

The Price is Paid

(There is a solitary drum beat, to announce an execution. William Morton, a wooden/cardboard cut out, is solemnly carried on and stood in his place to face judgement. Alternatively, use a third person. The style is a mini -Western.)

Josh: This here's court, an' you awl better quieten down now. We got us a trial!

Sheriff: William Morton, you is charged with shootin', killin', conspirin' to do evil ...

Josh: EEEEEVIL!

Sheriff: An' lyin'! You is guilty boy, an' you're gonna pay!

Josh: That's right Sherreef. You make him pay now, d'yer hear?

Sheriff: An' you hol yer tongue Josh Wakefield. I's about to lay sentence. Morton, you're guilty, and by the power invested in me, I hereby pronounce on you - the death penalty. Take him away, boy - and hang him!

(Josh gets hold of the cut-out. The husky voiced stranger enters)

Stranger: STOP!

(They stop and look)

Sheriff: What the? Oh, it's the new kid in town. Reckon you don't know how we do things round here mister.

Josh: Yeah. We's administratin' justice, ain't we Sherreef?

Sheriff: We sure are Josh, we sure are.

Stranger: I know he's guilty.

Sheriff: Well then, you don't mind if we jest get on now, do yer?

Stranger: I said, I know he's guilty. I know he done wrong, but you can take me. Kill me instead.

Sheriff: What the . . .? Ain't that jest about the craziest thing you ever did hear Josh?

Josh: Sure is Sherreef. Why, he must ha lost his raising talkin' like that!

Stranger: Let him live. You can take me.

(Pause. The atmosphere begins to turn menacing)

Sheriff: Now if you're gonna keep on talkin' like that, you're gonna get yourself in a whole lot of trouble. I might jest believe yer.

Josh: Yeah. (Scorn) You're a genuine hero, ain't yer? Pity you're gonna be a dead one!

Stranger: A man's godda do what a man's godda do.

(Josh is scared. The Sheriff groans at the well-used line. They eye each-other, ready for a shoot-out. The Sheriff takes his cigar out of his mouth and blows smoke in the stranger's face, then wheezes.)

Sheriff: You talk too much, boy. Reckon we don't like your face around here.

(He takes the Stranger's hat, drops it, treads on it, then jumps on it.)

Oh dear! Oh my! Oh now ain't that a shame? I jest trodden on your hat! Pick it up . . . boy.

(The Sheriff stands. Josh moves in close ready to fight. The stranger picks up the hat, dusts it down and slowly puts it back on. The Sheriff gets hold of it and twists it, to look silly on the stranger. Josh laughs mockingly.)

Now, ain't you a proper cowboy?

Josh: No Sherreef! He ain't a proper cowboy. A proper cowboy has spurs - there!

(He kicks the stranger's shins)

Sheriff: Yeah, an' a proper cowboy has a gun, like this one!

(He threatens the stranger with his fingers shaped for a gun)

Josh: An', a proper cowboy fights back when he's pushed!

(Pushes him)

Sheriff: Reckon this ain't no proper cowboy then.

Josh: No, but he's a hero - wants to die - fer somebody else!

Sheriff: You'll get your wish, Mister!

(The scene is choreographed.

They push, thump and eventually twist his arms till he's in a crucifix. The stranger does not resist, but there are groans of pain. They hold the crucifix position, then the stranger falls to the ground, dead. They look, stunned and shocked at what they have done.

Pause.

After the silence, the Sheriff turns to the cardboard cut-out/silent victim)

Sheriff: Morton, you can go . . . Your price is paid.