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The Adventures of Stetson McGraw
Episode 3: Stetson McGraw and the Ghost of the Abilene Trail

SCENE ONE: INTRO.

MUSIC: THEME MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER

Radio theatre presents: "The
Adventures of Stetson McGraw".
Episode three: "Stetson McGraw and
the Ghost of the Abilene Trail".

MUSIC: FADE OUT THEME MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER

In our last episode, legendary
lawman Stetson McGraw had caught up
with "Mad Dog" Doud aboard the
Round Rock Express, and was taking
the criminal into custody. But at
that very moment, a mysterious
accident caused a horrible train
wreck!

SCENE TWO: THE TRAIN TRACKS.

SOUND: A TRAIN WRECK (CONTINUOUS).

Mad Dog screams, but it's cut off by --

SOUND: A BODY HITS THE DIRT.

SOUND: THE TRAIN WRECK TRAILS OFF.

Mad Dog coughs and groans (as he gets up).

SOUND: A COUPLE AWKWARD FOOTSTEPS. JINGLING CHAINS.

SOUND: HE HITS THE DIRT AGAIN.

Mad Dog coughs.

MAD DOG

Oh god.

Mad Dog coughs and groans (as he gets up).

SOUND: A COUPLE AWKWARD FOOTSTEPS. JINGLING CHAINS.

SOUND: A GUN COCKS.

STETSON
Mad Dog?

Beat.

STETSON
Down here.

Stetson groans with effort.

SOUND: TINY METALLIC 'CREAK.'

Beat.

SOUND: ANOTHER TINY METALLIC 'CREAK.'

Stetson gasps.

SOUND: A COUPLE AWKWARD FOOTSTEPS. JINGLING CHAINS.

MAD DOG
You're pinned --

STETSON
Stay! There!

MAD DOG
But I can pull that --

STETSON
You'll pull my goddamn head off, if
I let you get close enough.

Stetson sighs.

STETSON
We'll just wait.

MAD DOG
(intense)
If we stay here we'll die.

Beat.

MAD DOG
Let me move the crate --

STETSON
Stay right there, you lowdown
thief. You ain't no better than you
were twenty years ago.

MUSIC: HARP RUNS, INDICATING A FLASHBACK.

SCENE THREE: DEVIL'S GORGE FIDUCIARY TRUST -- ROOFTOP.

SOUND: SONGBIRDS.

MUSIC: A TINNY PIANO IN A DISTANT BAR.

In this scene, Stetson sounds young, and cheerful, and patronizing.

His DEPUTY is even younger, and earnest, and a bit slow.

DEPUTY
They ain't comin'.

Beat.

DEPUTY
Or I ain't seein' 'em.

Beat.

DEPUTY
We're too exposed.

Stetson laughs.

DEPUTY
Sheriff McGraw?

STETSON
Well, *deputy*, they'll be here 'cos
this is the last bank on the
Abilene Trail they ain't robbed.
And this spot gives us a view to
the east. Pick 'em off easy.

DEPUTY
But --

STETSON
You wanna check out the west? See
if they're climbing up out of
Devil's Gorge?

DEPUTY
I reckon not.

Beat.

DEPUTY
They ain't comin'.

SOUND: A CHURCH BELL TOLLS TWELVE TIMES.

DEPUTY
Is there --

STETSON
Shh!

The deputy gasps.

All these lines are whispered until noted otherwise.

DEPUTY
That's Doud in front!

STETSON
Quiet, kid!

SOUND: RICKETY WHEELS IN THE DISTANCE. BARELY-AUDIBLE (AND INDECIPHERABLE) CONVERSATION.

DEPUTY
What the hell is that?

STETSON
That rolling contraption?
(a realization)
It's full of knockout gas!

DEPUTY
Huh?

STETSON
That's how they do it! How the bank
folks never remember nothin', but
wakin' up with their gold gone!

DEPUTY
Okay.

SOUND: A GUN COCKS.

STETSON
Hold on. There's too many of 'em.
We get one shot before they start
shootin' back, then we gotta run
like hell. We hit the main tank of
that contraption of theirs, it
knocks 'em all out.

DEPUTY
I can't hit that from here.

STETSON
So we let 'em get closer.

DEPUTY
Then I take the shot?

STETSON
Then *I* take the shot.

SCENE FOUR: DEVIL'S GORGE -- STREET.

SOUND: SONGBIRDS. CREAKING WHEELS (LOUDER).

MUSIC: TINNY PIANO (LOUDER).

SOUND: THE WHEELS STOP.

BRUTUS
Wait.

MAD DOG
No!

CRIMINAL #1
What now?

BRUTUS
I have bad feeling.

MAD DOG
We waltz in, we knock'em out, we
rob'em blind, and we waltz out!

CRIMINAL #2
Exactly.

SOUND: THE WHEELS RESTART.

MAD DOG
There ain't nobody can stop us!

SCENE FIVE: DEVIL'S GORGE FIDUCIARY TRUST -- ROOFTOP.

SOUND: SAME AS SCENE THREE.

Stetson is spooked.

STETSON
They saw us!

DEPUTY
 (doubtful)
 You think?

STETSON
 The big guy did!

DEPUTY
 We wait for the shot, right?

STETSON
 Yeah. Of course.

SCENE SIX: DEVIL'S GORGE -- STREET.

SOUND: SAME AS SCENE FOUR.

BRUTUS
 And why we go through main street?

MAD DOG
 It ain't main street.

BRUTUS
 Feels like parade.

SCENE SEVEN: DEVIL'S GORGE FIDUCIARY TRUST -- ROOFTOP.

SOUND: SAME AS SCENE FIVE.

SOUND: BRIEF, SLIGHTLY LOUD (BUT STILL INDECIPHERABLE)
 ARGUMENT.

STETSON
 What's that commotion?

DEPUTY
 Sheriff?

STETSON
 Something's up.

DEPUTY
 Sheriff, we--

From here on, Stetson talks a little bit too loud, while the deputy keeps talking in a harsh whisper.

STETSON
 I'm takin' the shot!

DEPUTY
 Sir, they ain't seen us, they ain't
 close enough--

STETSON
 They're gonna kill us!

DEPUTY
 Sir?

SOUND: A GUN COCKS.

DEPUTY
 They're too far!

SOUND: GUNSHOT.

Beat.

STETSON
 Did I hit it?!

DEPUTY
 I can't tell.

STETSON
 Aw, they're gonna get us any second
 now --

SOUND: RETREATING FOOTSTEPS.

SOUND: A DOOR SLAMS.

DEPUTY
 Sheriff McGraw? Stetson?

The deputy sighs.

DEPUTY
 I never thought I'd live to see
 Stetson McGraw turn yella.
 (suddenly anxious)
 Where'd they go?

SCENE EIGHT: DEVIL'S GORGE -- SIDE STREET.

MAD DOG
 Okay, we're taking a side street.
 Happy?

CRIMINAL #1
 I heard a shot.

BRUTUS

Ten percent too low for my take.

CRIMINAL #2

When?

CRIMINAL #1

When y'all were scoping the side street. Didn't you hear it?

MAD DOG

Anybody have bullet holes in'em?

CRIMINAL #2

They was arguin' percentages.

MAD DOG

Get the masks ready.

SCENE NINE: DEVIL'S GORGE FIDUCIARY TRUST -- ATTIC.

Stetson shivers.

DEPUTY

Sheriff? What the hell happened to you?

STETSON

Where's the gang?

DEPUTY

I dunno, they --

STETSON

Dammit!

SOUND: STOMPING FOOTSTEPS.

DEPUTY

Do we call in the posse?

STETSON

There ain't time!

SCENE TEN: DEVIL'S GORGE FIDUCIARY TRUST -- MAIN FLOOR.

SOUND: QUIET CONVERSATION. COINS CLINK.

JIMMY

Boss, I'm scared.

BOSS

We have to maintain an appearance
of normal business, Jimmy.

JIMMY

You sure Sheriff McGraw knows what
he's doing?

BOSS

He's the best lawman this state's
ever seen.

SOUND: A DOOR BURSTS OPEN.

MAD DOG

All right, y'all, this is a
robbery!

Everyone screams.

SOUND: A SQUEAKY VALVE OPENS.

SOUND: 'PSSHT' AS GAS ESCAPES.

Customers gasp.

SOUND: BODIES FALL TO THE FLOOR.

SOUND: ANOTHER DOOR FLIES OPEN.

STETSON

Mad dog!

SOUND: GUNSHOTS. SCREAMS.

BRUTUS

My mask!

Brutus groans and collapses.

SOUND: BRUTUS HITS THE FLOOR.

STETSON

(breathing heavy)
Thankee kindly.

SOUND: A FEW FAINT GROANS.

STETSON

Looks like you've taken a hit in
the shoulder, Mad Dog.

He punctuates the word "shoulder" with:

SOUND: A HEAVY-SOUNDING PUNCH.

Mad Dog groans.

MAD DOG
S-Stetson?

STETSON
(grunting)
Upsy-daisy.

MAD DOG
Wh-where are we going?

STETSON
A hundred feet to the west, Mad
Dog.

SCENE ELEVEN: DEVIL'S GORGE -- EDGE OF THE RAVINE.

SOUND: HOWLING WIND. DISTANT RUNNING WATER.

SOUND: STUMBLING FOOTSTEPS.

SOUND: MAD DOG STRUGGLES.

MAD DOG
Devil's Gorge? No. You never killed
nobody. Nobody you could take to
jail.

STETSON
'Fore today, I never was a coward.
I never let a dozen innocent folk
get kilt on my watch. You took
somethin' from me today, Mad Dog.
And I'll be damned if I let you
walk away from it.

SOUND: MORE STRUGGLING.

STETSON
Say your prayers, Mad Dog.

MAD DOG
No!

Mad Dog screams.

SOUND: THE SCREAM FADES IN THE DISTANCE.

Stetson coughs, moans, passes out.

SOUND: STETSON HITS THE DIRT.

MUSIC: HARP RUNS INDICATE THE END OF THE FLASHBACK.

SCENE TWELVE: TRAIN TRACKS.

SOUND: SAME AS SCENE TWO.

MAD DOG

I came to, and I thought it was heaven. The sky was so clear, and the sun was setting, and the creek water was lappin' at my feet, and I could hear --

STETSON

Bull. No man could've survived that.

MAD DOG

It was a goddamn miracle.

STETSON

I swore, up and down to a courtroom of lawyers and reporters and regular folks, that you was dead.

MAD DOG

Reckon I was, in a way.

STETSON

Huh?

MAD DOG

New name. New town. Eventually wound up buildin' contraptions at the University, just after they ran you out of town on a rail.

STETSON

You expect me to believe this?

MAD DOG

I'm here, ain't I? But...

Beat.

MAD DOG

I mean, don't you reckon a man can start over?

Beat.

STETSON

Okay. Move this goddamn thing.

They both groan (as they move it).

SOUND: METAL SCRAPES ACROSS THE GROUND.

SOUND: SOMETHING HEAVY CRASHES TO THE GROUND.

Stetson takes a couple of deep breaths, and groans (as he gets to his feet).

STETSON

Why the hell are you robbing a train, anyway?

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS. JINGLING CHAINS.

MAD DOG

Do you know what this train is carrying?

STETSON

Rich folks.

MAD DOG

The passengers get off at Round Rock. They were scheduled to be there not ten minutes ago.

Beat.

STETSON

What about the freight?

MAD DOG

The freight goes to Waco.

STETSON

(dismissive)

They wouldn't go to Waco.

MAD DOG

They would. They were. And I reckon it would've been the end of Texas and everything in it.

STETSON

Right. You're robbin' a train for charitable reasons.

MAD DOG

I wasn't ever robbing the train.

STETSON
What were you doin'?

SCENE THIRTEEN: SOMEWHERE IN THE WRECKAGE.

SOUND: A FAINT, MUFFLED, 'TICK-TOCK' SOUND.

SOUND: THE TICKING STOPS.

SOUND: EXPLOSION!

SCENE FOURTEEN: OUTRO

ANNOUNCER
What was the cargo of the Round
Rock Express? Where was it headed?
And how many more violent mishaps
can Stetson McGraw survive?

MUSIC: THEME MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER
Find out on our next exciting
installment of: "The Adventures
of Stetson McGraw"!
(MORE)