

NO LOCO

By

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PANEL 1

A river cuts through the green rolling hills of a frontier idyll. HOWE NADE, 40s, rests barefoot in the shade of a cottonwood on the bank. Derby hat pulled low over his eyes. A pair of worn cowboy boots beside him - an open whiskey bottle nested in the cuff of the closest. Smoke curls from a pipe clamped in his teeth.

CAPTION: "Kansas. Ain't no place like it. Little Blue river purlin' crystal clear at my toes."

CAPTION: "All's I need do is open my eyes..."

PANEL 2

Close on Howe's face - so as not to see his surroundings. He's hatless, unshaven, head tilted forward as if sleeping. A fly crawls over his scabbed, sun-blistered face. Stringy hair draped over closed, bagged eyes. He licks his cracked lips - subconsciously savouring his dream world.

CAPTION: "...An' that's where I'll be-

SFX: SCRICK-SCRICK-SCRICK...

PANEL 3

Close on Howe's eyes. One weary, bloodshot eye opens a crack.

PANEL 4

Reveal Howe, facing the horizon. He's buried to his neck in a vast sun-baked plain.

SFX: SCRICK-SCRICK-

HOWE Randal?

PANEL 5

Howe strains to see behind him. Veins rising on his neck as he draws on the last of his strength in a futile bid to free himself.

HOWE Just end it you dog roastin' sons of bitches!

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Howe slumps forward. The fly returns to land on his ear.

HOWE Lord, you set to test me...

VOICE (OFF) You ain't dead.

VOICE Sure looked dead.
(OFF) (CONT'D)

PANEL 2

Howe's bloodshot eyes snap open - buoyed with hope.

HOWE Randal! You made it!

PANEL 3

Looking down on 'RANDAL', sprawled in a blood-soaked gulch, body stuck full of arrows. His hat lays nearby. A patch of bone white skull where his scalp used to be. Two coyotes tug at a bare foot.

CAPTION: "Nope. He's raising stink a gully over"

PANEL 4

Looking on Howe from behind - head turned, features in profile.

HOWE Well, you ain't no Apache so get me the hell outta here before they come back!

PANEL 5

Howe grins, laughing, maniacal. He's losing his mind.

HOWE ...Dang, I'm talkin' to the wind!

HOWE (CONT'D) I'm skin-full of brain pickle - this all just a dream...

PAGE 3 - PANELS: 4**PANEL 1**

Close on Howe - eyes scrunched shut. Wishing himself away.

HOWE I'm in Kansas. Just open my eyes an'-

PANEL 2

Howe's eyes blink open.

PANEL 3

Howe's POV: that same arid plain. Relentless sun.

SFX: SCRICK-SCRICK-SCRICK

PANEL 4

Howe tilts, directing his words at his unseen companion.

HOWE Partner, I'll give you anythin', just name it!

VOICE (OFF) You is a little light on affects.

HOWE My credits good all places. You need a horse?

VOICE (OFF) Never been partial to the equine.

HOWE A woman then - got a sister-in-law, little on the chubby side-

VOICE (OFF) I do like chubby.

HOWE She's the gal for you.

HOWE (CONT'D) ...Partner? You there?

HOWE (CONT'D) Scalps! Genuine Apache. Trust me, I'm a craftsman.

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PANEL 1

A side canyon below a rock outcropping. Howe, pre-capture, scraped and bruised, claws out a hole in the dirt with his bare hands. A knotted sack and Navy Colt on the ground beside him. A trio of mounted APACHE SCOUTS stand silhouetted on a nearby ridge.

CAPTION "Hid me a whole sack, right before them Apache
 overrun us. It's yours..."

PANEL 2

Back with half-buried Howe. Angle from behind - features in profile as he addresses his unseen companion.

HOWE ...Got a map in my back pocket - I could just
 get a hand free...

HOWE (CONT'D) Partner?

PANEL 3

Howe's POV: A tumbleweed rolls across the barren expanse.

PANEL 4

Howe sags in defeat, stares into nowhere - a distance beyond reason. Two flies land on his head.

HOWE Lord almighty. I'm plum cooked-through crazy.

VOICE (OFF) They all say that.

PANEL 5

Howe tilts - a last glimmer of hope in his eyes.

HOWE You sayin' I ain't gone lost my wits?

VOICE (OFF) I'm right here. Clear as the desert air.

HOWE Promise?

SFX: SCRICK-SCRICK-SCRICK...

PANEL 6

Close on Howe, eyes raised towards the voice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

5.

A look of horror as a shadow falls over him.

VOICE (OFF) Promise.

PANEL 7

Howe's POV: staring up at a TURKEY VULTURE. Its wrinkled, blood-stained neck cranes from greasy feathers as it regards him with a cold black eye.