

T H E V A L L E Y O F T H E D E A D O A K S

By Colin Bannon

SHOOTING SCRIPT.



## **VARIOUS EXTREME CLOSE-UP SHOTS:**

A **SIX-SHOOTER** rests on a wooden table. The hand of a **YOUNG GIRL** moves into **FRAME**, tightly gripping the gnarled hand of an **OLDER MAN**. The girl guides the man, as if he's blind, in polishing the gun with a **HANDKERCHIEF**. Together, they open and spin the chamber. It's empty. The little girl guides the man as he loads the gun with a **SINGLE BULLET**. Their hands slide the gun off the table and out of **FRAME**.

## **EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY**

The beauty of the mountains is overwhelming. The sun illuminates the dense forest at the end of a dirt trail. A man on horseback rides alone gripping another pack horse by the reins. He is **JAMES EARLY**, approaching his twilight years. His pack-horse chock-full of supplies. **CANTEENS, BLANKETS, PACKS, AND TWO SADDLE BAGS**, his whole life. Early's hand is wrapped in a **RAG TIED ON WITH BAILING TWINE**.

## **EXT. DEEP WOODS - DUSK**

Early sits beside a **FIRE** drinking from a bottle of **BOOZE**. He has set up camp beside a gigantic rock formation. He looks as if he's under a spell, lost in the flames. Suddenly, a look of contempt conquers his calm face.

## **INT. BLACKSMITH SHOP - FLASHBACK**

A group of **RUFFIANS** crash through the door of the shop carrying Early by his hands and feet. He's bleeding, beaten. Hoots and hollers from the rowdy group as they set him down in front of an anvil, clasp him down so he can't escape. **VARGAS**, a gnarled man who seems to be their leader, kneels beside the anvil. This man has a glow of insanity in his eyes and a smile from cheek to cheek.

VARGAS

Early...

Early raises his head. The frightened look is gone. What's left is a look of pure hate. Vargas takes hold of Early's right hand. Laughing and muttering from the ruffians.

Vargas picks up the **SLEDGE HAMMER** that rests against the wall. The ruffians grab a hold of Early's hand and set it on top of the **ANVIL**. They hold it steadily in place. Vargas raises the hammer above his head. A beat. Early readies himself. Vargas brings it down hard. **SOUNDS OF CRUSHING BONE** echo throughout the barn. Early screams in pain and cries for them to stop. Vargas comes down hard again.

Cries of pain flood the barn. The third time is the hardest<sup>2.</sup> and the most painful, as the screams have turned from those of pain to those of terror. Vargas throws the hammer to the ground. **BLOOD** spills over the anvil.

EARLY  
(inaudible whimper)  
Kill me... Kill me...

VARGAS  
You'd like that, wouldn't you?

The Ruffians leave Vargas and Early alone.

**EXT. DEEP WOODS - DUSK**

Early wakes with a start. Another bad dream. The pain subsides in his eyes as he becomes aware of his consciousness. He wipes his long bangs away from his eyes with his bandaged right hand, a **RAG HELD ON WITH BAILING TWINE**.

A weak fire remains. Early removes his revolver from its **HOLSTER** with his bare left hand and holds it in his palm. He stares at it for a moment, recollecting. Out of nowhere, the hand of the young girl enters the **FRAME** and wraps Early's finger around the trigger. Again, as if he's blind, she guides the gun up and out of **FRAME**. The **CAMERA** moves back to holster. We hear the **CLICK** of an empty gun. A moment passes. Early returns the gun to the holster without the help of the little girl. His hand trembles. In a **WIDE ANGLE**, we see he is alone. The fire dies out.