

Part 20

Part 20 begins with the protagonist, the Kid, and his companion Toadvine making a desperate flight from the Yumas, their only goal to escape through a treacherous, barren landscape. The Kid, despite having an arrow embedded deep in his leg, refuses to stop. His injury does not slow him down, and the pair push on through the desolate plains. The hot sun beats down on them, and their water supply is running dangerously low. As they navigate the harsh terrain of sand dunes and barren stretches of earth, the realization that they are surrounded by little more than the remnants of a once-thriving environment hits them. Their struggle to survive is palpable, and they are aware that each passing minute brings them closer to being caught by their pursuers, who relentlessly follow them through the desolation.

Despite the Kid's growing pain from the wound, the two continue their journey, navigating the wilderness with only a sense of urgency to guide them. Toadvine, ever the pragmatist, checks on the Kid, asking how much longer he can keep walking. He questions the Kid's ability to continue, given their lack of resources and their dangerously low water supply. Their physical exhaustion is becoming evident, but there is no choice but to keep moving forward. As the harshness of the landscape closes in on them, they spot their enemies, the Yumas, closing in. The tension spikes as the Yumas begin firing arrows at them, forcing Toadvine and the Kid to take cover and defend themselves. The Kid, with a steady hand and unwavering resolve, manages to shoot one of the attackers, momentarily halting the assault. This brief success gives them a chance to regroup, but the Yumas' relentless pursuit is far from over.

Eventually, the duo stumbles upon a well named Alamo Mucho, hoping for some sort of respite from their physical and emotional strain. To their surprise, they find the expriest Tobin alone and unarmed at the well. Despite their initial hesitation, they drink the last of the remaining water, feeling its cool relief wash over them, but they know it won't be enough to sustain them. As the Yumas regroup in the distance, the trio discusses their situation and the limited resources they have left. The expriest engages the Kid in conversation, discussing their dwindling supplies of ammunition and food, their situation growing more dire by the minute. The oppressive feeling of doom looms over the group, but the presence of Tobin provides a small sense of temporary comfort amidst the chaos. As night falls, the Kid, Toadvine, and the expriest find themselves surrounded by enemies, the silhouettes of the Yumas creeping closer with each passing moment. The sense of vulnerability and dread is suffocating as the group prepares for the long, tense vigil that will stretch into the darkness.

The chapter reaches its climax as the Judge reappears, accompanied by an imbecile, bringing with them an air of authority and menace. The Judge, as always, seems to hold the reins of power in the conversation, but the exchange with Toadvine over his hat takes on a darker tone. It is a stark reminder of the materialistic and brutal nature of the world they are in, where even the smallest transaction or trade can hold significant weight. The Judge's presence casts a long shadow over the already bleak and violent landscape, highlighting the twisted balance of survival and morality in their lawless world. As the discussion between the Judge and Toadvine unfolds, it becomes clear that every action is driven by the need to survive, with little regard for what is right or just. The conversation is filled with threats, psychological manipulation, and power struggles, all playing out against the backdrop of the unforgiving desert. The saloon scene, where laughter and violence blend into one, reflects the fractured reality the characters live in. The complexity of their interactions, filled with tension, manipulation, and conflicting desires, serves as a stark commentary on the human condition and survival in a harsh, unforgiving world. The chapter draws to a close with the oppressive feeling that the violence and desolation will continue, as the characters remain trapped in an endless cycle of survival amid the chaotic, brutal landscape.