

GUN FOR THE DEVIL - PART ONE

Written by

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Based on

'Gun for the Devil'

by

Angela Carter

EXT. ARIZONA - RAILROAD TRACKS - DAWN

The track stretches out into the distance. Winding through the desert, around the giant rock formations.

EXT. RIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

CARLOS MENDOZA sits on his black horse watching the railroad in the valley below. He's only 35 but his face is scarred, dirty to make him look decades older. Dressed in outlaw black with a dusty poncho bearing soiled green, red and white.

Another out-law joins him. His brother, LUCAS, dirty, younger. Lucas' horse kicks in the dust. Nervous.

MENDOZA
(subtitled)
Are you ready?

Mendoza grins an unnerving grin.

EXT. VALLEY - UP THE TRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

An old American steam engine chugs it's way along, down into the valley. Two armored carriages at the front of the train.

INT. FOOTPLATE - CONTINUOUS

The DRIVER and FIREMAN are working hard. They've been up for hours.

INT. ARMORED CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

Two guards sit playing cards. Three more in bunks.

One of the pair at the table raises too high. GUARD #1 reaches for a gold bar from the huge pile behind them. Slams it down on the table, laughing.

GUARD #1
I see your five and I raise you
five more!

In one of the bunks their CAPTAIN lifts his stetson, not impressed. An angry looking white haired man who's got sunbaked skin and a temperament to match.

CAPTAIN
Surely I don't see you touching
that son?

The guard hurriedly puts it back down.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Didn't think so.

INT. PASSENGER CARRIAGE - BUNKS - MOMENTS LATER

A couple lay together in the cabin. The MAN wakes and checks his pocket watch. The WOMAN doesn't stir.

We can make out what looks like a violin case in the dark over by their luggage. Maybe there's another bunk in there but it's too dark to clearly make out.

He lays back down, putting an arm around his wife.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

A whole gang of bandits move a train of battered old stagecoaches across the tracks. Two bandits run between and hammer pins on the wheels, holding the stages in place.

Another rides between the coaches, throwing torches, they set the whole wagon train alight. Horses and all.

EXT. RIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Mendoza watches it all. From up here we can see the steam train approaching. The burning stages throw up thick black smoke you can see for miles.

EXT. VALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The bandits take cover behind boulders and in caves on the valley floor.

One of them loads his Spanish rifle.

INT. FOOTPLATE - MOMENTS LATER

Spotting the smoke, the Driver stops the next load of coal being shovelled. He and the Fireman make a decision.

One of them eases the regulator closed.

INT. ARMORED CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

The guards feel the train slowing down. The Captain sits up hesitantly.

EXT. RAILROAD - CONTINUOUS

The engine starts to slow. The chugging motion has stopped.

INT. FOOTPLATE - CONTINUOUS

As the train stops the Driver pulls out his six shooter. Cocks it and jumps off the footplate.

INT. PASSENGER CARRIAGE - BUNKS - CONTINUOUS

The Man stirs again. Unaware of what's about to happen.

EXT. RAILROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Making his way over to the smouldering stages, the Driver scans each side of the valley. Nothing moves.

EXT. ARMORED CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

The Captain rolls out from under the closing steel door. He straightens himself out and yells back to his men.

CAPTAIN
Keep this door shut!

He cocks his Winchester repeater and heads to the front of the train.

EXT. RAILROAD - MOMENTS LATER

The Driver is inspecting the burned out stages. Like skeletons fallen across the tracks. The Captain is pissed.

CAPTAIN
Why the hell did you stop this train?

DRIVER
I reckon the Native Americans did this. Burned the horses too.

Scanning the valley, the Captain raises his rifle.

CAPTAIN
God damn' Native Americans didn't do this! This is Mexicans. Damn rats. Lets get moving.

The Driver kicks out one of the burned out doors. The stages were full of snakes.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Come on!

The Driver looks closer. One of the snakes moves. Freaks him out.

ROCKS FALL somewhere up the valley. The Captain bolts. TWO SHOTS RING OUT. Both the Driver and the Captain are dead.

EXT. VALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The bandits charge the train down the sides of the valley. Mendoza leads the way.

INT. PASSENGER CARRIAGE - BUNKS - MOMENTS LATER

Both the Man and Woman are waken by the shots.

EXT. ARMORED CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

The four guards pile out of the carriage. FIRING wildly at the Mexicans.

They're picked off easily.

EXT. RAILROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Mendoza rides down the side of the train shouting orders. Bandits dismount and strip the bodies of weapons, ammunition and boots.

Lucas rides up.

MENDOZA
(subtitled)
Start unloading the gold. Hurry.

LUCAS
Sí.

Mendoza carries on down the train.

INT. PASSENGER CARRIAGE - BUNKS - MOMENTS LATER

Sat up in bed, the Woman watches as the Man peers out the window. They're scared. Speaking in some European language.

THE DOOR FLIES OPEN.

The pair freeze as Mendoza inspects the room. He sees the woman in a state of undress. Goes for her. The man goes for him. TWO SHOTS. Struck down by Mendoza's revolver. The woman is shrieking.

Ripping away the covers, he lies on top of her. Rips her earrings from her ears and pockets them. Tears off her nightgown and pulls off his belt. It's horrific.

INT. PASSENGER CARRIAGE - WALKWAY - CONTINUOUS

Two bandits rip out the light fittings and anything that might be gold. They're frantic, like pirates. Wild animals. We can still hear the woman screaming, hysterical.

ANOTHER SHOT. The sobbing screams stop.

EXT. ARMORED CARRIAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The last of the gold bars is loaded onto a wagon cart and the bandits start to ride off.

Playing and showing off what they have plundered.

EXT. RAILROAD - CONTINUOUS

Mendoza throws the violin to one of his gang and buttons his shirt back up. Mounts his horse and makes a vulgar hand gesture to his brother.

Lucas lights a bundle of dynamite and hurls it through a broken window into the passenger car.

Laughing the pair head off.

INT. FOOTPLATE - MOMENTS LATER

The Fireman has survived. He takes his SHOT at Mendoza, missing wide into the dirt. The out-law doubles back.

EXT. RAILROAD - CONTINUOUS

Mendoza lines up his shot. FIRES ONE from his pistol. Rides off.

The Fireman drops from the footplate onto the rocky valley floor. Beat. THE DYNAMITE EXPLODES.

EXT. VALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

The smoke from the stages mixes with the left over explosion. Bodies lay everywhere. Bandits ride off with their prize.

The steam train has been raped.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

San Francisco in the 1880's is starting to look like it does in the present day. The Golden Gate Bridge is missing.

EXT. OUTSIDE LIONEL'S SALOON - DAY

Very up-market looking saloon. A couple enter from the street. The lady is carrying a very brightly coloured parasol.

INT. LIONEL'S SALOON - BAR - DAY

The bar is alive with well-to-do types. All in suits and expensive looking dresses. The liquor is flowing.

JOHNNY HERMANN sits at the piano playing gentle honky-tonk to amuse the patrons.

Sat down he's not much to look at, 19, clean shaven, smartly dressed in a black musician jacket but there's something special about the way his long, white fingers work the keyboard, as if he's destined for other things.

As he plays he watches too wealthy men talking about their tailors or where they had their hats made. As he watches we can see him get more angry. This is a troubled young man.

Two girls go over the pianist as he's finishing a song. One GIRL leans right on the lid, staring into his eyes.

GIRL

I've never heard anyone play like that before. You sure are handsome, mister.

Johnny, embarrassed, putting the lid on the piano and standing up.

JOHNNY

Thank you miss.

He tries to walk to the bar but she blocks his path.

GIRL

Maybe you could teach me how to play some time?

JOHNNY

Maybe.

GIRL

I figure what with all these earth tremors we're having lately, we ought to get right down to business?

She throws herself onto him.

GIRL (CONT'D)

Maybe show me what else those hands can do?

LIONEL DELANEY, the proprietor intervenes. He's a short, old, hairy man with kind eyes. Very well dressed. He knows how to handle his customers.

DELANEY

Miss Lucy, you leave my pianist alone, y'hear? What would your father say if I told him you'd been botherin' Johnny like this?

Johnny hurries off.

GIRL

(laughing nervously)
I was just being friendly!

DELANEY

That boy's got a job to do. You leave him to it.

INT. LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny splashes his face with water from a bucket on the table. He starts rifling through the morning's post.

DeLaney enters with a beer for the young musician. Leaves is on the table.

JOHNNY

Thanks for that.

DELANEY

God damnit John! I can't beat them all off. Sooner or later you're going to have to settle down with one of them.

Johnny isn't paying any attention.

DELANEY (CONT'D)

I was hoping that you would consider sticking around for a while. The girls sure seem to like you, and the rich folks appreciate all those classical tunes you play.

Still not paying attention. The pianist finds the letter he's after. It's marked 'PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY'. He tears it open and starts to read.

DELANEY (CONT'D)

That's William Donaldson's daughter. He owns the largest chain of hardware stores this side of San Diego you know? That girl has all her bills paid for the rest of her life.

(MORE)

DELANEY (CONT'D)

And if I were your age, and hadn't
met Mrs Delaney yet...

(distant)

Oh boy...

DeLaney looks up and sees that Johnny has turned white.

DELANEY (CONT'D)

What ever is the matter? News from
Austria is it? Has the Kaiser been
impeached? Spit it out!

JOHNNY

My family. Dead.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Johnny plays with a glass of whiskey as he sits at the piano.
He starts playing something dark. Something classical.
Something minor. He's worse for wear.

People start to leave. LOUIE THE BARTENDER goes over, mid
song to stop Johnny from upsetting everyone in the bar.

LOUIE

Come on kid. Play something a
cheery-like?

JOHNNY

I can't.

Johnny swigs down the last of the whiskey.

LOUIE

You've can't play like this. Come
sit at the bar. Cool off.

Louie picks up the pianist and they stagger to the bar.

AT THE BAR.

Johnny slumps on a bar stool next to an NATIVE AMERICAN
looking man in a black suit and hat. The Native American has
a tattoo of a snake on his wrist, just covered by his cuff.

Louie refills Johnny's whiskey glass, he's trying to help.

LOUIE (CONT'D)

The boss told me about your folks
kid. I'm real sorry.

The Mexican shifts over to Johnny.

NATIVE AMERICAN

What happened to your folks?
(to Louie)

What happened to his folks?

LOUIE
Mexicans. Bandits in Arizona or
Texas.

The Native American nods.

JOHNNY
I should have been there with them.

LOUIE
What? That's crazy talk John.
Then you'd be dead too. How's that
gonna' help?

JOHNNY
I could have saved them.

NATIVE AMERICAN
Those bandits fire straight and
true.

LOUIE
They're fast too. A fella' from
New Orleans once told me that
Mexican bandits were the fastest
he'd ever seen.

NATIVE AMERICAN
And fast. Are you any good with a
six gun, pianist?

Johnny just sips his whiskey.

JOHNNY
I haven't got anything to lose.

LOUIE
I ain't never seen you fire off a
gun in my life, John.

NATIVE AMERICAN
You have to be good with the gun.

LOUIE
And fast.

JOHNNY
Maybe I could be fast enough.

NATIVE AMERICAN
Not that fast. There's no way a
boy like you could have done
anything.

The Native American thinks.

NATIVE AMERICAN (CONT'D)
Unless...

LOUIE

Unless what?

NATIVE AMERICAN

White man once told me of a man who was given a gun that could never miss. Austrian he was.

Johnny's ears prick up.

JOHNNY

Austrian?

NATIVE AMERICAN

That's got your attention. It was in the old world. When he pulled the trigger, whatever he aimed at would fall. It made that man rich. But it is a curse. Only one man on Earth can carry it at once.

JOHNNY

I remember that story. It's a fairy tail.

NATIVE AMERICAN

I don't think so.

JOHNNY

Where would you get a gun like that from?

NATIVE AMERICAN

The Devil, I would imagine.

LOUIE

It sound's like a crock of horse shit to me.

The Native American man ignores Louie. He carries on. Almost like a mantra.

NATIVE AMERICAN

Six rounds. Straight and true.

JOHNNY

Straight and true. And fast?

NATIVE AMERICAN

The fastest.

The pianist locks eyes with the strange Native American man. Louie is losing control of the situation.

LOUIE

(to Native American)
I think you should leave.

NATIVE AMERICAN

I'm just enjoying a quiet drink
with my new friend here.

Louie rests his hand on the shotgun behind the bar.

LOUIE

I said I think it's time you left.

They lock eyes, then the Native American jumps up. Smiles.

NATIVE AMERICAN

Perhaps.

(to Johnny)

They say he lives in Mexico. That
white man.

LOUIE

Get out of here!

The Native American tips his hat and leaves. Louie watches
him out the door. He goes back to cleaning glasses.

LOUIE (CONT'D)

Hey Johnny, don't take old tales of
witchcraft like that seriously.
What happened to your folks was a
tragedy, I'm sure of it. You don't
know who did it anyway!

JOHNNY

Mexican bandits!

LOUIE

And how many bandits are out there?
Makes no sense to be talking of the
Devil and magic guns. Such things
will make you sick with revenge.

It's too late. Johnny is thinking about nothing but.

EXT. OUTSIDE LIONEL'S SALOON - MORNING

A black figure in a musician's jacket hurriedly jumps onto
the first cable car he sees. Gone in the early hours.

INT. LIONEL'S SALOON - HALL - DAY

Lionel and Louie charge down the hall to Johnny's bedroom.

INT. JOHNNY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door is kicked open. The room is empty. Lionel sticks
his head through the door.

LIONEL
Damnit. What the hell did you say
to him?

LOUIE
I just tried to make him feel
better. He was talking about
revenge and guns and-

LIONEL
I hope you're a better piano player
than you are a bartender.

Lionel storms off muttering to himself.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
God damn kid. Who's gonna' play
the ivory now?

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Johnny makes his way up the steps.

INT. LIBRARY - EUROPEAN HISTORY SECTION - DAY

Johnny chases down one shelf, finally finding the huge book
he needs.

INT. DESK - MOMENTS LATER

He opens it up and leafs through the old Austrian newspaper
articles. Searching for something. Page after page.

FINALLY IT'S THERE. A man holding an old shotgun with the
words 'Startschuss für den Teufel' as the headline.

Johnny scans the text. Right at the bottom he reads:

JOHNNY
Wohnhaft in Mexiko. Mexico.

He slams the book shut. We make out a snake on the hard
cover.

EXT. UNION STATION - DAY

Johnny rushes into the old Victorian style station.

INT. PLATFORM - DAY

Huge transcontinental steam trains wait in the station like
giant restless beasts.

INT. TICKET OFFICE - DAY

Johnny puts down some cash on the ticket desk.

JOHNNY

The next train to Tucson. One way.
Thank you.

He gets the slip of paper and hurriedly reads it. Starts off towards the platform.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - RAILROAD - DUSK

One of the giant steam trains from the station charges across the desert towards Tucson.

INT. TRAIN TO TUCSON - PASSENGER CARRIAGE - DUSK

Johnny sits at the window reading a book on satanic European stories. The TICKET INSPECTOR makes his way down the aisle. Johnny hands him the paper.

TICKET INSPECTOR

Tucson. That's a long way. Are
you travelling by yourself?

JOHNNY

Yes.

TICKET INSPECTOR

All the best, son.

As the Inspector starts to walk off-

JOHNNY

I'm a reporter, can I ask you a
question for my story?

TICKET INSPECTOR

Yes?

JOHNNY

Do you know anything about the
Mexican boarder raids that have
been taking place on Union trains?

TICKET INSPECTOR

In Arizona?

JOHNNY

Yes. There was a train destroyed
two weeks ago. That's what my
article is about.

TICKET INSPECTOR

I remember it. Everyone
slaughtered, if I recall. They say
it was the Mendoza family.

JOHNNY

Mendoza?

TICKET INSPECTOR

Yes. Out-laws with something of a
reputation around these parts.

JOHNNY

You think that there's any truth to
that reputation?

TICKET INSPECTOR

Surely I couldn't say. All I know
is that if the stories are half
true, I wouldn't want to be
involved in any of their business.
Good night, sir.

The Inspector walks off.

JOHNNY

Good night.

Johnny looks out of the window on the cactus flying past. As
he rests the open book we can see a man taking a gun from the
devil.

EXT. MEXICO - EL CULEBRA - DAY

A dusty, flea bitten, no good Mexican village. Possibly an
old mining town that's past it's hay-day. False front wooden
buildings that are falling down.

EXT. EL CULEBRA - DAY

A woman hangs out washing on her stoop, ushering her small
child back into the house. This is no place to raise
children.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

A gang of bandits, headed by Mendoza tear down the middle of
the town. People give them plenty of room. The stores
shutter up.

The bandits dismount and one heads into each building. Like
the train robbery, this is choreographed, rehearsed, a
regular event

INT. TELEGRAPH - CONTINUOUS

As the bandit approaches, the telegraph operator produces a bag of pesos. This is protection money. The bandits run this town.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The rest of the bandits have gathered their payoffs and are returning to their horses. The money that wasn't handed over has been taken by force.

Mendoza dismounts his own horse and heads for the only saloon on the street.

INT. SALOON - DAY

Mendoza enters. Instantly the girl trying to play the piano in the corner stops. A few of the patrons get up, pushing the prostitutes from their knees.

ROXANA WERNER, a glamorous looking mistress descends the staircase defiantly. In her late Forties or early Fifties she looks like she takes no nonsense. She's not afraid of the bandit.

ROXANA

Carlos! What are you doing here?
You did not tell me you were
coming!

Mendoza doesn't even look up. He reaches the bar. GREGOR WERNER appears from one of the side rooms.

Much older than his wife, he is dying slowly of consumption. Now only an echo of the proud man he was. An Austrian. The people of this town know his as THE COUNT. Relegated to running the local brothel with his wife. He looks drunk.

COUNT

We owe you nothing.

MENDOZA

A drink?

The Count thinks for a second.

COUNT

One drink.

The BARTENDER rushes to fix a tequila for the Mexican. Roxana is between the two men now.

ROXANA

How is my sister?

Mendoza shrugs.

ROXANA (CONT'D)
And your daughter?

MENDOZA
Well. They are well. How are your
whores?

He smirks. The Count holds his wife back. They watch Mendoza drink. He sets the glass down hard. Throws himself to his feet and walks out.

MENDOZA (CONT'D)
We will be back in six days. You
will tend to our needs.

The Count holds his wife in a more loving embrace.

COUNT
One day he will turn Roxana. One
day he will slaughter us all and
burn down our home.

ROXANA
Maria will not let him.

COUNT
She is not here.

EXT. OUTSIDE SALOON - DAY

Mendoza mounts up and the bandits start to leave town. The shutters on the shop fronts begin to open again.

A black stage drifts silently into town. Stops at the telegraph.

Mendoza turns. Strangers are in his town.

INT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS

The Count notices something outside. He, Roxana and the girls head to the windows.

INT. STAGE COACH - DAY

Johnny looks out. He has tracked the Mendoza's down to this flyblown town in Mexico. He pays his driver.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny steps out onto the street. Mendoza stands right in front of him. Johnny has nothing to lose.

MENDOZA

Who are you?

JOHNNY

A pianist.

Mendoza draws his pistol.

MENDOZA

This is my town.

Mendoza cocks the gun. Johnny stares him down.

JOHNNY

Are you Mendoza?

Mendoza FIRES a round off into the dirt near Johnny's feet.

The Count rushes out of the saloon with a beautiful European shot gun aimed squarely at the bandit.

COUNT

Let him go, Mendoza. He's a stranger.

It's a Mexican standoff. Johnny tries to stay composed. Mendoza lightly squeezes the trigger. Then thinks better of it. He holsters his revolver. Grinning that bandit grin.

He mounts his black horse and rides out of town.

The Count lower's his own gun. Johnny is left there, alone in the dusty town.

INT. SALOON - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny races over to the Count who is fixing the shotgun back on the wall in on its display stand. The old man is coughing terribly as he does. Like the effort has been too much.

JOHNNY

Why did you do that?

COUNT

He wouldn't have thought twice about shooting you boy. Face down in the dirt. Why are you here?

JOHNNY

Surely the Sheriff-

COUNT

Sheriff? Sheriff works for the bandits in this town. Why are you here.

JOHNNY

I'm looking for someone. You called him Mendoza?

COUNT

Looking for who? Are you looking for trouble? You don't look like a gunslinger I ever saw.

JOHNNY

I'm a pianist from San Francisco.

COUNT

San Francisco.

JOHNNY

Do you have any work?

The Count wipes his mouth. Some blood.

COUNT

Work? You said you were looking for someone?

JOHNNY

That can wait. I need food and water first. And somewhere to sleep.

The Count starts to think it over. Roxana jumps in. She's been watching their whole exchange.

ROXANA

Are you any good?

JOHNNY

Me?

ROXANA

I don't see anyone else here?

Johnny makes his way over to the piano. Sits. Lifts the lid. The Count watches, astonished, as he starts to play Brahms. It sounds fantastic, even though the piano is out of tune.

Roxana stops him.

ROXANA (CONT'D)

Enough. Go, clean yourself up. I'm not having a filthy pianist working for me.

Johnny thanks her. Picks up his bag. Hurries in the direction of the kitchen. Roxana turns to her husband.

ROXANA (CONT'D)

He is a handsome young man.

COUNT

You have a soft heart for such a hard woman.

ROXANA

Maybe. He's the best piano player I've ever heard.

The Count stares longingly at the battered keys.

COUNT

Most definitely.

ROXANA

Still. There is something not quite right about him.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The Count leads Johnny to his room.

INT. SPARE ROOM - DAY

The door swings open. It's remarkably similar to his room in San Francisco only much more tired and old.

COUNT

The bed creaks a little but you'll have to get used to it. There is a lock on the door to keep out the girls.

JOHNNY

Thank you.

Johnny starts to unpack his things. The Count lingers at the door.

COUNT

Where did you learn to play like that?

JOHNNY

Vienna.

The Count is speechless.

COUNT

Vienna?

JOHNNY

Yes. I studied at the Vienna Conservatoire. Six years.

COUNT

Six years?

JOHNNY

My parent's are both musicians by trade. My father plays violin, my mother has the most beautiful voice you have ever heard.

COUNT

I see.

The Count processes this.

COUNT (CONT'D)

I spent some time in San Francisco. My self and Mrs. Werner. We spent time at the Opera House there.

JOHNNY

How did it take you?

COUNT

Well.

JOHNNY

Enough to leave?

The Count snaps back.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I am grateful for the hospitality you and your wife have shown me. And for the work.

After a moment.

COUNT

It is the least we can do for a pianist from Vienna.

EXT. HACIENDA - DAY

A hacienda in the middle of the Mexican desert.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

TERESA MENDOZA and her scruffy cat sit in the shade in the almost derelict courtyard of the once proud hacienda. Daughter of the out-law, 16 and as pretty as a young girl can be, but with a streak of wild bandit child in her.

Behind her we can see the extent of the hundred or so years of neglect the large house has suffered. Bricks lay in heaps everywhere we look. Pigs and dogs run around in the dirt.

She raises a stolen cigar to her lips and pretends to smoke it as she plays with Johnny's father's violin, stolen from the train robbery.

She plucks out a few notes and throws it away like trash. Onto a pile of stolen goods.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Mendoza and a few bandits sit around shooting at bottles. They're drunk. One of them starts to climb the building.

INT. MARIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Roxana lays next to her sister, MARIA MENDOZA, wife of the bandit. The pair are sipping tequila and fanning themselves. The mid-day sun is trying to force its way into the room through the blinds.

MARIA
(subtitled)
Teresa can no longer live like
this. She should not live like a
pig. She must marry a rich man.
Richer than Carlos!

Maria hands her sister a photograph.

ROXANA
And it has been agreed?

MARIA
Sí.

Roxana inspects the photograph of the husband-to-be. A bandit. He even looks like Mendoza.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Isn't he handsome?

ROXANA
Handsome? Have they met?

Maria stands up. Angry.

MARIA
(subtitled)
You think you have got such a
wonderful life with that husband of
yours. Just because he doesn't
wear his spurs to bed!
(in English)
If it wasn't for me, he would have
killed you both! Don't you know
that? You think your European man
could protect you? He is dying!
No me hagas reír!

She burns out and sits back down. Composes herself.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Sorry, sister.

ROXANA

I am just worried about Teresa.

MARIA

Love will come. As soon as they are married, once he gets his leg over her. And the babies! My Teresa's babies. My grandchildren, growing up in his enormous house surrounded by servants bowing and scraping!

Roxana isn't convinced.

MARIA (CONT'D)

There is nothing that can be done now anyway. Mendoza has arranged the deal. It is signed and sealed. Fixed. It is better than living like cerdo in this hole!

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

A giant rotting cathedral built for the mass conversion of the Native American peoples of the desert. It has been left to ruin like all the other buildings in the town.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A single PRIEST, old as the Church, lights a single prayer candle out of a display of a hundred as Johnny sits in silence staring at the giant rococo Jesus hanging about the altar.

The Priest finally turns.

PRIEST

You can not stay here forever.
This place will consume you.

JOHNNY

What?

PRIEST

This Church. It is so old. It will eat away at you until you are old. Like me.

(beat)

Why do you sit here?

JOHNNY

It's so hot outside.

PRIEST
It will only get hotter.

JOHNNY
How long have you been here? In
this village?

PRIEST
Here? In Mexico? Many years. All
my life that I can remember.

Johnny notices the candle.

JOHNNY
Why have you only lit one candle?

PRIEST
(sighs)
Long before the bandits came, I
would light more than one candle.
This Church would be full of
people. Now they are all too evil.
Too hardened by the desert wind.
Dry inside. I light a single
candle every day for every soul
that can be saved in this town.

JOHNNY
Who's soul is it?

PRIEST
That would be against my vows.

Johnny thinks.

JOHNNY
What do you know of Mendoza?

PRIEST
(awkward)
Mendoza is a good man.

JOHNNY
How can he be a good man?

PRIEST
Carlos does what he has to do. He
keeps the town safe from bandits.
From out-laws.

JOHNNY
He is an out-law.

Beat.

PRIEST
(intense)
Understand this;
(MORE)

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Mendoza runs this town. You will not be alive long if you disagree. He is a good man and that is all you need to know. You should not be asking questions. No-one in this town asks questions.

Johnny stands up. He takes one look at the Jesus.

JOHNNY

Even the Church in this town is poisoned.

INT. SALOON - AFTERNOON

Johnny plays a dark tune on the old piano as the prostitutes sit and talk. Business must be slow. There is no sign of The Count or his wife.

JULIE, a Yankee, ANA, KATIA, MADDALENA and INEZ laugh and giggle like girls half their ages.

Johnny is listening to every word.

JULIE

I think he's English.

KATIA

No, no, no. He is German, like the Senior Werner.

JULIE

The Count isn't German! He's Austrian.

KATIA

Then I think he's Austrian!

They laugh. Johnny shouts over.

JOHNNY

What do you know about the Count?

They potter over to the piano. More than happy to talk to their new neighbour.

ANA

He killed a man! In Mexico!

INEZ

San Francisco. Mrs. Werner's husband! With that gun!

MADDALENA

I was there! I never saw him shoot it. I heard a story.

Inez points to the European rifle on the wall.

INEZ
Right through the heart. Without
even looking!

JULIE
That can't be true.

JOHNNY
Why not?

JULIE
Because I've never seen him shoot
anything, ever. He plays with it
from time to time.

JOHNNY
Is it loaded?

JULIE
I don't know.

ANA
I think it is loaded.

She bends over the piano and winks at the musician. They're
prostitutes after all.

ANA (CONT'D)
I know what a loaded gun feels
like.

They all laugh.

KATIA
One night, I heard him telling a
salesman. He was drunk. He said
that it all happened in Germany-

Julie gives her a look.

KATIA (CONT'D)
Or Australia-

INEZ
Austria!

KATIA
It had nothing to do with Roxana.
They say he made a deal with
someone. A magic man. So that he
could kill his lover's husband for
what he had done to her. It was
revenge.

They are all listening now. Johnny slows right down.

KATIA (CONT'D)

They say the curse was so great,
that Mr. Werner was such a
marksman, that he was pursued for
years. His family were all killed.
Including his lover. He had to
live in hiding for fear for his
life.

She eases off a little.

KATIA (CONT'D)

Then, he came to America and met
Mrs. Werner in San Francisco.

MADDALENA

And that's when I met them and I
followed them here.

JOHNNY

What magic man?

KATIA

Magic man?

JOHNNY

You said 'magic man'?

ANA

I heard it was the devil himself!

JULIE

Don't be so stupid! There is no
such thing as the devil!

INEZ

What about Carlos Mendoza?

The girls laugh again. They all relax.

JULIE

It is all just a story, Johnny.
Don't worry about the devil!

INEZ

Exacto!

JOHNNY

But why would they come here?

MADDALENA

We were on the run!

JOHNNY

Why? From what?

Beat. That's a sore point.

MADDALENA

Believe me. If I had anything else to go to, do you not think I would go? You do not stay in a place like this unless you have too.

INT. DOWN WELL - MORNING

A bucket splashes muddy water everywhere at the bottom of the well.

EXT. WELL - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny begins hoisting up the bucket of water. He's not far from the brothel.

The sun is already hot - Johnny wipes the sweat from his pale face. He looks up and down the dusty street. He looks completely out of place there. We can hear horses approaching.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Maria rides like a bandit, with both legs over each side of the horse. Behind her, Teresa rides like a lady.

The pair thunder past Johnny, who makes brief eye contact with the bandit child, towards the saloon.

EXT. OUTSIDE SALOON - MOMENTS LATER

Maria stops her horse hard. It kicks and shakes its head. Teresa trots hers up next to her mother.

MARIA

You are not coming in.

TERESA

Mamá? Why? I want to come and see my auntie!

MARIA

You are an engaged woman now. You can't be seen in this whore house. It's not very lady like.

TERESA

But you are going in.

MARIA

Your mother is not a lady, Teresa. Go home.

Maria dismounts and begins tying up her horse.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Go!

Sullen, Teresa walks her horse off.

EXT. WELL - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny has his water. He takes a quick drink. Spits it out. Teresa stops by him. She eyes him up and down.

TERESA

American?

JOHNNY

Yes. Well. Austrian.

TERESA

American.

She can't stop looking at him.

TERESA (CONT'D)

Why are you here?

JOHNNY

I play the piano. At the Saloon.

TERESA

Your skin. Your hands.

JOHNNY

They are not as brown as yours.
Not as pretty.

Teresa thinks for a moment. She kicks her horse and it charges off. Dust everywhere.

Johnny is left standing there.

INT. BAR - LATER

Maria and Roxana sit drinking tequila. They speak in hushed tones.

MARIA

Pianist?

ROXANA

Yes.

MARIA

(screws her face up)
From San Frasco?

ROXANA

San Francisco. American.

MARIA

Mendoza wants to know why he is here? You must tell me sister. Is he gunslinger? Is he an out-law come to kill my husband?

Roxana laughs.

ROXANA

Have you seen him? An out-law! Johnny has never broken the law in his life. He is a boy. A pianist!

MARIA

And Gregor?

ROXANA

What about him?

MARIA

Why is he protecting him?

ROXANA

(sighs)

Gregor has seen enough bloodshed in this town. We all have. He didn't want to see any more.

Maria sips, slowly. Then:

MARIA

He doesn't like Gregor. He doesn't trust him.

ROXANA

I know.

Maria changes the mood, if only for a second.

MARIA

This piano player. Is he family? Is he related to The Count?

ROXANA

Related?

MARIA

Sí hermana, relacionados?

ROXANA

No!

MARIA

Are you sure of it? Why else would a young man come to a place like this? Do they look the same?

ROXANA

No. Not the same.

MARIA

They are both white! Both Europe.
They like music. Are you sure?

Roxana thinks. Maybe they are related.

ROXANA

I do not know.

MARIA

(blunt)

Maybe your pianist has come to find
his father.

Roxana puts her drink down.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Maybe a child that The Count begot
and then abandoned?

ROXANA

Maria! Do not say such things so
loudly! Gregor may hear you!

MARIA

He can not hear us. How is the old
man?

ROXANA

He is dying.

MARIA

Still?

Roxana scolds her sister.

INT. THE COUNT'S BEDROOM - DAY

As if he can hear them, The Count, sat upright in bed, COUGHS
hard into his handkerchief. There is blood there.

EXT. HACIENDA - DAY

A bandit rides into the hacienda. We see that he is joining
many others.

INT. HACIENDA - DAY

The bandit gang are gathered around Mendoza and his brother.
They're planning their next raid.

Mendoza takes charge of the wild bandits.

MENDOZA

Silence! Lucas has found a trail that the miners use to run their wages.

The bandits cheer.

LUCAS

It is east. Forty miles. They use six soldiers, paid by the mine to guard the wagon.

MENDOZA

We leave in two days. Make sure you are ready. Bring plenty of bullets!

He starts to laugh. The bandits bark like dogs in excitement.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

The family are eating. At least they eat together. Mendoza is picking food out of his teeth with a knife.

LUCAS

Brother? Roxana has hired an assassin to kill you.

Mendoza stops dead.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

We must burn the brothel to the ground!

MARIA

No!

MENDOZA

The pianist? Maria says he is a child. Harmless.

LUCAS

We can not take that risk! That old man has been waiting for a chance to cut you down. Now he has it. Let me burn that place!

MARIA

You are wrong, Lucas.

LUCAS

(to Mendoza)

What are you afraid of? Your wife's sister? Of that old man! Ha!

MENDOZA

I am not afraid of any man!

Mendoza thinks it out. He is afraid.

MENDOZA (CONT'D)

The Count has killed men better than you, Lucas.

LUCAS

Stories! Fairy tales.

MENDOZA

No. He has death in his eyes. I have seen it. Leave the pianist alone. It is not worth your life.

Lucas doesn't buy it.

LUCAS

No. If you will not kill him, I will.

MENDOZA

Lucas! Do what you please. He has powers. He can shoot you without looking. I have warned you.

LUCAS

He is a dying old man.

Teresa enters the room with her cat. She drops it to the floor and goes to her father. Oblivious to their conversation.

TERESA

Tata... I want to learn the piano.

The brothers look at each other. Then to the girl.

LUCAS

Who will teach you, Teresa?

TERESA

(defiant)

The pianist at Auntie Roxana's saloon.

MARIA

No!

MENDOZA

(angry)

That is no saloon! It's a brothel! No daughter of mine will be seen in a brothel! Not with that fat whore!

Maria leaps up to defend her sister. Carving knife in hand. Mendoza grabs her wrist. Twists and the knife drops to the floor. They are animals.

MARIA

Don't insult my sister!

MENDOZA

(wild, animal)

I am not having my daughter mix
with the whores!

TERESA

I want to learn piano!

MENDOZA

You will do no such thing. Soon
you will be married. Married women
do not need to know piano.

TERESA

Tata!

MENDOZA

No 'tata'. You can not get
everything your own way.

TERESA

But-

Mendoza shows her the back of his hand. She stops. Pouts.
Picks up her cat and walks off sulking.

LUCAS

The pianist-

MENDOZA

(rage)

Lucas!

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The bar is alive. Johnny plays a lively tune on the piano.
The girls are dancing with some of Mendoza's men.

The Count mingles between customers. Adding some
respectability to the joint.

He finds Roxana across the dance bar.

COUNT

Listen to my new pianist! The best
in all Mexico!

ROXANA

He is very good, Gregor. I'll give
you that.

COUNT

I can not believe that he found his way here.

ROXANA

What do you mean?

COUNT

Through the desert. It is as if he was destined to find us. Destined to stay here.

He looks at his whiskey.

COUNT (CONT'D)

Maybe it is all the liquor taking.

ROXANA

Maybe. Gregor. Can I ask you something?

Johnny changes the song. It's a slower waltz. The girls each stand with their desperadoes for the evening and begin to waltz in the centre of the bar.

It's a picture. Drunk bandits with guns and whores in filthy negligees.

The Count looks into his wife's eyes.

COUNT

You are as beautiful as the day I laid eyes on you, Roxana.

She blushes and then beams like a young girl. We can see how pretty she must have been.

COUNT (CONT'D)

Would you allow me to have this dance?

The Count presents his arm. Quickly she tidies her hair and smartens herself up in the mirror behind the bar.

Her husband puffs out his chest like a robin. Trying to impress her. It works. They begin to dance.

Johnny keeps right on playing. His fingers barely have to touch the keys. He has such skills.

EXT. OUTSIDE SALOON - CONTINUOUS

A dark, shadowed figure moves towards the saloon. Hiding behind a cart.

INT. BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Some of the prostitutes retire with their bandits for the night. The couple are still locked together. Flowing with the music.

COUNT

Roxana. You are the most beautiful woman in the world. I would go through hell and back for you.

ROXANA

(melting)
Gregor.

Roxana spots the figure through the window. She breaks from The Count.

COUNT

Roxana?

She's out on the stoop now.

EXT. STOOP - CONTINUOUS

Roxana searches out in the night. There is no movement. The Count joins her. The music still playing, now more sinister.

COUNT

What is it?

She grabs hold of him.

ROXANA

I thought I saw something moving.
A shadow. A soul out here the night.

She's upset. He kisses her head.

INT. BAR - LATER

Johnny plays Chopin for The Count as he collects glasses and bottles from the tables. The Count hums along when he can.

COUNT

You play so magnificently. Wasted on that old piano.

JOHNNY

It sounds just fine to me.

Johnny finishes the song.

COUNT

(jovial)

Don't stop! I don't pay you to stop!

Johnny is staring at the gun on the wall. The Count tries to distract him.

COUNT (CONT'D)

Tell me, is Vienna still the same? It has been so long since I have been home.

JOHNNY

I was there three years ago. There are huge new buildings. And a parliament.

A tear runs down the Count's cheek. He pours himself another whiskey from behind the bar.

COUNT

It has all changed. I do not belong to Vienna any more. I belong to dirt. Here. Mexico.

Johnny turns to him.

JOHNNY

Is it true?

COUNT

Is what true?

JOHNNY

Stories from Europe about you? About the gun?

COUNT

(hiding something)

I don't know what you're talking about. What stories about me?

Johnny sits at the bar.

JOHNNY

There is a tale of a man. A man who sells his soul to the devil for a bullet that can not miss its target. A bullet, fired from your gun.

COUNT

An old legend. When I was a boy in Austria such stories were told in the villages. Fairy tales.

The Count is uncomfortable. He gets up to leave.

JOHNNY

An old story of a wealthy aristocrat who vanishes suddenly. Reports of him escaping the devil in the new world. As far away from Austria as he can get? In Mexico.

COUNT

It is all nonsense.

JOHNNY

Is it? Wouldn't a man who has sold himself to Lucifer feel safest amongst the damned? With the Bandits? Here with the whores and murderers? Here in the hot, dead desert?

COUNT

I don't know what you want me to say-

JOHNNY

You are the man from the story! You sold your soul to the devil for a gun! That gun!

The Count starts to sob. Broken.

COUNT

It is true. It is true!

EXT. STOOP - LATER

The pair of Austrians watch the shooting stars go by. The Count has calmed down. His voice cracks in the night.

Johnny keeps up the interrogation in their native language.

JOHNNY

(subtitled)

How did you come to make the deal?

COUNT

(subtitled)

I was a young, foolish man. It was old witchcraft. Sorcery of the Old World.

JOHNNY

(subtitled)

And that gun in there can never miss?

The Count is restless.

COUNT

Speak English. We are in the New World now. That world is weary, exhausted. Leave it behind! This is a new country. This is our home. Full of hope.

The pair are aliens. Their shadows are set against huge rock formations out in the desert.

JOHNNY

Full of hope? This land is more ancient than the valleys of Europe. Strange gods brood over it. It has no hope. It will never be my home.

COUNT

The gun is out of bullets. Six rounds. The seventh belongs to the devil, that is how you pay.

JOHNNY

(cold)

And you could help me make my own deal?

The Count is shocked.

COUNT

What?

He heard him right.

COUNT (CONT'D)

You are a pianist, Johnny. Not a murderer.

JOHNNY

(ignoring him)

They said that you had supernatural powers.

COUNT

They said that about Paganini. That he must have learned how to play the fiddle from the devil. Since no human being could have played so well.

The town gets darker as Johnny speaks.

JOHNNY

A year ago my parents were murdered by Mendoza and his men. They were travelling to San Francisco to meet me.

COUNT

We all have our tragedies.

JOHNNY

Some tragedies we can turn back on the perpetrators. I've planned my revenge. Suitably operatic.

He turns to The Count for a reaction. Deeply disturbed.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I shall seduce the beautiful senorita and give her a baby. And you won't help me to shoot her father and mother, I shall find some way of strangling them with my pianist hands. I've planned my revenge.

COUNT

You don't know what you are saying.

The Count turns to leave. Johnny stops him.

JOHNNY

Ever since I received that letter. Black edged.

COUNT

If you've planned it all so well, if you're dedicated to your vengeance-

JOHNNY

I am.

COUNT

If you are quite determined, then you belong to the devil already.

JOHNNY

Then you will help?

COUNT

No.

JOHNNY

But I've heard the way to speak of Mendoza. Contempt is all you harbour for the bandit king. I saw the pleasure in your eyes when you pointed your cured rifle at him.

The Count makes it through the door.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Johnny has followed him in.

JOHNNY

Where were you aiming? Right
between the eyes? I thought so.

COUNT

Stop it.

JOHNNY

Why? You have nothing to lose?

COUNT

I have this.

JOHNNY

This? This rotting brothel? Tell
me you have always hated them!

The Count breaks down. The last decade or so have been so
hard. He is dying too.

COUNT

It's true. I do hate them.

JOHNNY

Help me to end it!

COUNT

To shoot him?

JOHNNY

To shoot them.

COUNT

I'm kept by a whore in a flyblown
town at the end of every road I
didn't take.

JOHNNY

Give me a gun that will never miss
a shot. That will fire by itself.

COUNT

I know where to get one.

JOHNNY

Then you will help me?

COUNT

No. Never. I can't do it.

Johnny eases off. Defeated. For now. The Count has time to
recover.

COUNT (CONT'D)
I have nothing to lose. But my
sins.

EXT. STOOP - MOMENTS LATER

Teresa has seen it all. She watches through the window.
Cloaked in black.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

The Count is about to retire for the night.

COUNT
I'm sorry Johnny. I can't help
you. You do not need this burden.
I must carry it by myself.

JOHNNY
I understand.

He kisses Johnny's cheek and leaves for his bed.

Left alone, Johnny throws over a chair. Desperate, he is
about to rip down the Count's magical gun when:

Teresa appears at the doorway. Beautiful against the stars.

TERESA
What are you doing?

He freezes. Composed.

JOHNNY
Nothing. What are you doing here?
I thought you weren't allowed.

TERESA
I go where I please.

Johnny isn't convinced.

TERESA (CONT'D)
No-one knows that I'm here.
(suddenly worried)
You have to keep it that way!

JOHNNY
Why are you here?

TERESA
Can you teach me?

JOHNNY
Teach you what?

TERESA

The piano. I want to learn.

JOHNNY

What use is piano to a bandit child?

She goes close to him. So close.

TERESA

I'm not a child. I am a woman. I want to learn piano. Can you teach me. Please.

Johnny pretends to think. This is easier than he thought.

JOHNNY

Yes.

She lights up.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

But not here. We will wake the prostitutes.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The one place that no-one would think to look for Johnny and Teresa.

They find the Church unlocked. They walk straight in.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

At the piano. Teresa's small bandit fingers copy what Johnny shows her. Czerny exercises.

She doesn't have it quite right and so he repeats them. Covering his long white hand over hers.

JOHNNY

No. Like this.

She repeats him. Learning fast.

TERESA

Is that right?

JOHNNY

Yes.

They're practically sat on top of each other.

They go again. She's getting better. There is something in Johnny's eyes now. Something soft. Perhaps he is falling for her, himself.

The rococo Christ watches the pair laugh and giggle as Teresa gets it wrong.

Suddenly she stops.

TERESA

I am getting married here soon.

JOHNNY

Married?

TERESA

Yes. My father has set it all up.
Married to a 'rich bandit
gentleman'.

JOHNNY

Gentleman?

TERESA

I am the heiress to my father's
money. My son will have it all but
I must be married first.

JOHNNY

Oh no. You won't be married. I
won't let you be married.

TERESA

You won't let me?

JOHNNY

No.

They stare for a moment into each other's eyes. Like The Count and Johnny earlier, the pair are alien in this landscape. The bandit child and the twisted vengeance seeker.

The tension boils over and they kiss. Deep. Passionate. Again and again. Teresa pulls off her blouse. Johnny's shirt, unbuttoned.

EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

A figure moves slowly through the shadows. Possibly the priest, wondering what all the noise is about.

INT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

The pair of them. Naked. Skin on skin. Making love on the floor of the Church underneath the statue of Jesus. High blasphemy.

Teresa cries with delight like the wild animal she is.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

Teresa rests her head against Johnny's chest. She is glowing with delight.

TERESA

(soft)

Does this mean that you love me?

Johnny is detached. Rejoicing in his own coldness. Teresa goes on without him.

TERESA (CONT'D)

So you love me! You must love me!
You'll take me away!

She kisses him and stands up. Makes her way down the aisle. Kicking aside a snake that has crawled in from outside. Reaches the foot of the rococo Jesus.

Sticks out her tongue. Proud. Defiant.

THE HUGE WOODEN DOOR OF THE CHURCH FLIES OPEN.

Teresa turns. Terrified.

HARD OUT.