

THE BALLAD OF THE WESTWIND KID

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Based on the song by Brumby

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EXT. RANCH - DAY

Two boys covered in dirt, YOUNG OLIVER (13) and YOUNG WEST (14), walk carelessly along a fence towards a ranch, the only building in sight against a backdrop of dusty plains.

As they near the home, a CRASH sounds, followed by a woman's SCREAM. The boys freeze in their steps, eyes wide.

WEST

Ma...

West takes off running toward to house and Oliver takes up pursuit.

MA (O.S.)

Donovan, please...

West rushes up the patio steps and through the door as the sound of sickening THUDS carry from the interior. Oliver catches his foot on the stair and tumbles to the deck. He reaches out and his hand meets an empty, discarded bottle at the base of a wooden chair. Oliver stands and sees another, half-drained bottle on a ramshackle table. Next to it lays a white revolver.

WEST (O.S.)

Pa! Pa, stop it! You're gonna kill her!

Oliver inches toward the door as the sounds of a SCUFFLE. West comes flying out the door, tumbling across the ground. Oliver backs up as DONOVAN staggers out the door after him, a bloodied hammer in hand.

DONOVAN

You need to learn some respect, boy.

West rights himself and scrambles backward.

WEST

PA, please...

Donovan steps forward and raises the hammer. West tenses. A SHOT rings out and Donovan stumbles forward, eyes wide and surprised. The hammer falls to the deck, with the man following. Behind him is Oliver, revolver in hand.

West gets up slowly and observes his dead father with a glazed-over stare.

OLIVER

West, I'm sorry... Your Pa...

West kneels down and cradles his father's black hat, staring into it.

OLIVER (cont'd)
Is, is she OK?

West shakes his head once again. Oliver drops the revolver and slumps down into the chair.

OLIVER (cont'd)
I'm sorry...
(beat)
What do we do now?

WEST
I did it.

OLIVER
What?

WEST
I killed him. I've got nobody left,
I'll take the blame.

OLIVER
... but it was in defense.

WEST
Maybe, but the sheriff's runnin'
against your Pa, and he's hung kids
before.

Oliver stares, dumbstruck. West picks up the gun from the floor and levels it at Oliver. He begins backing away.

WEST (cont'd)
Don't try to stop me, Ollie.

As he hits the dirt he turns and runs. Oliver jumps to his feet and hurries down the steps.

OLIVER
West, wait! West!

West keeps running, his face hard.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

A wanted poster: "WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE: THE WESTWIND KID \$1,000." In the center is a crude drawing of West, now older.

It lies on a cluttered desk, where an older OLIVER (29), dressed all in white, rests his feet as he leans back in his chair. A gold star is pinned to his chest. He flicks his revolver chamber open and shut absentmindedly as he stares intensely at the ceiling. A KNOCK. His eyes dart to the door. the chamber snaps shut one last time.

OLIVER
It's unlocked.

The door drifts open. A young man struts in easily, a rifle hung over his shoulder. A cocky smile is spread across his face and a cheek full of chew is in his mouth. This is JOEL RICHMOND (26).

JOEL
Sheriff Oliver, I presume.

Oliver motions with his gun to a chair opposite himself. The stranger pulls it out, then puts a foot up onto it, leaning forward on his knee.

JOEL (cont'd)
Names Joel, Joel Richmond. Just wanted to check in with you, let you know I was in town. If there's any trouble starts, don't want you gettin' alarmed.

He turns and spits a wad of tobacco-stained saliva onto the floor. Oliver looks at it.

OLIVER
There gonna be any trouble?

JOEL
You haven't heard?

He leans forward and taps a finger on the picture of West. Oliver doesn't look down. Joel grabs a glass and a bottle of whiskey from beside the poster. He seats himself on the desk and pours himself a drink.

JOEL (cont'd)
Westwind kid is headed this way.

OLIVER
You're here for the bounty then?

JOEL
I'm here to make your job easier. He rolls into town, all you've got to do is sit back while I take care of it for you.

Oliver gets up and makes his way to the door.

OLIVER
I appreciate that Joel, but I think
we'll manage.

The bounty hunter clucks his tongue.

JOEL
He's a dangerous man, 15 banks this
year alone.

OLIVER
Haven't been any deaths.

Joel drinks.

JOEL
Not yet.

He places the cup down on the table, right on the poster
over the words, "OR ALIVE." Oliver forces a smile and opens
the door, inviting Joel out. The man saunters over and
Oliver stops him with a hand on his chest before he passes.

OLIVER
If I die or he leaves Calico, you can
do what you want with him. But so
long as he's here, I won't have
vigilante justice in my town.

Joel's smile drops briefly but quickly finds its way back
onto his face. He spits another dark wad at their feet.

JOEL
'course sheriff.

He thumps Oliver on the back and pushes past his hand. The
door swings shut. Oliver sinks into the chair, picks up the
glass, and drains the rest of the contents.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Commotion breaks out along the street. Startled voices cry
out as citizens rush to their homes. Oliver steps out of his
office and observes the scene. Down the street, by a
hitching post, Joel plays with the action of his rifle.
Oliver approaches.

JOEL
Sheriff, you're just in time.

He nods past the edge of town. A speck approaches on the horizon. Oliver makes his way down the street.

OLIVER

That's still my territory, Joel.

JOEL

Oh, I'm just lookin' forward to the show!

Oliver stands at the edge of town watching the horizon. The distant shape takes form into the heat-distorted silhouette of a man on a horse. Minutes pass. Oliver waits. The man on the horse grows larger and clearer until he can be distinctly made out: a young man in dark clothes and a black hat. his eyes are bloodshot and he looks ragged and worn. This is WEST: THE WESTWIND KID (30).

Oliver stands his ground as West approaches the edge of town. The outlaw dismounts and stumbles to the hitching post, where he ties his horse. A few people line the edge of the street, they huddle to the walls as he nears. A few hurry inside. Shutters snap closed.

Finally, West turns his focus to Oliver. He draws himself up and walks calmly over to the sheriff. Oliver stares him down.

OLIVER

West.

WEST

Ollie. Good to see ya.

He draws his white revolver and sticks it under Oliver's jaw. The sheriff doesn't flinch. Joel leans back against a pole, amused. West waves the pistol down towards Oliver's canteen.

WEST (cont'd)

Water

Oliver pulls the container from his hip and hands it to the man. West keeps the gun in his face as he unscrews the cap with his teeth and takes large gulping swallows of the contents. Neither man breaks eye contact.

OLIVER

(softly)

Let me bring you in.

West shakes his head, still drinking. Oliver nods towards Joel, West's eye's dart over.

OLIVER (cont'd)
We've got a hunter here who's mighty
trigger happy.

West drops the canteen, water seeps out into the dirt and runs down the street thick like syrup. He lets out an exaggeratedly satisfied sigh.

WEST
Rather it be you.

OLIVER
Take a dive, West.

West chuckles. Another shake of the head.

OLIVER (cont'd)
I won't shoot you.

West drops the gun.

WEST
Yes, you will. 'Cause if you don't, I
promise I'll pull the trigger.

West paces back the way he came until he stands a ways out of town. He turns to face Oliver. Oliver unbuckles his holster.

JOEL
Don't worry sheriff, I'll avenge you.

The two men face each other down. Not a soul moves in the street as the two men observe each other, ever patient. West's hand twitches and, in a frenzy of movement, both men rip the guns from their belts. Neither fires.

In front of Oliver stands Young West (14). Revolver held aloft in both hands, eyes full of fear. Oliver's hand trembles slightly.

West (30) shakes his head slightly and pulls the trigger slowly. The hammer clicks, but no shot rings out. Joel laughs giddily.

JOEL (cont'd)
Well if that ain't something! The
outlaw's out o' bullets. Looks like
it's your lucky day sheriff!

Oliver stares West down, pleading.

JOEL (cont'd)
Any day now!

Oliver steadies his hand and squeezes, a shot echoes across town.

The street falls silent once more. West stands still. Oliver raises a brow at him. West drops to one knee, then the other. He falls flat.

Oliver lowers his gun and Joel jumps down from his perch on the decks. He thumps Oliver on the back and shakes his head bemusedly.

JOEL (cont'd)
Well, that was quite a show. I think
worth the price of missin' that
bounty.

The man turns, drapes his rifle over his shoulder, and walks down the street away from the scene.

EXT. TOWN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Oliver leads West's horse solemnly down a path, the town sits far behind in the distance. West's body lays slumped over the horse's back. Oliver checks behind him then brings the horse to a stop near a rock.

OLIVER
Whoa, boy. Well, I think that's
probably far enough.

West lifts his head, then slowly raises himself up, stretches, and drops to the ground.

WEST
Oh, that's gonna be sore later. Maybe
you should have just killed me after
all.

Oliver stares blankly at the man, but a corner of his mouth twitches upwards in a smile.

WEST (cont'd)
It's been a long time. You look good
Ollie.

OLIVER
You don't.

WEST
No. No, I don't, do I?
(beat)
Why didn't you do it?

OLIVER
Why did you?

West shakes his head, at a loss.

WEST
I don't know.
(beat)
Couldn't leave you looking a fool,
could I?

A moment of silence passes between them.

OLIVER
Well, what now?

WEST
I came here to die, Ollie. I've got
no plans.

OLIVER
Well, there's a ranch out east.
Double homicide a few years ago, it's
been abandoned ever since. Nobody
would bother you there.

West stares up at the sky, he smiles.

WEST
I'd like that.

He extends a hand, the two men clasp arms and embrace. West
starts leading his horse away.

OLIVER
But West-

West turns.

OLIVER (cont'd)
I hear of any more trouble from the
Westwind kid, I will shoot you.

West smiles.

WEST
I'll count on it.

With that he turns and leads his horse into the desert,
disappearing on the horizon.

END