

A man for all times

By

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FADE IN:

INT.GALLOWS - DAY

SUPER: MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA 1880

The gallows is set on the first level, in a corner of the building. NED KELLY(25) walks to the wooden platform, accompanied by a priest, altar boy, a doctor and the prison sheriff.

NED(V.O)

I arrive at the scaffold on a November morning. My limbs ache from the wounds received at the Last Stand. Soon I will be free of such worldly bothers.

MONTAGE:

Images of the Kelly gang, clad in primitive armor, shooting it out with police in front of the Glenrowan Hotel...

Ned walks into a hail of gunfire, and topples to his knees. Police swarm over him, ripping off his steel helmet...

The hotel burns, as a priest drags out bodies...

NED(V.O)

My brother and mates perished in the final battle, and I was taken, battered and torn, barely alive. The authorities ensured the best physicians treated me, and I recovered over time.

A stern faced judge, with black cloth on his wig, stares back at a defiant Ned in the dock.

NED(V.O)

I was brought to trial and sentenced to death for killing the police troopers who had hunted me...

A tired and sad woman works in a laundry...

NED(V.O)

My poor mother languishes still, in this same prison, awaiting the news of my death. The powers-that-be have denied our kin my remains after execution. Even my clothes are to be burnt...

END OF MONTAGE

Ned steps onto the trap and the processes of legal murder begin.

NED(V.O)

Ah well, I think, as I step onto the drop. I suppose it had to come to this. The execution party look at me and I realise I have spoken aloud.

The hangman appears from a side door, dressed in prison garb. His head is shaved, his visage rough, giving the scene a grotesque feel.

NED(V.O)

The hangman is a fellow prisoner, a chicken thief no less. He binds my ruined arms behind my back. I protest - not from the pain, but at the need for it. I will go quietly, without struggle. But it is all part of the official procedure to kill me. Now my legs are pinioned and I stand helpless on the trapdoor.

The hangman continues his work methodically, under the scrutiny of the doctor; he needs to ensure that death is instant and humane. The priest intones prayers. Below the scaffold, a group of witnesses watch impassively.

NED(V.O)

The noose is fitted around my neck. I move my head slightly to assist. As the white hood is pulled over my face, I glance up at the skylight in the ceiling, a final look at the world. Then I am in darkness. Waiting...

The hangman steps back to an iron lever connected to the trap. The doctor reaches out, as if to adjust the rope.

NED(V.O)

There is an echoing crash as the lever is pulled. The floor opens beneath my feet and I am falling. I tense, preparing for the abrupt halt that will break my neck, and usher me through to a higher court.

Ned's body comes to a stop with a sickening THUD. The onlookers stare as he slowly turns at the end of the rope.

NED(V.O)

My fall ceases, but there is nothing! No pain, no feeling of hanging or swinging, no anything. My conscious mind begins to shut down and I drift into a peaceful oblivion.

(beat)

But not for long...

EXT. BOAT - PRE-DAWN

Ned sits, eyes closed, against the side of the long boat. He is dressed in a uniform, as are the rest of the men in the boat. JOE BYRNE (23) leans across and kicks Ned's leg.

JOE

Come on, Ned, wake up!

NED(V.O)

I open my eyes slowly, aware of a rocking motion beneath me. My neck aches... Joe Byrne, my best mate, who I last saw lying dead in the front bar of Jones's Hotel, is smiling at me. Next to him is Steve Hart, my brother's comrade. He was alive when I was captured, but his body was later dragged from the ruins of the pub, reduced to a burnt piece of meat...

DAN

Leave him alone. He's saving his strength.

NED(V.O)

Another welcome voice, this time next to my ear. I turn to see my beloved brother, watching me with his customary warmth. There is no sign of the fiery end he shared with Steve. A great mystery is unfolding here, of which I seem to be a mere spectator.

The sky above begins to lighten. Ned looks down at the uniform he wears then around at the other men.

NED(V.O)

My restored friends do not seem surprised at my presence. Indeed, to them I have only been asleep. The past few minutes have seen me

(MORE)

NED(V.O) (cont'd)
experience extreme stress, enough
for several lifetimes. But
strangely, I feel no fear.
Rather, I feel a sense of
belonging...

Steve leans forward and vomits on the wooden floor of the boat. Other men follow suit as they near shore. The boat shudders as waves crash. An officer rises at the front.

OFFICER
Rifles ready, men. When we land
on the beach, make your way to
the foot of the cliffs, and wait
for further orders.

The soldiers prepare their weapons. Ned takes his rifle and huddles with the others. He lifts his head to look over the side of the boat.

NED(V.O)
A new shock hits me! We are just
one of many boats gliding into
the beach. Away out to the ocean,
I can see huge ships of iron,
bristling with guns. A barrage of
noise begins as the ships fire at
the cliffs.

On land, many guns open up in reply. The air over the water churns with shells and smoke.

NED(V.O)
A boat nearby is hit and the
explosion makes my eyes shake. A
large spout of water erupts,
flinging debris across the ocean.
The boat is reduced to chunks of
wood, the men ripped to pieces.
What manner of hell is this?

Dan grabs Ned's hand, his body trembling. Ned whispers to him instinctively, assuring him.

NED(V.O)
Joe looks at me and smiles. Good
old Joe, always there with a joke
and a smile during the worst of
times. Steve shuffles towards us
and once again we are the Kelly
Gang, bonded by fate and
circumstance.

The officer peers forward as the boat RASPS on the sand. He leaps over the side, splashing through the water. The din is enormous.

NED(V.O)

Then we are all up and scrambling out of the boat. Bullets whiz by our heads and the water is churned into a bloody fury. Men are falling, shot before they can get to shore. The four of us manage to stay upright and we make it to the cliffs. Our weapons remain unfired.

NED

Joe, what is this place?

Joe looks at Ned in bewilderment.

JOE

Gallipoli peninsula. On the coast of Turkey. Where else would we be?

(beat)

Are you alright, Ned? You haven't been wounded...?

NED(V.O)

I shake my head and ask another question. Turkey? How did..?

NED

The date, Joe. What date and year is it?

NED(V.O)

Again he examines my face, concerned for my sanity.

JOE

It's April twenty fifth. 1915.

NED(V.O)

I close my eyes...

FADE OUT

The End.