

FADE IN:

EXT. SOUTHWEST DESERT - DAY - (1800'S)

In the center of two long, steep, spreading-like-gnarled-legs canyon walls, a DARK CAVE ENTRANCE - surrounded by brush.

Dry weeds jitter apprehensively in the breeze. A donkey, ROSE, chomps grass.

A blood soaked corpse spread-eagled backwards, over a boulder. He grips a SIX-SHOOTER and GRINS with a macabre, secret joke.

An ECHOED EXCLAMATION from the DARK CAVE, then silence.

A SHRIEK, then ... LAUGHTER.

To the hole ... past the brush ... into the dark ...

INT. TUNNEL TO THE TREASURE CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

... where the cave walls FADE TO BLACK then just as quickly warm to a golden light that EXPLODES. as the tunnel opens to a ...

LARGE CAVERN.

TORCHES line the walls, and it seems the sun may have found a place to rest - deep within the earth - as a mountain of gold.

LAUGHTER ECHO'S and a MAN, desert worn, tops the mountain. He is dwarfed by its size. He titters madly as he scoops it into bags.

MAN

Thank ye, thank ye, thank ye.

A DARK FIGURE in the shadows nearby, stirs.

DARK FIGURE

Is it enough?

MAN

Oh yes ... yes yes yes ... for now.

He hefts two large bags, sits and sleds down the hill of gold.

EXT. ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Bags in tow, the Man blinks his way into the sunlight. A low RUMBLE, like distant thunder above the entrance, and ... POOF!

It is the Dark Figure from the cave, GENIE.

Attired, impeccably, in a dark suit and thin, black, western tie he sports a Vandyke and a trim mustache. Posture perfect this most eloquent figure is 5287 years old, or so, but he doesn't look a day over 50.

Standing above the cave he holds an ebony cane with a heavy, silver handle. It taps a measured beat into his palm. There is a sense of disdainful royalty in the manner that he raises one eyebrow and stares down at the Man.

PALM ... TAP, TAP, TAP. Beyond lays the grinning dead man.

GENIE

I suppose it was not enough.

The Man looks at his dead companion. His eyes narrow, his tongue flicks across dry, scaly lips.

MAN

I found ye. Yer mine. All mine!

GENIE

Yes, that is right, I am all yours.

The Man turns and loads the donkey.

MAN

Now ye git yer butt in that tin.

He looks up, but Genie is gone. He retrieves an odd BRONZE CANISTER, tosses it onto the donkey and the two start off.

His cackling laughter peals off the canyon walls, shrill screams directed to a vague irony. The WATER CONTAINER on the donkey drips its precious liquid from a hole ... a bullet hole.

The DEAD MAN grins; damn good joke.

EXT. DESERT - MIDDLE OF F'N NOWHERE - DAYS LATER

The Man and donkey struggle through waves of heat.

A low RUMBLE of thunder ... CRASHING CYMBALS ... POOF. Genie sits on top of the donkey, shaded by an umbrella.

GENIE

How are we progressing today?

The Man, sun-stroked, crazier than usual waves his arms, runs and pushes Genie off the donkey. Genie floats in the air.

MAN

Stay the hell off my Rose!

GENIE

I could not help but to notice ...

Genie glances at the BULLET HOLE in the barrel.

GENIE

You still have one wish.

POOF. ... Genie holds a tankard in his hand, he lifts it and drinks - a few drops fall from the tankard to the ground.

The Man's eyes bulge, he considers, but his greed is worth more. He stumbles away.

THE TOP OF SMALL RISE - SOMETIME LATER

The Man and Rose view a distant town. Rose bolts down the hill. The Man follows, laughing, whooping.

EXT. GHOST TOWN - MOMENTS LATER

Dust dances around the Man as he stands in the center of the empty, tumble-down town.

He spots the well, runs to it, shoves his face in, then stumbles back and falls to the ground as GENIE FLOATS OUT OF THE WELL.

Genie's laughter becomes a wind that rips through the town and blows the man down the street.

Floating in the air, Genie poofs dust from his fingers.

GENIE

Dry. ... Dry as a ...

The Man sits up next to the skeletal remains of a human.

GENIE

... bone!

Genie laughs heartily . . . the man shrieks in terror.

MAN

Water ... wa ... water.

GENIE

You have but to ask, and I will provide.

The Man's face falls; checkmate.

MAN

I ... I wish for water.

Genie lifts his cane, smacks it into his palm. Dark, heavy clouds instantly appear over distant mountains. The Man stares away, licks his dry lips with his thick, dry tongue, croaks ...

IN THE NEARBY MOUNTAINS ...

A torrential, Noah's Ark gully-washer.

IN THE GHOST TOWN ...

The Man lays, eyes closed. A drop of rain hits his face, then another. He stirs, opens his mouth - grateful. Genie floats above.

IN THE NARROW CANYON ...

The TREASURE CAVERN ENTRANCE explodes as WATER blows the hole wide open. The grandfather of Artesian's, shoots into the air and barrels through the canyon on its way to quench a thirst.

IN THE GHOST TOWN ...

GENIE

Your last wish has been granted.

The man stands, refreshed. He waves the canister around.

MAN

Yeah, but I got yer tin, and I'm keeping it. Ye tricked me out my last wish.

GENIE

It was your greed human . . . and it will lead to worse.

MAN

No worse'n you. I'll keep ye, till I --

A rumble catches his attention. He turns to see a WALL OF WATER boiling down the street. Rose gallops in front. He turns to Genie.

MAN

GET ME OUTA HERE!

Above the floating Genie the sky above roils inky black, LIGHTNING SEARS a nearby outhouse.

Genie stares down, dispassionately.

MAN

PLEASE!

He turns to face the last split second of his life as the wall gathers him and Rose up and sweeps them into a rolling tumble. He reaches out one last time. Genie appears conflicted, then jabs his cane out. The Man grabs it and Genie's roars in pain.

The Man holds the canister and uses only one hand for the cane.

GENIE

LET IT GO!

The Man looks at the canister, he can't - he won't.

GENIE

LET - IT - GO!

The Man tries to stuff the canister into his coat, he loses his grip on the wet cane, is swept away, screaming until he sinks.

Genie floats in the air, Christ-like; consumed.

LATER

Puddles ripple with a faint breeze and reflect a clearing sky. In one such puddle there is a glint; the rim of the BRONZE CANISTER. Nearby, Rose munches grass.

EXT. MEXICO - TULCO BAY - MEXICAN FISHING BOAT - PRESENT - DAY

The brightly painted boat bobs in the waves. Three men work the net while one watches from the conning tower.

ON BOARD

WHETO, 18, a Mexican Carrot Top, pulls FISH from the net. He holds up a large, gaping specimen for a fish-kiss. Boat humor.

CAPTAIN, rotund, rolling bluster with a cigar, shouts.

CAPTAIN

Wheto!

WHETO

Captain, I have found my true love.

CAPTAIN

And, as always she leaves a lot to be desired.

WHETO

Goodbye my love.

He tosses the fish toward the open water and freedom, but . . .  
A HAND SLAPS THE FISH, it falls to the deck, GASPING it slides  
into the hold where it joins PLENTY OF OTHERS.

EMILIANO

Your girlfriend, I would toss  
overboard, ...

This is EMILIANO, 19. Too pragmatic for his age he clings with  
one hand to the net. He grins, swings back to the net pile and  
pulls the net through the block with hard, practiced tugs.

EMILIANO

... but the fish, we keep.

CAPTAIN

Yes, yes, we are not in the throwing  
the fish back business.

WHETO

It's good luck to give something back.

CAPTAIN

Luck? Luck? ... You know about  
mermaids, yes?

Work slows while the three listen to the rumbling voice.

CAPTAIN

I heard once of a fisherman over in  
Puerto Vallarta, who caught a mermaid.

Exchanged glances between the crew, another tall tale.

CAPTAIN

Yes, yes true. He was going to sell  
her to the circus, but she told him  
that if he let her go she would  
grant him a wish. Anything he wanted.

WHETO

So, what did he wish for?

Rapid self-satisfying cigar chomping.

CAPTAIN

Nothing, nothing, he wasn't so  
stupid to believe in wishes. He sold  
her for twenty-five thousand pesos.  
That, he was assured of. That is luck.

THIRD CREW MEMBER

And the mermaid?

Emiliano rolls his eyes.

CAPTAIN

She died. A man in Mexico City  
bought her for his store for all the  
stupid tourists.

Wheto and the other man reflect. Emiliano shakes his head and goes back to work, laying the net in perfect rows.

EXT. TULCO BEACH - DAY - LATER

The bay is calm, nearly flat. The afternoon sun beams in two halves off the line of the horizon. The fleet chugs home.

A woman sits on a rock. Covered with a black shawl. She stares at the waves as if into the past, until fishing boats arrive.

She stands, the shawl falls releasing a mass of gray hair that is caught by the breeze, she pays no attention.

SOPHIA, old before her time, watches the boats chug past. Then a boat comes into sight ... a man on the boat waves. Suddenly she appears younger, relaxed ... she waves back.

SOPHIA'S DELUSION

The man on the boat jumps overboard ... he swims toward shore.

MOMENTS LATER

Dripping, a handsome young man, DELGADO, steps from the water. She goes to him, she is young again.

DELGADO

Ah, Sophia my love, you waited for me.

He holds his arms out, she embraces him, then they dance. In his arms she floats across the sand as if on glass.

END - SOPHIA'S DELUSION

EXT. FISHING BOAT - SAME

Emiliano stops waving, his arm drops slowly to his side as he watches his Sophia, his Mother, dance alone on the beach.

Captain regards the scene, then Emiliano, and he chomps slowly on the cigar. The rest of the crew suddenly finds things to do.

INT. DOCK HOUSE - DAY - LATER

A rickety affair where fishermen gather at the end of the day. Some clean up in sinks, some discuss the day's events.

Emiliano, stands in the shower, unabashed he scrubs heartily. He is lean and taut as a bow string.

Wheto enters.

WHETO

Hey, let's go to Cowboys.

EMILIANO

Can't.

WHETO

But, you said you --

EMILIANO

-- I know, but I got a job with Manny.

WHETO

What, performing for the gringos?

EMILIANO

Gringos pay.

Emiliano gets out, dries off.

WHETO

Marta will be there.

He lays his head against Emiliano, flutters his eyes.

WHETO

She wants you.

Emiliano reddens, gets flustered at this and turns away.

EMILIANO

She's not interested in me. Anyway, why's she going?

WHETO

Thomas got back ... he's taking the whole family out.

Emiliano is attentive to this news while he dresses.

EMILIANO  
Must have made lots of money.

WHETO  
I guess. ... You ever think of --

Emiliano reaches up and pulls a RED, ALLIGATOR LEATHER GUITAR CASE from a shelf.

EMILIANO  
-- No. Only fools leave home to do that.

WHETO  
Thomas --

EMILIANO  
-- Nearly died in the desert, then spent a year in jail up there. That scar? Kicked in the face by a Coyote. Me? I fish, I sing, I take care of my Mother. No foolishness.

He tugs at his powder-blue mariachi outfit. With fake silver buttons on the pants, a coat that's too small and a sombrero that's too large.

EXT. HOTEL - POOL AREA - NIGHT

Tourists around the pool drink, talk, eat, few pay attention to MANNY'S MARIACHI BAND, whose members smile big, tourist pleasing smiles. They perform with practiced skill; little abandon.

Emiliano sings a solo piece while Manny makes a lecherous note of one particular, CUTE SERVING GIRL.

The song ends. Manny pastes on a big, fake grin and turns to the polite applause of the tourists.

INT. HOTEL - KITCHEN - LATER

The band members eat and drink. Manny, cigarette dangling from his lips, goes from one to the next with pesos.

He gets to Emiliano, hands him the nights pay.

EMILIANO  
Thanks, Manny.

He plops down in front of Emiliano, moves in close. Emiliano moves back, waves the smoke out of his face.

MANNY

Good job tonight. . . . Boy?

EMILIANO

Yes?

MANNY

How's your mother?

Emiliano, shifts, uncomfortable with the question.

EMILIANO

She's fine. . . . You going over to see Graciela tonight?

MANNY

Sure . . .

The Cute Serving Girl walks by . . . a brief exchange takes place between her and Manny that's not lost on Emiliano.

MANNY

I got a couple of things first though.

EMILIANO

Yeah, and if my Auntie catches you, you'll be without a couple of things.

MANNY

Bah, women need to understand that the bull takes care of many, it's the way of nature.

Manny gives Emiliano a suspicious once-over. Emiliano, hands up, waves away the suspicion.

EMILIANO

Not my business.

Manny's relieved.

MANNY

You're a good boy, always been my favorite. That's why I'm sharing this with. Boy, you never going to be affording the good Doctors for you mother. You know, right?

EMILIANO

I'm selling the orchard, that'll--

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