

Majestic River

(aka Dusty and Ringo)

Written by

Kim Kelln

Copyright (c) 2020

1st Draft

Kim Kelln
+1(403)830-5983
Kim@kimkelln.com

1 EXT. PONDEROSA PLAIN - DAWN

1

Wide shot looking South on the Ponderosa-like plain. The sun is just rising. In the far distance we see a small plume of dust rising from the plain.

CUT TO:

Same wide shot except now we see that the dust is caused by a horse (RINGO) and rider (DUSTY) at a slow walk across the plain. The sun has risen a little more.

CUT TO:

Same wide shot but now closer and we can make out details of both Ringo and Dusty. Dusty is an older cowboy. He's sitting bolt upright on Ringo, an older, experienced piebald horse. The dust trail follows behind them.

2 EXT. CLIFF EDGE - LATER

2

Looking back onto the plain from the edge of the river cliff. Ringo and Dusty come closer. Dusty lazily reins in Ringo and they come to a stop. We notice that Dusty is wearing a back brace made from rawhide that rests on his hips and is buckled around his chest under his arms. He wears a wide brimmed hat, chaps and a holster with a Colt '45 in it. All of these carry the patina of a long life of hard work. That includes Dusty and Ringo.

Dusty grimaces and dismounts ever so slowly. Ringo does not move. Dusty steps down, struggling a bit getting his one foot out of the stirrup, then he hangs onto the saddle and rests his head waiting for the pain to subside.

Slowly, Dusty straightens up, stretches his back, then takes the reins and walks to the edge of the cliff. He drops the reins and wraps his arm under Ringo's neck, gently ruffling his mane and he looks out onto the river valley.

3 EXT. RIVER PANORAMA - CONTINUOUS

3

We see what Dusty and Ringo are seeing. A majestic river valley flowing slowly from East to West. In the distance in the East we see the Mission canyon, and at the end of the meandering river in the West we see the beginnings of the Ganges gorge. Both were named by the rancher that owns all of the land up to the cliff that Dusty and Ringo are standing on. Across the river we see a fence that parallels the river marking the end of the Holland spread and the beginning of the Kaledin ranch.

4 EXT. CLIFF EDGE - LATER

4

Close on Dusty and Ringo. Dusty still has his arm under Ringo's neck. Orbit around them picking up that both are contemplating the view of the river. Also catching the brand on Ringo's butt which is a bar over an oh. The ranch is sometimes known as the Bar None ranch, much to the chagrin of Mr. Holland. Return to the close on Dusty and Ringo. Dusty nuzzles Ringo's neck.

DUSTY

Beautiful, ain't it, old man. One of my favourite places in the world. Yours too, I imagine.

(sighs)

Not that we do much travelling, you and me. You ne'er been outta the county, I reckon. I bin to San Francisco once. That be afore I knew you. Be afore you was born, even. Nothing like here, though. Too dang many people, going too dang fast. Still, the ocean was something to see. Don't know if I'd put it up to this river, as far as view goes. Looks mighty plain, this river does, and sure don't have the breadth of an ocean, I guess, but brings way more quietude. It ain't crashing and roaring all the time. Way more memories for both of us, too.

Dusty continues to stand, holding Ringo's neck. Ringo is patient with the old cowboy, perhaps sensing that this is an important time for both of them. They contemplate the river in the rising sun.

DUSTY (cont'd)

We ain't youngsters no more, you and me. A couple old men in the twilight of our lives, or so the saying goes. I can't say I miss the rough and tumble of those years. What about you?

Ringo remains passive and unmoving.

DUSTY (cont'd)

That's what I like about you, Buddy, you keeps yer yap shut when you got naught to say. Unlike some that we know, eh? Well, I guess it does take all kinds to make the world go round.

(MORE)

DUSTY (cont'd)

Yup, we had all sort of adventures in those early years. We grewed old together. I remember when you was but a scrawny, uncoordinated fowl. Wobbling around, not sure what you was supposed to be doing, or where you was going. I had to guide you to your mama's titties. You caught on real quick after that and grew into a right handsome young man. Still quite the ladies man, even today. Wish I could say the same about the grizzled old specimen you see in front of you today. You don't have to be propped up to do your job either. Wasn't long ago that we did more than hold our own. Seems that they've been calling on us less and less these last few years.

Dusty pauses, and points and sweeps his hand lazily along the fences on the other side of the river.

DUSTY (cont'd)

Mind you, it sure ain't like in the old days when all that yonder were open range. Wandering around the territory gathering up all the long horns belonged to us, and some that dint.

Ringo snorts and shakes his head. Dusty chuckles.

DUSTY (cont'd)

Well, you're right, old man, they dint belong to anyone, not without a brand, no ways, but we fixed that real quick. Those days are long gone now. Used to be all our time was out tending to the cows. Now it seems we're building and fixing fences instead. No more time to look after the cows. Oh, I know I'm just being bitter, but I really think that the days of the open range was real cowboying

(Sighing)

You gotta adapt, though. Adapt or die, I guess. Don't like either, but ones preferred over the other.

Both Dusty and Ringo fall into a contemplative silence.

DUSTY (cont'd)

You been a good friend, Ringo. A real good friend and companion all these years. A lot of them it were just the two of us. Out there in all kinda weather. Bringing in calves and rounding up cows during those surprise late spring blizzards. You wading through chest deep snow to get to them out in Mission or Ganges. We were good too. Never lost a calf or cow that we could get to. Brought them all home.

Dusty does a big sigh. His eyes get watery.

DUSTY (cont'd)

The only one that got away on me was the lovely Rebecca. Mrs. Dalton now. Has been for twenty five years, I guess. You liked her because she'd give you those sugar apples whenever we was in town. She was sweet on you too. She done caught my eye that summer so long ago now. Loved to bake pies, she did. That's how we met up, over those pies. She was going to enter one of her pumpkin pies in the county fair that fall. Now, everyone knows that I make the best pumpkin pies round here and I ne'er lost the pie judging. Becky conjured up some really good pies but they wouldn't compete against mine. I ne'er out and told her so, but I did gently lead her to deciding that she should enter her berry pie in the fair. As I predicted we both won that year. My, we had a grand time at the fall dance. Laughing and twirling until the fiddlers were too tired to carry on.

Ringo snorts and shakes his head.

DUSTY (cont'd)

Nay. I was a spry fella back then. We could have danced all night. People commented on how I monopolized her dance card, keeping the other fellers at bay. We was attracted, her and me.

(MORE)

DUSTY (cont'd)

Well, that fall we was especially busy and winter set in, harsh like usual, so there were few visits to town. The odd time that Cookie would have to run in for this or that I'd send a short letter, but I'm not much for writing notes, you know. She'd write back. I told her about my aspirations to own my own spread one day. Run a small herd. Do a little farming, maybe. Someplace along a river, but someplace that land was cheap. I was saving up but a cowhand's pay ain't much. Anyway, spring came and it was busy like always. Rounding up the cows and calves that manage to wander over the entire spread. Next thing you know it was summer and I get a kind note from her saying how much she likes me, that we weren't meant to be, and that she's been betrothed to a nice young man in town. Russell Dalton, the lawyer's son. Her mama looked very favourably on him.

(Sighs)

Of course she married him in the fall. She invited us to the wedding. We didn't go. It would have been too hard. Mr. and Mrs. Holland and Emily were invited so I wrote up a congratulatory note in my best hand writing, and baked them a wedding pie and sent it along with them. I didn't enter my pies in the County Fair that year. Becky won for her pumpkin pie. I was hurting for a spell and I carried regrets with me all this time. Still, I never dwelled on them. Best not to, I reckon. Sometimes, though.

Tears come to Dusty's eyes. He wipes them away and then hugs Ringo a little tighter. He pulls a ratty, dirt stained envelope out of his shirt pocket and unfolds it. He looks at it.

INSERT - ENVELOPE

Handwritten, formal script...

Dusty Rhodes
Bar None Ranch

Dusty chuckles and holds the envelope up so Ringo can read it. Ringo shakes his head and snorts again.

DUSTY (cont'd)
 "Bar None!" Doc never tires of that old joke.

Dusty opens the flap on the envelope and extracts a letter. Also weather worn, dirt stained and looking well read. He unfolds the letter, then reaches into his other pocket and takes out a pair of wire spectacles and slowly puts them on.

DUSTY (cont'd)
 Don't know why I bother putting them on. I've read this a thousand times and could recite it from heart.

INSERT - LETTER

The same handwriting as on the envelope...

Dusty,

I'm sure you know what the diagnosis is so I'm not going to beat about the bush. It's the bad news you expected. Your spine is not going to get better. It might be cancer but you would have to go to the city for an operation to know for sure. I know you're not going to do that so I sent a supply of laudanum to help with the pain. If you need more, I'll send some with Cookie when he's in town.

Sorry I can't do more,

Doc Carson

DUSTY (cont'd)
 Laudanum. Damn stuff makes me woozy. I'd fall right off you if I could even get on in the first place. Although it does a mighty fine job on quelling the pain.

Dusty winces. He hugs Ringo.

DUSTY (cont'd)
 Not your fault, old man. Not your fault. It's been a long, good ride. We've been quite the team, but this is going to be the end of the road, my friend. You're going back alone. When you show up, they'll know.

(MORE)

DUSTY (cont'd)
Young Billy will take good care of
you, and you him. Hear? No messing
around.

Dusty hugs Ringo, and pats him down. He takes the letter from Doc Carson and tucks it into a saddlebag. He takes out another dusty, well used piece of paper from his pocket. He opens it up to read it. He nods as he reads.

INSERT - DOCUMENT

This is Dusty's will, written in his own, choppy hand writing.

Last Will and Testament
of Dusty Rhodes

Being of sound mind and maybe a slightly wounded and broken body, I, Dusty Rhodes, leave my tack, gear and horse to Young Billy Holland, all my cooking utensils, pots and pans to Cookie, and everything else that you might find that might find that can be put to use can be divided up or thrown out as you see fit. I have at least \$2500 in the bank in town. I want this money to go to Emily and Billy Holland. Emily can continue her university education. Same for Billy, but I know he wants to ranch and chomps at the bit in school. He can use this a seed money for his own spread some day.

August 28th, 1908

Dusty Rhodes

He nods when he's done reading it over to himself. All is in order. He folds it up and tucks that into the saddlebag and buckles it closed.

He hobbles, wincing, up to Ringo's head and gives him one more hug.

DUSTY (cont'd)
Well, it's about time, friend. No
more prevaricating as my Grandma
liked to say.

He painfully reaches down and pulls off his boots and puts them backwards in his stirrups. He uses a bit of string in his pocket to keep them from falling out. Then he puts up the reins, turns Ringo around and gives him a gentle pat.

DUSTY (cont'd)
Home now, old man. You know the way.

Ringo trots off a short distance then stops and looks back.

DUSTY (cont'd)
No, Ringo. Go home without me. I'll
see you on the other side.

5 EXT. PONDEROSA PLAIN - DAWN

5

Wide shot looking South on the Ponderosa-like plain. The sun is well up already. The plains shimmer with the heat. Ringo is trotting away raising a small cloud of dust behind him.

CUT TO:

Same wide shot but Ringo is further away and is almost obscured by the cloud of dust he trails.

CUT TO:

Wide shot but all we see now is a small pillar of dust far in the distance.

6 EXT. CLIFF EDGE - LATER

6

Dusty turns around and hobbles, painfully, to the edge of the cliff. He stands precariously close to the edge this time while he looks out on the river. He looks up, then left and right. He looks down. He appears to be contemplating jumping off the cliff, but he takes one last look and very slowly and painfully, sits down. He's cross-legged on the edge of the cliff. The brace keeps him propped up, but still in a lot of pain.

CUT TO:

The sun has risen further. It's past mid-day now. Dusty has not moved.

CUT TO:

It's afternoon. The sun is lower in the west and Dusty remains sitting cross-legged on the edge of the cliff. He hasn't moved.

CUT TO:

The sun is starting to set. The landscape is turning golden as the sun goes down.

7 EXT. CLIFF EDGE - LATER

7

We're looking at the panorama of the river valley from behind Dusty. He takes out his pistol and slowly raises it. We pan slowly from Dusty to the west. As the sun finally sets, we hear the gun shot that we were expecting

FADE TO BLACK