

BITTER RIVER

Written by

Todd Fabyanic

Spec Script

EXT. OHIO RIVER/SHORELINE - DAY (EVENING)

A cowboy, JASON CALHOONE, 22, rides his horse through the forest wilderness of the Ohio River shoreline. He rides hard and fast until he comes near a campsite.

EXT. HICK'S CAMPSITE - DAY (EVENING)

Jason slows down and takes precaution of the area. A pistol CLICKS behind Jason.

HICK, 49, real cowboy, stands behind Jason with his pistol loaded, cocked, and pointed at Jason.

Jason stops dead in his tracks, on his horse.

HICK
You Calhoone's boy?

JASON CALHOONE
Yes sir! That's correct.

HICK
Turn around! Let me get a look at you.

Jason places his hands on his horse's saddle. He turns slowly and looks Hick face to face, eye to eye.

HICK (CONT'D)
You eying me, boy?

JASON CALHOONE
You said turn around.

Hick looks at Jason. He gets a good look at Jason's physical appearance, looks him up and down.

HICK
I don't know who's jawline that is, but you definitely got your daddy's ears and eyebrows.

Jason remains still, and silent. His eyes on Hick, watching every movement Hick makes.

HICK (CONT'D)
I see you got your daddy's courage too. Eyeing me like that.

JASON CALHOONE

My daddy always said to look a man
right in the eyes, no matter who he
is.

HICK

Your daddy was a good man.

Jason tips his hat in respect to Hick's gesture.

HICK (CONT'D)

You heading to Cincinnati to see
your Auntie?

JASON CALHOONE

Yes sir!

HICK

Yeah! That's what I thought. I had
a feeling you'd be coming this way.

Hick puts his pistol down and places it back in his holster.
He dismounts his horse.

HICK (CONT'D)

Well, c'mon. Might as well get
comfortable.

Jason dismounts his horse and follows Hick over to the
campsite area.

A woman, DELLA, 40, former African-American house maid,
Hick's partner in crime, comes out of the tent.

HICK (CONT'D)

This is Della, and my name is Hick.

JASON CALHOONE

My name is Jason. Nice to meet
ya'll.

Della grabs a skillet off the campfire. She lets the steam
air and starts stirring the food inside the skillet.

DELLA

When's the last time you ate?

JASON CALHOONE

Too long.

DELLA

You hungry?

JASON CALHOONE

Yes ma'am.

Jason sits down by the campfire and accepts the plate Della hands him. He begins to chow down.

Hick and Della chuckle to themselves as they watch Jason eat.

Jason finishes eating and sets his plate aside.

DELLA

Now, take a nap and get some rest.

HICK

We'll talk when you wake.

Jason steps into the tent and lays down. He falls asleep.

The sun sets (sun goes down over the horizon).

EXT. HICK'S CAMPSITE - SUNRISE (MOURNING)

Hick & Della sit around the campfire.

Jason lies in his blanket and begins to wake up in the tent. His vision is blurry, and sounds are still fuzzy, as he wakes. The sound of voices slowly creep in.

HICK (O.S.)

It ain't right, Della.

DELLA (O.S.)

What ain't right, Hick.

Jason turns slowly in his sleeping bag to listen. He looks out a peep hole in his tent and sees Hick and Della sitting by the campfire.

HICK

Killing his daddy was one thing,
but taking that boy's home, that's
another. That's crossing the line.

DELLA

Are you going to help him?

Jason scoots and tries to get a better view. He accidentally SNAPS a twig under the tent.

Hick and Della turn their heads towards the tent.

HICK

I think he's up.

Jason opens the tent cloth and reveals himself.

JASON CALHOONE

I'm Up.

Jason crawls out of the tent and walks over to the campfire area.

HICK

I take it, you heard some of that?

Jason nods.

HICK (CONT'D)

Speak up! What did you hear?

JASON CALHOONE

Enough to know... that you know my situation.

HICK

Yes I do... and what do you attend to do about your situation?

Jason shrugs.

JASON CALHOONE

What can I do? I'm no match for this... and you know it.

Hick and Della look at each other.

HICK

Wise words! That said... That's still no excuse. Not here in the real world, kid.

DELLA

Easy, Hick.

Hick stands up.

HICK

Yes ma'am.

Della looks at Jason.

DELLA

Hick's just trying to help.

Jason Nods and looks to Hick.

HICK
Here's the deal. Listen up! I'm
only going to say this once.

JASON CALHOONE
Shoot!

Hicks sits down next to Jason.

HICK
The man that shot and killed your
daddy is a corrupt legal publicist
named Mr. Edvan Dunham. He shot
your daddy in the back coming out
of that saloon. Then, he used his
legal power to seize your daddy's
assets, including your home.

Della excuses herself. She gets up and attends to cleaning
the tent.

HICK (CONT'D)
Now, you and I are going to go and
take back what rightfully belongs
to you.

JASON CALHOONE
I don't know. That sounds like a
lot of trouble.

HICK
That's your choice, kid.

Della comes back over to gather the plates and stuff around
the campfire. She gathers a couple things and walks away.

HICK (CONT'D)
Do you want to go live with your
auntie, or do you want to man-up
and take back your life?

JASON CALHOONE
Are you going to help me?

HICK
Yes! If you allow me.

Della smiles, overlooking the conversation.

JASON CALHOONE
What's the plan?

Della steps behind Jason. She places her hand on his shoulder
and leans closer to his ear.

DELLA

It's always good to see a young man stand up and do the right thing. You made the right choice, Jason. Now, listen to Hick, he knows what to do.

Della steps away and packs-up the camp.

Hick Stands up. He walks over to a brush area.

HICK

The way I see it, we got one shot at this. One shot!

Jason gets up and steps over to Hick.

JASON CALHOONE

I'm listening.

Hick lifts the green brush and reveals the Ohio River. Jason And Hick overlook the river scenery.

HICK

Mr. Dunham will be coming up the river soon in his personal steamboat. He will be unprotected and our presence will be unexpected. He's not expecting us.

DELLA

I'll take the horses to the north side, where I will wait for you two to return.

JASON CALHOONE

That's if we make it.

Hick steps over to another view of the river. He lifts the brush and reveals another angle (off in the near distance) of a narrow river band.

HICK

We board the boat on the south side of that hill, were the river is narrow. we'll exit on the north side, where Della will be waiting.

JASON CALHOONE

OK! How do we get on and off the boat.

Hick releases the brush and closes the view.

HICK

The spots are narrow. I have rope to swing onto the ship. Getting off.. well, you look like you can use bath. You do know how to swim?

JASON CALHOONE

I can swim.

They all chuckle sweet nothings to the humor of the situation.

HICK

Good! Once we are on the boat, we will convince Mr. Dungham to return your property. I think you'll find him more cooperative with me there.

JASON CALHOONE

So we get in, or should I say, on. We deal with this Edvan guy, get what's mine, and get off the boat.

HICK

That's the plan. Ain't nobody ever going to bother again, afterwards. I can promise you that much.

Della has packed up camp and everything is ready to go.

DELLA

Ready?

Jason and Hick turn to leave. Hick stops and places his hand on Jason's chest, stopping him in his tracks.

HICK

After all is done; our work here is finished. I go my way, and you go back home.

The two gentleman shake hands and agree. They walk to the horses and mount their horses.

EXT. OHIO RIVER - DAY

A steamboat comes floating up the Ohio River, right on time.

MR. EDVAN DUNGHAM, 60, stands on the deck his steamboat. He enjoys the view briefly, and then steps inside to his steamboat office.

EXT. OHIO RIVER - SOUTHERN NARROW ROCKY CLIFF - DAY

Jason and Hick prepare to ambush Edvan Dunham's steamboat. They stand at the rocky top of a cliff where the river is narrow enough to make their swinging entrance aboard.

Della settles up the horses, binding them together. She departs swiftly, leaving Jason and Hick on their own.

Hick Throws both ropes up and around a big tree branch. He tightens the ropes and hands Jason his rope.

HICK

It's go time. You ready?

Jason nods and they both put on their bandana masks.

EXT. OHIO RIVER - DAY

The steamboat arrives, it reaches the narrow area.

EXT. OHIO RIVER - SOUTHERN NARROW ROCKY CLIFF - DAY

Jason And Hick swing off the rock cliff.

EXT. DUNHAM'S STEAMBOAT/OHIO RIVER - DAY

Jason And Hick swing onto the steamboat and land on the deck. Unseen, they hurry and untie themselves, releasing themselves from the cliff.

INT. DUNHAM'S STEAMBOAT/OFFICE ROOM - DAY

Edvan Dunham sits in his cabin room alone. Going through his paperwork. Smoking the tobacco in his pipe.

EXT. DUNHAM'S STEAMBOAT/OHIO RIVER - DAY

Jason and hick, on the deck, pull out their pistols and cock the hammers back, ready to fire if they have too. They slowly creep towards Edvan's office room door.

They reach Edvan's office door. They each take a side of the door. Hick silently counts to three.

HICK

(Silently/Mute)

One! Two! Three!

INT. DUNHAM'S STEAMBOAT/OFFICE ROOM - DAY

Hick kicks the door open.

Jason and Hick rush into the office room with their pistols pointed directly at Edvan Dungham.

JASON CALHOONE
Don't move! Get your hands up, now.

Edvan puts his hands up on top of his head. He looks at the two gentleman. He recognizes Jason immediately.

EDVAN DUNGHAM
You got balls, kid. I'll give you that.

Jason steps toward Edvan with his pistol pointed at him.

JASON CALHOONE
Quite!

Edvan looks over to the other masked gentleman, who is Hick.

EDVAN DUNGHAM
And who might you be there, fella?

Hick removes his bandana mask and reveals his face.

HICK
Surely, you haven't forgotten me, old timer.

Edvan recognizes Hick, the ghost from his past. His eyes widen with fear as he begins to tremble in his seat.

EDVAN DUNGHAM
So, this is how it ends?

Hick leans on Edvan's desk.

HICK
First, you're going to return what rightfully belongs to this young man.

EDVAN DUNGHAM
What insurances do I have?

Hick leans more closer to Edvan. He points the barrel of his pistol in front of Edvan's face.

HICK

Let's just say, them other
Dungham's out there might have a
future.

EDVAN DUNGHAM

You might be a stone cold killer,
but you're no devilish monster,
Hick.

HICK

Neither where you, until now.

Edvan eyes Hick directly. He can see that Hick is serious.

Jason moves closer to cover Hick.

Edvan grabs Jason's file off his desk and opens it. He stamps
the paper with a rubber stamper, legally returning the
property to Jason.

Jason overlooks the action.

Edvan finishes stamping, and places the papers back in the
folder. Edvan hands the folder to Jason.

EDVAN DUNGHAM

There... it's settled.

Jason takes the papers.

JASON CALHOONE

Now that that's settled, we got one
more thing to settle, Mr Dungham.

Jason steps forward and reaches his pistol out to shoot
Edvan.

JASON CALHOONE (CONT'D)

You killed my father, you bastard.

Hicks steps between Jason and Edvan. He blocks the shot.

HICK

That's where I step in, kid. Put
your gun down and go stand over
there by the door. Do it now!

Edvan leans back in his chair.

EDVAN DUNGHAM

You can't rob this young man of
avenging his father's killer.

Hick turns around to Edvan.

HICK
But I can honor his father, by
saving his son's innocence, and
mortal soul.

Jason puts his gun down and steps back towards the door.

JASON CALHOONE
What's this about, Hick?

Edvan laughs and chuckles.

EDVAN DUNGHAM
Wait! You didn't tell him. You want
to tell him now, or should I?

Hick moves safely between Jason and Edvan, looking at both of them.

HICK
My recent wife used to work for
Edvan... til one day she overheard
something. When she told me, I kept
her silent and safe.

EDVAN DUNGHAM
Not safe enough.

Hick faces Edvan aggravated.

HICK
Couldn't let it go, could you
edvan.

Hick turns back toward Jason.

HICK (CONT'D)
He sent his partner to murder my
wife. After he shot her, I killed
him. I was arrested and charged.

Edvan leans forward at his desk and rudely interrupts.

EDVAN DUNGHAM
If it wasn't for this boy's daddy,
you'd be rotting in jail.

Jason steps forward.

JASON CALHOONE
My Father?

Hick moves between them. Deescalating the situation.

HICK

Your father testified in court. He told the truth about what he witnessed that day. The judge pardoned me of all charges. I was released. Your daddy was a good and honest man.

JASON CALHOONE

More reason to shoot this guy, in my book.

HICK

That's right! But.. it's not your shot, kid. It's mine.

Hick turns away from Jason and takes his stance directly in front of Edvan, facing him face to face.

Edvan sits upright in his desk chair, as if he knows what's coming and has no shame. He places his hands firmly on the desk before him. Sweating nervously, he trembles fearfully.

EDVAN DUNGHAM

So, this is how it ends... Hick?

Hick FIRES 3 SHOTS from his pistol. Two in the chest and one in head. (He shoots Edvan dead)

Edvan falls straight back in his chair, and falls to the ground. Lying there dead, the shots killed him instantly.

Jason walks over to see Edvan's corpse. He stands over his dead body.

Hick walks over to see the body as well.

Both Jason and hick stand over Edvan Dungham's dead body. Hick leans down closer.

HICK

The End!

THE END