

MIDDLE GROUND



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Written by

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EXT. TOWN ROAD - DAY

Folks crowd the walkways of the small, western town. Men stand outside the saloon with pints in-hand, awaiting the showdown between

TAYLOR MERIT (34), a scrawny, timid man with a pea-shooter on his hip. And JACK MILLS (42), a gruff outlaw who duel-wields hand-cannons. He slouches with the casual regard one gets from being at the wrong end of a gun too many times.

They stand fifty paces apart, hands ready.

Taylor's voice trembles.

TAYLOR

Maybe we can find a middle ground?
I never meant no disresp--

JACK

It's too late for that, boy. The only middle ground we're gonna find is the fifty paces of dirt between us. You wanna talk like a man, you better be ready to shoot like one.

Jack adjusts his hat.

Taylor's eyes dart around. People around stare with a mix of fear and anticipation. He spots the SHERIFF (56), leaning against the door of the station.

TAYLOR

You gonna do something about this?

The sheriff considers this for a moment. He wanders off the walkway, into the street toward Taylor.

Jack shrugs at him, impatient.

Taylor sighs in relief.

The sheriff walks up to Taylor. He unholsters his gun.

SHERIFF

That man don't miss. He aims for the heart.

He taps the butt of his gun against Taylor's chest.

SHERIFF

So that's where you shoot from, ya hear?

A mix of fear and disbelief etched on Taylor's face.

The sheriff presents the gun to Taylor.

Anger replaces Taylor's fearful expression as he peers down at the gun. He stares down the sheriff.

TAYLOR

Call it.

The sheriff smirks. Flicks Taylor a nod, holsters his gun. He moves off to the side.

SHERIFF

We ready, gentleman?

Jack nods, smiles. Fixes his gaze on Taylor.

Taylor hovers his hand next to his gun. Wiggles his fingers in anticipation.

A wisp of dust sweeps up between in the street between them.

SHERIFF

Draw!

Jack snatches his gun, aims from the waste.

Taylor snatches his, points it straight out from his chest.

One loud BANG rings out as smokes shoots from the barrels of their guns.

A spark flickers mid-air between the men.

Stillness. The bang echoes and fades into the distance.

Taylor stands frozen.

Jack stares, confused.

Taylor looks down at his chest. Feels it. Nothing.

Jack walks toward Taylor.

Taylor walks toward Jack. The sheriff moves to meet them in the middle.

The three men scan the ground.

CLOSE ON THE GROUND

Two bullets smashed together, melded by the heat of the blasts. A large one, a small one.

Jack hawks, shoots a spit wad on the metal bit. A searing sound, a bit of smoke rises from it.

He peers at Taylor, shrugs it off.

JACK

Looks like you got your middle ground.

He struts off toward the saloon.

The sheriff winks at Taylor, heads off. The crowd disperses.

Taylor looms over the bullets. Smirks.

FADE OUT.

THE END