

**CRAIG STRETE: A HORSE OF A DIFFERENT TECHNICOLOR (PLAY)**

ACT I

SCENE I Interior

Two old men sit side by side in rocking chairs like two tame birds perched on the lid of a coffin.

One is white, the other Indian.

JOHN FORBES is the white one.

He coughs a lot, dresses forty years behind the fashions and chain smokes cigarettes with slot machine motions.

RED HORSE is in the other chair. He is dressed in old jeans, a bright blue shirt good enough to steal and a pair of old cowboy boots even a dead man wouldn't want to wear. He has an old corn cob pipe stuck in his mouth and his thick gray hair is tied none too neatly in braids.

JACK FORBES inhales deeply on his cigarette and coughs so hard he blows ashes all over his shirt. Despite the years that mark his face, there is still a great deal of strength to be seen there. He has the air about him of a man who meets life headlong and unflinchingly. He has the look of a man accustomed to being in command.

RED HORSE

Man you're age, ought to have learned how to smoke by now.

JACK FORBES stops coughing and looks over at RED HORSE. He wipes the back of his hand across his mouth before he speaks.

JACK FORBES

I made you a star. You should be happy.

RED HORSE

I wanted to be a planet.

JACK FORBES

You can pretend against it but you had it all. My films made you larger than life.

RED HORSE lights his pipe, puffs on it contentedly.

RED HORSE

I was not larger than life. Just thicker above the neck.

I made faces for a living. You call it acting. Running twenty miles a day in front of a camera to hit somebody over the head with a rubber tomahawk is not a serious way to go through life.

JACK FORBES

There you go, poor mouthing everything. You're just angry at me because you

couldn't handle the success.

RED HORSE

I didn't know I had any.

(Pause)

After all, I was in your movies.

JACK FORBES

You had your name up in lights. If that's not success, I don't know what is.

RED HORSE

You're right. You don't know what is. The kind of success you always wanted was the kind where you end up crawling on your hands and knees at two hundred miles an hour just to make a deal.

JACK FORBES

You had success. You just were TOO Indian to capitalize on it. I see you haven't changed. You can say what you want about being in my films, but I filmed what I knew. I don't regret it.

(Pausing for emphasis)

In the old West, men were men.

RED HORSE

And they smelled like horses.

FORBES stares off into the distance, seeing something unseen.

JACK FORBES

Remember the first film I directed you in?

FORBES smiles at the memory, turning to look at RED HORSE.

JACK FORBES

RETURN OF THE APACHE DEVIL. It was a two reeler made for the old Republic studios. Made the whole damn thing in three days. It made money hand over fist.

RED HORSE

How could I remember that far back? When you've fallen off one horse, you've fallen off them all.

JACK FORBES

Republic thought I was a genius. Two reels in three days and a first time director to boot. Hell, if they'd only known. I was in Mexico two days before and DRANK the water!

(Tugging uncomfortably at his pants)

I went fast because I HAD to go fast. I had the one shot trots. Should have bottled that stuff and sold it to producers with directors behind schedule.

RED HORSE

We shot more film when you were on the toilet. That's why we finished the film so damn quick.

JACK FORBES

(Indignantly)  
That's a goddamn lie!

RED HORSE  
(Calmly)  
Indians never tell lies. They just don't tell the truth.

JACK FORBES  
(Tapping his chest with his finger)  
I directed ever damn foot of that film.

RED HORSE  
Same method in toilet. When you find something that works, I say use it every chance you get.

FORBES scowls at RED HORSE and then bends over and opens a paper bag at his feet. RED HORSE watches with obvious interest as FORBES takes out two cans of beer. FORBES glances at RED HORSE to see if he wants one. RED HORSE nods yes with evident eagerness and FORBES opens both cans.

RED HORSE starts to reach for the beer but a thought suddenly occurs to FORBES and he just misses handing the can of beer to RED HORSE. FORBES takes an absent minded sip out of the can of beer meant for RED HORSE.

JACK FORBES  
Tell me Red Horse, why did you ever come to Hollywood in the first place?

RED HORSE  
(Staring at the can of beer with fascination as he answers)  
I was dreaming. I hoped to penetrate a house of knowledge which I believed lay beneath the sea. When I returned to the land of men, I wanted the spirits of this great knowledge to make my people walk in beauty.

JACK FORBES  
(Incredulous)  
You came to Hollywood for that?

RED HORSE  
(Shrugging, withdrawing the hand that had reached out for the beer)  
Well actually, I went out there to get a job falling off horses in cowboy and Indian movies but when I got there,  
(Winking at FORBES)  
Italians already had all the jobs.

FORBES take a long pull on the beer that he had intended for RED HORSE.

JACK FORBES  
Well, that's Hollywood, for you.  
(Taking a sip from the other beer can, seemingly quite unaware that he's drinking from both cans of beer)  
It has the courage of its own lack of convictions. But remember my old friend. I gave you a job. I gave you your chance. It didn't matter to me if you were a.....

RED HORSE  
(Interrupting)  
I lied to get the job.

FORBES chokes, mid-gulp, and beer dribbles down his chin.

JACK FORBES  
What?

RED HORSE  
I told you I was Italian.

JACK FORBES  
Uh, really?  
(Tries to remember, looking somewhat confused)  
Uh, I thought that....uh...

RED HORSE  
You didn't find out I was really an Indian until our third film, SON OF THE APACHE DEVIL. I was the only one who didn't get a sunburn. That's how you found out.

JACK FORBES  
(Shaking his head, suddenly remembering)  
Now I remember. I always said you rode a horse too good to be an Italian.

He tilts his head back, drains the beer intended for RED HORSE. He shakes the can to make sure it's empty then tosses it over his shoulder. It bangs against the back wall of the cabin.

RED HORSE almost rises out of his chair, as if his body is trying to follow the path of the beer can. There is a look of abject longing on his face. He eyes the paper bag at FORBES's feet with hope and expectation.

One handed, FORBES sticks a cigarette in his mouth and lights it, unaware of RED HORSE's distress.

FORBES coughs rackingly, with the first inhalation of the cigarette. He looks over at RED HORSE.

JACK FORBES  
So you faked it a little at a time when everybody faked it a lot. So what? It doesn't matter now. The point is, I kept you on. I made you the first Indian star of the shoot 'em ups. And I hired more real Indians in my films than any other director.

(He has another coughing fit, which he soothes with a swig of beer from the other can)  
You can't take that away from me!

RED HORSE  
What's to take? I always figured the Great Spirit gave you your chance to direct motion pictures. It was the Great Spirit who chose you to make so many Westerns about Indians.

FORBES almost chokes on his beer.

JACK FORBES

For a second there, I thought you might actually be complimenting me on something.

RED HORSE

(Nodding slyly as if in agreement)

I think you were the Great Spirit's choice.

FORBES finishes the second beer, and shakes the empty can.

JACK FORBES

Thanks Red Horse. I'm truly flattered.

RED HORSE

The Great Spirit would have wanted somebody who wasn't going to mess it up by knowing anything.

FORBE's hand tightens around his cigarette, snapping it off behind the filter. He realizes he has been had.

JACK FORBES

You talk more than any Indian I ever met.

(Pausing for emphasis)

Talk is silver.

(Taking a long dramatic pause, broken only by the sound of the empty beer can rattling off the wall as he flips it over his shoulder)

BUT SILENCE IS GOLDEN!

RED HORSE's body again unconsciously tracks the flight of the beer can.

RED HORSE

And a fart is nobody's friend. Let's have ANOTHER goddamn beer!

FORBES nods in agreement with the sentiment. He starts to bend over and has another coughing spasm which leaves him gasping for breath, pale and shaken. He looks over at RED HORSE.

JACK FORBES

You don't really like me do you?

He averts his eyes then and reaches down and gets two more beers out of the bag. He holds the cans in his lap, keeping his eyes on them.

RED HORSE takes the corncob pipe out of his mouth slowly and cradles it in the palm of his hand as if it suddenly were very heavy. He looks suddenly very weary.

JACK FORBES

When I think of all the years, all the things we went through. Out on location in the middle of a thousand nowheres, not quite in hell and no ways near heaven. Seems like I spent two whole lifetimes with you....and with your people.

He opens both cans slowly as if the act helps him shape his thoughts.

JACK FORBES

I made it possible for you to live in a better way. I gave you money. I gave you fame even. And even though it was Hollywood all the way where everything is bent, I think I pretty damn near always was straight with you.

RED HORSE

In that I agree. In Hollywood, honest meant undetected. But you were straight with me in your heart.

JACK FORBES settles back deeper into the rocking chair, extending a can of beer to RED HORSE

JACK FORBES

So how come, that being true...all those years...you never took my hand in friendship?

RED HORSE

(His hand about to close on the beer)

Maybe because there was always the rustle of paper money when your hand came out.

Angry, JACK FORBES withdraws his hand, letting the beer can come back to rest in his lap.

RED HORSE lunges futilely at the can of beer.

FORBES bolts a gulp of beer angrily, from the can he's been offering to RED HORSE.

RED HORSE balls his hand into a fist, as if he wishes to take a poke at FORBES but holds himself back, thinks better of it, and unclenches his hand.

RED HORSE

You don't need to take it so personal. There was always one more take, one more horse to fall off of. I never did anything for you that I wasn't paid for. That is a difficult way to live.

FORBES drinks again from RED HORSE's beer

JACK FORBES

I never cheated you. I was generous. I paid you what you were worth and then some. A man can look back on that with pride, can't he?

RED HORSE watches him drink, licking his lips.

RED HORSE

What I did you always asked me to do for money, you never asked me to do it for you because I was your friend.

FORBES waves both cans of beer for emphasis.

JACK FORBES

Christ! I didn't want to take advantage of our friendship!

RED HORSE

Until you do something to test it, friendship has no strength. It has no heart until you risk it.

FORBES starts to hand the can of beer to RED HORSE as if suddenly remembering that it is his beer.

JACK FORBES

I held back...

(Unconsciously drawing back the can just as RED HORSE lunges for it) because I respected you.

RED HORSE

You can't expect that of friends in this life. Respect is only good after you are dead. Then you hope your friends don't let their horses stand too long over your grave.

FORBES grimaces and downs the rest of RED HORSE's beer.

JACK FORBES

Well you give me a pain in the ....

RED HORSE

(Half angry about the past and about the beer, cuts in)

Don't tell me pain stories. I fell off three hundred and fifty horses of a different Technicolor. I rode across your screen. I danced for you. I fell off horses for you. I got shot for you. I was living in two worlds and the Great Spirit was working the night shift. When you said do a rain dance, I did a rain dance.

(Banging his corncob pipe angrily against the wooden arm of the rocking chair)

When the script called for a woman, you changed me into one. Don't tell me about pain!

JACK FORBES

I feel pain too. Like the one in my heart right now. I always liked you....Always....You treat me badly. Would it break your red rear end to admit to liking me, even a little? Just once, maybe, for old times sakes?

RED HORSE

(Smiling cagily)

Supposing I did like you, always did like you, I wouldn't tell you.

JACK FORBES

It isn't fair. I'm always getting the shaft. I guess I shot too many movies and not enough actors.

RED HORSE

Being liked is something that is known and doesn't have to be told.

JACK FORBES

We all like to be liked. What's the harm in saying it?

RED HORSE

Plenty harm. All these years, you are the same man who drank the water. You never changed. If it wasn't a cattle stampede or dynamiting the dam, you couldn't feel it. If I saw a hundred people on horseback, I looked for someone I knew. You worried if they had taken their wristwatches off or whether or not the horses would do something unfortunate on camera when they rode by. I looked for a home in every face I saw. But what did you look for?

JACK FORBES

(Defensively)

I was always looking for the big picture.

RED HORSE

There was never a big picture. Only big people with hearts as big as the sky, for the man who had time to see it.

JACK FORBES

I must be crazy, talking about movies to you. You never sat in the director's chair. I had to move mountains. I had to play God!

(With a dreamy sort of look on his face)

In the beginning, was montage. Then it was an endless parade of forty-nine year old starlets in soft focus who had never been kissed. I was a good director! Hell, I was a great director because I was lonely. Because in that silence that surrounded me, I chased the greatest loneliness of all that a man can aspire to. I moved and shook. My power was in my ability to motivate, to show the donkey the carrot.

He drinks from the other can of beer.

RED HORSE

(Eyeing the beer can)

You never had it so good.

JACK FORBES

Or parted with it so fast. Yes sir, Red Horse, you're a genius in Hollywood, until you lose your job.

RED HORSE

(Looking at the bowl of his pipe)

Well, life is a choice of choices. You could have ridden some other horse, chased some other sunset.

JACK FORBES

(Shaking his head)

I don't think so. I didn't know anything else. Didn't want to know anything else. A director is a guy who aims at something he can't see and hits it, if he's lucky with bullets from empty guns.

(Finishing his beer and tossing the can away)

A director has certain responsibilities.

RED HORSE

A human being only has one. Being human.

JACK FORBES

I could never explain my life to you Red Horse.

RED HORSE

It's not my job to understand your life. That's the white woman's burden.

JACK FORBES

(Wearily)

Leave my ex-wife out of this.

RED HORSE

Even so, I always understood you. You wanted to hit the big jackpot which meant you had to become a slug in the machine. You wanted to get into the big poker game of the ages but you bluffed with the same hand for too long. They brought in a new dealer and your Westerns fell off the same horse I once rode. A six gun stopped beating four of a kind.

JACK FORBES

(Staring at the old Indian with simulated disgust)

You are a philosopher. That is not good. They'll say you use drugs.

FORBES throws the last beer can over his shoulder. RED HORSE winces as it bounces nosily off the wall.

RED HORSE

I WOULD if I could get any.

(Staring down at the bag in front of FORBES chair with longing)

But beer is up another dollar a six pack. I say the world is coming to an end.

JACK FORBES

(Nodding in half drunken agreement)

Have another beer Red Horse.

RED HORSE

Maybe you should stop being so generous with my beer.

FORBES takes out two more cans of beer, sets them in his lap and begins to open them. His fingers are now very unsteady. He pauses from this task to put another cigarette in his mouth. RED HORSE leans over and lights the cigarette for him.

FORBES thanks him with a nod, takes a few puffs and then has such a violent coughing fit, the cigarette flies out of his mouth.

FORBES bends over, tears in his eyes, barely able to breathe.

JACK FORBES

I didn't have to be a film director. I could have been a gynecologist.

RED HORSE

Cowboys and Indians can't last forever but women are something the world can't live without.

JACK FORBES

(Shaking his head with regret)

I used to have a real personality but a producer got rid of it for me. I spent a lot of time working for people who tried to put my head in a wine bottle.

RED HORSE

You should have quit when it started to fit.

JACK FORBES

(Announcing decisively)

Another beer. Just the thing to wash the rotten taste of Hollywood out of our mouths.

At least I wasn't a Hollywood phony. People hated me for myself.

FORBES drinks from the can in his left hand, nods in satisfaction, and then treats himself to another gulp, this time from the can in the other hand that he has just opened for RED HORSE.

RED HORSE

(Sighing)

My generosity knows no bounds.

JACK FORBES

Forty years a director. I spent most of my life in half lit rooms with half lit people. I was drunk on success, drunk on money, drunk on power.....and I was drunk too. And then, right into the toilet. I went from the house on the hill to the phone booth on the corner of walk and don't walk. It should have meant more than that.

RED HORSE

I always said the same thing about your films.

JACK FORBES

What's wrong with my films, you drunken old totem pole!

RED HORSE

Aside from me being in them, everything else is what is wrong with them.

JACK FORBES

(Gesturing angrily with the beer cans, spilling some of the beer)

You take that back! My films were true to life. They meant something! They were steeped in authenticity!

RED HORSE

They were steeped in something.

JACK FORBES

Oh, I may have cut a few corners here and there but I attempted to depict what I could see.

RED HORSE

A crazy man and a not crazy man think the same way. The difference is where you start.

JACK FORBES

(Gesturing even more wildly, spilling more beer)

If you didn't like my films, if you didn't believe in the...in the moral integrity of my films, why did you stay all these years?

RED HORSE

I didn't have to believe in your films, only your money. You had the most believable money I ever saw.

JACK FORBES smashes the beer cans against his chest, spraying himself with beer.

JACK FORBES

Let me tell you something, you miserable model for a buffalo nickel, I had to believe in them. Every producer insisted so he wouldn't have to. I sweated out every word uttered in every one of my films.

(Contemptuously, FORBES flings the half-filled beer cans over his shoulder, spraying both of them in a fine shower of beer)

What other director can say that?

RED HORSE

(Wiping beer off his face, looking disgusted)

Kissing yourself above the knees is hard work.

JACK FORBES

Remember that death scene in *THEY RODE BOLD FOR GOLD*? You helped me write it yourself! You can't tell me that scene didn't have something!

FORBES is very much caught up in the memory, making elaborately drunken gestures with his hands.

JACK FORBES

The faithful Indian returning to warn his white master of the ambush, only to drop dead at his feet. I said to you, Red Horse, you gasp out your words of warning in English, then look far away into the distance and say your dying words in your own tongue. Thinking of your wife and child back at the wigwam, never to see them again. You gave your all for the white man but your heart returned to your people at the last moment. It was your greatest moment on screen and it wasn't even in English. I did that. I insisted that the last words you spoke should be Indian. I made it authentic. It was just the right touch. I had the audiences crying in their socks! Remember! It was so successful I had you do it in all the other movies.

RED HORSE

You also said not to say it in real Indian. You just wanted to make it sound Indian.

JACK FORBES

I said that?

RED HORSE

I wouldn't forget something like that.

JACK FORBES

Well, so what? It's the thought that counted. It sounded Indian. Nobody could tell it wasn't Indian. I didn't want to offend any particular Indian tribe. I had producers to answer to.

RED HORSE

I could tell. My people could tell. Which is why I went ahead and said it in my own language anyway.

JACK FORBES

You what? You did what?

RED HORSE

In my death scene, I spoke my own language.

JACK FORBES

(Staring darkly at him, rebuke on his face)

If I had known, I'd have skinned you alive. No director has to take that kind of insubordination!

RED HORSE

Aren't you curious to know what I really said?

JACK FORBES

It was a death scene, the highest point in the film. I'm sure you said something appropriate.

RED HORSE

(Deliberately speaking in the stiff, unnatural Indianese of the old bad Westerns)

Translated, it went like this. No. This ...not ...arrow.. in... my... stomach. I... just... excited.

JACK FORBES spreads his hands to the heavens above as if inviting a lightning bolt to put him out of his misery.

JACK FORBES

And to think, I wasted a whole life time liking you. I should have stuck with the Italians. They ride horses like old people make love but they don't shaft you when you're NOT looking.

RED HORSE

(Snorting derisively)

They only shaft you when you ARE looking.

JACK FORBES

Red Horse, you're the kind of guy who takes a sack full of kittens down to the river to drown them and then starts to cry... because you can't get them to skip.

JACK FORBES

(Pointing an accusing finger at Red Horse)

What did I ever do to you anyway. Is it because a lot of Indians think you're an Uncle Tomahawk because of the films you made with me? Is that what you're holding against me? Are you blaming me because some people think you're some

kind of stupid wooden Indian Hollywood clown?

RED HORSE

I enjoy being a clown. That is my sanity. If you laugh, you survive death, if you don't you die out. To be an Indian and to be too serious is to be blind and trapped in the white man's frantic world where death is not an old friend, just a terrifying interruption.

JACK FORBES

I take what I do seriously, what I have done. In Europe, they still watch my old films. They call me a great artist. They appreciate my vision, my sensitivity.

RED HORSE

To be appreciated. That is a very serious hell. It is a power too strong to be overcome by anything except flight.

JACK FORBES

(Defensively)

I put things on film that had never been seen before. I spent my whole life at it. It had to mean something to you, to your people.

RED HORSE

Your films landed where the hands of man never set foot.

JACK FORBES

I sought truth.

RED HORSE

You could have had the dreams locked in men's hearts. The dreams of my people. You could have had my hand in friendship. That is all the truth a man need know.

JACK FORBES

I helped keep your people alive. I created visions of your life, maybe not accurate in every detail, but the meaning was there. I gave the world moments of your people's lives for all to see.

RED HORSE

Always the outside, never the inside. You may have shown the world the dances we did but never the dances inside ourselves. The fire you lit for us, flashed and flared and danced on the silver screen but showed us only the dark in which we lived.

FORBES is overcome with a sudden, convulsive fit of coughing. It leaves him looking very ill and old and worn out. He looks at the old Indian next to him and there is pain in his eyes that is not from the illness inside him.

JACK FORBES

All these years, have you hated me?

RED HORSE

Could I hate you when the whole world was watching? You always had the courage to make a fool of yourself and then you were willing to take the rest of the

world with you. I never felt exploited or used. Mostly I was amazed at your earnest stupidity.

RED HORSE looks into FORBES eyes, understanding the pain there.

RED HORSE

I was born a savage. You called me forth from my reservation prison, dressed me up as a Noble Savage or a vicious one, taught me to ride horses I couldn't afford to own and to pretend to kill men I had no reason to hate.

I put away the cowboy boots that really fit and wore the costumer's moccasins that didn't fit and never would.

I danced dances for the camera that meant nothing, chanted chants even I didn't understand, scalped bald men and endlessly rode in a circle around Western Civilization.

You always said you were looking for truth but instead I always thought you were looking for some purity in my primitiveness.

You called me forth in a hundred different costumes no man of my tribe would have been caught dead in, painted like devils too evil for us to even dream of.

You brought me and my people exotic and disguised onto the silver screen in every shape and color and flavor of reality but our own. And why?

Every time I fell off a horse when a white man shot his six shooter for the seventh time, I always asked myself what was in it for you.

Then one day I figured it out.

I was a guilty pleasure. I was something suppressed in your own life. I and my people were an experience, civilized white people are denied the luxury of indulging in.

So we were summoned forth but our reality didn't match your forbidden fantasy.....so you recast, rewrote, recut and reclothed the missing part of your heart's forbidden desires, just to give the rest of the world a chance to satisfy it's own deepest secret fears.

Some of my people called me Uncle Tomahawk because I danced for you. Because I got shot for you, because I always fell off horses so beautifully for you.

But I seduced the world with your foolish help. I gave the world an interesting lie. I kept truth for myself.

JACK FORBES

(Shocked)

How could you live a lie?

RED HORSE

How could you film one?

JACK FORBES

I was approximating a truth. I felt it to be true. I had my beliefs in some of it. I was cynical, God knows. I gave the hicks what they wanted to see. I never disappointed my audience. Well, not for a long time anyway. Later I lost control of myself and lost my grip on the audience too.

RED HORSE

(Looking at the empty beer cans on the floor)  
Drinking wore away the first half of your strength.

JACK FORBES

(Agreeing)  
My ex-wife, who fancied herself, considered herself entitled to the second half. I did my last films with what was left.

RED HORSE

I still don't know how you spent your whole life chasing a truth that would not fit in your hand or heart.

JACK FORBES

(Looking at something outside the room, as if staring at his own past)  
Maybe because I was in love, in love with all the faces in the dark I never knew. Maybe because I thought when I found my audience, I would somehow find myself. When I touched them, I would touch me.

Maybe because people were too full of feelings I couldn't express in me, because I could be content with an image.

I was looking for a place to die on the photograph of my soul. I lived like some kind of deranged ghoul who put cameras in Geronimo's coffin in order to interview Indian worms.

Sometimes I think I am an evil old man because I chased a truth about a people who wouldn't tell it to me, because I wanted selfishly to put it all in one stunning montage, in one brilliant symbolic lap dissolve, seeing you and your people chained to my wishes, turning from untamed bodies dancing on trees to a pair of eyes staring beautifully in the dark.

RED HORSE

You are a dying man. It is in your voice. It is in your eyes.

RED HORSE reaches out and puts his arm around JACK FORBES shoulder.

RED HORSE

This is a good joke. It is all behind you. It is up to other people to stumble upon new lies. You will make no more films, my old friend and that is well and just, for I do not wish to fall off any more horses.

JACK FORBES

(Voice trembling with emotion) The goddamn doctors say I've got cancer. For once, I expect the goddamn idiots are right. They say I don't have much time. I feel like they are right about that too.

I just came to say goodbye.

RED HORSE smiles. He seems strangely cheerful at the news.

RED HORSE

What doctors tell you, my bones tell me. I too am nearing my time. Big parts of my body are ready to fall off. It is a hell of a good joke! We can race and see which one falls apart first.

I was beginning to get angry at you. I have been waiting up for you. I have been saving up some of the most interesting lies, also lots of dirty stories.

I have been holding off on the dying business, waiting for you to catch up. If you think I am going to fall off three hundred and fifty goddamn horses of a different Technicolor for you and got bumps and bruises and damaged parts for every damn inch of me, having gone through all that, then die all alone, you're crazy!

We are old and out of horses. We are past sex and the arrogance of it. We have lived a lifetime together and the hurts and lies of the past are not only over, they are forgiven.

All our lives, we have loved each other, as friends, as human beings.

I have always known this because I am Indian but you have only suspected it because you are white and stupid and as crazy as three ducks with wooden legs trying to be quiet.

Now it is right that we will be together at the end. I am glad you did not stay in Hollywood, to die among strangers. What I can not understand, is what took you so long to get here. I almost had to sit on matches all day long just to keep the heart fire lit.

JACK FORBES

(Smiling)

I had to help my ex-wife get her cat down out of a tree. The reason I'm late is because I'm such a poor shot.

RED HORSE

You always were a gentleman. You never hit a woman with your hat on.

FORBES tries to hide the tears leaking from the corners of his eyes. He tries to straighten his back, get a grip on himself.

JACK FORBES

What gets me...I...all these years...what I tried to do...tried to say...how I carried myself...I was so...so damn afraid you wouldn't like me. Goddamn! I tried so damn hard to be your friend.. ....I hoped...why am I so goddamned dim that I have to wait till the last reel to find out the truth?

RED HORSE

The truth only waits for eyes not filled with longing.

There is a silence between the two of them. The thought hangs in the air between them, like a bridge that spans an old, deep river they have always

longed to cross.

JACK FORBES bends over and gets out two cans of beer, the last two cans in the sack. He opens them, holds them in his lap, a can in each hand. RED HORSE stares at him, his hands balled into fists.

JACK FORBES peers into the growing darkness of the day

JACK FORBES

I think the matinee is almost over. We didn't ride off into the sunset and we didn't get the girl.

The old Indian puts his pipe in his shirt pocket with an air of putting it away forever.

RED HORSE

I died in a hundred movies and I never felt like I feel now that I'm actually doing it.

JACK FORBES

If it feels like you've had to go to the bathroom for five years, and can't, you and me are in the same movie.

RED HORSE

Death may turn out to be funny. I hope not too damn funny. If there is a happy hunting ground and we go there, Jack Forbes, it better by Christ not be a movie set.

JACK FORBES starts to take a drink from RED HORSE's beer.

JACK FORBES

Hell, don't worry about it. If it is, you're a personal friend of the director, and we'll get ourselves a rewrite.

(Lifting RED HORSE's can of beer to his lips)

I already got a good idea how to redo our death scene.

RED HORSE lunges forward and grabs his arm at the wrist.

RED HORSE

There is no death, only a change of worlds.

(Snatching the beer can out of FORBES'S hands)

AND IN THE NEXT WORLD, BRING SOME OF YOUR OWN DAMN BEER.

FADE TO BLACK.

ACT II

A graveyard with burial platforms at the back of the stage. Later that same day. They are walking slowly across the stage. They seem to have come a great distance. Both men are using canes, in the manner of men using a staff to help them climb uphill.

JACK FORBES

Why are we here now?

RED HORSE

(Smiling)

Maybe so we will know where we are going to be later.

JACK FORBES

Well you don't have to be so damn cheerful about it! Say, this place reminds me of a movie set. You know, if we added a little bit of fog, some wind and...

He holds up his hands as if framing what he sees for a camera.

RED HORSE

An outhouse reminds you of a movie set.

JACK FORBES

(Looking around excitedly)

No really. If we put the wind machine over there...

(motioning to the left)

and then slowly let the fog drift in with the wind.

RED HORSE

You don't need a machine. You open your mouth....There is fog and wind.

This is our sacred burial ground. It is the hill of our ancestors.

JACK FORBES

Who's buried here? I don't see any names on the graves.

RED HORSE

Their names are a sleep and a forgetting.

There is a silence between them, like a shared sorrow.

JACK FORBES

Why did you bring me here? To show me the past?

RED HORSE

No. Places in the past hold no fascination for me. That is not what I am looking for. Not the past, not the faces that call to me even now in our present darkness.

It is youth itself I seek. To find that moment again when I was just a step or two forward on the path of life.

(Looking away)

I touched something once, sensed something in the world about me. At the moment, I had kinship with the world and became one with it for the rest of my life. Now at the end of things. I wish to make my way to that moment once again. I wish to feel what I once felt. That is all, to stare for one second with eyes made young again, for that one big-hearted moment, at the secret face of my destiny. And then happily will I sleep. Gladly will I then move to the quiet at the end of the road.

JACK FORBES

You have surprising things in you. I never got any of that on film.

RED HORSE

Is it something a camera could see?

JACK FORBES

No. But you never really understood the special magic of film. You try to give men dreams, you try to give them stars they can look up to as they walk along.

RED HORSE

More lies than dreams. Too much sight, too much sound....and not enough vision.

JACK FORBES

If you had walked where I walked, stood where I stood....Goddamn, it's too late to make you know what I know. You were always on the wrong side of the camera. You were an ACTOR...a kind of tourist who thinks he's a scenic route and visits himself.

I never met an actor yet that understood that film isn't about how people think and feel, its about how they act and behave.

RED HORSE

I would rather that films were about the things that dance in men's hearts.

JACK FORBES

The box office usually went for the things that dance in women's underwear. So you don't always get what you want. Hell, I never got anything I wanted. I always got what I thought I wanted.

(Regretful)

I'd like to live my life all over again.

RED HORSE

So you would not make the same mistakes?

JACK FORBES

No. So I could make even more of them. It's the only damn way to learn anything important.

RED HORSE

We both told lies for a living. I told them to you. You told them to the world. Before we get to where we are going, before we climb to the last place where we are going to be in the sky, I ask you as a man, was the journey worth the going?

They stop and look at each other. Suddenly they are almost shy, uncomfortable with each other.

JACK FORBES

Well how the hell would I know!

(Waving his cane for emphasis)

You went where I went. We made Westerns. We led our own parade. The trouble is,

now the parade's gone by.

RED HORSE

If it was a parade, it went down a street that didn't exist.

JACK FORBES

Not real enough for you? Real never did too well at the box office. It didn't sell tickets. What did you expect? We're talking about Hollywood here, not the hill of ancestors.

RED HORSE

Only time I ever felt good about Hollywood was seeing it in the rear view mirror.

JACK FORBES

Hollywood wasn't all bad. I used to like the autumn.....when the birds changed color and fell out of the trees.

Still I would have killed for the chance to make just one more film. Just one more. Oh Christ, I miss it!

RED HORSE

To hunger for use and to go unused is the greatest hunger of all. Try not to think about it.

(Starting to walk toward the front of the stage)

Come along.

JACK FORBES

(Motioning back at the burial grounds)

Isn't this where you were taking me?

He rushes forward to catch up with Red Horse. He moves up beside him and almost goes past him, his eyes turned partly back at the burial racks behind them.

RED HORSE

No. Time takes us here. We go past this place. I am taking you to the edge of the world.

They come to the edge of the stage. JACK FORBES, impatient at the slow pace the old Indian has set, is about to pass him, when he stops abruptly at the edge of the stage. He flails his arms, teeters, looks terrified and jumps back.

Red Horse leans over and looks down. He seems very calm.

JACK FORBES

Jesus Christ! I almost walked over the edge!

He edges carefully up to the edge of the stage, very fearful and looks down. Obviously he is at the edge of a very high cliff. The ground is a long way down.

RED HORSE

It's a cliff.

JACK FORBES

I know its a cliff! You idiot! Why didn't you warn me!

RED HORSE

Since we came here to jump off it, it didn't seem important.

JACK FORBES

What!

RED HORSE

(Looking over the edge, smiling)

It's a good day to die.

JACK FORBES

(Looking over the edge also)

It's a good day to kick your teeth in!

RED HORSE

If you have a glass of water, I'll hand them to you. These are my just-for-the-camera-teeth. They always hurt like hell.

JACK FORBES

I've never understood the Indian sense of humor. I never could get the joke. If my arms weren't so tired, I'd offer to put you to bed with a shovel.

RED HORSE

It's no joke. If you are not afraid of death, let us jump to meet it. It will make us young again.

JACK FORBES

What do you think I am, some kind of idiot?

RED HORSE

You're white aren't you? Well, then I rest my case.

JACK FORBES

You're not funny. You're just a loud noise with dirt on it.

RED HORSE

I am funny. You are funny. Life is funny. You take things too seriously.

JACK FORBES

You want me to jump off a cliff and you TELL ME I take things too seriously?

RED HORSE

Yes. Otherwise you would look forward to the jump. There's a big laugh waiting at the bottom.

JACK FORBES

Listen arrow head! Alive is ALIVE but dead is DEAD!

RED HORSE

And an elk is not just a horse with a hat rack.

JACK FORBES

What? Sometimes I almost understand you. And then I feel real bad. I don't mind dying. I just don't want people to say I was crazy too.

RED HORSE looks over the edge again, as if estimating the distance.

RED HORSE

Are you ready to jump?

JACK FORBES

No you goddamn dumb Indian! I ain't gonna jump off any damn cliff!

RED HORSE

You say that now. But later, maybe in mid-air, you are gonna thank me for thinking of it.

JACK FORBES

Do you know what you're talking about? Dead! You're talking about getting dead, falling dead, being dead! Dead!

RED HORSE

You'll get used to it.

JACK FORBES

Why did you bring me out here? Aside from the snappy jokes?

RED HORSE

This is no joke. This is the serious stuff. We stand out here and get right with the Great Spirit, then jump. Trust me. It'll be a hell of a good laugh right there at the end.

JACK FORBES

I don't believe in the goddamned Great Spirit! And if you think...

RED HORSE

Calm down. I'm gonna do the right magic things, I'm gonna take care of you. I'll fix it up with the Great Spirit. Trust me on this.

JACK FORBES

You are one big arrow in the ass, do you know that?

RED HORSE

(Lifting his hands to the sky)  
Great Spirit, two Indians stand before you, asking your help.

JACK FORBES

Hey! What are you trying to pull?

RED HORSE

(Motioning him to be quiet, whispering to him)  
Ssssh. It worked when I lied to get into the movie business, why wouldn't it work to get you into the Great Beyond?

JACK FORBES

(Grabbing his arms and pulling them down)

You can't fool around like this! This is the Great Spirit you're talking to!

RED HORSE

So OK, so I don't tell him every little thing. I figure from this distance, his eyes ain't so good.

JACK FORBES

You ought not to joke so much with the Great Spirit. He may decide you aren't funny. Also his funny may not be your funny.

RED HORSE

A fat lot you know. Manys the time, me and the Great Spirit used to close up the Saddle Up bar. Fact is, he can't hold his booze. I personally have drunk him on his ass!

JACK FORBES

Right. You go drinking with the Great Spirit and you drink him under the table. Coming from a guy who wants me to dive face first off a cliff, this makes one hell of a lot of sense! Tell me, how do you tell if the Great Spirit is drunk? Does he belch up clouds or what?

RED HORSE

Well one time we was drinking like sixty and I could see it in his eyes he was knocked white...his eyes looked like two sheep droppings in tomato soup and I said. "Great Spirit you are drunk. You are so drunk you can't even see in a straight line."

He said.

(Voice slurred, imitating someone drunk)

"Am not!"

I said. "Prove it."

The Great Spirit looks across the bar and says

(Imitating a drunken voice)

"See that. There's a cat coming into the bar...see him plain as day, a ugly old black cat and he's got just ONE BIG OLD EYE.

And that's how I knew he was drunk when he saw the one eyed cat.

JACK FORBES

Huh?

RED HORSE

That cat wasn't COMING into the bar...he was GOING OUT.

Jack Forbes has the look of man who has been forced to eat spinach or something equally unpleasant.

RED HORSE

I also say, the Great Spirit's funny and my funny, are the same damn thing.

JACK FORBES

(As if talking to himself)

The worst of it is. I never can tell when he's pulling my leg or not.

RED HORSE

You just look out there and you'll see how absolute nut funny the whole damn world is! Like us both getting old and big important parts of us falling off like dead fenders on Indian cars and you know real damn sure, the Great Spirit got more jokes than Navahos got sheep.

JACK FORBES

(Still talking to himself)

As many times as this bastard has pulled my leg, I ought to be able to pole vault without a pole.

RED HORSE

(Hands up to the sky)

I invoke the Spirits!

JACK FORBES

(Sarcastic disbelief)

Shouldn't you be speaking in your own language? I mean if you're really talking to...

RED HORSE

No. It makes me sneeze.

JACK FORBES

Oh I get it now. The idea is, I jump over the cliff and I like it because anything would be better than listening to you.

(Looking down)

Yeah. Its looking more attractive by the minute.

RED HORSE

(Lifting his arms to the sky again)

Great Spirit! We are pretty damn well out of steam! We are all dead from the neck down! I just touch on a few things here, then over we go and you know all the rest. Well, this Indian Jack Forbes, he is a friend of mine but you know he is stupid as hell.

JACK FORBES

That's it. Flatter me in front of your friends.

RED HORSE

Yes Great Spirit, he is as stupid as fleas on a wooden dog!

JACK FORBES

Try not to oversell me. You'll have him believing I'm a relative of yours.

RED HORSE

(Looking skyward)

Today is the time of going away. Always for us Indians, is the time of going away.

JACK FORBES

Are you talking about leaving, dying or the end of the world? Not that I'm able to keep score.

RED HORSE

Both.

JACK FORBES

Which both?

RED HORSE

Both both.

JACK FORBES

Your math isn't any better than your English. Well hell, its getting pretty late in the day. I guess we've had about all the comedy we can stand. What say we go back?

RED HORSE

(Looking down from the sky)  
What do we have to go back to?

JACK FORBES

So life starts to look a little rocky and the only thing you can think of, is we should dive over a cliff! A guy can get seriously depressed hanging out with Indians. Let me tell you Red Horse, knowing you has not been all sweetness and light!

RED HORSE

You are just angry because you did not think of it first.

JACK FORBES

I give up.

RED HORSE

If you have anything to remember, now is the time to do it.

JACK FORBES

I had the kind of life which mostly I try not to remember.

RED HORSE

That is sad my friend. There must have been things that gave joy.

JACK FORBES

Like what?

RED HORSE

You had women.

JACK FORBES

They had me.

RED HORSE

You had fame. Everyone knew your name.

JACK FORBES

Me and Jack the Ripper. Household words. On the tip of every tongue. But will they still cash my checks after I'm dead?

RED HORSE

And you have me as a friend.

JACK FORBES

(Looking down at the cliff bottom)

Lately, even that is beginning to wear thin. This thing with the cliff for instance.

RED HORSE

I know. You should have thought of it first. I'm the actor and you're the director. But you got to admit, its a horse of a different Technicolor finish!

JACK FORBES

Oh yeah. It'll make a hell of a final shot. Its great stuff movie-wise but I keep wondering where the hell the stunt doubles are?

RED HORSE

Here's your chance to show them French guys that like your films so much, that you really are an ....(stumbling over the word) an ought--tool, ottertour,...auteur. You even do your own stunts.

JACK FORBES

Hey! Don't get me wrong. I like the script! Its the casting that turns my stomach. I think of the kind of splash I'm supposed to make on the rocks below, and I know I'm too tall for the part.

RED HORSE

You'd be surprised to see just how short you become by the time you hit bottom. Believe me, you'll scale down to fit the part.

JACK FORBES

You're coming down with a bad case of dialogue.

RED HORSE

Think of it as a movie that really moves.

JACK FORBES

Who do I have to sleep with to get out of this picture? Somehow I just can't see myself as a smear on the landscape.

RED HORSE

Why should you be any different than any of your films?

JACK FORBES

Everybody's a goddamn film critic. By god, you almost got me convinced. For two cents, I'd jump.

RED HORSE

See how white people are! I start talking serious stuff here and right away,

there you go bringing money into it.

JACK FORBES

Well you aren't any better. What was all this Indian mystical looking for your youth stuff?

RED HORSE

That's the part where we jump over the cliff.

JACK FORBES

Don't explain it to me.

RED HORSE

No need. You'll figure it out on the way down.

RED HORSE goes to the edge, holds himself as if ready to jump.

RED HORSE

Spread your wings my friend. Trust me. I say it is time to glide off into the sunset.

JACK FORBES

Aren't we supposed to kiss a horse first? I mean if we're going to remake one of my worst Westerns, we might as well go all the way.

RED HORSE

Quit fooling around. This isn't no damn Western!

JACK FORBES

Is it a horror film?

(Looking down, obviously bothered by their nearness to the edge)  
From where I'm standing, that category gets my vote.

RED HORSE

This is where I give you back to yourself.

JACK FORBES

Its the way that you want to wrap the gift that gets me.

RED HORSE

Are you going to jump or not?

JACK FORBES

No. I think that is a definite OR NOT. Mind you, I've always been attracted to violence, I'd just rather see a punch than feel one. Besides, when I said I wanted to leave a lasting impact on the world

(Motioning toward the cliff)  
this wasn't what I meant.

RED HORSE

Don't you want to be young again?

JACK FORBES

You're the craziest damn Indian I ever met!

RED HORSE

There you go again. The first little thing you don't understand, and you go call me a crazy Indian! Just because it doesn't make sense to you, doesn't mean it doesn't make sense. That's white people for you, if it doesn't fit in their hand, they can't find it.

JACK FORBES

And I suppose that's why you went to such great pains to tell the Great Spirit just how stupid I am? I don't know what Indians know so you offered me up as  
.....

RED HORSE

Maybe the Great Spirit won't notice your skin is a little too light, but no way he's going to think somebody as stupid as you is an Indian. Trust me, I was making excuses on your behalf.

JACK FORBES

I'd like to ram an arrow right up your...

RED HORSE

Why should I want one where you got one?

JACK FORBES

You're a goddamn piss-ant! You know that!

RED HORSE

Those are fighting words!

JACK FORBES

Your whole goddamn tribe is a bunch of piss-ants!

RED HORSE

Yeah. I know. But they're family. I have to make allowances. But what you are, is a horse's ass.

JACK FORBES

You know. One of these days you are gonna push me too far. One of these days and then

(swinging his cane in the air in a menacing manner)

KAPOW! I'll hit you so hard you'll have to stand on your hands to find your face!

RED HORSE

This is as good a day as any.

(Lifting his cane up, holding it like a club, taking an offensive stance)

JACK FORBES

You think I'm kidding!

(Gripping his cane firmly, making as if to strike)

C'MON.

They circle each other warily, canes raised, like very inept boxers.

RED HORSE

I hit you just once and it's all over for you!

JACK FORBES

Listen. If I swing and miss, just the wind from it will knock you down.

RED HORSE

I will probably knock you into yesterday!

JACK FORBES

I will probably knock you into last week!

They make a complete circle around each other, moving somewhat closer to the edge of the cliff without being consciously aware of doing so.

RED HORSE

One blow and your central goodie will journey to the spirit land!

JACK FORBES

My what? Oh yeah. Well, I'm going to hit you so hard the socks you don't have, will be knocked off!

RED HORSE

(Threatening)

Dead! That's what you'll be!

JACK FORBES

(Counter-threatening)

Dead twice! You'll be dead twice!

RED HORSE

Twice your twice!

JACK FORBES

Oh yeah!

RED HORSE

Oh yeah!

Each man seems to be waiting for the right moment to start but neither seems particularly eager to be the one to take the first swing.

JACK FORBES

I'll knock your eyes out!

They move closer to each other and it seems that they are finally going to swing at each other but as each begins to move his shoulder, each of them stops, clearly waiting for the other to strike the first blow.

RED HORSE

Goddamn it, so go ahead! When I whack you, your nose is gonna be where your ears are!

JACK FORBES

Go on you coward! What are you waiting for?

RED HORSE

If I hit you it'll all be over. I'm trying to make the fun last longer. Go on, hit me! Take your best shot!

JACK FORBES.

I'm the director. YOU HIT ME! We'll see how long the fun lasts!

They rush at each other but manage only to exchange places from left stage to right, dashing past each other. Neither one has shown any real movement to take a swing at each other.

RED HORSE

Your mother sleeps with goats.

JACK FORBES

(Shocked)

What?

RED HORSE

I said your mother sleeps with...

JACK FORBES

I know...I've got photos. And you're living proof that goats that sleep with people can produce offspring.

RED HORSE

Oh yeah.

JACK FORBES

Yeah.

RED HORSE

How come you don't...

JACK FORBES

I ain't angry enough yet.

RED HORSE

Me neither.

JACK FORBES

You're a lousy actor.

RED HORSE

You're a lousy director.

They stare at each other. RED HORSE shakes his head. They are obviously at an impasse.

RED HORSE

This isn't getting us anywhere. What's the worse insult you can think of?

JACK FORBES

(Thinking about it)  
You ask me, I think I married it.

RED HORSE

Like I said, this isn't getting us anywhere.

JACK FORBES

At our age, we're too old to be offended by anything.

RED HORSE

OK, I'll count to three and then we both let go.

JACK FORBES

Sure. Use up all the numbers you know.

RED HORSE

ONE!

JACK FORBES

It's been nice knowing you.

RED HORSE

TWO!

JACK FORBES

Well nice is a big word.

RED HORSE

THREE!

JACK FORBES

More like a pain in the..

This time they really take a swing at each other. The canes smash against each other and the battle is joined. There is a frantic flurry of blows but they are standing too far apart to do much more than smash cane against cane. This wild flurry of blows, cane against cane, exhausts them both. The fight is fast and furious but not much more happens other than two feeble old men smashing sticks together like strange children playing a game.

JACK FORBES

(Gasping for breath)  
Have I hit you yet?

RED HORSE

(Equally out of breath)  
As weak as you are, how would I know if you had?

This last statement seems to spur JACK FORBES on, because he attacks with renewed vigor. They are expending a great deal of effort, dancing back and forth across the front of the stage. First one pushes the other back with the fury of his attack, only then to be pushed back in turn by a sudden frantic retaliation by the other combatant.

Both men are rapidly approaching exhaustion.

Their swings become more erratic. Now instead of their canes crashing against each other, now there are times when they miss completely.

They are just too old for this kind of physical effort. They can barely lift their canes high enough to strike out at each other.

They back off a few steps, staring dully at each other, as if trying to get their second wind. Each would like to give it up, but neither knows how to quit.

They both seem about to speak, their lips about to frame something but nothing can be said. It is a question of honor now.

Wearily, they jointly rush into battle again, but are so tired that they miss each other completely and go spinning dizzily past each other with the force of their swings.

This takes them right to the edge of the cliff. They end up teetering on the rim of the cliff, arms flailing wildly, both men nearly plunging over the cliff. Both canes fly out of their hands and land behind them.

Sudden concern for the other man, manifests itself in both of them. Simultaneously, they grab and try to yank each other back from the edge of the cliff.

They end up, arms wrapped around each other's heads, dragging each other about ten steps back from the edge of the cliff, giving them the somewhat addled appearance of the oddest dance couple that ever took to a ballroom floor.

For a second it seems like they are both engaged in a contest to pull each other's heads off. They stop moving.

They both let go, stand up and stare at each other, embarrassed.

JACK FORBES

Whew! That was a .....

RED HORSE

(Finishing it for him)  
close call.

JACK FORBES

I'd say it was a....

RED HORSE

(Agreeing before he can finish the sentence)  
near thing.

JACK FORBES

That was....

RED HORSE

Yeah...uh. Don't remind me.

JACK FORBES

Well....That was...

RED HORSE

OH yeah..Certainly.

JACK FORBES

That was....

RED HORSE

Oh yeah...You said it.

JACK FORBES

(Getting irritated as he realizes he hasn't finished a single sentence yet...speaking LOUDLY )

I MEAN THAT WAS....

RED HORSE

You can say that again!

JACK FORBES

GODDAMN IT! I HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING YET! STOP INTERRUPTING ME!

RED HORSE just shrugs.

JACK FORBES

What I was trying to say was...It was lucky I was around to save your miserable ass!

RED HORSE

What the hell are you talking about? I SAVED YOURS!

JACK FORBES

Says who? You ungrateful bastard!

RED HORSE

Those are fighting words!

They both turn and look back at their canes. Then they turn and look at each other. Suddenly they both look old enough to be God's father. There is absolutely no fight left in either of them.

JACK FORBES

We already did that page of dialogue. Maybe we should cut to the finish. I feel too dead for words.

RED HORSE

You look too dead to skin.

JACK FORBES

I declare a truce. You see my ass around here anywhere? I think it got tired and fell off.

RED HORSE

Now you've REALLY said something.

JACK FORBES

Let's sit down before we fall down.

RED HORSE

It only took you 70 years to come up with a good idea, this is it.

Both men move forward and sit at the edge of the stage, dangling their legs over the edge of the cliff. They are exhausted. It shows in the way they slump down beside each other.

They sit there for a while, saying nothing, too worn out to talk, completely exhausted by their battle.

JACK FORBES

(Having a violent attack of coughing, which leaves him even weaker)  
Do I seem to be breathing?

RED HORSE

Not so anyone would notice it. You'd have me fooled.

JACK FORBES

(Coughing)  
I wish I had a cigarette.

RED HORSE

A thing like that will kill you.

JACK FORBES

Then, I wish I had two cigarettes.

RED HORSE

Cliff is faster. And better.

JACK FORBES

We aren't back to that again are we? Forget it. I am too busy thinking about breathing.

RED HORSE

(Looking down)  
Suddenly, I remembered.

JACK FORBES

Well don't. Have a bowel movement instead.

RED HORSE

Our trouble is that we need to go out in style.

JACK FORBES

Our trouble is that we've both GONE OUT OF STYLE.

RED HORSE

That's why death is such a good idea.

JACK FORBES

Definitely you're having a bowel movement. Course with you, that PASSES for thought.

RED HORSE

Now's our chance to be legends in our own time!

JACK FORBES

Goddamn! Don't explain it to me. I don't want to die throwing up.

RED HORSE

You're afraid to let go.

JACK FORBES

You're godamn right!

RED HORSE

Letting go is the only way to hold onto everything.

JACK FORBES

What's that supposed to mean? I never know what the hell you are talking about?

RED HORSE

Because you never LISTEN. Words are important. All of that which made us men in this world is gone. To stay in that world would be a sad truth and a sadder death. Now there is much to talk about. There are things, words we must say.

JACK FORBES

It's just words. I've heard it all.

RED HORSE

But understood none of it. A word is like a wind and a thousand words are like a storm to the man who hears them in his heart.

JACK FORBES

I'm not stupid you know. I CAN understand something...provided everybody speaks very slowly and doesn't use any words bigger than a producer's brain.

RED HORSE

You are smart, just not wise. A wise man would leap at the opportunity to jump over this cliff.

JACK FORBES

I don't think I like the way you put that. But never mind.

(Looking down, shuddering)

I am beginning to appreciate my own lack of wisdom.

RED HORSE

In life, you had a passion for life in one hand. But is not wisdom, another hand with a passion for death? If we do not seek death, if we lie to ourselves now, if we think life is still ahead of us then we are like two blind old snakes touching our own tails and thinking we have found a new mate.

JACK FORBES

Look I'm tired. Everything aches. The movie is over and I feel like a man left only with a sense of having seen it. Nothing more, nothing less. Take pity on me.

RED HORSE

You want me to push you off the edge?

JACK FORBES

No! You goddamn idiot! I want you to put the four dollar dialogue back in your goddamn hat and just tell me what the hell you are trying to talk me into!

RED HORSE

You and me. We jump over the cliff and become legends.

JACK FORBES

Are you serious about this?

RED HORSE

May lightning strike me dead if I---

JACK FORBES

Never mind the special effects. Why?

RED HORSE

You know why YOU should jump off this cliff. You just don't know how to say it.

JACK FORBES

(Definite, looking down the cliff)

I KNOW I don't know it!

RED HORSE

You don't know you know it.

JACK FORBES

Listen, I come from a long line of people who've never had any reason to jump off cliffs! You either have cliff jumping in your blood or you don't. Trust me on this, I am full of DON'T.

RED HORSE

(Shading his eyes, looking up at the sun)

This is traditionally the best time to jump. What do you say we get it over with?

JACK FORBES

I put cliff jumping in the same category as me getting pregnant. I mean there's a curiosity appeal to it, I grant you. I'll always wonder what its like to experience it, but they're both temptations I know I can always resist. Am I

getting through to you? I hope so because I've had enough for one day.

(Rising stiffly to his feet)

I mean I've HAD IT. I'm going home.

RED HORSE

(Triumphantly)

Exactly. I knew you knew it!

JACK FORBES

(Shaking his head)

You've fallen off too many horses. It's affected your mind.

RED HORSE rises stiffly to his feet so that he stands beside JACK FORBES. He motions toward the cliff as if displaying a wonder for all to see.

RED HORSE

(Excited)

We jump home!

JACK FORBES

(Pointing down, as if humoring a madman)

Down there. That's home?

RED HORSE

Home. Youth. Everything that we were, everything that we will always be, is waiting for us down there.

JACK FORBES

And then after you fell off the horses, they probably stepped on you. That would account for it.

RED HORSE

It's hard trying to explain things to white people. It makes my tongue tired just thinking about it. Look, what happens if we leave here and go back?

JACK FORBES

You mean.....

RED HORSE

I'll ask them, I'll answer them too. I don't want to grow a mustache waiting for you to figure it out.

We go back and we do whatever dreary kind of business is left for us to do. Eventually, maybe not today, maybe not this week, but the day after or the week after, one and then soon, both of us will be dead.

And that's how the world will find us. Two old men who used to be something in the world long ago, now two old heaps of bones the world is tired of. They'll see us as souvenirs of another time and place, two bone piles who have lived past their prime. Antiques you white people call them. And that's the last image we'll leave them with. Is that the way we want our film to end?

JACK FORBES

No. It sounds bad but

(Indicating the cliff)  
this looks worse.

RED HORSE  
This is a very special cliff. There's no way to get down to the bottom.

JACK FORBES  
Which means?

RED HORSE  
We don't just die, we disappear.

JACK FORBES  
I must be an idiot. I still don't get it.

RED HORSE  
What happens in Hollywood when you haven't got a deal, when you haven't got a job.

JACK FORBES  
You're dead.

RED HORSE  
And when you're broke and can't convince anyone you can be trusted with the big money it takes to make a movie. When you can't walk the walk and talk the talk....

JACK FORBES  
Just as dead...maybe deader.

RED HORSE  
We aren't going to make any more movies are we?

JACK FORBES  
Never.

RED HORSE  
But they won't know it, if they don't see us die.

JACK FORBES  
You mean....

RED HORSE  
We become creatures of legend. They'll come looking for us. Somebody will remember. They'll see my face on a dusty old film, they'll see your name on the credits of one of our old disasters and somebody will say, hey whatever happened to....and they'll come looking. Idle curiosity at first. Later, the mystery will deepen. And when no one can find us....

JACK FORBES  
Like flies to honey!

RED HORSE  
They will not know we died like men. They will only know we vanished like

images on film, like the lies we gave the world.

JACK FORBES

By god, you're insane!

(Thinking about it)

It's so crazy I'm beginning to like it! It's got story value! How will they remember us? Not as a toothless old Indian who's fell off too many horses...

RED HORSE

or a broken down old film director who spent his last years following horses around with a shovel.

JACK FORBES

But as two men alive only in the past and disappeared in the future!

RED HORSE

It's all down there. Everything that we were. We will become a magic stolen from the world. They will not remember we were old. When they can't find us, it will convince them, that the world has been denied some greatness of which only we were capable. They will talk of our lost talents as if we had once touched the face of God. They will talk about the film we could have made. They will mourn our passing.

JACK FORBES

But we wouldn't be around to hear the kind lies they'd be telling about us.

RED HORSE

But we'd have our laugh right down there at the bottom. That's something they could never take away from us. We failed at life but we'll succeed at death.

JACK FORBES

This is what you meant about making us young again. It's so crazy it makes sense. I was afraid of this. Its bad enough to die but I'm going out crazy too.

RED HORSE

I guess that means you are going with me.

Now they are both standing at the edge of the cliff. By the way they carry themselves, they are now considering it in a very different way. They step a little closer to the edge.

JACK FORBES

It's crazy.

RED HORSE

The kind of crazy if you are very lucky you have just once in life.

JACK FORBES

I always felt you were a bad influence on me. This is my reward for spending too much time with Indians.

RED HORSE

We die in one world and are reborn in another.

JACK FORBES  
Do you really believe that?

RED HORSE  
(Shrugging)  
Call it a wild guess.

JACK FORBES  
But we will die.

RED HORSE  
(Cheerfully)  
All over the place.

JACK FORBES  
Will it hurt?

RED HORSE  
It is the kind of pain you feel when you fall off a horse.

JACK FORBES holds out his hand to RED HORSE.

JACK FORBES  
Take my hand in friendship. I don't want to fall off this horse alone.

RED HORSE  
(Taking his hand firmly in his)  
This is a movie first! Two men falling off one horse!

JACK FORBES  
Are you ready?

RED HORSE  
No retakes. We have to get it all on the first take.

JACK FORBES  
(Looking down)  
I've never fallen off a horse before. What do I do?

RED HORSE  
Look down. When you bite the dust, it's best to know where to grip with your teeth. What do you see?

JACK FORBES  
Clouds. I can't see the bottom. I don't know what I see.

RED HORSE  
I see the wind. It is that same wind that swept us out upon the world in our youth. In that wind, we knew great battles and peace, great hungers of body and ambition, lies that were larger than life, truths so small they slipped through our fingers. We feasted and were fed upon. We were honored and treated like a dog. We found friends among our enemies and enemies among our friends.

JACK FORBES

What else do you see?

RED HORSE

It is not what I see that counts. I am the actor. You are the director. What do you see?

JACK FORBES

Hell I don't know! Maybe the face of a friend I didn't know I had. It's something I never looked for before. Funny how nothing else looks important now. I guess I've lost my touch for seeing the big picture.

RED HORSE

You haven't lost it. You've just started looking for the center of the world. Look harder.

JACK FORBES.

I don't see anything. Just the horizon.

RED HORSE.

Good. Let's aim for it.

It's better than nothing.

Hand in hand they go to the edge of the stage and begin to leap.

The stage goes black and stays black. The lights come up. They are gone.

Curtain.