

"GRAVE TROUBLE"

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"GRAVE TROUBLE"

FADE IN:

INT. SHARPES' PHARMACY, TOWN OF WINLOCK - DAY (1880)

Bottles filled with syrupy tonics line the shelves of the pharmacy; advertisements for toothache gum, bitters, plasters, and instant pain annihilator hang on the walls. And at the counter, WENDELL SHARPES helps each of three excited boys, JESSE, IKE and GEORGE, to a handful of hard candy. The boys are dressed in their "Sunday-best" clothes.

In his late forties, Sharpes' weathered face reveals a past that his neatly pressed suit can do little to disguise. Sharpes looks like he'd be equally comfortable handing out candy, or wielding a gun.

SHARPES

Here you go, boys. Don't eat 'em all at once.

JESSE

Thank you, Mr. Sharpes.

IKE

Let's go, Jesse. We gotta get right out in front, else we won't hear 'em crack.

GEORGE

Yeah, keeee-rrrack!

The boys leave the counter and scamper excitedly out the front door of the store. Next in line at the register, ETTA CAHILL watches the boys run off as Sharpes rings up her purchase.

ETTA

(amused)

Looks like it's fixin' to be quite a party out there, Wendell.

SHARPES

Yep. Today's the big day.

ETTA

You'll be joinin' us, won't you?

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SHARPES

Miss Cahill, I wouldn't miss it for the world. I'm headed out right after you.

ETTA

Good. Then, I'll see you there.

SHARPES

Okay. Thank you now.

Sharpes watches her go as he locks up his cash register. He picks up a shotgun from behind the counter, dons a bowler hat and walks to the front of his store.

EXT. SHARPES' PHARMACY - DAY

For the first time, we hear the UPROAR of a crowd in wild celebration. On his way out, Sharpes flips over the "OPEN" sign and closes the door. The flipside of the sign reads "CLOSED (ON ACCOUNT OF HANGING)".

With a satisfied smile, Sharpes settles into a chair on the wooden sidewalk in front of his store so that he can watch the action across the street -- he's been waiting for this for a long time.

EXT. MAIN STREET, WINLOCK - DAY

Title reads:

WINLOCK - 1880

The three boys from Sharpes' pharmacy push their way through a very large crowd that has gathered in front of a gallows. They eagerly hustle their way to the front, joining several of their friends. The boys rub their necks and growl with sadistic glee as they mock two outlaws standing high on the gallows directly in front of them.

EXT. MAIN STREET, WINLOCK - DAY - ON THE GALLOWES

stand BOOTS and SLIM, each with a noose around his neck. They are both in their early thirties, sweaty, dirty and unshaven. Their mean eyes are glazed with stupidity.

Before them stand MARSHAL BILL THOMPSON, DEPUTY ERNEST and a Priest as they witness the Outlaws' last rites.

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Thompson is in his mid-fifties, short and compactly built. He wears an aura of relaxed, confident maturity: he's ridden with the best, and killed some of the worst.

Deputy Ernest is a good foot taller and three decades younger than Thompson. His tremendous devotion to the Marshal knows no bounds.

Boots spits on Thompson's gleaming badge. The Priest quickly raises his Bible to strike Boots for his insolence, but Thompson stops him.

Thompson pulls off his badge, slowly wipes it on Boots' chest, and puts it back on, staring down Boots the whole time. Boots writhes against his noose, helpless. Ernest grabs the noose around Boots' neck and joyfully cinches it tighter. Thompson, Ernest and the Priest move down the line to Slim.

EXT. SHARPES' PHARMACY - DAY

MRS.SNYDER, a wisp of a woman in her seventies approaches Sharpes.

MRS.SNYDER  
Afternoon, Wendell.

SHARPES  
Good afternoon to you, Mrs.Snyder.

MRS.SNYDER  
I am surely glad to see that the Marshal finally caught those boys.

SHARPES  
Yes, ma'am. Two of 'em anyway.

MRS.SNYDER  
Well, I hope they get jerked all the way to Jesus!

SHARPES  
Yes, ma'am.

Several people in the crowd begin pointing down the street, their excitement turning other heads in that direction. The SOUNDS of celebration increase.

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SHARPES  
 (continuing;  
 looking down the  
 street)  
 Here come the other two now.

EXT. MAIN STREET, WINLOCK - DAY - ON A WAGON

driven by two snake-like, heavily armed COWBOYS. They drive slowly towards the crowd.

EXT. MAIN STREET, WINLOCK - DAY - THE GALLOWS

Thompson sees the wagon coming. He motions to Ernest and the two descend the gallows steps. Thompson stations Ernest at the gallows lever and then he walks off towards the wagon.

EXT. SHARPES' PHARMACY - DAY

MRS.SNYDER  
 (watching  
 Thompson)  
 You reckon the Marshal will  
 retire now?

SHARPES  
 That's his plan.

MRS.SNYDER  
 (beat)  
 That's a shame.  
 (leaving)  
 Bless you, Wendell.

SHARPES  
 Afternoon, ma'am.

EXT. MAIN STREET, WINLOCK - DAY - NEAR THE GALLOWS

Followed by an enthusiastic crowd, Thompson walks towards the approaching wagon. The crowd's enthusiasm wanes when Thompson draws his gun as the wagon arrives.

The two Cowboys sit dead-still as Thompson approaches them with his pistol poised. They nod; he walks past them, back to the rear of the wagon. A tarp covers the load.

Thompson rips away the tarp revealing two pine caskets.

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He flips open a latch on the nearest casket and cautiously opens the top. Dressed in cowboy gear, PARKER lies inside, large, and solid as granite.

Thompson moves around to the other casket and opens it to see RED ELDER. With his black cowboy outfit and his dark, greasy face, Elder is a picture-perfect "son of a bitch".

Thompson pulls a small knife out of his vest and jabs Elder several times -- he's dead. He puts the knife away and then nods to the two Cowboys to get off the wagon. At this, the crowd CHEERS and runs up to the wagon to look in the caskets. Thompson pulls a wad of money out of his vest and counts out a large sum to each of the cowboys.

COWBOY #1

Fine day for a hangin', ain't it  
Marshal?

THOMPSON

Yep. Now close 'em up and get out  
of town.

COWBOY #2

Glad to be of help.

THOMPSON

(yelling)

Allright Padre, hang 'em.

Thompson walks off, followed by the scurrying crowd.

EXT. MAIN STREET, WINLOCK - DAY - ON THE GALLOWS

the Priest smiles and opens his Bible to deliver a sermon to the crowd.

EXT. MAIN STREET, WINLOCK - DAY - THE WAGON

The two Cowboys close the lids on the caskets, but they leave the latches open, wink and walk off.

THE GALLOWS

Thompson and Ernest station themselves at the gallows lever. Ernest grasps the lever lovingly: he's dying to hang the creeps. Thompson eyes the crowd, searching for trouble. He sees his Wife standing next to his Daughter. They wave at him and he winks.

## EXT. SHARPES' PHARMACY - DAY

The two Cowboys walk past Sharpes.

COWBOY #1  
Afternoon, Wendell.

Sharpes ignores them.

COWBOY #2  
Wish we could join you for the  
action, but... we better run.

Oozing with wickedness, they laugh and walk away. Sharpes watches them, then studies the wagon. A beat later he picks up his shotgun, gets out of his chair and walks off the sidewalk towards the wagon. He begins to wade his way through the thick crowd.

## THE GALLOWS

The Priest closes the Bible and makes the sign of the cross.

## THE WAGON

The tops of the caskets blast open. Elder and Parker snap upright, revealing the guns they were lying on. Carrying a gleaming silver pistol, Elder scrambles over the side, drops to the ground and sprints behind the wagon towards the back of the gallows. Parker gets to his feet and pulls up a large rifle.

## SHARPES

forty feet from the wagon, sees Parker and raises his shotgun but -- damn it -- the crowd blocks his shot.

## THE WAGON

Some of the folks on the edge of the crowd near the wagon see Parker and scream. Parker fires.

## THE GALLOWS

A bullet blows through the Priest's back and out his chest. Thompson and Ernest wheel around and see Parker on the wagon. They draw their guns as the crowd scurries around them in a mass of boiling confusion.

## THE WAGON

Parker aims and fires again.

## THE GALLOWS

This bullet strikes Ernest sending him backwards into Thompson. He catches Ernest while trying to draw a bead on Parker. Elder, pistol ready, is sneaking up behind Thompson in the confusion.

## THE WAGON

Smiling, Parker cocks his rifle.

## SHARPES

finally has a clear shot at Parker and unloads both barrels of his shotgun. Hit by the savage blast, Parker hurtles off the wagon.

## THE GALLOWS

Elder blasts Thompson twice in the back sending him to the ground. Elder smiles as he walks by him on his way to the gallows steps.

On the ground and mortally wounded, Ernest struggles to aim his gun at Elder. Laughing, Elder viciously shoots Ernest.

Elder raises his gun high in victory; the sun's reflections off the gun are blinding. But then, Elder hears something behind him and turns around.

Thompson has called him. Barely able to stand, he has his gun aimed and levelled at Elder.

Elder smiles and lowers his gun, cocking the trigger.

Thompson stares him down and fires. Elder falls, shot through the throat. Thompson collapses.

## EXT. MAIN STREET, WINLOCK - DAY

The crowd backs away from the dead bodies of Thompson, Ernest and Elder. Sharpes pushes his way through the crowd, too late. He sees the mishap and looks up at the gallows in disgust. Boots and Slim smile down at him -- maybe he'll let us go? Sharpes walks over to the gallows lever. Their smiles snap off. Sharpes yanks hard on the lever.



EXT. MAIN STREET, WINLOCK - DAY - BELOW THE GALLOWS

The executed plunge through the gallows floor. Their boots slam to a stop and twitch as they dangle.

BEGIN TITLES:

THE GHOST TOWN MONTAGE

The afternoon passes with each scene, falling to darkness at the end of the last scene. We hear MILLING VOICES and a piano playing WESTERN MUSIC throughout.

- A) The swinging boots and the gallows DISSOLVE TO:
- B) Several of the Main Street storefronts that were behind the gallows. The storefronts are boldly signed "Messenger Office", "Bank", "Fletcher's General Store", "Winlock Saloon".

A sign on the Messenger Office reads "Open Till 4PM"

People energetically move in and out of the storefronts as wagons laden with commerce drive by. We see Fletcher, the balding owner of the General Store, happily greeting people as they enter.

- C) Main Street a few years later. We see fewer wagons drive by, fewer people going in and out of the buildings, fewer hands for Fletcher to shake. Less energy.

The "Winlock Saloon" sign has been changed to read "Sharpes' Winlock Saloon".

- D) Main Street a few years later. The buildings are beginning to look rundown. A few people walk slowly down the sidewalk.

The sign on the Messenger Office now reads "Open Till Noon"

Fletcher walks out the front door of his store, and looks up and down the street for customers that aren't coming. He consults his pocket watch, dejectedly flips the sign on the store's door to "CLOSED", locks up and walks into the bank next door.

Two seedy cowboys walk into the saloon.

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E) Main Street a few years later, dusk. A tumbleweed rolls down the dusty street. One wagon pulls by carrying a poor family and their meager belongings out of town.

The "Fletcher's General Store" sign has been changed to read "Sharpes' General Store", but there is a huge "Out of Business" sign in the window.

The Messenger Office signage is gone, replaced by a large "Property For Sale" sign.

An old drunk stumbles out of the saloon and passes out in front.

A banker walks out of the bank, as someone inside hangs a sign in the window that says "Out of Business." Slowly, he walks down the dusty sidewalk, stepping over the drunk. With a final, sad look down the deserted street, the banker walks into the utter blackness of the saloon.

END TITLES:

DISSOLVE TO: