

COWBOY KIM'S TALES OF THE WEST S01E13 - KIM MEETS
COTTONMOUTH

WRITTEN BY KELLY "COWBOY" KIM.

CASTING NOTE: The role of Cottonmouth has been written specifically for Bob Sparker.

SCENE 1 - INTRO

NARRATOR

The dry, dusty town of Judith Lake didn't have a sheriff until a lone cowboy blew in with the wind. He had no past, no future, and no name other than Kim. But he took to the town and it took to him, and now he defends this rocky little outpost with his life...in Cowboy Kim's Tales of the West.

MAIN THEME.

KIM (NAR)

Well, I don't look for trouble, but trouble keeps looking for me. This time it's a rash of crimes-- burglary, cattle rustling, a whole farm razed to the ground in a single night...

(SFX: the whistling of the wind.)

KIM (NAR)

No perp that I can find, neither. And now a bunch of kidnappings, or something that looks like 'em, anyway. Mostly young men, disappearing overnight and no clue but this.

(SFX: rustling of paper.)

KIM (NAR)

Some flyer talkin' about a get-rich-quick scheme in City X. So that's where I'm goin'.

SCENE 2 - IN THE BAR

(SFX: city sounds, the clapping of horses' hooves in the dirt, etc. Kim walks into a bar; the doors close behind him. There's some chatter in the bar that fades into the background as he talks.)

KIM
Just water, thanks.

BARTENDER
Gladly, son. Here on business?

KIM
I suppose so.

(SFX: the bartender is filling his glass. He stops.)

BARTENDER
Yeah?

KIM
You ever seen this? Found it
tacked up on a post over in
Laramie, ten miles east of here.

BARTENDER
(sighing heavily)
Cripes, not again. You want **him**
over there, in the back. Damn near
every day we get a few of these
layabouts in here for a drink and
a fight. That's his business.

KIM (NAR.)
I turned in my seat. There was a
man sitting in the back, nursing a
glass of something-or-other as he
pored over some papers. Yeah, that
looked about right.
(to the bartender)
That so, then?

BARTENDER
Yeah. I'm stayin' out of it. Talk
to him if you want the details. Or
better yet, just turn around and
head on home.
(grumbling)
Damn fool thing to do.

(SFX: Kim's footsteps as he walks to the back, laid over a
little background chatter.)

NOTE: Don't try to pass the EMCEE off as Bob. He's a bigger, broader character with a deep baritone voice, more like a carnival barker.)

EMCEE

Well hey there, friend. Wanna make a buck?

KIM

Yeah. What's this about?

EMCEE

Not much. I got a boss likes to watch some fights in the evening. You sign up, you fight five low-down rascals like yourself...no offense...

(Silence.)

EMCEE

...Then you win. \$500 at the end of the night. Easy money.

KIM

And if I lose?

EMCEE

Well, then you work for us. See, we're nice enough to give you a job. Nice deal, right? 'Specially for a big guy like you.

(beat)

You'll do fine.

KIM

...All right.

EMCEE

All right! That's the spirit. There's a cellar below here. You come back at night and tell the doorman the number "21." Got it?

KIM

I got it.

EMCEE

Good, good.
(paper rustling)
And your name?

KIM

(beat)

John Lawson.

EMCEE

(clicking his tongue)
You'll have to do better than
that, son. But that's all right.
John Lawson it is.

SCENE 3 - THAT NIGHT, IN THE CELLAR

KIM (NAR)

I made my way back in the middle
of the night. The cellar was dark,
dusty and thick with the smell of
smoke.

EMCEE

All right, boys, all right. Got a
live one for you tonight, just
blew into town today. John Lawson,
repeat, that's John Lawson, step
up...

KIM

That's me.

EMCEE

That's right. Look at you, big
strapping fellow. We'll have
ourselves a **show** tonight, boys!

(SFX: raucous laughter from the crowd.)

EMCEE

You know the rules. Five in a row.
You win, you're home free, and
with some cash money to boot. You
lose, you get a spot in...
well...you'll see.

KIM (NAR)

I was suspicious, but I kept
quiet. Plenty of time later to get
my answers, anyway.

(SFX: crowd chatter, fading out, silence)

KIM (NAR)

The first guy up was big. Stocky.
Quick eyes, too, that darted
around the room. Whether it was
fear or cleverness, I wasn't sure,

but I decided I wasn't going to
find out.

EMCEE

Hah! Mr. Lawson's taking the lead
here, opening with one hell of a
right hook...

(SFX: scuffling and crowd yelling -- the Emcee's voice is
drowned out by the crowd.)

EMCEE

Pipe down, won't you? ...Ah, go
ahead! I don't get paid enough for
this!

KIM (NAR)

He was tough, real tough, and
quicker than I thought. But he
tired easily, and it wasn't long
before...

(SFX: heavy thump as the opponent hits the ground)

EMCEE

Oh, ouch! Looks like Bruno here
didn't count on our man being so
quick on his feet. Good job,
Lawson, and not a scratch on you!
That's worth a tip.

BRUNO

(breathing heavily)

KIM

You all right?

EMCEE

(sharply)
Don't you touch him!
(whistles)
Get out here, boys!

(SFX: scuffling)

BRUNO

No! Get off me! For God's sake,
get off me!
(painfully)
I can go again!
(adlibbed protests)

KIM (V.O., NAR)

I watched as a group of men--must

have been four or five--wrestled
him down and dragged him out the
door in the back. I'd seen gorier
things, but that...

(beat)

That chilled me to the bone.

(SFX: his protests fade into an eerie silence.)

KIM

(to EMCEE)

Where are they taking him?

EMCEE

That's no concern of yours.

KIM

(raising his voice)

Tell me where you're taking him!

EMCEE

(growling)

You'll be next if you don't pay
attention, cowboy!

KIM (V.O., NAR)

All at once I felt something slam
into the back of my head with a
crack. I stumbled, turned, and
before I knew it my fists were
swinging again--

(SFX: fighting, cheering)

KIM (V.O., NAR)

The fight passed by in a blur. So
did the next, and the one after
that...

(SFX: Kim's labored breathing)

EMCEE

Well, well, how about that? Take a
breather, buddy. You've earned it.

(to the crowd)

Looks like we got a **contender**,
folks! This one's going up against
our house champ!

(SFX: cheering)

EMCEE (V.O.)

That's right, you lousy dogs. Our
reigning champion, Cottonmouth!

(SFX: the cheering fades away as COTTONMOUTH's footsteps come in, eventually leaving nothing but the sound of Kim's breathing.)

KIM (NAR)

I looked up. Someone had drifted in from the back of the crowd and stepped into the center of the room. I hadn't even known he was there.

COTTONMOUTH

Nice job,

KIM (NAR)

he said, fixing me with a look. He was dressed in black and white, with a silk scarf tucked into his belt. A silk scarf...what kind of two-bit thug could afford something like that?

COTTONMOUTH

You ready?

KIM

(still panting a bit)
I'm ready.

COTTONMOUTH

Then let's dance, cowboy.

(NOTE: Cottonmouth is terse, but not without expression. He's a little bit languid, with a hint of a drawl, but he doesn't take any unnecessary time. He's a performer, but in this moment, he isn't performing for anyone but himself and, at a distant second, Cowboy Kim. Everyone else is unimportant to him.)

(SFX: fighting, but slowly paced. Not many blows being landed, but the whistling of narrowly dodged attacks.)

KIM (NAR)

I could hear the whistle as his fist sailed past my face. He was fast--lightning fast.

COTTONMOUTH

Give it up!

(SFX: a couple more punches land their mark. Kim crumples to the ground.)

COTTONMOUTH
(genuinely disappointed)
Aw, I didn't mean it.
(and now annoyed)
You're really gonna go down that
easy?

KIM (NAR)
But I wasn't done yet.

COTTONMOUTH
And here I got all excited for n--

(SFX: the sharp whip and thud of Kim bringing his leg up
into Cottonmouth's.)

COTTONMOUTH
Oof! What--

KIM (NAR)
I caught him in the shin with my
boot. He came tumbling down right
after me, and boy, it felt good.

COTTONMOUTH
Dirty cheater!
(coughing)
I should have thought of that!

(SFX: continued fighting)

EMCEE (V.O.)
I've never seen this before--
someone who fights dirtier than
Cottonmouth!

KIM (V.O.)
He could give a punch, but he sure
couldn't take one. Soon he was
laid out on the ground, groaning
into the dirt. I didn't feel too
bad for him--not after all the
boys and men he'd knocked down in
this very ring, himself.

EMCEE
Ooh...

(A hush falls over the cellar again.)

EMCEE
You know what this means, don't
you, Cottonmouth.

COTTONMOUTH
(coughing)
Yeah. Yeah, I know.
(hoarsely)
Bring 'em in.

(SFX: (the heavy footfalls of the guards.))

KIM (NAR)
I watched as one of the men
reached down to help him up. And
then...

(SFX: a really, really painful-sounding punch in the face.
Maybe with a bit of a crunch to it, but not too much.
Something that clearly lands on the nose.)

EMCEE
Hey! Hey, you can't do that!

COTTONMOUTH
Like hell I can't!
(muffled)
Get off me!

KIM (NAR)
I hated this man, but I decided
that I hated the ringleaders even
more. I lunged at them myself,
knocking them back into the crowd.

(SFX: yelling, maybe with a bit of cheering mixed in)

COTTONMOUTH
(laughing)
You're all right, cowboy!

FOREMAN
(deep and authoritative)
That's enough.

(Everything falls quiet, except for possibly Kim and
Cottonmouth.)

FOREMAN
You two do all this?

KIM
Yes, sir.

COTTONMOUTH
(spits)
And proud of it.

FOREMAN

The boss loves it. Wants to talk to you.

COTTONMOUTH

Tell him he can--

KIM

(quickly)

We'll listen. Where is he?

FOREMAN

This way.

EMCEE

(disdainfully)

Huh. Not worth it, I'd say.

(SFX: footsteps, fading from the sound of the cellar into someplace with more of an echo)

KIM (V.O., NAR)

Finally. Maybe now I'd get some answers...

(beat)

He led us down a long hall, so long it felt like it was heading practically to the other end of town.

COTTONMOUTH

(hissing under his breath, to Kim)

Nice trap you got us into.

KIM

I don't think so.

COTTONMOUTH

(beat)

Hmm.

KIM (NAR)

We went into a room, dark and cold. It was lit only by the flickering of--a television, in one corner, or something that looked like it. And seated next to it was someone I couldn't make out. Just a dark shape in front of a white screen.

BOSS

Cottonmouth. And Lawson.

(Silence. Maybe with the faint crackling of the CCTV.)

BOSS

You put on one hell of a show out there, you two. Too good to toss that double act away, in my opinion.

KIM

What do you want?

BOSS

I've got a lot of work for two men like you. Work for me.

COTTONMOUTH

(beat)

Yeah, all right. Mind if I make myself a drink? All that fighting got me mighty thirsty.

KIM (NAR)

I watched as Cottonmouth slunk--or maybe slithered--over to the bar. I hadn't expected that, given he'd been throwing a tantrum a couple minutes ago.

(beat)

Something wasn't right.

BOSS

Go ahead.

(to Kim)

And you?

KIM

No. I don't want your job. I just want some answers.

BOSS

Answers, eh?

(SFX: creaking, as he leans back in his chair, and the sound of Cottonmouth pouring a drink in the background--clinking, etc.)

BOSS (CONT'D)

Well, you've earned them. Shoot.

KIM

Where do the losers go? And don't give me any nonsense about a "job."

BOSS
(chuckles)
You familiar with the Aja region?
Over on the coast?

KIM
A little. That's the far west.
(searching his brain)
It's rocky...only industry coming
out of it these days is--

COTTONMOUTH
(cutting him off)
Diamond mines.

(Silence.)

KIM
Diamond mines.

BOSS
That's right. Hard work over
there, you know.
(to Cottonmouth)
Make me one while you're back
there, will you?

COTTONMOUTH
Whatever you say, boss. What about
you, cowboy?

KIM
(barely restrained
anger)
No. Thank you.

BOSS
Don't see why you're so surprised,
frankly. Like I said, hard work.
Long hours. Rough on the body.
Accidents happen.
(chuckles darkly)
I need a lot of men.

KIM
You...
(voice shaking)
You rich, pompous, sadistic...

COTTONMOUTH
Your drink, kind master.

BOSS
Thank you.

KIM
(exploding)
And you're no better! How can you
work like this? How many boys have
you sent to their graves, you low-
down, spoiled snake--

BOSS
Now, now.
(sips his drink)
There's no call for insults, man.

KIM
I can't believe...

BOSS
(steamrolling over him)
As for you, there's nothing to be
done with you but to cart you off
anyway. You can make all the
friends you want in...
(falters)
In...

(The Boss starts to cough. The glass falls and shatters.)

KIM (V.O., NAR)
I watched as the man coughed,
choked, and finally doubled over.
I couldn't move. And part of me
didn't even want to.

COTTONMOUTH
(coldly)
You asked how many men I've led to
their graves. There's one more for
you.

KIM
You...

COTTONMOUTH
It was fun, being a bulldog, but
I'm not into being tied down.

(SFX: footsteps, and rustling sounds as Cottonmouth
searches.)

COTTONMOUTH (V.O.)
A grand. Half for me. Half for
you. What do you say?

KIM
I don't...I don't want any.

COTTONMOUTH

Suit yourself. Now come on. We'd better split before people start looking around.

(SFX: horses' hoofbeats, at a gallop)

KIM (V.O., NAR)

A passage led outside, and we grabbed a couple of horses and ran off into the night. Maybe it was two, three in the morning, but I couldn't tell. It felt like I'd been in that cellar for a week.

COTTONMOUTH

(calling out)

Where you headed, stranger?

KIM

(calling out)

Where do you think? I'm going to the coast.

COTTONMOUTH

Are you crazy? It's fifty, sixty miles, and that's as the crow flies...

KIM

I don't care.

(SFX: the galloping slows.)

COTTONMOUTH

Don't see why you're wasting your time playing hero, personally.

(beat)

You were good out there.

KIM

What?

COTTONMOUTH

I said you were good out there.

(SFX: horse hooves against dirt, pawing at the ground. A snort.)

COTTONMOUTH

You know your way around a brawl, that's for damn sure. Don't suppose you wanna join up with me.

KIM
(flatly)
No, thanks. Not for a killer.

(A moment of tense silence, then the riding resumes, slowly.)

COTTONMOUTH
Killin' ain't the only thing I do.

KIM
Yeah?

COTTONMOUTH
Yeah. Burglary, extortion, cattle rustling, whatever needs doing.

KIM
Kidnapping?

COTTONMOUTH
Not for those jokers. Those idiots all came aboard of their own accord, if that's what you're asking.

(suspiciously)
Where did you say you were from?

KIM
I didn't. But I'm sheriff of Judith Lake.

COTTONMOUTH
(laughing)
Judith Lake! Practically my backyard! I'm a few miles northwest, in Viper Valley. Well, usually.

(chuckles)
Life's got me busy.

KIM
I know.

COTTONMOUTH
(beat)
What's that look for?

KIM
Cattle rustling, extortion...

COTTONMOUTH
(over Kim's words)
Aw, hell, chief...

KIM
That barn razed to the ground a
week back. Was that you?

COTTONMOUTH
(angrily)
Yeah, that was me, and if you've
got a problem with it you come
down off that horse and tell me.
(low, threatening)
I can dig you a shallow grave
right here.

(Silence.)

COTTONMOUTH
Business is business. That's all.

KIM
(coldly)
I think we'd better part ways
right here.

COTTONMOUTH
(coldly)
I think we'd better.

KIM
You get out of town and you keep
moving, Cottonmouth. I don't wanna
see that face of yours again.

(Cottonmouth laughs a harsh, cynical laugh.)

COTTONMOUTH
We'll see how long that lasts.
Bye-bye, cowboy.

(SFX: sound of the whistling wind and horses' hooves.)

MAIN THEME - REPRISE. FADE OUT.

(END)