.

MARK

That's a little steep.  
(Mark thinks a few seconds)  
What the hell. It's Uncle Carson's company credit card anyway. Do you take plastic?

CARLOS

(Smiling and waving)  
Come on in.

EXT. GARAGE - EARLY EVENING

Mark is covered with grease and oil as he tightens the last lug nut on the truck tire. He stands and admires his work.

Mark gathers the tools he had borrowed from Carlos and walks to the garage.

INT. - GARAGE - EARLY EVENING

Mark lays the tools on a workbench. Carlos is working under the hood of a car.

MARK

Thanks for the use of your tools.

CARLOS

Did you get it fixed?

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Yea. I think it'll hold until I get to Yuma. And then I'm through with Uncle Carson. He can have somebody else drive the thing back to Denver.

CARLOS

You going to quit truck driving?

MARK

I never wanted to be a truck driver anyway. My Dad owned the company and when he died, Aunt Paula's husband stole it out from under me and my mother.

CARLOS

What will you do?

MARK

(washing his hands over a sink)

I don't know. I've got a little savings. Maybe I'll just bum around and explore the desert a bit. But then, Momma's health is starting to fail.

Mark dries his hands and reaches into his shirt pocket. He produces a credit card and hands it to Carlos.

MARK

Here, and put an extra fifty on there for that lunch your wife brought down.

CARLOS

(grinning and walking to his office)

I hope this doesn't come back to bite me.

MARK

He'll never see it. His accountant does all the book and bill work. He won't tell.

The two laugh as they enter the office.

INT. - TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

Mark has pulled over to the side of the road and is looking at his GPS and map. He sees a road on the GPS that isn't on his map.

MARK

(Talking to himself)

What's the deal here? This is a new map. Why isn't that road on it.

He studies the two instruments of navigation a little longer.

MARK

According to the GPS, that road will save me about a hundred miles. But why isn't it on the map. Oh well, I don't have anything to lose.

He folds the map up and puts it on the dash board of the truck. He puts the truck in gear and makes the left turn onto the road.

The road appears to be a well maintained gravel road. He is able to maintain a good speed.

He yawns and looks at the clock on the dash board.

MARK

Ten o'clock. I've made up enough time. A couple hours sleep won't hurt.

He sees that the road is too narrow to stop on without blocking it. Further on he sees it widen up. He pulls into the opening and his head lights shine on what appears to be an old abandoned saloon. He stops the truck, sets the brake, shuts off the engine, and climbs from the cab.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

He walks to the old building and uses his pocket flashlight to look around. The sign on the front is hanging from one corner and the name "The Dusty Dog" is barely visible.

The front doors have fallen off their hinges and most of the windows are broken. Looking down to the side of the saloon he sees several other old dilapidated adobe and wooden buildings.

(CONTINUED)

Mark walks a full circle around the saloon. An outhouse in the back has fallen over. Cactus and weeds grow up to the sides of the saloon.

Back in front, Mark cautiously steps onto the front porch. He looks at the porch cover to look for signs that it could fall. He steps to the front door and peers in.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

The inside of the saloon has tables and chairs strewn about and over turned. An old mahogany bar runs down the wall to his right. Behind the bar is the frame where a large mirror once hung.

To his left is a stair case that leads to a balcony. Five doors line the back wall of the balcony. He imagines the bar girls taking customers in there for a little roll in bed.

In the back of the saloon is two doors. The one at the end of the bar opens into an office and storage room. The other door leads outside to the back.

Hanging on the back wall is an old regulator clock. Under the clock is an old upright piano.

Mark cautiously walks around the saloon following the beam of light from his flashlight. He rubs his hand along the bar and finds what appears to be bullet holes. He sees more bullet holes in the shelves behind the bar. Then he sees a bullet hole in the mirror frame at the same level as a person's head.

He yawns and remembers why he stopped.

MARK

(Talking to himself)

I'll have to mark this place on my  
GPS and come back for a closer look  
in the daytime.

He exits the saloon and walks backwards to his truck.

MARK

(Talking to himself)

What stories that building could  
tell.

He bumps into something and turns around to see his truck. He looks at the saloon once more before opening the door and climbing inside.

INT. - TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

Mark sets his GPS and then sets his alarm clock. One more look and he climbs into the sleeper and goes to sleep.

INT. - TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

Mark is awoken by the sound of a piano playing. He looks out the window of the truck and sees the saloon is lit up. The doors are back on their hinges, the windows are whole, and light comes from inside the saloon. The sign on the front of the saloon is hanging back level and is readable.

MARK

(Talking to himself)

What is going on here?

There are buggies parked beside the saloon and horses tied to the hitching post in front of it. The dilapidated buildings have light illuminating from them and look like new.

He climbs from the cab and looks around. He sees a bearded man walking towards the saloon.

EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

The man's wide brim felt hat is torn and ragged with age. His clothes are torn and covered with dust. A pistol hangs on his right hip.

MARK

(Calling to the man)

What's going on here?

The man turns and looks at Mark.

SAGEBRUSH EVANS (45 yrs) is wearing a vest, blue cotton shirt, and jeans.

SAGE

Mighty fancy lookin' wagon you got there mister. Don't reckon I ever seen one as big and fancy as that before.

MARK

What are you talking about, old man. It's just a plain old...

Mark turns around and sees not his truck, but a freight wagon and four mules harnessed to it.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Where's my truck? It was just here.  
I was sleeping in it. Where's my  
truck, old man?

SAGE

Don't rightly know what you're  
talkin' about, mister. Only truck I  
ever seen was a hand cart down in  
Yuma at the train depot. And it  
weren't big enough to sleep on.

Mark looks past the wagon towards the road. What used to be  
a graded road is now a rutted wagon trail.

MARK

(Turning around to Sage)  
What's going on here?

SAGE

Just a few folks gatherin' for a  
little spirits and beer and female  
companionship, iff'n you know what  
I mean.

(Sage winks at Mark)

MARK

No, no, no. I mean, where's my  
truck? And that road, just a few  
minutes ago it was a smooth level  
road. Now, I wouldn't drive a truck  
down it if my life depended on it.

SAGE

That road's always been the same.  
It used to be an old Apache tradin'  
path. Then they opened up the  
territorial prison in Yuma and  
started transferin' prisoners down  
it. It ain't much like them roads  
near the big cities, but we use it  
just the same.

MARK

Look, old man, I've got to find my  
truck. I've got to be in Yuma by  
eight o'clock.

SAGE

Don't reckon you'll make it. Yuma  
is two days travel from here. Ain't  
no way you can get that wagon there  
by then.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

But I've been on that road for...

Mark looks at his wrist expecting to see his digital watch. But instead he sees his wrist is bare and his clothes are covered with dust. On his feet are a well worn pair of boots instead of his tennis shoes.

MARK

Am I dreaming? Is this some sort of nightmare?

He also sees that he is wearing a pistol on his hip.

MARK

Where did this come from? I don't even own a gun.

SAGE

You look like you could use a drink, mister. You just come on in here and I'll get Sandy to set you up with somethin' that'll settle your nerves.

The two start walking towards the saloon.

SAGE

By the way, young fella, what's your name?

MARK

(In a voice just above a whisper)  
Mark. Mark Johns.

SAGE

Glad to make your acquaintance, Mark Johns. Folks around here call me Sagebrush Evans. Sage for short.

Mark stops walking and watches the old man.

MARK

(Quietly to himself)  
My grandfather used to tell me stories about a man named Sagebrush Evans. But what was it?

SAGE

(stopping and turning to mark)  
What? What'd you say?

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Nothing, just talking to myself.

SAGE

Well, come on. Sandy has some of the finest beer in these parts.

Mark looks once more towards where the truck was. He follows Sage to the saloon.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

Sage steps onto the porch and stops.

SAGE

Sandy named the saloon "The Dusty Dog." But the only dusty dog she allows in there is that little rat sized Mexican dog of hers.

Sage removes his hat and begins beating the dust from his clothes. Mark takes the cue and does the same with his hands.

SAGE

That head cover you got there will do a better job.

Mark then notices that he is wearing a hat.

MARK

(Removing the hat and beating the dust from his clothes)  
This has to be some sort of nightmare.

SAGE

What'd you say? Clay is playing that piano extra loud tonight and I didn't quite hear you.

MARK

(Still beating dust from his clothes)  
Nothing, nothing.

SAGE

For a fella that says nothing, you sure do talk a lot. Come on, let's get that beer.

The two walk through the swinging doors.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Mark looks around. The tables are upright, the chairs are filled with patrons and several men are standing at the bar.

Sage walks to the end of the bar and Mark follows.

Mark hears a woman laugh and looks to see a bar girl escorting a drunken cowboy up the stairs.

The clink of poker chips on a table in the back of the saloon catches his attention.

MARK

This has to be a dream.

SANDY

What's a dream?

Mark hears the voice of a woman and turns to see a woman dressed in a blue frilly dress standing behind the bar. She has auburn hair and an ivory white complexion. SANDY MOORE (30 yrs) stands on the back side of the bar, holding a small dog in her arms.

SAGE

Hello, Sandy.

SANDY

Hello, Sage. Who's your friend?

SAGE

Sandy, this here is Mark Johns. He just pulled up out front in that freight wagon on his way to Yuma.

SANDY

Hello, Mark Johns. Nice to meet you.

Sandy reaches out her hand for Mark to shake.

Mark stands stunned by her beauty. He feels a nudge in his side.

SAGE

(Elbowing Mark in the side)

Ahem.

MARK

Oh, uh, hello, maam.

Mark takes the dainty hand that was offered to him.

(CONTINUED)

SANDY

What'll you have?

SAGE

I'll take a glass of that wildcat  
whiskey you got back there.

SANDY

And you, Mister Johns?

Mark again says nothing and again feels Sage elbow him in the side.

MARK

Uh, Uh, a beer, maam.

SANDY

One whiskey and one beer coming up.

Sandy lays the dog on a pillow at the end of the bar and turns and walks away.

Mark looks around and is still in awe about what is going on around him.

MARK

(In a soft voice while looking  
at the clock on the wall)

I'll just wait for midnight when my  
alarm goes off and wakes me up.

SAGE

What's that...oh, oh, never mind.  
Just talking to yourself again.

Sandy returns with their drinks. Sage reaches to pet the little dog but the dog growls and snaps at him.

SAGE

That damn little dog never has  
liked me.

SANDY

(petting the dog)

Chico doesn't like very many  
people, only me and the girls.

SAGE

(motioning to the piano player  
and bartender with the whiskey  
glass in his hand)

And the piano player and barkeep.

(CONTINUED)

SANDY

Oh, he only tolerates Luke and Clay  
because they work for me.

Mark tries to pet the dog but receives a nip on the hand.

SAGE

See, told you. He don't like nobody  
but Sandy and the girls.

Mark again looks around and marvels at what is going on  
around him. He takes a sip from the beer.

MARK

This has to be a dream.

Mark watches the clock and waits for the time his alarm will  
go off and wake him up. He sips at the beer, gazes at Sandy  
and watches the time go by.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes after his alarm is set for, and  
still it is silent. He finally gives into the dream.

MARK

(mumbling to himself)

Well, I'll wake up when I wake up.

Mark and Sage sip at their drinks while conversing with  
Sandy. The night wears on. Beer after beer is served and  
drank. The clock on the wall finally chimes midnight.

Sandy walks to the center of the bar and picks up a hand  
bell. She rings it loudly.

SANDY

(yelling over the din of the  
crowd)

Okay folks. Closing time. Drink up  
what you got and we'll see you  
tomorrow.

Mark downs his beer and turns for the door. Sage grabs his  
arm and motions for him to stay.

SAGE

That's just for them other folks.  
Just stay put. Me and Sandy talk  
and visit in the office while she  
counts up the days receipts.

Mark turns back to the bar. He watches as the other patrons  
finish their drinks and file out the door. Soon, all that is  
left in the saloon is Mark, Sage, Sandy, and Luke the  
bartender.

(CONTINUED)

Sandy then sees three men sitting at a table below the staircase.

SANDY

That means you too, gents. Drink up.

The three men are hard looking men. A week old growth of beard is on each of them. Their clothes are faded and dirty. Each wears a pistol on his hip.

JOE GLADSTONE (40 yrs) takes a sip of his beer.

JOE

If it's all the same to you, we'll just have three more beers.

SANDY

Well, it's not all the same to me. Drink what you have left and go on. We're closing.

Mark watches Luke, sensing trouble, reach for the shotgun under the bar. But before he can reach it, one of the three men draws his pistol and shoots Luke. He falls back against the shelves of whiskey bottles, behind the bar, and falls to the floor, dead.

BANDIT NUMBER TWO (35 yrs) slides his chair back and stands. He starts walking towards the bar, holding the still smoking pistol in front of him.

BANDIT NUMBER TWO

Now, about them beers, Missy. If Joe wants another beer, he gets another beer.

BANDIT NUMBER THREE (25 yrs) puts his hand on his pistol.

Sandy runs and kneels down beside the body of her longtime friend and bartender, Luke.

Mark watches in horror at what has just happened. Then the voice of his grandfather comes to him and tells him what he has been trying to remember about Sagebrush Evans.

GRANDFATHER'S VOICE

Sagebrush Evans was my father. He and my mother, Sandy Moore, were never married. One night a stranger on a freight wagon came into the saloon. A gunfight started out between Sagebrush and these three

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GRANDFATHER'S VOICE (cont'd)  
outlaws. The stranger saved the  
life of my Momma and gunned down  
the leader of the gang.

Mark then looks to see Sandy grab the shotgun, but she doesn't see the bandit walking toward the bar with his pistol out.

As she stands up, Mark dives at her and tackles her as the bandit fires. His bullet shatters the mirror and glass falls on them.

Another shot rings out. Mark sees that Sage has dove behind the bar and grabbed the shotgun. As he stands back up, he pulls the triggers to both barrels of the shotgun.

The bandit number two flies backwards from the blast of the gun.

Mark draws his own gun and stands and fires at the man named Joe. Joe has drawn his own gun and fires at the same time. Mark feels the burning sensation of a bullet barely grazing his shoulder. But he also sees Joe fall backwards with a hole in his chest.

Sage emerges from behind the bar with his own pistol in hand. The bandit number three has ducked behind the stairs. Sage sends bullet after bullet into the planks of the stairs.

The third bandit returns fire but does no damage.

Mark sees the man's foot sticking out from behind the stairs. He takes careful aim and fires. The foot is jerked back behind the stairs and the man screams in pain.

Then, firing shot after shot at the bar, the man stands and tries to run for the back door. Mark and Sage keep down.

Sandy has reloaded the shotgun, and when the third man's gun clicks on an empty cylinder, she stands and fires, driving the man out the back door of the saloon.

Mark and Sage stand from behind the bar. The barrel of the shotgun is still smoking in Sandy's hands. Sage gently takes the weapon from Sandy and lays it on the bar. Mark escorts Sandy to a chair at a nearby table.

Mark and Sage go and check the three dead bandits. A piece of folded paper with a fresh bullet hole in it is found in Joe's pocket. Sage reads it and hands it to Mark.

SAGE

Looks like you got a reward a  
comin', young feller.

Mark reads the paper. It's a wanted poster. Joe's picture is  
on it.

WANTED POSTER

Wanted dead or alive for robbery  
and murder, Joe Gladstone. Five  
thousand dollars. Collect at Yuma  
prison.

SAGE

I guess you won't be worried about  
your job any more once you collect  
that reward.

MARK

(folding the poster back up  
and handing it to Sage)  
No, you keep it. I have no use for  
it right now. But I may be back  
some day to collect it.

Mark starts to walk towards the saloon doors. He stops and  
turns to Sage and Sandy. It is then that he notices how much  
Sandy looks like his own mother.

MARK

Your real name is Ethan, but I like  
Sagebrush just fine. And Ma'am,  
he's a good man, don't let him slip  
away with that reward.

Mark turns and walks out the door.

EXT. SALOON - NIGHT

The night air has grown chilly and a breeze has picked up.  
Mark stops and turns to the saloon. Once again it is old and  
dilapidated.

He turns back around and sees his truck.

MARK

Was that all a dream?

He reaches up and feels the blood stain on his shoulder and  
feels the back of his hand where the dog had bit him.

He smiles, climbs into the cab as his alarm starts to chime.

EXT. FREIGHT STATION - EARLY MORNING

The semi pulls through a gate at a freight dock and backs into a slip by the dock.

Mark climbs from the cab of the truck with the bill of lading in hand. He walks up to a man standing by an office door.

MARK

Here's your load.

Mark hands the man the papers with the keys to the truck.

SHIPPING CLERK (50 yrs, fat) takes the papers and keys.

SHIPPING CLERK

What am I supposed to do with these keys?

MARK

(walking away from the man)

Flush them down the commode, drop them in your shredder...I don't care. Where can I rent a Jeep?

EXT. SALOON - AFTERNOON

Mark brings a rented Jeep to a stop outside the saloon. He exits the Jeep and looks around. The road is barely visible through the weeds and sagebrush. He walks to the saloon and stops. Looking at the old building, he brushes the dust from his clothes before he enters.

INT. SALOON - AFTERNOON

Mark looks around the inside of the saloon, now flooded with sunlight. He looks at the bullet holes in the bar, the stairs and where the mirror used to be.

He slowly walks toward Sandy's office, looking around.

INT. SANDY'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Mark looks around the office. The old roll top desk has collapsed to one side. Again he hears his grandfather.

GRANDFATHER'S VOICE

She left that reward in a cash box in the desk. My guess is that it is still there today.

(CONTINUED)

Mark pries open one drawer after another until he finds the box. He picks it up and shakes it. He smiles when he hears the jingle of coins inside it.

He reaches into his pocket and removes a key chain. On it is a small key given to him by his grandfather years ago. He uses the key to unlock and open the box. Inside he finds a folded piece of paper with a bullet hole in it. He carefully unfolds it. Barely visible is the picture of Joe Gladstone. With the paper he finds four thousand dollars in twenty dollar gold coins. Also in the box is a diary.

He opens it to the last page, dated June, 11, 1898 and begins to read.

SANDY'S VOICE

Ethan Junior and I are moving on. Business has dried up here since the livery stable burned down and the railroad came through twenty miles south of us. Sagebrush hasn't been seen since he went prospecting in the desert three years ago. I imagine his bones are fairly well bleached by the sun by now. My sister says we can stay with them in Denver until I can find work. It's tempting to take the gold reward money with us, but Sage insisted that Mark Johns would someday return to claim it. But I am taking a thousand of it. I hope he will understand when he returns, if he ever does. It was a nice little community here while it lasted. There are only six of us left now. Jake Turner and his wife will be traveling to Denver with me and Ethan Junior. Clair Nelson, the last of my girls, is moving on to California with Thomas Flanders. I wish them all the best.

Mark closes the diary. He explores the old saloon some more. He is compelled to climb the rickety old stairs. They creak with every step.

He opens the first door and looks around. He moves to the second door and is shocked to see a familiar hat hanging on a bedpost. On the bed is the skeletal remains of a man.

MARK

Sagebrush. You did come back.

He finds in Sage's hand, a note. It is barely legible as he reads it.

SAGE'S VOICE

They're all gone. Sandy, Junior, all of them. I tried to get back here sooner, but I fell down a canyon wall and broke my leg. I was almost dead when Squatting Dove, an old Apache squaw found me. She was the last of her tribe. She nursed me back to health. When I was able, I came back here. But every body was gone. A blasted Rattler bit me as I stepped in the door. So my days are done. If Mark is reading this, take the pouch from my pocket. It came from the base of Signal Mountain. There is a rock there that looks like what I first saw mark in. A quarter mile north of there, you'll find what I call Chico's Grin. It's there you'll find it. I'm getting weaker. The snake poison has reached my brain. The only regrets I have is not making an honest woman out of Sandy and seeing my boy grow up.

Mark folds the paper and reaches into the pockets of Sage's vest. He finds a small leather pouch and removes it. He opens it to find it full of gold flakes.

MARK

Sage, you old son-of-a-gun. You found it.

Mark feels the floor below him start to sink. He carefully rolls the rotted sheets around Sage's remains and takes the hat from the bed post.

He makes it to the bottom step with the bundle when the stairs start to collapse.

## EXT. OLD CEMETERY - EARLY EVENING

Mark has written on a makeshift wooden cross, the name, Ethan Sagebrush Evans. He places Sage's remains in a shallow grave. He takes the gold pouch and lays it in the grave with Sage.

MARK

You found it, Sage, you keep it.

He then removes the left ring finger bone and wraps it in a piece of cloth and places it in his pocket.

MARK

I'll find Sandy's grave. At least part of you will be with her.

He then fills in the grave, stands for a moment of silence, and turns and leaves.

## EXT. MODERN CEMETERY - EARLY MORNING

Mark stands before a grave with a bouquet of flowers. The stone reads Sandra Renee Moore. Borne March 7, 1864 - Died November 20, 1932.

The cemetery has been freshly mowed. Fresh flowers are at several graves in the area. Mark lays the flowers he brought at the base of the stone. Looking around to make sure he isn't seen, he digs a small hole and places the cloth that contains Sage's finger in it and covers it up. With a piece of chalk, he writes, Sagebrush Evans below Sandy's name. He stands and walks away.

## EXT. BAR - AFTERNOON.

Mark is standing beside his mother. He has a rope in his hand the leads to a cloth draped over a sign on the front of a bar.

MARK

(handing the rope to his mother)

Mom, you do the honors.

EVELYN JOHNS (76 yrs) sits in her wheel chair and takes the rope from Mark.

EVELYN

Are you sure you want to do this?

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Yes, Mom. It's already bought and paid for.

EVELYN

But it cost so much.

MARK

The coin dealer gave me enough money for those gold coins that I could buy this and still have plenty to live on. So go on, Mom, pull the rope.

Evelyn pulls the rope and the cloth drops to reveal a sign that reads, The Dusty Dog II.

MARK

You and I have living quarters in the back, Mom.

Mark pushes Evelyn through the front door and a small Chihuahua follows them.

INT. BAR - AFTERNOON

Mark pushes his mother past a mahogany bar with bullet holes in it. The old regulator on the wall chimes three times. Hanging on a peg behind the bar is a ragged old felt hat.

THE END