

"COWBOYS & ALCHEMISTS"

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EXT. SALOON - LATE AFTERNOON

We begin on a late afternoon sun above an old, well-loved saloon in a small one-horse town. By the raucous din of noise, the saloon is clearly full. A deep woman's voice bellows over the crowd.

WOMAN (O.C.)

I could use a hand with this next trick...

INT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS

A young woman, maybe 20, with long dark hair pulled into a tight bun stands on a small stage at the front of the packed saloon. It's clear that she is a woman, despite the fact that she's attempted to hide her identity with a small fake mustache and a large top hat. She pulls a hand out of her hat.

WOMAN

I learned it from a one-armed magician, and... Oh... Actually, I guess I can probably just do it myself then.

In the back of the crowd, a lanky, flaxen-haired man in a cowboy hat leans against the bar. WES ASHLEY, a bounty hunter whose exact age is difficult to pinpoint, eyes the woman suspiciously and studies a piece of parchment.

SHERIFF HANSIAN DANTE a large black man tattooed with the gnarly scars of previous scraps, finds Wes at the bar.

DANTE

What did you call me in here for, Wes?

WES

Dante! I need your help taking her in.

Wes points to the stage, and Dante looks down at the parchment. It's a WANTED POSTER of the woman onstage. It reads: ALYS YATES MACKENZIE, a bandit wanted for card cheatin', pickpocketing, heists, and other larceny.

DANTE

You sure that's her?

Wes holds a little fake moustache up under the nose.

DANTE (cont'd)
Oh yeah, that's her alright.

They watch her for a moment as she interacts with the crowd, doing classic tricks like pulling a coin out from behind an ear, etc.

DANTE (cont'd)
Fine, let's make this quick. I need you to help me catch the Golem that's been terrorizing the town.

WES
(distractedly)
Yeah... let's just wait 'til she's done...

DANTE
(sighs)
This again!?

WES
I want to know how she does it!!!

DANTE
Why?? You can do better magic-

WES
(nervously)
Alchemy! I can do...that. Of course I can. And if you've heard anything to the contrary, it would be a lie!

The Sheriff eyes him suspiciously.

WES (cont'd)
But with alchemy, you need materials to transform. She can make things out of nothing. And she can make things disappear!
(to himself)
I need to learn that.

INT. BACKSTAGE - LATER

Alys finishes her final bow before rushing off stage.

ALYS
Good crowd.

Once she's safely in the back hallways, she pulls a POUCH out of her jacket and pulls out a handful of jewelry.

ALYS (cont'd)
REALLY good crowd!

She opens the back door of the saloon and is instantly greeted by Dante.

ALYS (cont'd)
Oh! Afternoon sheriff! I was just
lookin' in this lost-and-found pouch
for my locket, and I found it! Yaay!

Alys forces a huge smile as she chucks the bag away. She tries to pass the Sheriff who stops her.

DANTE
I don't think so.

Alys laughs nervously, then bolts the other direction, only to bump immediately into Wes. They have her surrounded. The sheriff hauls her to her feet and starts to put her in cuffs.

ALYS
Hey! Who do you guys think I am? What
have I ever done?

The Sheriff holds out the wanted poster.

DANTE
This answer your question?

ALYS
Actually, no.

DANTE
What?

ALYS
I can't read. What does it say?

DANTE
It says you're wanted.

ALYS
Aww! And my Ma said no one would ever
want me.

DANTE
No, it means--

WES
You really can't read? That's so sad.

DANTE
Illiteracy is a huge tragedy.

ALYS
At least I got other skills--

Alys holds her hands up, somehow free of cuffs. Wes and Dante look at her in shock, and she runs off. They give chase. It's not a long chase.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN THOROUGHFARE - MOMENTS LATER

Alys, now in handcuffs, leg chains, and bound around her midsection with rope, trudges miserably behind Dante and Wes.

ALYS
Okay, is the rope really necessary? I don't even think its doing anything.

Wes turns towards her.

WES
I'll take off the rope if you tell me how you do your magic.

ALYS
A magician never reveals her secrets.

WES
(sighs dramatically)
But I wanna know!!!!

Just then - the group is interrupted by a small earthquake and a very loud roar. The ground in front of them suddenly erupts, giving birth to a giant, terrifying EARTH GOLEM.

He roars again, taking up a fighting stance in front of the team. Dante jumps into action, pulling out a large shimmering broadsword. Wes and Alys are frozen in place.

ALYS
I'll let y'in on one secret...

WES
(unable to look away)
Y-yeah?

ALYS
Always watch a magician's hands.

WES

Hands?

Wes holds up his own hands and sees that the handcuffs are now around his wrists, while Alys is free.

ALYS

So long!

Wes watches Alys escape as he struggles to free himself. He calls to Dante.

WES

Dante! Help!

DANTE

I've got my own problems over here!

On Dante, somehow tied up in the rope and leg chains, attempts to keep fighting off the earth golem.

WES

How does she do that?

Wes runs over to help Dante.

WES (cont'd)

I need the key!

ALYS

(calling back)

You mean THIS key?

WES

How does she DO that!?!?

DANTE

Quick! Use your magic!

WES

Umm, yeah, coming!

Wes, still handcuffed, looks around quickly and grabs a bucket of slop nearby. He races towards the monster, and gets ready to channel a spell, his hands starting to glow.

WES (cont'd)

(under his breath)

Please work.

(louder)

Take THIS! FIREBALL!

As Wes launches the bucket at the monster, expecting it to turn into fire, the monster braces -- only to be showered with a cloud of BUTTERFLIES.

DANTE

What was that?! You're supposed to be a powerful wizard!

WES

I've been having issues lately, okay?
I'm sure I just have to try harder.
FIRE SPARKS!

Wes grabs a handful of rocks and sand and throws them up in the air. They transform into daisies, and fall to the ground.

WES (cont'd)

You've gotta be KIDDING ME!

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - CONTINUOUS

At the edge of town, Alys quickly saddles her horse. As she mounts the stallion she glances back towards the fight and hesitates.

From her POV we see Wes and Dante, cuffed and chained, hopping around pathetically trying to fight the monster. She looks down at the key in her hand.

HOARSE VOICE

You know you gotta do what's right.

ALYS

What?! No I don't! Who said that?

Alys looks around and only sees the other horse tied to the post. She eyes it suspiciously.

ALYS (cont'd)

Horsey?

HOARSE VOICED HORSE

Yeah, that's right.

Alys' jaw drops.

HOARSE VOICED HORSE (cont'd)

You never heard a talking horse before? I'm Wes' familiar.

ALYS

Then YOU go help him!

HOARSE VOICED HORSE
 What am I gonna do? Eat some oats?
 Whinny?

Alys groans.

HOARSE VOICED HORSE (cont'd)
 You got any oats?

EXT. THOROUGHFARE - MOMENTS LATER

Exhausted from the fight, Wes and Dante are just trying to stay alive. Suddenly, they hear a whistle and turn to see Alys standing around the corner of a nearby building.

She quickly motions for them to follow her, and they do. The stone creature follows, much slower. Alys unlocks the handcuffs and chains.

ALYS
 We have to distract it, but I don't
 have my usual supplies. Any ideas?

WES
 (sighs)
 I have a confession to make. I can't
 do alchemy anymore.

Dante pats him on the shoulder, comfortingly.

DANTE
 Aww, Wes. That's obvious.

WES
 None of my normal spells work. All I
 can do is this!

Wes throws a rock up in the air. It transforms into a RED BLANKET and falls into his hands.

WES (cont'd)
 And THIS! And THAT!

He throws two more rocks up in the air. One transforms into a handful of COLOURFUL HANDKERCHIEFS. One transforms into a poof of GLITTER.

WES (cont'd)
 (frustrated)
 SEE? Useless!

ALYS
Wait, that's perfect!

Moments later -- The golem rounds the corner and stops when he sees Alys, with her top hat and moustache back on, standing in front of Wes and Dante.

Alys holds up a hand. She reaches into her sleeve and starts pulling out a handkerchief, then another, and another, and another! The monster stands there, confused and mesmerized by the display of strange magic.

ALYS (cont'd)
The pledge!

She reaches into her hat and pulls out the large red cloth. She drapes it over Wes and Dante, and does a quick lap around them.

ALYS (cont'd)
The turn...

Once on the other side, she holds out a hand filled with glitter and blows it gently onto the blanket. She pulls the blanket away with a flourish -- revealing Wes and Dante have disappeared!

The monster, realizing this, <ROARS> angrily.

ALYS (cont'd)
And...?

Just then, Dante and Wes leap from the rooftops on either side of the monster.

WES
THE PRESTIGE!!

They land heavy on the monster, driving him to the ground and knocking his head so hard that it leaves a large dent in the road. He tries weakly to get up, then faints, this time for good. The team cheers in celebration.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - LATER

Alys mounts her horse silently, trying to sneak away.

Just then--

WES
You're not going anywhere...

Alys turns, startled, and sees Wes and Dante.

WES (cont'd)
... until you spill your secrets!

ALYS
You really came to beg?

WES
Nah. We came here to thank you.

DANTE
Thank her? I came here to arrest her.

Alys looks at Dante for a beat, then takes off on her horse. Wes and Dante quickly jump on their horses and take off after her, all riding into the sunset. As they do, their voices fade out.

WES
Come on! I need your magic!

ALYS
You have your own magic!

WES
YOURS IS BETTER!!

DANTE
I need to take you into the station!

ALYS/WES
YOU'LL NEVER GET ME ALIVE!/NOT UNTIL
I GET MY SECRETS!

FADE TO BLACK.