

BIG EVIL

Written by

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OVER BLACK: Dozens of cicadas HUM, off-key and eerie.

EXT. SANDSTONE HILLS - DAY

The HUM continues, on a sweltering, shimmering day in rugged hills. Green foliage fights to grow among boulders, and twisted oaks and thick brush cover sandstone outcroppings.

A scaly lizard basks in a patch of sunlight --

CLANK. A metallic, foreign sound. The lizard flees.

A sweaty, filthy CONQUISTADOR steps into view, dented armor creaking. He wears the traditional peaked helmet. It's GASPAR, 30. He hacks his sword at a maddening, thorny vine.

GASPAR
(subtitled Spanish)
Pig-lover!

Gaspar stops to spit and scowl. HERNAN, 35, another conquistador, joins him. They pass a wineskin and wait impatiently.

FATHER OJO, 45, a skinny, one-eyed priest in a robe and an eyepatch, delicately picks his way toward them.

GASPAR (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
Hurry! Surely the Seven Cities of Cibolla lie straight ahead!

FATHER OJO
Patience.

Hernan frowns and slaps a mosquito.

HERNAN
Where is the gold, Ojo? Did you forget to bless us?

GASPAR
Perhaps his God cannot hear.

Father Ojo reflexively touches his cross necklace.

FATHER OJO
God gives more than gold.

GASPAR
To your mother, perhaps.

They move on. Gaspar pushes aside a branch, revealing...

EXT. A CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

A man-made clearing of bare red dirt, fifty yards across. It is silent except for BUZZING flies. The men stare toward its center...

A LOG TOWER, fifty decrepit feet tall, rises out of a jumbled pile of SKELETONS. No flesh remains for the flies.

Father Ojo crosses himself.

The men approach. Some of the skeletons have bound hands. Hernan spots a SILVER BOWL.

HERNAN

Perhaps God does listen.

The conquistadors scavenge, gleefully scattering the bones.

Gaspar's eyes widen. A skeleton leans against the tower, apparently wearing a GOLD CROWN. Gaspar grabs the crown.

SNAP. The skeleton's spine breaks, but the skull remains attached to the crown. Gaspar is left holding both. Annoyed, he looks closer.

The "crown" is in fact an ornate FUNNEL. Its long, sharp spout has been driven through the skullbone. Gaspar slides the skull off the spout.

Ojo trembles.

FATHER OJO

No, this is unholy.

OJO'S POV: he backs away. His vision distorts.

Ojo trips backward into a dark, black pool. Disappears.

The pool bubbles. It's oil. Gaspar and Hernan peer into it...

Ojo reappears with a GASP. Waist-deep and totally coated. He blinks, revealing the surprised white of his ONLY EYE.

GASPAR

The fountain of youth!

The two conquistadors howl with laughter as Ojo sputters. Finally, Hernan offers a hand.

HERNAN

Here you go --

Hernan freezes.

TWO FIGURES rise behind Ojo. They drip with oil and are stained deep black: their long hair, animal-hide clothing, teeth, skin, eyeballs -- everything -- black, like Irish bog men submerged for centuries or longer.

The figures clutch Ojo. Slowly, they pull his necklace tight. The crucifix pierces his throat. His blood sprays.

The conquistadors draw swords, too late. More DARK FIGURES are behind them, trapping them.

CLOSE ON: Gaspar's helmet hits the ground and rolls.

OPENING CREDITS MONTAGE

A picture book. The pages FLIP:

an "Indian Territory" map... the Oklahoma land rush... a grizzled settler... headlines announcing "Oil!"... native Americans in tribal garb... three OILMEN posing by a gusher... an aerial photo of oil derricks... a fancy outdoor party... crying children on a reservation... smug oilman UNCLE FRANK STANDISH...

The book closes. Its cover says "Standish Petroleum -- The First 100 Years" over a shield logo.

END MONTAGE

EXT. HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA - DAY

Sunshine. Palm trees. Everything's perfect.

INT. FANCY GROCERY STORE - DAY

The type of store that "curates" groceries. Employees -- mostly actors and models in tight black shirts -- flit about distributing complimentary wine.

A WOMAN WITH A TOTE, 40s, stands at a cheese sample tray, chewing and staring.

A life-sized, cardboard standup of a brown COW stares back.

TOTE WOMAN

Is this cheese non-dairy? Is it vegan? Is it locally-sourced?

RICK SCHNABLE, 32, listens patiently. Rick wears an apron and the fitted shirt that looks better on less pudgy employees. He brushes back his floppy black hair and smiles.