

INT. SALOON- DAY

We see a bustling Wild-West saloon, complete with a bar, ragtime piano music, and a card table. At the helm of the card table sits a man in a pristine, maroon cowboy outfit and a goatee. This is SAMUEL FRIEND. He and the man across from him put their cards down on the table. The man has clearly lost and buries his head in his hands. This is AMOS PECCADILLO.

SAMUEL FRIEND

(chuckling)

Oh that is unfortunate, Mr. Peccadillo. Quite a hefty wager on this hand too...now if you would kindly pay up, we'll be all square.

AMOS

(mumbling)

I ain't got the money...

SAMUEL FRIEND

What was that now?

AMOS

I said I ain't got the money!

SAMUEL FRIEND

Well, we'll have to do something about that now, won't we Mr. Peccadillo? If you would be so kind and place your hand upon the table...

AMOS

Oh, please Mr. Friend, anything but that! Have mercy on a poor soul!

SAMUEL FRIEND

If you don't have the money, we only have two options. You could simply pledge your allegiance and undying servitude to me now, agreeing to pay homage to my name and do whatever is asked of you without question. Or...I could kill you.

Amos slams his hand upon the table and weeps.

SAMUEL FRIEND (CONT'D)

There's a good man.

Samuel grabs a long, metal rod from a fireplace and looks menacingly at Amos. Suddenly, a bloodied man walks into the saloon wearing dirty, tattered clothes; a bright light shines from behind him as he enters. This is STRANGER. The entire commotion of the bar stops dead; the piano music ceases, the BARMAN drops a glass that he is cleaning, and Amos and Samuel look over at the man in awe. Stranger gazes around the saloon and takes a seat at the bar. He taps the top of the counter and the bartender quickly slides a glass over to him; he catches it without looking and begins to sip from it. The commotion begins again. Samuel looks back at Amos and smiles sinisterly.

SAMUEL FRIEND (CONT'D)

Now, where were we?

Samuel deftly pushes the metal rod onto the top of Amos' hand, making a hissing sound-- Amos screams in agony. The rod is lifted and we see a distinctive mark burned into his hand.

SAMUEL FRIEND (CONT'D)

Now go on, git.

Amos runs out of the bar holding his injury. Stranger turns and sees the man run out, but it does not phase him and he turns back around. The bartender walks over to a nervous looking man who has whistled him over. This is LUKE.

LUKE

Hey there- uh- barkeep, who's that man down there? You know, the- uh- the scruffy mean lookin' one.

Stranger overhears Luke's comment looks down the bar out of the corner of his eye.

BARTENDER

You don't know? That's Stranger, he used to be Sheriff of these parts. That man was the law. Him and his deputy, the purest boys God ever laid eyes on, kept these streets clean for years.

Stranger stares forward in thought; the scene flashes back and forth between the bar and Stranger's memories.

INT. OFFICE- DAY

Stranger, dressed in a crisp Sheriff's uniform, shakes the hand of a young man. This is JACK EDEN.

STRANGER

What's your name, son?

JACK

They call me Jack Eden, sir.

EXT. TRAIL- DAY

Stranger and Jack ride horses and talk to each other.

STRANGER

So, what's your story Jack?

JACK

I don't really want to get into it...I got a troubled past.

STRANGER

Everyone's got their skeletons, I guess.

BEAT.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

I was gettin' to thinkin', you sure got a knack for the law...a sheriff could use a guy like you. I could give you a roof over yer head if you help me out 'round here.

JACK

Like you're deputy?

STRANGER

Yeah...somethin' like that.

Jack smiles at Stranger.

INT. OFFICE- DAY

Jack and Stranger stand across from each other.

STRANGER

I hereby declare you, Jack Eden, as my full-fledged deputy.

Stranger pins a badge on Jack's vest; the two firmly shake hands.

INT. HOUSE- NIGHT

A man in a black cowboy hat with a red bandanna over his face counts a large amount of money at a table. The door is kicked down as Stranger and Jack enter. The two point their "guns" (hands in the shape of guns) at the man; down the "barrels" (pointer fingers) of the two guns, it says "Justice" and "Righteousness".

STRANGER
Hands up Mcgrueder!

JACK
Your bank robbin' days are over!

STRANGER
Tie him up, Jack.

Jack nods at Stranger and walks over to the robber. He slams the robber's head against the table and puts his hand behind his back; Stranger smiles as he watches.

INT. SALOON- DAY

Stranger continues to stare off into the distance and takes a long sip of his drink. Luke and the bartender continue to talk at the end of the counter.

LUKE
That guy's the sheriff?! No
kiddin', huh!

BARTENDER
Well, no...not anymore. Ever since
the incident with his deputy, we
haven't seen him 'round these
parts.

LUKE
Wait, what incident? What happened
with his deputy?

BARTENDER
That, my friend, is quite a sad
tale in itself...

Stranger again stares off and the scene changes to a flashback.

EXT. WOODS- DAY

Stranger and Jack walk through the woods together.

JACK
Nice day out, huh?

STRANGER
Mmm.

BEAT

JACK
Ya know Stranger, I never did thank
ya for takin' me in all those years
ago...

STRANGER
Nhaw, it was nothin'...

JACK
No really, considering my
situation, I don't know where I'd
be if you never took me in. You
practically saved my life. Thank
you.

Stranger smiles warmly at Jack. Suddenly, the two hear a rustling of leaves as they stop dead and look at the hill in front of them. Up the hill, we see the entire tree line is covered with Indians. In the center stands an Indian of a somewhat small stature with an extremely large, feathery headdress; he holds two white stone tomahawks in his hands. This is CHIEF CANEJA.

STRANGER
(under his breath)
Chief Caneja...?

The two groups stand deadlocked with each other. Chief Caneja slowly raises one hand in the air and holds it; suddenly, he lets out a war cry and throws his hand forward as the entire tribe of Indians charges down the hill at the two.

STRANGER (CONT'D)
Fall back kid!

Stranger and Jack pull out their "pistols" and they start walking backwards; they pick off assorted Indians sprinting towards them who proceed to tumble down the hill. However, the duo are quickly over-run and Stranger is thrown to the ground;

he frantically looks around amongst the chaos for his deputy. Jack is seen trapped in a net being dragged into the woods by a horde of Indians; he outstretches his hand and screams to his friend.

JACK
Stranger!

Stranger begins to get up to run towards him but is quickly kicked back down; a shadow is cast over Stranger as Chief Caneja looms above him, sunlight hitting the back of his headdress, perfectly illuminating him. The Chief stares at Stranger and suddenly brings the butt ends of his tomahawk swiftly down upon his head. The screen goes black.

INT. SALOON- DAY

Stranger takes another long sip from his drink and stares straight forward.

BARTENDER
And after all that, Stranger just lost it. He quit the law business and went off to find Chief Caneja and his tribe. This is the first time we've seen him in months.

LUKE
Gosh...you don't say. That is the darn saddest tale I have ever heard.

BARTENDER
Hold it together there Luke...

LUKE
Hey, I ain't cryin'! Just got some dust in my eye is all...

BEAT.

LUKE (CONT'D)
But- uh- what happened to him after that? He looks awful banged up-- there must be some story to tell.

BARTENDER
I haven't the slightest idea...Why don't you go on over there and ask him for yerself?

Luke nods and timidly walks down the bar. He sits next to Stranger, takes off his hat, and begins fiddling with it.

LUKE
Uhh..umm, hi. Mr. Stranger?

STRANGER
Just Stranger.

LUKE
Right, right, Stanger...umm, I was just wonderin'...well, me and the barkeep got to talkin' down there and we got on to talkin' 'bout you, we weren't sayin' nothin' bad or anythin', honest. It's just...well the story 'bout your deputy came up and I would just like to- uh- offer my condolences. I- um- I'm truly sorry.

Stranger, still staring forward, grunts and nods his head.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Anyway, I-I was just wonderin'...what happen to you's after you left? I heard you just up and disappeared after the incident...did you- uh- did you hunt down that Chief Caneja? I'm just diein' to know what really happened cause...

Luke's voice trails off as Stranger disappears into thought and the scene changes to a flashback.

EXT. VALLEY CLEARING- DAY

A shiny black boot steps into the screen; the camera pans up to reveal Stranger in an all black cowboy suit with a mean look on his face. He takes his "gun" out of his holster, revealing the word "Vengeance" written down the pointer-finger, and deftly slides it back in. Stranger walks into the clearing, revealing nothing but a smoldering fire.

STRANGER
Where in the hell is everyone...damn nomads must have packed up and left...

The camera suddenly switches to a first-person perspective of someone peering around a rock at Stranger.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Where'd you go Chief Caneja? You hidin'?! Come out now and fight me like a man!

Stranger hears a rustling noise and quickly turns around, pointing his "pistol" toward the trees. Suddenly, Chief Caneja comes running from the opposite direction. He screams and slams his tomahawk down at Stranger, who rolls away just in time-- Caneja's tomahawk gets stuck in the ground. Stranger sits in a crouched position gasping for breath with a look of shock upon his face.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Or like the dog you are!

The Chief suddenly charges at Stranger as he swings his tomahawks madly-- Stranger narrowly dodges each swipe. Caneja does a powerful swinging tomahawk maneuver and Stranger ducks to avoid it; as he ducks, he kicks out Chief Caneja's legs, causing him to fall to the ground, Stranger stands up and aims his "gun" at the Indian.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Say good night, Caneja!

All of the sudden, Caneja swiftly kicks him in the hand. As Stranger shakes his hand in pain, Caneja gets up and runs toward him once again. Caneja and Stranger go arm-to-arm on each strike; the Chief suddenly lands a strong kick to Stranger's chest, sending him stumbling back. Chief Caneja takes this opportunity to strike him in the face with the butt end of his weapon; Stranger falls backwards and lands face-down on the ground. He slowly gets up with a groan and looks around for the Chief who is nowhere to be seen.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Sneaky Injun...

All of the sudden, we see Chief Caneja sprint off a very large rock and fly through the air towards Stranger, tomahawk in hand. Stranger rolls out of the way at the last second, gets into a crouched position, and "fires a shot" at the Chief, striking him in the stomach. Stranger walks towards Chief Caneja and stands above him.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

That's for Jack Eden.

Stranger begins to walk away. Suddenly, Chief Caneja coughs and Stranger stops in his tracks.

CHIEF CANEJA
 (weakly)
 Wait...

Stranger walks back over to Caneja.

CHIEF CANEJA (CONT'D)
 Before my spirit leaves this earth,
 there is something you should
 know...I did not kill your friend
 in cold-blood.

STRANGER
 What are you talking about...speak
 Injun!

CHIEF CANEJA
 I was forced to do it; I did not
 murder Jack Eden out of choice.

Stranger kneels down to Chief Caneja's side.

STRANGER
 What do you mean? Who forced you?

CHIEF CANEJA
 A man. A man that, because of my
 father's filthy gambling habits, my
 whole tribe and I are in debt to
 for life. If we did not kill your
 friend, the man said he would
 murder my people.

STRANGER
 But why Jack Eden?

CHIEF CANEJA
 Your friend was also in debt to
 this man, but he tried to hide from
 him. Soon enough, he was found and
 the man ordered him dead.

Stranger suddenly has a flashback.

EXT. RIVER- SUNSET

Stranger and Jack sit by the bank.

STRANGER
 So, what's your story Jack?

JACK
I don't really want to get into
it...I got a troubled past.

EXT. WOODS- DAY

Stranger and Jack walk through the woods.

JACK
No really, considering my situation
I don't know where I'd be if you
never took me in. You practically
saved my life. Thank you.

EXT. VALLEY CLEARING- DAY

STRANGER
I see...but who is this man?

CHIEF CANEJA
I do not know him by name...only
that he is the embodiment of true
evil. Find this man-- exact revenge
for me, for my tribe, for Jack
Eden, for what is right.

Chief Caneja puts his tomahawk in Stranger's hand and dies majestically. Stranger looks at Chief Caneja's hand and notices a very distinctive marking branded into his skin.

STRANGER
I will find you, wherever you are,
and I will kill you.

He places Jack Eden's badge on the Chief's chest and walks away. The shot pans back down to the mark on Caneja's hand and cross-fades back to the saloon.

INT. SALOON- DAY (PRESENT)

The cross-faded shot reveals the same marking branded into Luke's hand.

LUKE
Uhm, Mr. Stranger- I mean Stranger,
if you don't want to talk 'bout it,
that's fine by me. I just-

Stranger's attentions darts to Luke's branded hand-- he grabs Luke's hand and stares at it.

STRANGER

Where did you get that mark?!

LUKE

Oh, that...I- uh- I got it from that man over there, Samuel Friend. I lost a card game to him and- well- let's just say I'm in debt to him for a long time...he branded me to make sure I didn't forget...guess that's why I'm so jumpy nowadays.

Stranger slowly stands up from his seat.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Wait, wa-was it somethin' I said?

Stranger finishes his drink and deftly sets it down on the bar; he then taps the white handle of a tomahawk that is in his belt loop. The entire bar falls silent and stares at him. Suddenly, he turns around and throws the tomahawk full speed at Samuel Friend. Samuel's widens his eyes and gulps. The screen goes black with a large thud.

FADE OUT.