

**CORTEZ**  
**(EXCERPT ONLY - Version1)**

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INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Benedict slowly pushes the door open. A green fluorescent light intermittently flickers. A small slit of a window in the corner helps to illuminate the otherwise stale office.

He walks up to the front counter. A few dusty brown files and papers scatter the table top with a typewriter and an old Hewlett-Packard electronic word processor that look as though they haven't been touched in quite some time. On the floor in front is a mangy old BEAGLE you'd think was dead if it wasn't for the intermittent lifting and dropping of its belly.

A small push-button bell sits on top with a sign next to it: "ring for service".

DING - Benedict taps the button. He stands there for a beat. Nothing.

BENEDICT

About what I figured.

He walks behind the counter and behind a partitioned wall to a back room revealing a prison cell. Benedict hears heavy breathing coming from a MAN, asleep in the jail.

As he approaches, he sees the cell door is slightly open. Benedict pushes it to a close.

A loud CREEK from the cell walls startles the man inside.

MAN

Hey now!

The man pops up squinting. A hangover from hell in his head.

MAN

Hell, son, what are ya' doing?

The man is somewhere in his fifty's, haggard, wearing a brown Sheriff's shirt. The patch on the shoulder reads "Cortez Sheriff's Department". On his left pocket - a silver star badge with the name RIGGINS embroidered above.

Riggins throws on his Sheriff's Hat.

BENEDICT

My apologies. I wasn't quite sure what to make of the open cell.

RIGGINS

I sure as shit don't want to be locked up in my own jail now do I?

BENEDICT  
I would think not.

More grunts and groans as Riggins rubs his head. He walks to a desk outside the holding pen and takes a seat.

He opens a drawer and takes out a tall bottle of whisky, pops a couple of prescription pills in his mouth, and swills it down with the liquor.

RIGGINS  
So... Who're you?

BENEDICT  
Name's Rholand Benedict. Nice to meet -

Benedict goes down to pet the dog.

RIGGINS  
- Don't touch that one. S'got worms...

Benedict stops.

RIGGIN  
Tim Riggins. Sheriff. You're dressed kinda' fancy. You a friend of Smitty's?

BENEDICT  
No affiliation to Smitty.

RIGGINS  
That's what most of Smitty's men will tell ya.

BENEDICT  
Who is this Smitty?

RIGGINS  
Most of em' say that too... But you don't look like you're haulin' loads and all. You haulin' loads?

BENEDICT  
Not a truck driver.

RIGGINS  
Then what the hell ya' doing here?

BENEDICT  
Is everyone this polite?

RIGGINS  
No one said I had to be polite. And  
no one asked you to come here.

BENEDICT  
How do you know?

Riggins pauses.

RIGGINS  
Then... What can I do ya' for Mr.  
Benedict?

BENEDICT  
I'm looking for someone.

RIGGINS  
Who?

BENEDICT  
A gentleman named Carlito  
Esperanza.

RIGGINS  
Don't know the name.

BENEDICT  
From what I've been told, he works  
here in Cortez. I assume you know  
the area well...

RIGGINS  
Too well... Hell, I've lived here  
my entire life. Fourth generation.  
My Great Grandad was killed  
defending these walls from Pancho  
Villa and them heathens from  
'ventually rippin' and rapin' it  
down to hell in a cocaine  
handbasket. I love Cortez. My  
familial bloodline has  
traumatically bonded with it. Which  
ain't to say I'm exactly *IN* love  
with the place either. In fact I  
probably hate it if I really  
thought 'bout it...kind of a co-  
dependent relationship, but, eh...

BENEDICT  
And Esparanza?

RIGGINS

I couldn't tell you how many damn Mexicans come on through here looking for work. Mostly at the slaughterhouse or at the Walmart down the highway - but they come and go. Pretty much in a nameless sorta way.

A beat. Benedict studies Riggins, sizing him up.

BENEDICT

Fourth generation, you say?

RIGGINS

Yup.

BENEDICT

Looks like this town has seen better days.

RIGGINS

(sighs)  
I'll say she has.

BENEDICT

Well I won't take any more of your time.

Benedict turns to walk away before-

BENEDICT

Just one last thing, Sheriff. I was told Esperanza lived in a small community just outside of town. Perhaps you could advise me on the most efficient means to make my way there.

Riggins goes to grab his whisky bottle.

RIGGINS

Whereabouts?

BENEDICT

An area called... Prospect Hill.

Riggins jolts his hand, struck by the words, he fumbles the bottle catching it just before it knocks over.

Riggins looks at him as though caught red-handed. He says nothing but his look betrays a different story.

BENEDICT

That's what I thought. It makes a man wonder what's in the name Prospect Hill that turns everyone on edge.

RIGGINS

I don't... I... Don't know what you're talking about.

BENEDICT

Have you walked these streets lately, Sheriff?... Sober?

RIGGINS

What's it to you?

BENEDICT

Well, by the looks of it, I'd think you don't give one damn about what's happening in this town.

RIGGINS

But I do.

BENEDICT

Really... perhaps its time you start acting like it.

Benedict steps out the door to the street.