

“Synopsis”

It's what's inside most folk that scares 'em.

—Clint Eastwood in *High Plains Drifter*

Finally, you paint the town red. You order up
two hundred gallons of crimson, one barbecued steer,
and tell the townspeople, “Get to work.”

The local midget you've named mayor and sheriff

is on your side. He was hiding under the saloon on the night
you were bullwhipped to death by Stacey and his cousins.

They've just been released from jail

after serving one year for a crime they didn't commit.

This time it's personal. They plan to empty
the mining company's safe, dynamite the whole place
if it comes to that. Because of the paint, people, you rename
the town Hell. Now there is nothing to do but wait

for Stacey and his cousins to ride in. You find time
for exactly two forcible rapes, though the next morning
the women are seen radiantly combing their hair.

The midget mayor/sheriff asks when you'll give the signal.

You tell him, “I won't give the signal. You will.”

High noon. Stacey and his cousins ride in
to find hoisted above the town's red square a banner
the local women have sewn together at your orders

with linen from the town's one red hotel. “Welcome home, boys!”

the banner says. In time Stacey and his cousins die
the kind of death men like Stacey and his cousins die.

Today the town is red and smoldering as are the women

who have acquired your taste. The midget mayor/sheriff is busy with a knife. "I'm almost finished here," he pipes. In last night's shoot out, he killed a man. "Finished," he says. His handiwork is good. You take a last long look at Hell,

kick your horse in the ribs, tip your hat to the mayor/sheriff and tell him through your teeth, "You knew it all along."