

WARDELL

BY BENSON PARKER

Fade In

Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys play IDA RED as titles scroll.

EXT CHIEF THEATER, GALLUP, NEW MEXICO - DAY

Pickup trucks and a few cars from the 1940's and early '50's line the streets. People are buying tickets and going in the theater most of them are dressed Western.

INT CHIEF THEATER - DAY

The 1950 Western movie Fort Defiance is on the screen. The Calvary chases Indians across the desert.

A smiling, enthused audience, fill the theater, it is dim but not dark. The big center section of the theater is occupied by White people.

The smaller left section of the theater is mostly Mexicans.

Onscreen, soldiers and Indians battle it out.

The right section of the theater is mostly Indians. A middle-aged INDIAN man against the right wall looks around, smiles, and calls out.

INDIAN

Hey, that's my horse.

Everyone laughs.

Later onscreen, an Indian shoots a soldier and a few of the Indians in the audience cheer.

The first few rows of the theater are filled with White, Mexican and Indian children who are not segregated like the adults in the audience; most of them are dressed like little cowboys and cowgirls.

Later onscreen, when a soldier shoots an Indian the White men cheer.

TY and WARDELL sit near the middle of the center section laughing. Ty is eighteen years old, Wardell is twenty-four years old. They are working cowboys. Their hats are in their laps.

The audience has loosened up and Mexicans are cheering when an Indian or a White man are shot. It's all in good fun.

Later onscreen, Wylie Coyote chases Roadrunner.

Backstage, SARAH adjusts DUSTY'S bandana. They are both in their early twenties, blond and attractive.

Onscreen, a news reel. Part of the audience is coming and going with popcorn and drinks. Kids of all races down in the front rows and in front of the stage play around.

NEWSREEL

... Operation Wetback to send
an estimated four million illegal
immigrants back to Mexico.

Mexicans boo and hiss, some of the cowboys and Indians laugh and applaud.

The trailer for *Shane* is shown.

In the projection booth, a young lady takes a 78 rpm record from its sleeve and places it on a turntable.

Onscreen, a scene from a Western serial like Desperados of the West ends with a cliff hanger.

WARDELL

So who's this Dusty character you
were talking about?

TY

He's from New Mexico and he's been
in about six B Westerns. I heard
he's in town working on another
one and that's why he's here today.

WARDELL

Well that must make about ten
Westerns that have been made
around Gallup in the past few years.

TY

I know, pretty exciting, huh?

Wardell is nonplussed.

The theater owner, MR. RAGSDALE, walks to center stage dressed in a white snap-front Western shirt, bolo tie, jeans, a diamond pinky ring, and pointy-toed boots.

MR. RAGSDALE

Ladies and gentlemen the Chief
Theater is proud to present one
a your favorite Western stars,
New Mexico's favorite son, let's
hear it for Dusty Armstrong.

The audience applauds. In the projection booth a young lady cues the record and an instrumental version of Don't Fence Me In fills the theater.

Wardell turns and looks over his shoulder at a little window beside the projection window where the young lady looks down at Wardell and smiles.

As the music and applause rise, Dusty strides out smiling and waving. He is bigger than life with a huge white cowboy hat, a giant red bandana around his neck, a fancy Western shirt, jeans, boots, big belt buckle, and in his right hand a coiled, braided-leather bullwhip.

DUSTY

Yee haw, I'm so proud to be here
back in my home state of New Mexico.

He snaps the whip.

(con'd)

Aqui esta New Mexico. Nosotros
Son es New Mexico.

Sarah marches out from back stage waving a big New Mexico state flag attached to a six-foot wooden pole.

Everyone is standing and clapping, some men hold their hats over their hearts, while others wave theirs in the air.

Sarah is wearing a tan and turquoise fringed skirt with a matching vest, and a white silk blouse. She has on fancy boots and a turquoise cowgirl hat sitting back on her head. She displays an exaggerated posture and smile. She marches around the stage a couple of times with the music playing, the crowd cheering, and Dusty popping the whip. As the music dies down she marches off stage.

Dusty cracks the whip a few more times then goes stage right where Sarah takes the whip and gives him a rope. He dallies out a small loop and begins twirling it around as he strolls back to the far side of the stage. The audience has calmed down and is quiet. The rowels on his spurs roll across the wooden stage making the jinglebobs jingle. His boot heels scrape the wood, the rowels click around, the jinglebobs jingle. Youngsters in the first few rows are transfixed.

(con'd)

I want to thank y'all for coming out today, and I wanna let you know that it's a pleasure to be back in Gallup. My new movie will be startin' up here in a few minutes.

He does the Butterfly trick with the rope.

(con'd)

When I first got to Hollywood and got a part as an extra in a Western, there was this scene where the lead actor, the

(more)

(con'd)

star, someone you have all seen in the movies, was supposed to rope a horse. He's a nice feller, and a well-respected actor, but let me tell ya, he ain't no cowboy.

Dusty swings the rope so it is making a circle in front of him.

(con'd)

So after watching him chase that horse all over the desert, ropin' air, I told the director that I was starting to feel sorry for the horse. He laughed, and I told him I could rope that horse for him. So I rode out and roped the horse.

Sarah steps from the curtain on the far side of the stage, and Dusty throws the loop across the stage, and right over her. It doesn't seem to touch her; it floats over her then drops to her feet.

Everyone applauds, Ty and Wardell exchange raised eyebrow looks that convey appreciation.

(con'd)

So me and the director became friends. A few weeks later he gave me a sidekick part in a movie he was makin, and since then - it's been a heck of a ride.

Dusty straps on his six-shooters and does some fancy tricks while he talks about growing up on a ranch in New Mexico. The crowd loves it.

(con'd)

... we had a radio, and at night, we would hook it up to a truck battery and listen to border radio, so I feel like I was lucky to have growed up on a hardscrabble ranch in New Mexico.

Later, Sarah hands Dusty his guitar and as he is pulling the guitar strap over his head a YOUNG COWBOY in the audience calls out.

YOUNG COWBOY

Hey Dusty, where's Lightning the Wonder Horse?

DUSTY

Lightning is on location just a few miles from here. I'll tell him you asked about him.

You know, I'll be twenty-two years old this summer so it was just a few years ago that I was settin out there watching Westerns every Saturday and dreaming of someday bein a cowboy up there on the big screen.

Dusty looks over his shoulder at the blank movie screen, and the projector suddenly beams a majestic color picture of the desert with mountains in the distance, and a gold and purple sunset. Dusty and Sarah stand stage right as he looks down front and addresses some of the kids in the front rows.

(con'd)

You young buckaroos are lucky to be growing up in the greatest state, in the greatest country the world has ever seen. This is the place where you can make your dreams come true. So dream big, work hard, and put a little Cowboy in whatever you do.

The music from *Don't Fence Me In* booms out again, and this time the first line of the lyrics appears across the bottom of the screen with a bouncing ball over it. The ball bounces from word to word, from syllable to syllable.

Oh, give me land lots of land
Under starry skies above
Don't fence me in

Dusty doesn't have to tell everyone to sing along. Between the music, the bouncing ball, and Dusty and Sarah singing, they can't help themselves. Ty and Wardell sing along.

AUDIENCE

Let me ride through the wide open
Country that I love
Don't fence me in

Near songs end, the music is still playing and the audience is still singing when Dusty calls out over the music and singing.

DUSTY

Thank you all for coming out today,
I really appreciate it. Stick
around, my new movie is coming
up next. Thank you, thank you.

He and Sarah wave, smile and step backstage. A black and white PRC movie logo fills the screen.

EXT JEEP PICK-UP TRUCK - DAY

The sun is about to set as Ty drives a new dark green Jeep pickup truck down the one main street, past signs that read, "Route 66", and "Indian Pawn", with Wardell on the passenger side of the bench seat. They stop at a Texaco station, where a young Mexican boy pumps gas for them. Barely discernable in the background a sign advertises a price of twenty-two cents a gal.

TY

Well, how'd you like the show Wardell?

WARDELL

I liked it okay. I liked Dusty
better than that movie he was in.

TY

Yeah, I know what you mean.

Wardell pats the dashboard.

WARDELL

This is a pretty nice graduation present you got here Ty.

TY

Yeah, it is itn't. This is the first year they've come out with a six cylinder, I love it. And when I put it in four wheel drive it'll climb a tree.

EXT PAWN SHOP - DAY

They stop at one of many pawn shops lined up on Route 66 and go inside.

INT PAWN SHOP - DAY

The pawn shop is filled with turquoise jewelry, guns, guitars, saddles, blankets, and much more. They look around then Wardell shows Ty a wooden box about the size of a cigar box.

WARDELL

I'm gonna get this.

TY

What is it?

Wardell opens the box and shows Ty.

WARDELL

A wood carving set.

TY

Well that might be fun. Have you always wanted a wood carving set Wardell?

Wardell looks at Ty and smiles, but doesn't say anything.

EXT COWBOY CAFÉ - NIGHT

Ty parks the Jeep on the street then he and Wardell go in the Café.

INT COWBOY CAFÉ - NIGHT

They sit at the counter, smile at the waitress and place their order.

TY (to Wardell)

This is getting to a ritual,
coming in here and having Sopaipilla
and coffee before going out on
the town.

WARDELL

Well I've seen what can happen
when you go out drinking on an
empty stomach so I think it's
probably for the best.

TY

Oh you're never gonna let me live
that down are ya?

WARDELL

Well I figure it don't hurt to
remind you once in a while that
you're not some kinda Superman
like you seem to think after you
get a few drinks in you.

EXT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ty parks in the crowded parking lot of El Rancho Hotel then he and Wardell go in.

INT EL RANCHO HOTEL - NIGHT

The open two story lobby is filled with Western antiques, Indian rugs, trophy animal heads, and Western movie memorabilia. They walk past the gift shop and restaurant then go in the lounge where a band is playing a Hank Williams song.

BAND

I got a hot rod Ford, and a two
dollar bill;
And I know a spot right over the hill.
There's soda pop and the dancing's
free
So if you wanna have fun, come along
with me.

The crowd is about half locals and half tourists, most of the locals are dressed Western, and a few of the tourists are sporting cowboy hats, Indian jewelry, or cowboy boots, that look as if they were bought earlier in the day.

Ty and Wardell smile and wave to people they know, then they sit at a table against the wall. In one corner booth are six young well-dressed Mexicans. The biggest round booth in the back corner has a "Reserved" sign on it.

WARDELL

Don't you go getting drunk. I
don't wanta have to explain
something unfortunate to your
Dad. Again!

TY

Okay, don't worry, I won't.

Wardell sees a girl across the room.

WARDELL

Oh good, there's Beth, she'll
keep you outa trouble.

Beth is waving, smiling, and walking toward them through the crowd. She is Ty's age, petit, and dressed Western.

LATER

The band is playing the Les Paul and Mary Ford song, *Vayo Con Dios*. Wardell is playing table shuffleboard with a tourist lady when Ty and Beth walk up. Ty points with a bottle of beer in his hand.

TY

Hey look there's Dusty and Sarah.

Dusty and Sarah come in from the restaurant and make their way to the round booth in the back where a few other movie people sit. No one notices them.

TY

I'm gonna go say hello to 'em.

WARDELL

I'd join you but I think I'm being hustled by a professional shuffleboard player here.

The city girl he is playing shuffleboard with laughs. Ty and Beth wander off.

INT MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ty waits until Dusty goes to the room marked "Cowboys" then follows him in. Ty washes his hands and straightens his shirt while Dusty smiles at the graffiti mural on the wall before him. Then Dusty steps up to the sink beside Ty.

TY

Hey Dusty, I saw your show this afternoon. You were great Pard.

DUSTY

Thanks. We usually only do appearances like that when I'm between films but I didn't have any shoots today so it was kinda spur of the moment.

TY

It's good to know that some of the people making Westerns are real cowboys.

DUSTY

Well, thanks. What do you do?

Ty
My folks have a ranch about
three hours south of here that
I work on.

Dusty washes his hands.

DUSTY
How many acres?

Ty
Well, it's about twenty sections
but you know how it is - it takes
thirty acres to keep one cow.

Dusty looks at Ty anew.

DUSTY
Whoaa, that's huge Pard.

TY
Yeah, it's a lot work is what
it is.

They continue talking as Ty follows Dusty out of the
restroom.

INT EL RANCHO - NIGHT

Dusty
What's your name?

TY
Ty, Ty Hart.

DUSTY
Well Ty Hart, come join us, I'd
like to hear more about your place.

Later

Ty comes up to Wardell beaming with excitement.

TY

War, you shoulda come over when
I waved to ya. Dusty told me
where they're filming tomorrow
and invited me out to watch.

Wardell listens but is looking across the room where
the girl he has been with all night is returning from
the Cowgirls Room and a city dude has stopped her and
is holding her by the arm.

WARDELL

That's great Ty. I'll be right
back.

Wardell walks away, Ty and Beth follow. Wardell goes
up to the girl who is trying to pull away from the
man. The BARTENDER starts from behind the bar.

WARDELL

Come on Sarah, let's dance.

The STRANGER puts his hand on Wardell's chest, and
gives him a little push.

STRANGER

Get lost, cowboy.

The bartender is between the two men before Wardell
can reply.

BARTENDER

All right you guys, we don't
want any trouble in here. If
you have a problem take it
outside.

The stranger is full of himself.

STRANGER

Let's go cowboy.

The stranger looks at Sarah.

STRANGER

Wait right here honey, this
won't take long.

EXT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ty and Beth and a few guys from the bar follow Wardell and the Stranger out to the parking area. The troublemaker is leading the way; he suddenly turns and tries to sucker punch Wardell. Wardell ducks and comes up under the man's chin with a right powerhouse. The man staggers back, shakes his head, and assumes a boxers stance. Wardell squares off against him and they start trading licks. Neither man moves his feet they stand there and duke it out until Wardell lands a blow that knocks the man down. His eyes snap shut and he falls hitting the back of his head on the curb. There is a pop like a firecracker when his head hits the concrete curb, his body twitches for a second, then becomes still.

Ty knells beside the body and feels for a pulse then he stands up, turns, and whispers to Wardell.

TY

He's dead War.

Wardell frowns and shakes his head.

WARDELL

What?

TY

Dead. Gone. Departed. It wasn't your fault, he hit his head on the curb. He swung on you, you hit him, he fell and hit his head on the curb. It was an accident.

Wardell looks down and starts walking slowly in a daze toward Ty's truck.

INT TRUCK - NIGHT

Ty gets behind the wheel, Beth stands beside Ty's open door, Wardell sits in the passenger seat looking down.

TY

You want to wait for the law?

Wardell doesn't answer for a few seconds, then he looks up.

WARDELL

Hell no, get me back to the ranch.

EXT RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

Ty and Wardell sit in the truck parked near the back door of the ranch house. Wardell rubs the knuckles on his right hand, and looks down at his right fist where an old jagged scar runs across the back of his hand.

TY

You never have told me how you got that scar.

WARDELL

It was a long time ago.

TY

Musta been pretty bad to leave a scar like that.

WARDELL

It wasn't that bad I just didn't take care of it.

The kitchen light comes on.

WARDELL

God I dread telling Cole and Mary Jo about this.

TY

Come on, I'll tell 'em.

INT KITCHEN - MORNING

When they go in the back door Ty's parents, COLE and MARY JO HART look at them with concern. Cole and Mary Jo are in their late forties.

Mary Jo serves coffee and fixes breakfast while Ty tells his parents what happened. Wardell sits with his forearms on his knees staring at the tile floor.

COLE

Who was the guy?

TY

I never seen him before, probably a tourist passing through. He was dressed like a city dude, had a back east accent.

COLE

Anybody with him?

TY

I don't think so.

Cole paces the kitchen then looks out the window. Ty and Wardell exchange worried looks. Cole looks to Mary Jo.

MARY JO

He's not going to jail.

Cole leans back against the counter.

COLE

Okay, I want to be on record as telling you that you should turn yourself in. But you're a grown man, and if you chose not to turn yourself in, there's a lot of fence out there that needs tending to. This place has over eighty miles of fence on it and five line shacks. And there's a dozen windmills that need looking after so a man could stay busy out there 'til this thing blows over if he was of a mind to.

Wardell stands.

WARDELL

Whew, good, that's just what I was thinking. I can't thank you enough Cole, Mary Jo. I'm sorry if this causes you any problems.

COLE

Well if that's what you've decided on, you better get started. The Sheriff will probably be out here for long. Load a wagon and take it up to the Bear Ridge line shack. That's the only line shack we can get a wagon to so you'll have to pack everything from there. Take a couple a horses. I'll have Ty take some supplies up there once a month, and I'll send word about how the Sheriff is handling things.

Mary Jo is not far from crying as she puts a plate of food in front of Wardell.

MARY JO

Here Wardell, you eat for you go.

EXT RANCH HOUSE PORCH - DAY

The SHERIFF and Cole sit in rocking chairs on the front porch as the Sheriff relates the same story that Ty and Wardell had told Cole earlier. Mary Jo comes out with coffee for them and sits beside Cole.

SHERIFF

... so do you have any idee where he is?

COLE

You're welcome to look around if you want to, but he could be half way to Mexico by now.

The Sheriff nods and gives Cole a knowing look.

SHERIFF

Well I guess I'll look around some while I'm here. Drove all the way down here I might as well have a look see.

The Sheriff steps off the porch and walks back toward the bunkhouse. Cole looks at Mary Jo, she puts her hand on his shoulder.

COLE

I don't know.

MARY JO

You're doing the right thing.
That boys been with us for us
for eight years, he's like a son.
And it was an accident.

EXT LINE SHACK - DAY

Ty drives a wagon toward the Bear Ridge line shack and fires a rifle in the air to let Wardell know he is coming. The shack is eight feet square with no windows. It is constructed of skinny unpeeled logs that were cut on site. Stacked near the shack are some fence posts, rolls of barbed wire, and a pile of firewood. There is a fire ring made of rocks in front of the shack.

While Ty is unloading the wagon Wardell rides up on a lathered up horse.

TY

Well I see you didn't bring your
razor with you.

WARDELL

Actually I did. I just haven't
bothered to use it. So what's the
news?

TY

Well, they're callin' it Involuntary
Manslaughter.

WARDELL

What's that good for?

TY

Five to twelve.

WARDELL

Is there a statute of limitations?

TY

'Fraid not, War.

Wardell rummages through the boxes of supplies in the back of the wagon.

WARDELL

Next time bring me a Hershey bar or something.

TY (laughs)

No problem, anything else?

WARDELL

Naw.

They finish unloading the wagon and carry some boxes inside.

INT SHACK - DAY

The line shack has a dirt floor, a low ceiling and is barren except for an Army cot, a kerosene lantern, a small wood burning stove, and a duffle bag. They put a few boxes of canned goods on the floor and go back outside.

EXT LINE SHACK - DAY

TY

I went out on location, as they call it, and hung around with Dusty and the movie people for a few days.

WARDELL

Oh yeah? How was that?

TY

It was great. I loved it. I got to be an extra in a few scenes. And before he left Dusty told me if I came to Hollywood he'd see to it that I found work.

WARDELL

That sounds like fun. You gonna do it?

TY

Yeah, I think I might. He told me about this friend of his, Cowboy Cody, who's a New York actor that came to Hollywood to be in Westerns, not just movies but Westerns. And how he doesn't have any cowboy skills so his name is kind of a joke and that he needs a double for just about everything. Dusty said I'm the right size and look and that I might could work with him.

WARDELL

You love the movies, and you're outta school now, but what about Cole and Mary Jo?

TY

They're not too keen on the idea. But, whatever I do I'll still be coming up here to check on you every now and then.

WARDELL

Aww don't worry about me. Hell I love it up here.

EXT WESTERN LOCATION - DAY

COWBOY CODY is crouched behind a boulder shooting it out with unseen bad guys while his stunt double, Ty, watches from just off camera. Standing off camera with Ty, a stuntman is firing a pellet gun at the rocks around Cody.

TY

What's in those bullets?

STUNTMAN

They're low power bullets packed with Tanner earth. After sound's added it'll look like bullets hitting the rocks around him.

Ty and Cody are about the same size and are dressed exactly alike with fancy Western shirts with piping, big white hats, and jeans.

TY

Let me see that a minute.

He takes the gun from the stuntman and peppers Cody with a few shots that come a lot closer than is usual. Cody glances over and sees Ty aiming at him. Cody fires a couple of blanks at Ty, and Ty falls back as if he has been hit while Cody frowns trying not to laugh while the camera rolls.

LATER

Ty tries to show Cody how to work a bullwhip, but Cody only succeeds in hitting himself on the back of the head and knocking his hat off with the tip of the whip.

TY

I'll tell you what Cody, they're ready to shoot, you just swing it around and I'll let them get some close ups of me from behind working the whip that they can edit later.

When the camera rolls Cody swings the whip around and gets it caught in the overhead boom, gets it wrapped around his legs, then knocks his hat off again. The crew is still laughing when Ty comes out stands in the same spot that Cody was standing in and shoots his scene with the whip. Cody watches Ty.

Later

CODY

How'd you learn to do that with the whip?

TY

I practiced. And I got a lot a pointers from Wardell the cowboy back home that I was telling you about.

EXT DESERT - DAY

A dot in the middle of a huge expanse of desert. Zoom in reveals Wardell working with post hole diggers, his saddle horse and pack horse stand nearby. The pack horse has a make shift sled tied to him with some skinny fence posts, a roll of wire, and hand tools, piled on it.

Wardell sets a post in the hole and pushes dirt in around it with his boots. He looks down the fence line to where it disappears in the far distance, then looks in the other direction to where the fence disappears in that direction. He begins to hum, then sing as he packs dirt in around the post. At first looking down at his work, then looking up.

WARDELL

Oh, give me a home
Where the buffalo roam
And the deer and the antelope play
Where seldom is heard
A discouraging word
And the skies are not cloudy all day

Then louder and looking around more, increasing his field of vision. His saddle horse peaks his ears.

(con'd)

Home, home on the range
Where the deer and the antelope play
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
And the skies are not cloudy all day

He laughs and looks at the saddle horse.

WARDELL

Pretty good, huh? Yeah I thought
you'd like that one.

EXT PALOMINO SALOON HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

The parking lot is filled with cars.

INT PALOMINO SALOON - NIGHT

A Western band is onstage performing *Hey Joe* by Carl Smith. Ty and Cody survey the young starlets and hopefuls in the crowd. A few of the patrons are dressed Hollywood Western, a couple of them are wearing Nudie Suits.

CODY

That cocktail waitress is the best looking thing in here, and she said she'd go out with me when she gets off work. But that'll be at three AM. I have to be on the set at six AM.

TY

Well Pard, you know I'm always willing to stand in for you.

CODY

Yeah, I'll just bet you would. But not tonight. Tonight it's the real thing - and I mean it this time.

TY

Sure it is Cody.

EXT WOODED MOUNTAINS - DAY

Wardell pans a small stream and gets tiny grains of gold. He uses tweezers to separate the gold from the black sand, then puts the gold in an aspirin tin.

He looks up from the stream to a ridgeline about fifty yards above. He wades the stream and climbs, with difficulty, to the base of the ridge. He strolls along until he finds himself at the base of a small cliff where there is a cave.

In front of the cave are the remains of an ancient fire ring. He scuffles his boots in the sand and kicks up arrow heads, some broken and some whole, pottery shards, and pieces of beadwork. He picks out some of the better arrowheads and beads and puts them in his pocket.

EXT WESTERN LOCATION - DAY

Cody watches Ty twist a wire around a horse's foreleg down near the hoof. Ty wraps the other end of the wire around the saddle horn, then does the same thing to the other leg.

CODY

Ty, you know you don't have to do this stunt if you don't want to. It's not my character taking a fall.

TY

I know, but hey, more money.

CODY

Don't you worry about getting hurt?

TY

The horse is more likely to get hurt than me. Some of these guys don't care, they just throw their arms up and jump off. But if you get the horse to turn his head to the side just a little bit before he goes down he's less likely to break his neck.

Cody walks away shaking his head. Ty races the horse toward a camera with Cody and half a dozen others watching. He holds the ends of the wires along with the reins. At the predetermined point he throws his arms up as if he has been shot pulling the forelegs underneath the horse, then he lets go of one of the wires and pulls one of the reins a little to turn the horse's head. The horse goes down unhurt.

DIRECTOR

Cut! Way to go Ty.

Ty and the horse stagger up to a scattering of applause. Ty knells, removes the wires, and gives the horse a pat on the neck.

EXT MOUNTAINS - DAY

Wardell sits in the saddle patting his horse's neck and looking at a broken fence line with fence posts leaning over and some posts lying on the ground. A few yards down the line he sees a tree stump.

FLASHBACK.

EXT DESERT TOWN - SUNSET

Fourteen-year-old Wardell lassoes a stump. He is in the backyard of a tiny rundown shack near railroad tracks. His dolled-up, floozy-looking thirty-two year old MOTHER opens the back screen door and calls out to him.

MOTHER

Wardell, I'm going to work.

WARDELL

See you later.

She turns and goes through the shack and out the front door. A few seconds later Wardell sees her leave in a car with a man driving.

He lassoes the stump again then walks toward the stump coiling the rope as he goes. He goes in the house and opens the ice box. It is empty except for a glass jar with a screw on lid half full of water and a package of hot dogs. He drinks water from the jar, then walks through the living room where there is a couch with a pillow and blankets on it. He goes in the only bedroom, his mother's room.

His mother's dresser is dark wood with a big oval, beveled mirror. The top of the dresser is cluttered with make-up, cheap jewelry, bobby pins, brushes and combs, powder and paint.

He opens a bottle of red finger nail polish and uses the little brush to put a big drop of polish on the dresser. He screws the brush back into the bottle, presses the bottle down on the drop, then leaves the room.

EXT GALLUP - DAY

Cole parks in front of the McKinley County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff comes out of the building and heads for his patrol car. Cole gets out of his truck and calls to him.

COLE

Hey Sheriff, where you off to?

SHERIFF

Howdy Cole. What brings you to town?

COLE

I was on my way to the feed store and thought I'd stop by and see if there was any news concerning that incident with Wardell.

SHERIFF

No, nothing new. Why have you seen him?

COLE

No, I haven't seen him, and you know it's been over a year now.

SHERIFF

Yeah, I know. Nobody ever came and claimed the body on the guy who died.

COLE

You know Cody worked on my place since he was fifteen years old and never did me wrong. I was glad to have my son hang around with him.

The Sheriff leans back against his car and looks at Cole.

SHERIFF

What you getting at Cole?

COLE

Couldn't you just lose the file,
or drop the charges or something?

SHERIFF

I don't have the authority to do
that. It's outa my hands. And
besides too many people know
about it.

COLE

Damn.

SHERIFF

I'll tell you what Cole. I'm
gonna come out to your place
tomorrow and make a visit. If
I don't see Wardell I'm not gonna
have time to go way the hell
down there again looking for him.
Okay?

COLE

Okay, thanks. 'Preciate it.

SHERIFF

But if I ever see him around town
I'm gonna have to take him in.

COLE

Fair enough.

EXT BEAR RIDGE LINE SHACK - DAY

Ty drives the wagon loaded with supplies, fence posts,
and rolls of wire, toward the shack and fires a couple
of shots in the air. At the line shack he unloads the
wagon. Later, Wardell rides up, his hair and beard are
longer.

Wardell and Ty sit outside by the fire.

TY

...so the Sheriff comes out the
next day and has lunch with
Momma and Daddy and doesn't
even look for ya.

Wardell raises his brows and smiles.

TY

So you can go back to sleeping
in the bunkhouse and eating dinner
with the folks every night.

Wardell pokes the fire with a stick.

WARDELL

Oh, I don't know. I think I'll
stay out a while longer.

Ty is dumbstruck.

TY

What? Why? You don't feel guilty
about what happened, do you?

WARDELL

No. I feel bad that it happened
but it was an accident, I don't
feel guilty about it.

TY

You know Dad has been putting
your pay in the bank for you
every month so you've got money
coming.

WARDELL

That Cole, what a guy. Closest
thing to a father I ever had.

TY

Don't you get lonesome up here?

Wardell looks around at the unspoiled vista.

WARDELL

It's hard to explain but the longer
I stay the... the bigger I feel. I
feel more connected, more... alive.
You know I don't just stay on the
(more)

(con'd)

fence lines. I've been all over the Gila country and into the Reservations, and all over. I love it out here, it's beautiful.

They look out across a stunning landscape. Wardell is transfixed, Ty looks around for a few seconds, then clears his throat. Wardell comes back.

WARDELL

So how's it going in Hollywood?
You a movie star yet?

TY

Not hardly, but it is a lot of fun. My buddy Cody wants to come up here and meet you. That okay with you?

WARDELL

Sure Ty, any friend of yours...

EXT DESERT HIGHWAY - MORNING

Ty drives his Jeep pickup with Cody leaning against the passenger door.

CODY

Do your parents know we're coming?

TY

No, we don't have a telephone, but they're used to me comin' home every few weeks. And it bein' the week before Christmas... I've never been away from home on Christmas.

EXT LAS VEGAS - NOON

They drive east on the Strip past El Rancho, Last Frontier, Desert Inn, Hacienda, and Tumbleweed Motel. At the railroad station they turn right onto Fremont Street and say, "Howdy Pardner" to Vegas Vic.

EXT KINGMAN - DAY

In Kingman, they get on Route 66 just as the song, *Route 66*, comes on the radio. They laugh and sing along.

TY, Cody and RADIO

You see Amarillo, Gallup, New Mexico, Flagstaff, Arizona, Don't forget Winona, Kingman, Barstow, San Bernadino.

Later, they pass a gas station with a sign in the window, "Peach Springs Indian Rodeo".

TY

In rodeo if you get throwed you don't get paid, but in the movies you get paid more to get throwed.

CODY

You know sometimes the whole crew is holding their breath to see if you're okay.

TY

You're kidding.

CODY

Yeah, it's scary; you could get serious hurt you know?

TY

Tell me about it! I still hurting from a fall I took for you last week. But you know, just between you and me - it ain't nothing to me. When I was five years old my Daddy started puttin' me up on the back of anything with hair. I've ridden sheep, goats, bulls, hell, we broke and trained our own horses. Me and Wardell used to enter local rodeos together.

CODY

I'm looking forward to meeting
Wardell after all you've told me
about him.

Ty

Yeah he's one hard working cowboy.

EXT MOUNTAINS - DAY

In a narrow little ravine filled with snow Wardell sees what looks like smoke rise from a jumble of boulders. He climbs over icy rocks and discovers a small hot spring forming a pool about the size of a bathtub. Under the trees, all around, the ground is covered in snow. Steam rises from the water.

Wardell piles his clothes on a rock beside the spring. He eases down into the hot water closing his eyes and smiling.

INT TRUCK - Day

Ty and Cody pass a tourist court with an almost empty parking lot just before Flagstaff. There is snow in the mountains.

TY

It's cold up here. When you make
a trip like this in the summer
time most people drive all night
and lay up in air-cooled tourists
courts during the day.

CODY

I'm just glad to be out here, I
don't care what time of year it
is. I haven't really seen much
of the West, you know. I took the
train from New York, and that was
nice, but this is even better.

They come to a sign that reads, "Oak Creek Canyon".

TY

Here's the turnoff for Oak Creek Canyon. There's been a bunch a Westerns that were filmed there.

EXT WINSLOW - DAY

Cody is driving through Winslow when Ty sees a poster advertising a rodeo.

TY

Yeah, jumping off is easy compared to getting thrown off. And it pays a lot more. Coarse in rodeo, and on the ranch, you don't have nobody telling you what to do all the time. In the movie business, every day I've got some assistant telling me to wait over there, ride over here, fall off at this exact spot, and turn your head this way so the camera won't get your face, and ...

CODY

You know what to me is the best thing about making Westerns?

TY

Yeah, it makes it easier to pick up girls.

CODY

That's true, but I was thinking about hanging out between shoots with the stuntmen and extras. Some of those guys, like you, are the real deal, Cowboy through and through.

Ty

Yeah, it's hard to find work on a ranch these days, and when you do it don't pay nothing. And that reminds me, I've been wondering, what do you make?

CODY

Three hundred a week. What do you make?

TY

A hundred a week - but I have to do all the dangerous stuff!

CODY

You don't have to memorize pages of script.

TY

Oh yeah, that sounds real dangerous. Besides, you don't memorize doodily, you read the lines just before the camera rolls and remember them long enough to shoot the scene. I do all the hard stuff; I should make more than you.

CODY

I agree. I wouldn't want to get thrown from a horse going twenty miles an hour. Actually, I could do all that stuff you do, but the insurance company won't allow it.

TY

Sure you could Cowboy Cody. You don't even need a double; you could do it all.

CODY

You're not really my double anyway. We don't look anything alike.

TY

I know, I'm a lot better lookin' than you are.

EXT MOUNTAINS - DAY

Wardell knells beside a small stream, picks up and examines small stones, holds them up to the light, then puts them in his pocket.

In camp Wardell builds something using two empty tin cans, wire, and sticks. Assembled, it is a contraption.

INT JEEP - DAY

CODY

What are your folks like?

TY

They're hardworking, ranch people. I'm an only kid so we were always close, and I feel kinda bad not bein' there. It could be a more profitable place with some work. It needs a more windmills, stock tanks, cross fencing... work.

CODY

Do you have a girlfriend back there?

TY

Yeah, sorta, Beth. She's got the hairiest legs in the county but boy can she ride a horse.

EXT MOUNTAIN STREAM - DAY

Wardell hammers the stakes from his contraption into a shallow little stream. The stakes support a one-gallon tin can hanging half submerged on its side in the stream. After adjusting it he watches the can turn slowly around in the current.

EXT GALLUP - DAY

In Gallup they pass the Chief Theater where the marquee advertises the movie Hondo.

Later they pass El Rancho Hotel.

TY

That's the El Rancho that I was telling you about. That's where I met Dusty, and that's where Wardell had his fight.

CODY

Who did you say owns it?

TY

It was built by D.W. Griffith's brother, R.E. Griffith, he came to Gallup to direct a Western, and then came back and built the hotel. It's headquarters for the movie crews that come to town. And a pretty wild place on the weekends.

EXT RANCH ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Ty turns off the road beside a big rusty mailbox. Cody gets out and swings the gate open. Ty drives over the cattle guard, and under a rusty metal archway with cut-outs of cows and the letter H in a circle. Cody closes the gate then gets back in and looks back at the arch.

CODY

So is this the Circle H?

TY

Yeah, that's our brand.

CODY

How far is it to the house?

TY

It's about three miles to the house and we'll gain about three thousand feet in elevation.

CODY

Good Lord, Ty this place is huge!

TY

Aw, it ain't much.

The rough ranch road crosses the desert and starts winding its way up into the mountains, and trees.

The house is surrounded by Ponderosa pine, and giant boulders. The foundation of the house up to the bottom of the windows is made of rocks that are between one and two feet in diameter. Above the rocks, huge logs form walls up to the shake roof. There is a barn, bunkhouse, corrals, and other out buildings in back of the house.

EXT MOUNTAINS - DAY

Wardell takes the can from the stream. He takes a smaller can from inside the larger can and opens it. The smaller can is about half full of wet white sand. The small rough stones that he put in the can with the sand have been polished to gem quality. He smiles at their beauty; dark red garnets, turquoise, onyx. He puts more rough stones into the can, reassembles the tumbler, then watches it turn around.

INT RANCH KITCHEN - MORNING

Cody comes in the kitchen where Mary Jo stands at the stove cooking. He gives her a big smile.

CODY

Good morning, Mary Jo.

MARY JO

Good morning.

CODY

Where is everybody?

MARY JO

Ty's not up yet, and Cole's out checking on cows. How late did y'all stay up last night?

CODY

It was after midnight. Your husband is a mighty interesting fella to listen to.

MARY JO

I've probably lost the proper perspective on that. I've been listening to him for thirty years. I'm kidding, I still like listening to him. Sometimes.

CODY

After meeting y'all I can see why Ty turned out so well.

MARY JO

Well thank you. He's our baby, don't tell him I said that though.

She puts a platter full of breakfast on the table.

MARY JO

Here you go Cody.

He sits down at the table.

CODY

Thank you.

MARY JO

What have y'all got planned for today?

CODY

I don't know, I hope Ty's gonna show me around the ranch.

He starts eating.

CODY

This is a beautiful home, how long have you lived here?

MARY JO

I've been here twenty years. Cole was born here, not in this house, but in the old house.

CODY

Where's the old house?

MARY JO

It's the bunk house out back there. That's where Cole's parents lived when they started out here.

CODY

Who lives there now?

MARY JO

Nobody now, Wardell used to live there.

CODY

Ty's told me all about Wardell, or War, as he calls him.

MARY JO

Yeah, Ty's the only one ever calls him that. War.

CODY

Ty really looks up to him.

MARY JO

He's like an older brother to Ty... and like a son to me and Cole. I miss him.

CODY

It must be hard knowing he's out there someplace but you can't see him.

MARY JO

It is, but still, I'd rather him be out there riding the line than sitting in prison.

She looks out the window at distant snow-capped mountains.

EXT MOUNTAINS - DAY

In the mountains, Wardell sits on a log a few steps from a line shack tending a fire and cooking breakfast. He stares into the fire.

FLASHBACK

INT HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Young Wardell stirs eggs in a frying pan. He hears the front door quietly close, he looks toward it and sees a man walking away across the yard. He steps to his mother's bedroom door and sees her lying in bed partially exposed. He looks disgusted and goes back in the kitchen.

INT KITCHEN - MORNING

Cody takes his breakfast dishes to the sink and Mary Jo takes them from him.

MARY JO

I'll get those.

CODY

That was the best breakfast I ever had. Home cooking, been a long time.

MARY JO

Where's your family Cody?

CODY

I was raised by my grandmother in New York, and when she passed away a couple of years ago I moved to Hollywood. I don't know if I have any other family.

He turns away and she gives him a heartfelt look. He goes to the back door and looks outside while holding his coffee cup.

CODY

This is what I've been dreaming about all my life. This place is beautiful, the house, the barn, the corrals, the mountains... it's all so real.

She looks at him askance.

MARY JO

Yes, it's real.

He looks at the door frame where pencil marks record Ty's growing up.

CODY

I mean movie locations are usually fake, but this, this is the real thing.

Ty comes in the kitchen.

TY

Momma is Cody telling you lies about what a big movie star he is?

Ty puts an arm around Mary Jo and kisses her cheek. She fills a plate for him.

CODY

No, I was telling her about that gap-toothed girl you been dating back in Hollywood.

Mary Jo looks at Ty, shocked and amused.

TY

He's lying, Momma. He once told me that he decided to become an actor when he realized what a good liar he is.

CODY (TO MARY JO)

She's got a good quarter inch gap between her two front teeth that she can spit through.

Mary Jo laughs. Ty sits and starts eating.

TY

Momma, if you and Daddy ever go see one of Cody's movies keep in mind that if he's doing anything other than talking on screen - it's probably really me.

CODY

She can whistle through that gap
so high that only dogs can hear
it.

EXT DESERT - DAY

Ty and Cody ride horseback across a meadow with a few inches of snow covering the ground. Cody leads a pack horse. Ty pats this mounts neck.

TY

This is Blaze. I've been
working with him since he was
a colt. I work with him some
every time I come home for a visit.

Cody isn't listening, he's looking all around.

CODY

Look at those mountains. Breathe
this air. I'd like to start
every day like this.

TY

Maybe next part you get you
could get 'em to let you show
off a little bit. And by you
of course I mean me.

CODY

What are you talking about?

TY

Watch this.

Ty takes off on Blaze riding in a big circle around Cody while doing tricks; he slides off the back of Blaze and holds onto the horses tail skiing through the snow, pulls himself back up, slides off the side holding onto the saddle horn, hits the ground with both feet then bounces back into the saddle, stands in the saddle, sits backwards on the saddle. Then he rides back up beside Cody.

CODY

Holy cow! I didn't know you could
do all that. That was amazing.
Here.

He hands the pack horse reins to Ty, and takes off at a gallop. He throws his right leg over the horse's neck, holds onto the saddle horn with both hands, and slides off. When he hits the ground with both feet to bounce back up he doesn't reach forward with his feet and falls face first into the snow. His horse gallops away.

Ty is still laughing when he rides up with the pack horse and hands the reins to Cody.

TY

Way to go Cowboy Cody. I wish
there woulda been cameras rolling
for that.

Cody brushes off snow and takes the pack horse reins.

CODY

Oh you think you're so smart.
What'd I do wrong?

TY

You spent most of your life in
New York.

Ty is still laughing as he rides after Cody's horse.

EXT BEAR RIDGE LINE SHACK - DAY

Wardell, Ty and Cody stand around a fire in front of a line shack. Wardell hasn't shaved or cut his hair in months. His clothes are old and faded. He stands with his hands in his pockets smiling at Ty and Cody. Ty turns skewers of game over the fire, Cody paces around looking at everything. Ty and Cody are clean-shaven, and well-dressed.

WARDELL

So Cody, you think you can make
a movie star outta Ty?

CODY

Well, I don't know about all that Wardell. I haven't made a movie star outta me yet. I've only been in some B Westerns. I don't think he's motivated enough anyway, he's kinda lazy.

WARDELL

Yeah, I had almost made a cowboy out of him when he ran off to Hollywood.

Ty looks down, and shakes his head.

TY

I shoulda knowed better than to get you two together.

INT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cole, Mary Jo, Ty and Cody sit around laughing and talking. A four foot tall mahogany Magnavox radio plays Western music softly in the background; the sound quality is perfect. Ty gets up and stands in front of the blazing fireplace. There is a Christmas tree in the corner.

TY

Momma has Daddy taken you to see any of our movies yet?

MARY JO

Why no, he never takes me anyplace.

COLE

Honey I took you to town not more than three or four years ago, and all you did was complain and say you wanted to go home.

They smile at one another sharing a private joke.

COLE

I don't think I understand the picture shows. They play at the Chief for two or three days and then they're gone never to be seen again.

TY

All the more reason to go see the one's we're in while you can.

COLE

And how come so many of them are in black and white when they have color pictures these days?

CODY

Because black and white film is about four times faster to develop than color. The studios are filling a need, they can't crank out Westerns fast enough.

MARY JO

Well, nothing against you Cody but I'll be glad when Ty gets the movie making out of his system and comes back here and helps his Dad run this place.

Cody looks at Ty, Ty looks at the floor.

TY

I know, I know, and I will, soon.

MONTAGE

-In the mountains, Wardell chops wood and stacks it in front of each of the line shacks.

-On the fence line, his horse pulls barbed wire tight, and he hammers staples into fence posts.

-He finds a stray cow then he and his mount fight their way through dense undergrowth to chase it out in the open where he ropes it, throws it, ties it, then builds a fire, and brands it.

-He rides up to a windmill that is squealing loudly as the blades turn in the wind. He climbs the windmill with a bucket of grease and soon the windmill goes silent.

-At night in a line shack he crushes different colored berries in a bowl and makes dye that he rubs into the wood of small hand-carved animals. On some of them he embeds gold or small gems.

EXT EL RANCHO - NIGHT

Ty parks the Jeep in the parking lot of El Rancho then he and Cody walk toward the lobby entrance. The parking lot, hallways, the whole area is crowded with working cowboys, tourists, weekend cowboys, cowgirls, and senioritas.

INT EL RANCHO LOBBY - NIGHT

When Ty and Cody go in the lobby, music from the lounge and colorful Christmas decorations enliven the swirl of happy people. In one corner a tall, stately Saguaro Cacti in a four foot square container has been set up and decorated with multi-colored Christmas lights. Cody looks all around at the westernalia and Western movie posters.

CODY

Look at all this stuff, this place is amazing.

Two hot young cowgirls walk by them going to the lounge.

CODY

And look at that. I'm used to seeing girls dressed Western, but these girls look like real cowgirls. Real pretty cowgirls.

TY

Yeah, some of these local girls have lived on ranches all their lives and can ride better than either of us. Well, better than you anyway.

On the other side of the lobby, BETH and her girlfriend SUCE check their coats then go over and stand by the fireplace. They are both wearing jeans, long-sleeve snap-front Western shirts, and boots. Beth spots Ty and Cody as soon as they enter the lobby.

BETH

Look, there's Ty.

She starts toward him, Suce puts her hand on Beth's arm stopping her.

SUCE

Wait, let him come to you.

Ty sees Beth and motions for Cody to come with him. Cody is looking around appreciating the rich Western atmosphere. As Ty and Cody make their way across the crowded lobby, Cody's eyes meet Suce's eyes for the first time. Beth hugs Ty then pushes him away and looks contrite.

BETH

Why haven't you written to me?

TY

Beth, darlin', I'm home every few weeks.

BETH

You said you'd write.

TY

Oh darlin', you know I'm liable to say anything.

BETH

Don't I know it, you've been lieing to me since eighth grade.

Ty looks at Cody who hasn't taken his eyes off Suce.

TY

Cody this is Beth and Suce.

CODY

Nice to meet you.

They go in the lounge where the girl singer with the band is singing the Patsy Montana song *I Wanna Be a Cowboys Sweetheart*. They find a table and sit.

BETH

So how long you home for this time?

TY

We'll probably head back the day after Christmas.

BETH

Good. I'll be glad to be rid of you.

Under the table she puts her hand on Ty's thigh.

BETH

We went to see you guys at the Chief when *Gun Ridge* played there.

She looks at Cody.

(con'd)

You were great.

She looks at Ty.

(con'd)

Are you sure you were in it? We didn't see you.

TY

Every time you saw Cowboy Cody here in a fight, like in the saloon, or when his horse went down - that was me.

BETH

Well, you should look at the camera so we know it's you.

Ty exasperated.

TY

I can't, that's the whole idea.
You're supposed to think - arrggh!
If you couldn't tell it was me then
good, I was doing my job.

Ty looks at Cody and shakes his head. The girls laugh.

TY

Let me tell you about Cowboy
Cody here. One day last week
after being on location all
day with horse falls, fight scenes,
dust storms, you name it. Cody
comes up to me and says, 'Whew,
rough day.' We're wearing the
exact same costume; mine is
torn and dirty and bloody from
top to bottom, my hats crushed,
I'm dirty, sweating. And he and
his costume look brand new.
Yeah, whew, rough day.

BETH (To Ty)

Is it true that Wardell's working
on a ranch down in old Mexico?

Ty and Cody exchange a glance.

TY

I hadn't heard that one.

SUCE

I heard he changed his name and
is prospecting uranium in Utah.

The band starts playing a slow song.

CODY

Suzy, would you like to dance?

SUCE

It's Suce, not Suzy. And yeah
I guess so.

Ty and Beth watch Cody and Suce dancing. Cody is looking at
Suce and talking. Suce looks away uninterested.

BETH

Your movie star looks like he's falling for Suce.

TY

I know, I've never seen him like this before. In Hollywood the girls are usually after him because they think he can get them a part.

BETH

And to Suce, him being an actor is a strike against him. She's not going to get involved with somebody who's going back to Hollywood in a few days. She's... level-headed.

LATER

The four of them sit at the table talking. Cody puts his hand on Suce's hand and she pulls her hand away. Ty laughs at him.

CODY

Did Wardell have a girlfriend?

Ty

No, well, not since Janine.

SUCE (to Cody)

Janine ran off with an osteopath from Albuquerque.

TY

That was a few months before the fight here.

Beth shivers.

BETH

I still can't walk past the spot where it happened.

SUCE

Janine was nice, but she was a city girl.

TY

Wardell didn't know what an osteopath was. The only doctor he'd ever known was a vetinary. I guess its okay to say this now. And I guess I'm the only one who knew that Wardell had been having an affair with Linda Ragsdale.

Beth and Suce are shocked.

BETH

Oh my God I can't believe it. You mean the Ragsdale that owns the Chief Theater?

TY

Yep.

SUCE

Well, Mr. Ragsdale is in his late fifties and Linda and Wardell were about the same age.

Beth

Still, that don't make it right.

TY

Wardell told me things about Mr. Ragsdale that made it right... in Wardell's mind anyway.

Beth leans in.

BETH

Like what?

TY

Well I shouldn't say.

Beth hits his shoulder.

BETH

Oh you're no fun.

Later the band is on a break and people stand around in the parking lot, talking, smoking and getting whiskey bottles from under truck seats and passing them around.

Beth and Ty are in the front seat of her car making out when she pushes him away.

BETH

I gotcha a little Christmas present.

She leans over the back of the front seat, sticking her rear end up in the air as she reaches into the back seat. Ty looks over at her tight jeans in silhouette and pats her butt.

TY

Thanks honey I love it.

She slaps at his hand.

BETH

You better stop that boy.

She sits back down and hands him a wrapped box with a bow. He opens it and holds up a brown leather vest with silver conchos sew on around the bottom, and pockets on the front and on the inside, and lined with dark green silk.

TY

Wow this is beautiful, thank you.
Where'd you get it?

BETH

I made it.

TY

You're kidding? Are these the conchos from that belt? It's really nice, thank you, it must have taken a long time to do this. But now I feel bad that I don't have anything for you. Oh wait. What's this?

He pulls a small jewelry box from his pocket and gives it to Beth. She opens it and sees a diamond ring. She is speechless, near tears.

TY

Its just a little something I
picked up in Hollywood for you.
Thought it might help keep
you on the straight and narrow
while I'm away.

She gives him the ring then holds out her left hand, he puts the ring on her ring finger, she looks at it, then throws her arms around his neck and kisses him.

INT TRUCK - NIGHT

Ty drives, Cody looks out the window at the moon.

CODY

I finally meet the girl of
my dreams and she lives a
thousand miles away.

TY

Tell you the truth I don't think
she was that taken with you.

EXT WESTERN LOCATION- DAY

Cameras track Cowboy Cody as he races his mount to the edge of a roaring river then reins him in. A few minutes later the cameras follow Ty as he charges the same horse into the river. The horse stumbles, falls, and rolls over on top of Ty. Cowboy extras and stuntmen race their mounts along the bank of the river throwing ropes at Ty's fast disappearing limp form.

Later, Cody sits alone on a boulder by the river holding his head and crying.

EXT ROUTE 66 - DAY

Cody drives Ty's truck down a desert highway as the sun sets behind him. The sun reflects in the rearview mirror casting a band of golden light across Cody's

eyes. He looks grim. Over his shoulder, through the rear window the bed of the truck can be seen. Suitcases and boxes hold down a tarp that covers Ty's casket.

EXT DESERT CEMETARY - NIGHT

It is snowing, under a full moon headstones stick up through a blanket of snow. Wardell sits bundled up on his horse looking down at Ty's headstone.

William Tyler Hart
1934 - 1953
Beloved Son

Tears freeze in Wardell's beard. He turns his horse and slowly rides along the railroad tracks into Gallup.

There is no traffic on Route 66. He ties his horse to a parking meter just past the Cowboy Café, and then goes inside. The café is empty, he sits at the counter and orders Sopaipilla and coffee.

The WAITRESS takes his order then goes in the kitchen, where she and the COOK peek through the pass-through at Wardell.

WAITRESS

That's him I'm telling ya that's Wardell. I've waited on him and Ty many times.

COOK

How can you be so sure with that long hair and beard... it's hard to tell.

WAITRESS

No, that's him. He ordered the same thing that he always ordered when him and Ty he used to come in. That was before he got in that fight at the El Rancho and then disappeared.

EXT ROUTE 66 - NIGHT

The Sheriff stops his patrol car beside Wardell's horse. Through the wet car window and the snow the Sheriff can make out the circle H brand on the horse. He considers it for a moment then drives away.

INT CAFÉ - NIGHT

Behind the counter the waitress walks up to Wardell with a coffee pot.

WAITRESS

More coffee?

Wardell stands up to leave, sticks his hand in his jeans pocket.

WARDELL

No thanks. What'd I owe you?

WAITRESS

It's on the house.

Wardell looks at her, smiles, then pulls a gold nugget from his pocket and puts it on the counter.

WARDELL

Well thank you kindly.

He walks toward the door.

WAITRESS

You're welcome (Pause) Wardell.

He looks back at her and smiles, bobs his head up, then goes out the door.

MONTAGE

-Cole and Cody work on a windmill. Cole stands on the ground looking up at Cody and telling him what to do.

-Cole drives a pickup truck across the desert with Cody beside him. He stops the truck, Cody gets out and throws a block of salt from the back of the

truck.

-Cody pulls on a piece of barbed wire while Cole hammers a staple into the fence post.

-Cole and Cody are horseback slowly following a dozen cows.

COLE

I been meaning to tell you that me and Mary Jo really appreciate you staying around after the funeral and helping out the way you have. But it's been a couple of months now, and I know you probably want to get back to Hollywood so don't stay on our account. I mean, we really like having you here, but I'm sure this ain't helping your movie acting career any.

CODY

Thanks for saying that, Cole. I'll tell ya I been thinking about it a lot lately and I've about decided that I'd rather be a cowboy than pretend to be a cowboy.

They stop their mounts, the cows graze.

COLE

Well good for you boy. I think you've made the right decision. And I want you to know that you've got a job and a home here for as long as you want.

CODY

Thanks Cole, you know I love it here, and I'm not interested in movies anymore after what happened, I mean, if he hadn't been taking my place that day..

Cody chokes up and looks away.

COLE

Now don't go blaming yourself for that. It was an accident.

They sit in silence for a moment watching the cows.

COLE

Did you know Ty couldn't swim?

CODY

No, I didn't know that.

COLE

I shoulda taken him someplace when he was little to learn how but... look around, there's not a body of water big enough to swim in within a hundred miles of here. Hell, I don't know how to swim.

CODY

You know... what happened to Ty... it wouldn't a mattered if he knew how to swim or not, it was the horse falling on him that did it.

COLE

Oh yeah?

CODY

Yeah. I was looking right at him when it happened. And I wish to Christ I wouldn't have been.

COLE

I'm glad you told me that. Poor Mary Jo, she blames herself because she didn't put her foot down and make him stay on the ranch. Then Beth comes out to see us after the funeral and she's crying and carrying on saying that she shoulda done more to keep Ty at home. I guess we're all trying to blame ourselves when really, nobody's at fault.

CODY

Yeah, I guess you're right about that.

COLE

We gave Beth that vest she made for Ty. She got hysterical, it was awful.

FLASHBACK

Ty and Beth sit in the Chief Theater watching a Western movie.

TY

Look at the guys in this scene. There must be ten men on the screen right now and every one of them has on a vest. Why don't I have a vest? The only time I get to wear a vest is when I'm in a film and I get one from wardrobe. I love vests, put me in a vest and I'm one happy cowboy.

BETH

Well they're not that hard to come by. All that money you're making in the movies you could buy all the vests you want. You sure aren't spending any of it on me.

TY

Oh come on. I just bought you some popcorn.

Beth throws popcorn at Ty.

FLASHBACK

INT CAFÉ - NIGHT

Ty and Beth go in a restaurant. The cash register and menus are on a glass counter. Under the counter are Western items for sale; turquoise

jewelry, Kachina dolls, bead work, and a leather belt.

They sit in a booth, give their order, then while waiting they go back to the glass counter and look at the items for sale.

TY

Wow, look at that Navaho belt, I'll bet it's a hundred years old, probably made by Cochise himself.

BETH

Cochise wasn't Navaho he was Apache.

TY

Well, maybe worn by Cochise. He may have traded scalps for it, you never know. The leather is shot but those silver conchos are beautiful.

They look through the glass pointing out things they like.

TY

I'm going to the men's room I'll be right back.

While he is gone Beth buys the belt and stuffs it in her purse.

EXT PORCH - NIGHT

Beth sits in a rocking chair on a porch, she sews conchos onto a brown leather vest, while singing to herself.

EXT LINE SHACK - DAY

Cody and Wardell stand by the fire after unloading the wagon.

CODY

I didn't tell Cole and Mary Jo but one of the movies that Ty was in with me is showing at the Chief this weekend. Do you think I should tell 'em?

WARDELL

I wouldn't but it's up to you.

CODY

Yeah, I don't think I will. It'd just make 'em sad. It makes me sad just thinking about it. I sure miss that guy.

WARDELL

I know what you mean. I think about him all the time. Till he left for Hollywood we were around each other every day, and never had a cross word.

Cody gets red in the face and looks away.

CODY

Shit. I better be going. I'll see you next time.

EXT CHIEF THEATER - LATE NIGHT

The Closed sign is in the window of the box office. Wardell's horse is tied up in the alley near the back door of the theater.

INT CHIEF THEATER

The theater is empty except for Wardell and LINDA RAGSDALE sitting side by side in the last row watching a Cowboy Cody Western. Wardell has shaved and cut his hair. He points at the screen.

WARDELL

That's him, that's Ty, I can tell by the way he rides, he rides a lot better than Cody.

EXT ALLEY - NIGHT

In the alley the Sheriff stops his patrol car and looks at the Circle H brand on the horse for a minute then drives away.

Wardell and Linda watch the movie in silence for a while.

WARDELL

This is too sad I don't want to watch anymore.

LINDA

I'll go turn it off.

She gets up and walks away. Wardell stares at the blank screen until she comes back and sits beside him in the dark. They hold hands.

INT RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

Cody, Cole, and Mary Jo sit in the living room listening to Death Valley Days on the radio. Mary Jo sits at a desk working on the books, Cole reads the Albuquerque Journal newspaper, Cody stares into the fire.

EXT RIDGELINE - NIGHT

Wardell sits on his horse in the moonlight looking down at the distant lights of a small village. A coyote howls from far away. He stands in the stirrups, reaches into his jeans pocket and pulls out a few different colored gem stones. He rolls them around in his hand, then throws them into the night sky where they turn into comets and arch fiery trails to the horizon.

EXT GALLUP LAW OFFICE - DAY

Cody sits in the Jeep pickup. Suce comes out of an office wearing a dark print dress and low heels, carrying a small strapless matching bag, and a stack of mail. She is surprised to see him. She goes over to the truck.

SUCE

Cody. What are you doing back in town?

CODY

I never left. I've been out at Cole and Mary Jo's since the funeral, trying to help out around there.

SUCE

Yeah, I saw you at the funeral. Sorry I didn't get a chance to talk with you. So you're working at the Circle H, huh? Are you a ranch hand now?

CODY

Trying to be.

SUCE

What about the movies?

CODY

It's not what I want to do anymore.

SUCE

Well, I'm sure Cole and Mary Jo appreciate having you around.

CODY

How 'bout you? Would you appreciate having me around?

SUCE

Co - dee! I, uh, I have to get to the post office before they close.

She turns to leave, takes a step then turns back.

SUCE

How did you know where I work?

CODY

Mary Jo.

She turns to leave, then turns back.

SUCE

How did you know when I'd get
off work?

CODY

I didn't. I've been sitting here
for over an hour.

SUCE

Well, if you're sitting there
tomorrow at this time I guess
we could go get a coke or something.

CODY

See you tomorrow.

EXT LINE SHACK - DAY

Cody drives the wagon up to the Bear Ridge line shack.
Wardell is chopping wood.

CODY

Hey Wardell, how are ya?

WARDELL

Good Cody, how you doin'?

CODY

Better and better every day.

Cody climbs down, stretches, and shakes hands with
Wardell. They begin to unload the wagon.

CODY

Mary Jo sent you some stuff in
one of these boxes. It's got
some new clothes and boots, and
I don't know what all in it.

WARDELL

Good. I was getting tired of
patching these boots.

CODY

Cole sent you some binoculars.
I'm not sure why but... They both
want to know when you're coming
down for a visit.

WARDELL

Tell 'em I'll ride back down
with you next month. You know I'm
really glad that you decided to
stay on the ranch. If you hadn't
of I was thinking I should go back
down to the bunkhouse, and I don't
really want to do that.

CODY

You don't have to thank me, I
love it here.

They go in the shack and Cody is surprised to see that
the walls are covered with animal hides, furs, antlers
and shelves. The shelves are filled with horns,
skulls, Indian artifacts, mineral samples, and gems.
There are also many small, beautiful woodcarvings of
animals Wardell has created. Some of the animals are
embedded with gold, turquoise, onyx or garnets. Cody
picks up a carved rabbit and examines it.

CODY

Dang, Wardell you been busy. These
are amazing.

WARDELL

Well thanks it's something to do
of an evening.

CODY

They're beautiful. They look
real. You're an artist.

WARDELL

Well now, I don't know about all
that.

CODY

Can I take some of them back with
me?

WARDELL

Sure, I don't care. You can have 'em. The shacks are all filling up with stuff.

Cody examines a rabbit that is so detailed it looks real with turquoise eyes and an onyx nose.

INT RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Suce holds the rabbit that Cody has just given her. They are sitting in a candle lit restaurant.

SUCE

Thank you, it's beautiful. I've never seen anything like it before. Where'd you get it?

CODY

Well, I probably shouldn't say.

SUCE

Now what in the world could that possibly mean? You stole it from some secret bunny society? Bunny agents are out looking for it as we speak?

CODY

Okay, but you have to promise not to tell anyone. You promise?

SUCE

I promise.

CODY

Only two other people know what I'm about to tell you, so...

SUCE

This is too strange. I promise I won't tell anyone where you got the bunny, Cody.

CODY

Wardell.

She inhales a short gasp.

SUCE

You're kidding. Where is he?
What's he doing?

CODY

He's riding the line on the
Circle H, staying in the line
shacks, fixing fence and windmills.
And creating some really
beautiful wood carvings as you
can see.

SUCE

So Cole and Mary Jo are the
only one's who know?

CODY

Right. Cole and Mary Jo and
you and me.

SUCE

I'm glad you told me, I was
worried about him. And I won't
tell anyone. Although what
difference would it make? It's
not like the laws gonna go down
there and look for him. I heard
the Sheriff told Cole that he
wouldn't be going back down there.

CODY

Yeah, I guess you're right but I
don't think Wardell wants anyone
to know.

SUCE

I saw Beth about a week ago.
Losing Ty really changed her,
she had her heart set on him.
When I saw her she seemed a
little... out of it, kinda
distracted. She couldn't stop
talking about Ty. I tried to
change the subject but she just
went back to talking about Ty.

CODY

Ty once told me that she had the hairiest legs in the county, does she?

SUCE

Why no! That Ty, I swear. He was funning you. Her legs aren't any hairier than anybody else's.

EXT MOUNTAINS - DAY

MONTAGE

-Wardell sits on his horse using binoculars to look at tailings from an abandoned mine across the little valley from where he is.

-At the opening to the mine he ties his horse and pack horse to a tree, gets his hammer and enters the mine.

-He comes out of the mine with the hammer in one hand and a rock in the other. He breaks the rock and examines it in the sunlight. It is about half turquoise with gold streaks through it. He puts it in a saddlebag, and goes back in the mine.

-Wardell puts another rock in the saddlebag then looks down into the trees and sees the remains of a structure. He slides down the tailings pile and checks out a small, dilapidated log cabin, a nearby pile of rocks, and a rusty pick with a broken handle.

-He walks around examining the area.

WARDELL (to himself)

This might be a good place to fix up, lay in some firewood, and some water in case I ever need to get out of the weather around here. And so I'll have a place to stay when I come back for some more of these pretty rocks.

He starts climbing back up to where the horses are.

EXT LINE SHACK - NIGHT

The area in front of the line shack now has a couple of big logs to sit on arranged around the fire pit, and a big pile of firewood, a stack of fence posts, and rolls of barbed wire. There is a black metal grill on one side of the fire with a coffee pot on it. Wardell and Cody sit facing the fire with some of Wardell's wood carvings on the ground before them.

CODY

You know if I put some of these carvings of yours in the gift shop at the El Rancho I bet they'd sell like hotcakes.

WARDELL

Fine by me like I said, the line shacks are filling up with stuff. The desert and mountains around here are very, ah ... bountiful.

CODY

I could give the money to Cole to put in your account at the bank.

WARDELL

Yeah, I don't care about that. We can split it fifty fifty if you want. That Cole I swear I owe him everything.

CODY

No, I don't want any money for this. You're the artist, you're the one who should benefit from it.

INT EL RANCHO - DAY

Cody goes in the gift shop and shows the MANAGER some of Wardell's wood carvings.

MANAGER

These are amazing. I've never
seen anything like them before.
Who made them? Are they off the
Res?

Cody pauses, and looks around before whispering.

CODY

No, Wardell made 'em.

The manager's eyes bulge.

MANAGER

You're kidding.

CODY

Nope.

MANAGER

Where is he? What's he doing?

CODY

That's all I should probably say.

MANAGER

I'll take all you can get.

EXT DRIVE-IN MOVIE - NIGHT

The Jeep Pickup is backed into a space at the drive-in theater. There are broken bales of hay against the cab, loose hay deep in the bed. Cody and Suce lean back against a bale of hay looking at the giant screen where a Western movie is being shown. They are both wearing jeans, boots and long sleeved Western shirts. A speaker from the speaker post lies in the hay beside them.

CODY

This is a movie I was in before
I met Ty.

Cowboy Cody appears onscreen, Suce looks from the screen to Cody and back again, then pretends to yell as she points at Cody.

SUCE

Hey look everybody, it's Cowboy
Cody.

Cody grabs her uplifted arm and pulls it and her
further down into the bed of the truck.

CODY

Shhh! Quiet girl.

Suce laughs and looks up at the screen.

SUCE

Look at you, so serious. What
an actor.

Later, they share popcorn while looking at the screen.
Suce gives Cody a sly look.

SUCE

Owww, didn't that hurt?

CODY

It was a stand-in, and those
chairs are made of balsa wood.
They weigh about, well I don't
know what they weigh, but
they're very light.

SUCE

Owwie, now I know that had to
hurt - getting hit on the
head with a whiskey bottle.

CODY

They're made outta sugar. And
you notice no liquid ever comes
out when they're broken over
someone's head.

SUCE

Maybe that's what's wrong with
you - you got hit in the head
too many times in those B Westerns.

He grabs her around the neck with his arm and playfully hits her on the head.

Later

On screen Cody is seen riding after bad guys.

SUCE

Nice horse.

CODY

It was a rental, most of them are.

SUCE

Oh yeah?

CODY

Yeah.

SUCE

It's a Morgan.

CODY

Oh, really?

SUCE

Yeah.

SUCE

This looks like it was filmed around here.

CODY

It's Pioneerville. Have you ever been to California?

SUCE

Yeah, I spent a few summers with my aunt and uncle in Inglewood when I was younger and they took me all around.

CODY

Did you like it there?

SUCE

It's okay to visit but I wouldn't want to live there. It's like there's two kinds of Gallup girls, the city girls and the ranch girls. The girls who grow up in town are more likely to move away after high school and go to Albuquerque or California, or someplace. And the girls who grow up on ranches around here, like me, are more likely to stay. It's the ranch, it becomes a part of you, I wouldn't want to live in town. In any town.

CODY

I know what you mean. I love the Circle H. I wouldn't want to live anyplace else.

Suce looks at him approvingly.

Later, a different Western plays, the moon and stars shine, Cody has his arm around Suce as she sleeps with her head on his chest.

EXT MOUNTAINS - DAY

The summer sun beats down on a sweating Wardell as he leads his horse along a narrow mountain trail with a steep drop off close at their side. The horse is skittish, with his ears laid back, then the ground gives way under his right rear hoof and he slides, thrashing, over the side.

Wardell holds on to the reins a second too long and is pulled over the edge. They tumble end over end to a hard landing.

Wardell gets up, the horse is screaming with leg bone sticking out. Wardell quickly limps over to the horse, pulls the rifle from its scabbard, and shoots the horse in the head.

The busted, empty water bag lies nearby.

WARDELL

Oh shit.

Wardell uses the rifle like a cane as he stumbles down the mountain.

He climbs up under an overhanging rock to escape the noon sun.

He staggers through barren country as the sun sets, rises, and sets again.

His lips are swollen and cracked, his eyes bloodshot and unfocused as he shuffles along a game trail on a barren mountainside. He stops, his nostrils flare, he looks to his left and sees a dark narrow crevice in a rock wall and goes in. He touches the sides of the slot with his hands to steady himself as the tunnel-like slot twists and turns, then opens in a lush green box canyon.

At the bottom of the little ravine is a stream. He drops the rifle and tries to run but moves herky-jerky, like a madman, until he collapses in the cool, clear water.

He crouches on his hands and knees like an animal, and drinks. Later, he lies with his head on a little strip of black sand at the water's edge with his body in the water, and sleeps.

He wakes up, drinks a little more, then spots some berries growing nearby. He crawls over and starts eating berries ravenously. He snatches up mushrooms that are growing under the berry bush and eats them, and he eats some tiny thornless cacti that look like brightly colored fruit.

He crawls back to the stream, drinks, then sleeps. When he wakes up he eases around the canyon. Colors vibrate with an inner life; everything moves and glows with profoundness. Every tree, bush, and grain of sand has a distinct outline. The ripples on the surface of the stream are complex, choreographed, ever-changing patterns putting on a show for his amusement.

He becomes aware of life all around him; insects, birds, and butterflies are everywhere. He can see little fishes beneath the surface of the water. A timid, blue-eyed rabbit peeks from beneath a shadowed rock overhang.

He finds petroglyphs, and charred wood from an ancient campfire, and sees, in a vision, the long history of the canyon with its Indian ceremonies, rituals, and carnage.

He looks up, sees a cloud, then looks down from the cloud and sees the green living miracle canyon surrounded by hundreds of miles of barren gray desert. The little canyon throbs with color and life while surrounded by dead desolate desert.

EXT MOUNTAINS - DAY

A dead black bird lies on the ground in front of a line shack while Wardell sits cross legged before it carving. The sun makes the black wings flash iridescent in his eyes.

FLASHBACK.

EXT HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

A Texas state flag and an American flag fly in front of Fort Pecos High School. A group of teenage boys stand behind a pickup truck in the parking lot. The boys are all older and bigger than Wardell. He slows down when he walks past and looks their way. They look at him.

TEENAGE BOY

Hey, are you Wardell?

Wardell smiles and moves closer.

WARDELL

Yeah, I'm Wardell.

TEENAGE BOY

You live in that little house
down by the tracks?

WARDELL

Yep, that's me.

TEENAGE BOY

Yeah, my daddy knows your momma.

Several of the boys look away trying to suppress
laughter. The boy who said it smirks at Wardell.
Wardell turns red, grits his teeth, and walks away.

EXT HOLLYWOOD BLVD. - DAY

Near the corner of Hollywood and Vine a Lincoln
Towncar parks in front of Pierre's Art Gallery and a
blond FEMALE wearing a mink coat and sun glasses goes
in.

INT PIERRE'S ART GALLERY - DAY

The woman strolls around then stops in front of a
glass display case, and pulls her sunglasses down her
nose. She peers at the figures inside the case as the
gallery owner hurries toward her.

FEMALE

Pierre, you've been holding out
on me. Where did you get these
elegant little carvings?

PIERRE

I was just coming to tell you
about those, Miss Malone. They're
called Wardell Wood, and they're
hand carved by a wanted man. An
outlaw living somewhere in the
trackless deserts of the southwest.

FEMALE

You're kidding. What's he wanted
for?

Pierre leans across the counter and whispers.

PIERRE

Murder!

FEMALE

Oh my God.

She points to a little sign in the display case.

FEMALE

What's this?

The sign says, One Per Customer.

PIERRE

Sorry dear, but these are rare.

WOMAN

How much?

PIERRE

Two hundred dollars each.

She points to an elegantly carved Gila Monster.

WOMAN

I'll take the lizard.

Montage.

- Wardell discovers old miners cabins made of weathered boards.
- Wardell finds rusty equipment near abandoned mines.
- Wardell explores a ghost town.
- Wardell walks around Spanish adobe ruins.
- Wardell enters Indian kivas.

EXT The OASIS BAR - DAY

At a desert crossroads several pickup trucks from the 1970's are parked in front of the bar. Two of the trucks have gun racks in the rear window with rifles in them. Two of the trucks have CB antennas. A hand-made sign on the door to the bar reads, "No hippies or bikers allowed."

INT BAR - DAY

Plaintive country music plays on the jukebox while five rough-looking, middle-aged men sit at the bar with cans of beer in front of them. They've had a few.

FIRST MAN

Last year during deer season me and a couple of guys were hunting just outside the Gila National Forest. We seen this guy way out in the desert leading a pack horse. I looked through my scope and knew right away that it was him.

He pauses, looks around, but no one asks who it was so he continues anyway.

(con'd)

It was that old outlaw Wardell. Trekking across the desert alone.

SECOND MAN

Bullshit.

FIRST MAN

I knowed Wardell from up in Gallup years ago. I'm not saying we hung out together or anything, but we went to some of the same places.

SECOND MAN

Bullshit.

BARTENDER

I believe him. Wardell came in here 'bout three years ago and sat on that very stool and had a beer. I talked to him. Seemed like a real nice feller.

SECOND MAN

Bullshit.

THIRD MAN

My cousin bought a horse off him.

Second Man slaps his hand to his forehead and leans on the bar.

THIRD MAN

Everybody knows that Wardell breaks wild horses and sells 'em down in Deming. He stays down there in case the laws get after him he can slip across the border.

Second Man shakes his head in silence.

FIRST MAN

I heard he killed another man down in Pie Town a few years ago. Just like before he hit him one time and - Boom! out go the lights.

First Man raises his beer can.

FIRST MAN

Here's to Wardell, last of the old West outlaws.

SECOND MAN

I'm gonna need another beer.

EXT DESERT - DAY

Wardell rides a fence line that runs beside a dirt road. He is in his fifties, lean and leathery, with a two day beard, and hair cut off straight just above his collar. He comes to a section of fence that has been cut and pulled aside. Big tire tracks go from the road through the break in the fence and beyond.

WARDELL

Oh, this don't look good.

He follows the tracks across the desert then around a little hill. About a hundred yards ahead of him, concealed from the road by the hill, he sees a semi-truck cattle hauler, and a pickup truck with a two-horse trailer hooked up to it. Two cowboys are closing the back gate on the cattle trailer which is full of Circle H cattle.

The pickup is a big four wheel drive with a 1984 state inspection sticker on the front windshield, and a rifle rack behind the driver's seat with a rifle in it. There are two horses in the trailer and saddles and tack in the bed of the truck.

The two men close the rear gate, look around, and see Wardell, they talk for a minute but Wardell is too far away to hear them, then one of them walks to the semi-tractor and the other one goes to the pickup. They get in the vehicles then start slowly toward Wardell with the pickup in the lead. There is no road and they are following the tracks they made when they came in. Wardell sits on his horse beside the tracks and watches.

WARDELL

Well this don't look good either.

Wardell slowly backs his horse away from the tracks without taking his eyes off the trucks.

He sees that the rifle is now not in the gun rack.

Wardell is about thirty yards from the tracks when the pickup gets even with him and the driver lays the rifle on the window opening and fires at Wardell. Then he stomps the gas pedal and speeds away with all four tires throwing sand, and the semi right behind him.

The bullet nicks Wardell's left arm; he jerks his rifle from the boot and shoots three of the semi trailer's tires as it roars past. The semi driver slams on the brakes as Wardell charges after the pickup.

The semi driver gets out, climbs to the back of the cab and jerks the air hoses off, then jumps to the ground, and starts to turn the handle that lowers the front legs of the trailer. The cattle are all bawling.

Wardell cuts across the desert and stops his mount in front of the pickup. The driver of the pickup lays his rifle on the side view mirror bracket and fires at Wardell. He misses. Wardell uses his knees to turn his horse, then takes careful aim and shoots the pickup driver through the windshield and hits him in the forehead. His head jerks back and the truck veers off away from Wardell at the last second.

Wardell watches as the pickup careens across the desert then slams into a boulder.

Shots are fired and bullets whiz past Wardell. He looks back to see the semi without the trailer bearing down on him as the driver holds a revolver out the window and shoots at him.

The semi driver empties his revolver without hitting Wardell, throws the gun to the floor of the truck, puts both hands on the big steering wheel and bears down on Wardell. Wardell shoots him in the chest, and the truck veers away from Wardell at the last second.

When the driver is hit he goes rigid with both hands on the steering wheel, his head back and his boot wedged against the gas pedal. The semi is heading straight for the horse trailer where the two horses are kicking, bucking and whinnying trying to get out of the trailer.

Wardell takes off racing after the truck, rides up beside it, jumps on the fuel tank under the driver's door, reaches in and turns the key off. The truck chugs to a stop a few yards from the back of the horse trailer.

The pickup truck engine is still running and all four tires are turning slowly digging deeper and deeper into the sand. He reaches in and turns the key off, then goes back and opens the trailer. The two horses stagger out and race away.

He then steps back up and looks at the semi driver; he's dead.

He looks around then whistles for his horse. While waiting for his horse he sticks a finger in the hole in his shirt sleeve, rips it, and looks at the wound to his arm. He takes the bandana from around his neck, wraps it around his arm, and ties it using his teeth to pull it tight.

Wardell's horse comes up still wild-eyed and edgy. Wardell pats the horse and talks to him.

WARDELL

You okay boy? I think you were more scared than I was. But you done good. You were racing along beside that big ole truck like you'd been doing it all your life. Way to go boy.

He rides to the cattle trailer, opens the rear door and carefully inspects the cattle as they climb out. They're all okay.

He rides through the opening in the fence then goes back and puts a temporary fix on the fence.

Then he rides along the line until he comes to a telephone pole. He takes a sack from his saddlebag, climbs through the fence, sits on the ground beside the telephone pole and puts spikes on his boots. He wraps a belt around the pole, climbs the pole and uses a field telephone to call Cody.

EXT RANCH HOUSE - DAY

The black rotary phone in the living room of the ranch rings and Suce answers it.

Cody sits in a rocking chair on the porch with a glass of iced tea while two young Mexican ranch hands stand in the yard before him with their hats in their hands.

CODY

... and get a good count on everything in those four sections then let me know what you found by the end of the week. Juan I want you to grease the windmills up there...

Suce comes out on the porch.

SUCE

Wardell's on the phone.

He gets up, waves the men away, and hurries in.

CODY

Wardell, what in the world's
goin' on? I know it must be
something cause you hardly ever
use that phone I give ya.

WARDELL

Sorry to bother ya Cody but I
caught a couple of guys trying
to make off with some of our
beeves. They went to shootin' at
me and well, they're dead now.

CODY

Are you okay?

SUCE

What's happened?

Cody motions for her to wait.

WARDELL

Yeah, I got a little scratch on
my arm is all.

CODY

Where are you, I'll start up
there?

WARDELL

On the road to Red Hill, about
two miles past that lone Juniper.
You'll see where the fence has
been messed with.

CODY

Well it'll take us a few hours
but we'll get there before dark.
You just take it easy till we
get there.

WARDELL

Okay.

CODY

You sure you're all right?

WARDELL

Yeah, I'm fine. And, uh, it's up to you whether or not you call the law in on this.

CODY

Well I don't see any need. Did we lose any cows?

WARDELL

No, as a matter of fact we gained a couple of horses.

EXT EL PASO HILTON - DAY

The sign in front of the Hilton reads, Tenth Annual Western Auction.

INT HILTON CONVENTION ROOM - DAY

A crowd of a few hundred well-dressed people are seated watching items being auctioned off.

AUCTIONEER

Up next today we have a very rare work of art, a one of a kind sculpture by the infamous New Mexico outlaw known only as Wardell. That's right folks this is an excellent example of Wardell Wood. Highly sought after, and hand carved by a legend in his own time. This is a life-like reproduction of a Scorpion with 8 legs, two pinchers, and a ruby-tipped stinger. It is a deep shiny black in color and is mounted on a rock with real gold and turquoise running through it. We'll start the bidding at \$2,000.

EXT RANCH HOUSE - AFTERNOON

A gray-haired and stout Cody drives a big ATV to the barn where Suce is washing the now forty-year-old faded Jeep. He gets off the ATV, a little stiff, and kisses Suce on the cheek.

CODY

You know, sometimes I don't feel
like I deserve all this.

Suce finishes spraying off the Jeep and drops the hose in a trough.

SUCE

Deserve all what?

They start walking toward the back door.

CODY

Well, first of all - you. Then
Cole and Mary Jo leaving the ranch
to us. Now, today, I make the
monthly run up to the line shack
and Wardell tells me he wants us
to invest that quarter of a
million dollars he's let accumulate
in the bank - back into the ranch.
He wants me to buy those sections
on our south side. I told him it
was too dry down there, but he just
said we could sink some wells.

Cody opens the back screen door for Suce, and as she walks in, she pats him on the chest.

SUCE

No Darling, you deserve it all.
And I think what Wardell wants
to do is a great idea. You know
who deserves something is Beth.
I wish we could do something for her.

EXT CHIEF THEATER - DAY

The marquee at the Chief Theater announces the Western movie Barbarosa (1982). Posters for the movie are behind dusty glass on each side of the box office. The dusty glass is decorated with finger drawings. The posters feature a photograph of Willie Nelson and Gary Busey with guns drawn.

A thin, 50-something year old Beth paces back and forth on one side of the box office talking to herself, smoking a cigarette, and wearing jeans, boots, a Western shirt, and the vest she made for Ty. The vest is several sizes too large for her and she seems to have shrunk over the years. The only jewelry she wears is the ring Ty gave her.

BETH (mumbling to herself)

My fiancé is in movies that are shown here all the time. He's in Hollywood now working on another Western movie. He wants me to come out there and join him but I told him I'd wait here for him. I ain't lost nothing in Hollywood.

Children going to the theater give Beth a wide berth and look at her with fear. Adults look at her with pity, Indians walking past don't look at her.

(con'd)

I made this vest for him and he wore it in some of his movies. Yeah, he's a famous actor in western movies. These are real silver conchos I sewed on around the bottom. Next time he's in town I'll bring him down here then everyone will see that I'm telling the truth. He...

EXT LINE SHACK - DAY

Cody creeps up the rugged mountain road in a huge 4x4 pickup truck. Wardell sits at a big rustic picnic table near a fire ring in front of the line shack.

LATER

Cole and Wardell sit at the picnic table with coffee cups and some of Wardell's wood carvings in front of them.

WARDELL

How's Suce?

CODY

She's doing great. She'd like to see you more often than two or three times a year but she stays busy with Little Ty.

WARDELL

How's he doin'?

CODY

He's great, growing like a weed. Can't keep him off the horses, he is straight up cowboy, and doesn't like being called Little Ty anymore. It' just Ty now.

WARDELL

You ever miss Hollywood and the movies?

CODY

No, not really.

WARDELL

Have they made any more Westerns around Gallup lately?

CODY

No, not in years.

WARDELL

What happened?

CODY

In Gallup what happened was that one year the business owners got together and decided to double the price of everything for the movie people. Hotel rooms, food, horses, everything. So Hollywood said screw you and started going to other places to make movies.

WARDELL

Well that's a shame. What the hell were they thinking?

CODY

I don't know, it was like biting the hand that feeds you. And added to that is the fact that they aren't making as many Westerns as they used to. You've been out here for about 30 years, things have changed, and not all for the better.

WARDELL

You want to go up to the cabin?

CODY

Yeah, I haven't been up there in a couple of years. You sure picked a great place to build.

They ride horses further up into the mountains, come to a stream and follow the path beside the stream until the water gets turbulent as it cascades over boulders. Later they come to a small, beautiful log cabin beside the stream and under huge Pines.

CODY

I've got to get Suce to come up here. She'd love this place. It's not easy to get to but it's worth it.

They dismount and walk slowly up toward a nearby ridge line. At the top of the ridge they can see for ten to twenty miles in every direction without seeing a road or building. The sun is setting and the sky is streaked coral, gold and turquoise.

CODY

You ever think about moving back
down for good?

Wardell is watching the sunset, then he looks around at the glorious vista.

WARDELL

No, I pretty much got everything
I need right here.

Cole looks around, takes it all in, and nods his head a little.

CODY

Yeah, maybe you do Wardell, maybe
you do.

EXT MOUNTAINS - DAY

Cody and Suce now in their fifties stop their horses and look down at the desert. In the middle of the flat open expanse is a serpentine line. They look from the line to one another.

SUCE

What the hell is that?

CODY

That's what I was fixin' to say.

They start down.

EXT DESERT - DAY

They ride up to the serpentine line; it's a hundred yard long barbed wire fence for no reason, going nowhere, not connected to anything. Undulating across the desert; tight, neat and perfect.

They sit on their horses and look at the fence, speechless. They look at one another and slowly shake their heads. Cody starts to laugh.

CODY

I guess he got tired of making
straight lines.

EXT SHACK - DAY

Cody drives the truck loaded with supplies to the Bear Ridge line shack. Wardell is chopping wood. He stops and waves to Cody.

WARDELL

Hey, long time no see Ty. How
you been?

Cody notices that Wardell calls him Ty but he doesn't say anything about it.

CODY

I been real good Wardell. How you
doin?

WARDELL

Can't complain. I been cross
fencing that big stretch down
south that you bought but I ran
outta wire. I see you brought
some. Very good Ty.

They start unloading the wagon.

WARDELL

How's Cole and Mary Jo?

Cody looks down and hesitates.

CODY

They're doin good, they send
their love.

Wardell goes in the line shack with a box. Cody leans against the tailgate and stares into the distance. His eyes get full.

Cody (to himself)
Ty was my double and now I'm
his double.

Wardell comes back out and notices that Cody is
flushed.

WARDELL
What's wrong Ty?

CODY
Nothing War, nothing.

FLASHBACK

INT HOUSE - SUNSET

A slow moving freight train can be heard in the
background. Young Wardell goes in the kitchen and puts
an Army surplus backpack on the table. He fills a
thermos at the sink and stuffs it in the backpack
along with a few oranges.

He goes in his mother's room and looks at the dresser.
The setting sun comes through the bedroom window and
reflects in the mirror all gold and silver. He slams
his fist into the mirror, it shatters into dozens of
pieces as beams of light explode like fireworks
filling the room. The flashing beams of light are
accompanied by the whack, crash, and tinkle of the
breaking glass.

Wardell walks toward the westbound train with the
backpack slung over his shoulder. He takes a
handkerchief from his hip pocket and wraps it around
his bleeding hand.

EXT GAS STATION - DAY

An upscale young couple stop for gas at a forlorn
isolated gas station in the middle of the desert. The
husband leans against their BMW, while the gas pumps
at \$2.79 a gallon. Inside the car a Bob Wills cd is
playing Across the Alley From the Alamo. The wife
strolls around videotaping distant landscapes.

At the corner of an ancient derelict building she turns and sees an old man sitting on the ground, in the shade, with his back against the building, a bottle of beer beside him. He carves wood. His hair and beard are long and gray and his clothes are faded and dusty. About ten yards away a packhorse grazes on desert stubble.

The young lady cautiously steps closer, and the OLD MAN looks up.

OLD MAN

Howdy.

YOUNG LADY

Hello. Do you live around here?

He rises effortlessly and looks out over the empty desert to the distant mountains without a road or building in sight. Her camera follows his gaze.

OLD MAN

Yeah, I live around here.

YOUNG LADY

Have you lived here long?

OLD MAN

Well let's see, what year is it?

She laughs.

YOUNG LADY

1994.

OLD MAN

Really? Well...

He counts on his fingers.

OLD MAN

About 40 years. Although it don't seem that long, and not much has changed out here. We got more land and more cows but... Where you from?

YOUNG LADY

My husband and I live in Vermont
we're out here on vacation. Is
it always this hot?

OLD MAN

Hot? This is a nice spring day,
Girl. It gets a lot hotter than
this. If you think this is hot
you don't want to be here in the
summer. I'd say you could fry an
egg on the sidewalk but there
ain't a sidewalk within a hundred
miles of here.

She laughs.

YOUNG LADY

Is that your horse?

OLD MAN

Yeah, he's one a my horses, he
likes to be called Pilot.

Then, barely raising his voice.

(con'd)

Pilot come here boy.

Pilot looks up and ambles over; the young lady pats
his neck. The Old Man and the Young Lady make small
talk and she videotapes the old man's gnarled hands.
He works a piece of wood with a small delicate
instrument.

Later

OLD MAN

We're going now. It was nice
talking with you. Here, this
is for you.

He hands her the piece of wood that he has transformed
into some kind of animal, not a real animal, but an
imaginary animal from another world, exotic and
beautiful. She holds it in her cupped hand, and aims
her camera at it.

YOUNG LADY

Thank you, it's beautiful. I'll
treasure it. I...

She turns the camera up but the old man and the horse
have turned and are walking away. As she records them
they disappear into the shimmering desert heat.

FADE OUT

