

## **The Misfits, Part VII**

John Huston, Director (1961)

On the morning of the mustang round-up, Perce helps Guido get his plane ready. Gay is loading tires onto the truck. The shots in this sequence are beautifully composed, with strong horizontals (dark groups of bushes and mountain, an airplane wing) and verticals (the people, tree branches, the bars of the plane).

Roslyn approaches, dressed in western gear – blue jeans, white shirt, denim jacket and boots. She bends down and pets Dooley, saying, “Look, Gay. He's not snapping any more.” Gay answers philosophically, “Yeah, things generally look different in the morning.” She smiles at him.

Gay hoists a tire onto the back of the truck. To Guido, he says, “Try and chase 'em down the old mine road.”

As Guido dresses for the flight, Roslyn comments, “Boy, that's some jacket.” “Been on a lot of missions in this thing. I wouldn't take a hundred dollars for it. It's bulletproof.”

Then he pulls out his rifle and checks it. “Probably never see this again in history, you know.” Her smile fades. She steps away from the plane.

After several tries at the propeller, Gay finally gets the motor going.

The plane stirs up a great cloud of dust and moves away, as the others watch.

The plane leaves the ground and gains altitude. Roslyn waves up at Guido in the excitement of the moment. They watch as Guido heads towards the mountains in search of the horses.

A dissolve brings our view from the earth up to the sky as Guido looks down, over the side of the plane.

He swoops low over the scrubby flatland, which tilts at a dizzying angle in the frame, and then flies over rugged peaks to the valley beyond, searching for the mustang.

In a flat expanse of land divided by the remains of a dried up creek, Guido notices something and goes in closer.

Yes! It's the horses! He braces himself and lowers the plane. He begins chasing them, forcing them to run toward where Gay and Perce are waiting. In the vastness of the landscape, the horses are small black beads, trailed by a cloud of white mist.

Guido nudges the horses back toward the truck.

We see that there are six horses, one smaller than the others. Guido flies over them and then circles back, nudging them on.

The truck has reached the planned meeting place and the three others get out. Gazing at the wide expanse, bordered by mountains, Roslyn says with wonder, "It's like a dream."  
Perce agrees. "I seen a picture of the moon once. Looked just like this."  
Gay stands on the truck, looking through his binoculars.

Roslyn and Perce join Gay on the truck. The camera looks up at them so that they loom in the sky, icons among the clouds.

Gay explains, "He'll drive the horses out of that pass."

"You see anything?" she asks.

Gay goes on, "Uh-uh. I forgot to tell you something last night. You know, cow outfits use the pasture up in those mountains. When they come across mustang, they shoot 'em and leave 'em for the buzzards. 'Cause they eat up all the good feed."

"They're nothin' but misfit horses, honey. I wish you'd been here in the old days. I seen 'em come pouring out of those passes three, four, five hundred at a time. Some of 'em were real beautiful animals. Made sweet ridin' horses."

"I wish I'd been here then," Roslyn says wistfully.

"I hear something," says Perce.

"What?" Gay doesn't hear it.

"Engine, sounds like."

"Where?"

"Out there." He points.

"No, it's too soon. He wouldn't be in the pass yet."

Roslyn puts her hand on Gay's arm. "Listen. I hear him."

"There he is!" exclaims Perce.

"Gay, look!" Roslyn points excitedly. The plane is a dot in the distance, roaring closer and closer.

"He never worked this fast before. I'd have seen him, but I didn't expect him so soon."

Understanding that Gay can't admit that he can't see or hear as well as he used to, Perce helps him out. "Oh, I seen him glinting against the sun. It was the glint. That's what it was."

There's a loud bang and Roslyn flinches. "What's that?"

"He fired a shot," answers Gay.

"Here they come," Gay announces. Looking through his binoculars, he counts aloud. "One, two, three, four, five, six..." Roslyn's spirits are flagging. Gay goes on, "I guess he'll be going back for the rest now."

"Let me have a look," says Perce and takes the binoculars.

"You see the rest yet?" asks Gay.

"No. Six. It looks like a stallion and four mares... and a little colt."

"You sure?" asks Gay, disbelieving.

"Yeah. A spring foal. Yeah. It's a colt all right, Gay."

Perce looks disgusted. He didn't even want to come for only fifteen horses. He hands the binoculars back to Gay who asks Roslyn, "Want a look?"

Reluctantly, she takes the binoculars, seeing the mustang for the first time.

“Maybe it's cooler in the truck,” Roslyn says, and leaves them.

Perce turns his back on Gay. “You said there'd be fifteen. There are only six.”

Gay brushes it off. “Ah, probably lost a few. That'll happen.”

“It don't make much sense for six, does it?”

“Six is six. Better than wages, ain't it?” Perce doesn't answer and Gay repeats, louder this time, “I said it's better than wages, ain't it?”

“Sure. Anything's better than wages,” concedes Perce.

Gay starts warming up his lasso. “Perce, I know a place about a hundred miles northeast, Thighbone Mountain. Must be at least 500 head in there. I never bothered with 'em 'cause it's awful tough to get 'em out. You have to horseback in.”

“I don't know, Gay. To tell you the truth, I don't even know about rodeos any more.”

“Boy, I'm beginnin' to smell wages all over you.”

“Sure wish my old man hadn't died.”

“Well, when you get through wishin', all there is is a man's work. And there ain't much of that left in this country.”

Roslyn is sitting alone in the truck. Perce touches her hand in encouragement and then walks back to help Gay.

The horses are closer now and Roslyn can see them without the help of binoculars. They gallop across the plain, pursued by Guido's plane.

In another significant composition, we see Roslyn agitated but confined within the truck's shadowy cabin, while outside, in the light, the men are framed with almost geometric precision between the dark column of the wing mirror and the broken vertical line defined by the slats at the back of the truck.

Finally, the horses, harried by the plane, begin to tire and slow down.

As the plane lands, Perce and Gay wait on the parched, cracked land. Perce casts a tiny shadow in the midday sun. Gay calls Dooley over, puts a rope around his neck and fastens him to the plane.

Guido climbs out and runs over to the truck. Perce and Gay hop up on the back. With Roslyn beside him, Guido starts the truck.

When they're just about up to the horses, Guido takes the goggles off his hat and pulls on his gloves. “You grab hold now,” he advises Roslyn, excitement in his eyes. “We're gonna do a lot of fast turning.”

Up in the back, Gay and Perce are ready with their ropes, as the truck races along. The horses run their hearts out to get away. Bearing down on them, the truck turns wildly, tires screeching.

Perce throws his lasso, which hits the horse's head, without circling around its neck.

As Roslyn squirms with discomfort, Guido leans over grimacing towards the passenger window and calls out, “Throw again, Perce!”

“Get that horse, cowboy!” yells Gay.

When Perce throws again, the lasso lands around the horse's neck.  
"That's the way!" hollers Gay with fierce pleasure.

The roped horse keeps running right outside the window next to Roslyn. Guido seems energized, in ecstasy even. But Roslyn cannot tolerate anymore and suddenly averts her gaze, towards the inside of the truck.

Perce throws a tire off the truck; it's tied to the lasso around the horse's neck. Gay ropes another horse and throws another tire off. Guido yells up, "Attaboy, Gay! Get that horse! Attaboy, Gay!"

Helpless, Roslyn looks up at Gay beseechingly from the cab, but he's oblivious. The truck swerves.

Roslyn is so close that she could reach out her hand and touch the horses. Gay ropes another, showing his teeth in his broad delighted smile.

Guido turns to Roslyn, his eyes lit up. He suddenly seems young and carefree. "Well, here's the big chief," he says.

"What?"

"The stallion."

Roslyn watches in shock as the stallion races for freedom. The camera shows us hooves in blurred motion above the horse's elegant shadow.

Guido explains, "We'll tie 'em up now, and open their nooses so they won't choke overnight."  
"Overnight?" Roslyn can't believe this torment won't be over soon.  
"Yeah. The dealer's truck'll pick 'em up in the morning."

At last, Guido stops the truck. The three men get out.

"Perce?" Roslyn calls out. "Were those his mares?"

"Uh-huh."

"Was that his colt?"

He nods his head.

Guido and Gay are approaching the horse stealthily. Gay turns his head slightly and calls Perce to join them.

Once again, in Russell Metty's glorious cinematography, the camera looks up at Perce from below, so that he towers above the mountains, his head among the clouds. The horse faces him, standing still, breathing heavily, nostrils flaring.

The final confrontation is about to begin.