

A One Man Audience

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6th Draft

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EXT. WOODS - SMALL CAMP - NIGHT

The full moon shines its rays between the trees. A shooting star whizzes by in the sky. The only other source of light seen is the faint glow of a low fire.

A MAN, looking to be a rough-and-tough Westerner, in his mid-40s, sleeps in the shadow of a large pine with his hat tipped down. He looks like he hasn't seen the inside of a house for weeks.

With his belongings sits a travel-size telescope staring up.

The man faces the fire, resting his left hand on a repeating rifle.

Leaves rustle in the distance. The man jolts awake. He grips the repeater and places it in his lap. A continuation of slow, inconsistent rustling gets closer. The man stands, raises his gun and aims into the darkness.

The mumbles of someone singing echo through the trees. The closer it gets the more obvious the slurring of words becomes.

The man does not waver in his aim. He slowly takes his finger off the trigger guard. He grazes it over the trigger.

The stumbling gets closer. The singing gets closer until a DRUNKARD walks into the firelight. The drunkard looks to be in his early twenties. He makes his way closer to the man. The only warm clothing on him is a light coat.

The man raises his head from the iron sight. His concerned face turns into a toothy grin.

MAN

Oh, that poor boy is piss drunk.

DRUNKARD

Hey, Jed! Jesus, don't point that gun at me! Why'd you move camp, I've been-  
Oh shi-!

The drunkard tumbles forward onto the ground, a few feet away from the fire. The man steps back.

The drunkard hollers in laughter. He struggles to sit upright.

DRUNKARD (cont'd)

You gonna help me up, Jed?

The man lowers his gun, keeping his distance.

MAN

You're in the wrong place, son. I ain't no Jed, and I certainly don't know any Jed.

DRUNKARD

Wh... You're not Jed?

MAN

Afraid not.

DRUNKARD

Is that... so? My apologies then. What's your name stranger?

MAN

Are we friendly or something?

DRUNKARD

Oh, come now. Don't be like that! Here, I'll start. The name's Josiah Applebottom.

The man simply stares back.

DRUNKARD (cont'd)

This is the part where you...

The man grunts.

DRUNKARD (cont'd)

Hey, I don't bite. Come on, now.

MAN

It's uh... Bill... Miller.

DRUNKARD

Ha! You know your own name, don't you?

BILL

You're trying my patience right now, boy.

Josiah holds his hands up in a mocking way.

JOSIAH

Woah now. Hold your horses. I think we got off on the wrong foot.

(MORE)

JOSIAH (CONT'D)

It is pleasure to make your  
acquaintance, Bill.

Josiah extends his hand out. He does not receive a hand back.

Josiah lowers his hand and continues sitting.

BILL

Where'd you come from?

JOSIAH

I don't... quite remember. I went  
down to the creek to relieve myself,  
and... well I'm here now. I don't  
know where here is.

BILL

That's a tough deal, kid, but it's  
time you best-

JOSIAH

I know what your gonna say... but...  
it's cold, it's dark, and I can't  
currently tell the difference between  
my left and... the opposite.

BILL

Why should I care? I don't need your  
buddy coming here too, looking for  
your sorry self.

JOSIAH

Please. You think I'm an idiot, my  
friend's the real drunk. The only  
direction they know is left. No  
opposite or anything.

Bill grumbles.

BILL

You sure your friend won't go looking  
for you? The last thing I need is  
more company.

Josiah's head raises slightly.

JOSIAH

Oh, yeah?

BILL

Never mind.

JOSIAH

Alright. In any case, I do promise,  
that, my friend...

Josiah looks up as if he is thinking hard.

BILL

Jed-

JOSIAH

Jed! Yes! I promise, my friend, Jed,  
is probably already sound asleep,  
dreaming about women, or gambling,  
or... I don't fuckin' know, they  
ain't gonna be looking for me.

Bill pauses.

BILL

Mmm, fine. You can stay the night,  
but that means just the night. By  
first light, you're out of my hair.

Josiah gets more comfortable around the fire.

JOSIAH

I do greatly appreciate that, kind  
sir. You are... truly selfless.

BILL

You don't try me and you'll only see  
my selfless side. Take it this way,  
at best, you're my entertainment for  
the night.

Bill sits back down but keeps his gun in his grip, his left  
hand on the trigger guard.

Josiah stares at Bill's hand placement.

JOSIAH

Been a while since you seen some  
entertainment?

BILL

What of it?

JOSIAH

Well, look at you. You don't look  
like you seen a bath is all I'm  
saying.

BILL

I think we can keep our histories to ourselves. But uh, yeah it's been a while.

JOSIAH

Loud and clear. I will drop the subject, friend.

The camp goes silent.

Josiah looks up at the stars.

JOSIAH (cont'd)

Gorgeous aren't they?

BILL

What?

JOSIAH

The stars. The constellations. It sure would be something to see a shooting star right about now.

Bill leans a bit forward.

BILL

The constellations?

JOSIAH

Yes, indeed.

BILL

What do you know about them constellations?

JOSIAH

Well, I ain't no expert or nothing, but I know enough. I know that they're stories that live forever.

BILL

You must really be drunk because you're talking nonsense.

JOSIAH

But think. Orion, Taurus, Ursa Major an-

Bill gives a small chuckle.

BILL

Um, it's URSA major, son.

Josiah hesitates, then chuckles back.

JOSIAH

Right, you are, Bill. Anyhow, those names are thousands of years old, but we still know them. Why? Nobody believes in that crap anymore. But it's a story. Those specks in the sky tell a story and it still lives.

BILL

Huh. You don't seem like the type to be into that kind of stuff.

JOSIAH

Are you saying you do, Bill?

BILL

Heh, you got me there, son.

JOSIAH

Do you have one?

BILL

One what?

JOSIAH

A story! It just seems like... a man of the mountain, such as yourself, would carry some... sentimental things, wouldn't they? Even something that can put those damn stars to shame. Of every mountain man I've met, not a-one has carried something that doesn't have some... incredible... story-

Josiah pauses for a moment, then proceeds to belch.

Bill gives a hearty laugh.

BILL

Jesus! When you're drunk, you sure do play the part, friend.

Josiah laughs nervously.

JOSIAH

I guess I do.

Bill puts his rifle down and grabs his bag beginning to shuffle through it.

BILL

I think I know where you were going with that. I might have just the thing.

JOSIAH

Aha! I knew you were holding out on me, Bill Miller.

BILL

Yeah.

Bill takes a little longer to find what he's looking for. Finally, he pulls out an irregularly shaped, baseball-sized, black rock that shines in the light of the fire.

Josiah's eyes are locked on the orb. He puts himself in a small trance, then suddenly snaps out of it.

JOSIAH

You're showing me... a rock?

BILL

This ain't just no simple rock, friend. You said you wanted to see a shooting star, right? Well, this fell from the heavens, in a blaze of scorching flames. Boy, let me tell you it hit the earth with such a loud crash- It was this shy from taking my head clean off! Nearly scared the living daylights out of me. Anyways, they call it a meteorite. You wanna hear the story, don't you?

Josiah stares intently at the meteorite. He looks up at Bill.

JOSIAH

No, thank you.

BILL

What's that?

Josiah's speech is no longer slurred.

JOSIAH

Don't worry, I already know the story. Probably a different one from whatever horse shit you were going to say.

Bill begins to stand up.



BILL

The hell you say to me, bo-

Josiah fumbles before pulling a revolver out from under his coat. He points it at Bill.

JOSIAH

Don't touch that gun, Nicholas.

Josiah pulls the hammer back.

Nicholas freezes.

Josiah stands up with ease, slowly walking around the fire towards Nicholas's repeater.

NICHOLAS

What'd you just call me?

JOSIAH

They have quite a bounty on your head, did you know that? Five-hundred dollars ain't no chicken feed. Of course, neither is killing a professor.

NICHOLAS

Professor? What professor?!

Josiah kicks the repeater away from Nicholas. He sees a rope next to Nicholas's pack and tosses it to him.

JOSIAH

Put those on for me will you?

NICHOLAS

Boy, you don't know what you're doing!

JOSIAH

You can save it for the hangman, Nicholas. We have a long journey ahead of us.

NICHOLAS

Josiah Applebottom. Was that your name? Listen, you've got the wrong guy.

JOSIAH

Oh no, I think I do. Toss me the rock.

NICHOLAS  
If you'd just-

JOSIAH  
The rock, please.

NICHOLAS  
Fuck you.

JOSIAH  
I don't think you're in a position to  
say things like that.

Nicholas gives a frustrated but futile grunt. He tosses over  
the rock.

NICHOLAS  
My name is Bill, I swear!

Josiah catches it.

JOSIAH  
And what's your last name?

Nicholas hesitates.

NICHOLAS  
M-m-milton! It's Milton!

JOSIAH  
I'm sorry Nicholas, I'm afraid you  
said Miller earlier, not Milton. I'm  
also afraid to say that Miller is  
incorrect as well. Here, let me help  
you.

Josiah pulls a tattered piece of paper from the back of his  
pants and unfolds it. He uses his revolver to point at the  
WANTED POSTER with the name NICHOLAS STINSON on the top  
followed by a drawing resembling Josiah's hostage.

Josiah uses the gun to point out the words and looks away  
from Nicholas.

JOSIAH (cont'd)  
Wanted, Nicholas Stinson for theft,  
murder... you know, this picture  
oddly resembles you too.

With Josiah's attention on the poster, Nicholas bolts up  
towards him.

JOSIAH (cont'd)  
... and if you look here, uh oh, left  
han-

Nicholas's left hand crashes into Josiah's face, making him drop the rock and his gun flying out of his hand.

JOSIAH (cont'd)  
Ah! No!

Josiah turns his head in the direction where the gun went.

NICHOLAS  
Fists up, boy.

Josiah turns back to face Nicholas.

He hesitates, takes a deep breath, and then raises his fist.

Nicholas goes for another punch with his right, but Josiah ducks and bum rushes him.

Suddenly, Josiah tackles Nicholas to the ground.

Josiah attempts to pin Nicholas down with his knee, but Nicholas fights hard, making Josiah lose his balance. Nicholas lifts his body off the ground, making Josiah fall to the ground.

He tries to get back up and throw a punch, but Nicholas reacts quickly and grabs him by the throat. He pulls him to the ground and begins to choke him.

Josiah struggles. He makes gurgling screams, putting his hands over Nicholas's face. Tries to grab at his eyes, and kick his legs. Nothing works.

His struggles slowly but surely dissipate.

Nicholas's eyes, filled with determination, catch the glimmer of the gun. He lets go of Josiah.

Josiah gasps for air. He coughs and heaves, unable to sit up.

Nicholas grabs the gun and stands up. Clutching his knees, he laughs.

NICHOLAS (cont'd)  
Clumsy fool. You call yourself a  
bounty hunter? You can't even keep  
hold of your own iron!

Nicholas stands fully upright.

NICHOLAS (cont'd)  
I am sorry for this. I enjoyed our  
little chat about the stars.

He points the gun at Josiah.

Josiah raises a hand towards Nicholas. A nervous chuckle.

JOSIAH  
Come now. Don't be like that.

Nicholas looks up at the sky.

NICHOLAS  
Specks in the sky, huh? You won't  
even be a speck in the whole  
universe.

The cylinder of the revolver begins to rotate. Josiah turns  
and winces.

BANG!

Josiah looks back to see Nicholas standing there with blood  
dripping down the bridge of his nose. He lowers the gun and  
falls, allowing Josiah to see JED, standing there with a  
smoking gun. A tall auburn-haired woman, she smirks at  
Josiah.

JOSIAH  
That wasn't how that was supposed to  
go, Jed.

Jed walks towards the now-deceased Nicholas.

JED  
You're alive, aren't you?

Jed kneels down next to Nicholas and searches his pockets.  
Josiah brushes himself off.

JOSIAH  
He's not.

JED  
Hey, don't dwell on that. Look, hand  
me the rock.

Josiah sees it glistening in the firelight. He picks it up.

JOSIAH  
Here.

Josiah gives it to her.

JED

Do you remember what you said to me after your last show? This is our ticket. Not that bumbling caravan for the unwanted. This man killed an innocent person for this rock. There was a reason he had his face posted everywhere. And now we have it. It may not be a real star, but right now, I'll settle for a shooting one. This is the start of something for us! Are you with me?

Josiah looks at the corpse.

JED (cont'd)

He was going to kill you. We did a good thing. You knew the risks, now you reap the rewards. Are you with me?

JOSIAH

Yeah. I'm with you. It was a good performance, right?

Jed gives a smile.

JED

There's my actor boy. Come on. Let's head back to camp.

JOSIAH

Lets.

The End.