

LEAVING ATSOM POINT

By Justin Alejandro Gonzales

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance):

0 male, 0 female, 2 either

Cline [m/f] An aimless outlaw.

The Apothecary [m/f] A supernatural entity.

Time:

A time before barbed wire.

Setting:

The ghost town of Atsom Point, deep in the heart of the wild west.

Note:

Characters have been assigned a gender for the sake of readability. Please change pronouns according to casting.

Scene 1 – The Apothecary’s Shop

(At rise: An empty apothecary’s shop. Twilight shines through the windows. CLIME’s voice is heard calling out from somewhere in town, offstage. She’s been at this for some time.)

CLIME (VOICE)

I need some help here! Agh . . . can someone . . . get a doctor? I need some . . . damn help!

(CLIME enters the street outside the shop, stumbling. She clutches a wound, from which an arrow protrudes. She is somewhat bleary from the poison that has not quite taken hold of her.)

CLIME

I’ve . . . been poisoned. I don’t have . . . ngh . . . all day here. Where the hell is everybody?!

(She notices that she is in front of the apothecary’s shop. She tries the door to find it is unlocked. She lets herself in and searches frantically around the room. The stores are barren of anything useful.)

CLIME

Antivenom . . . ? Opium . . . ? Can I not even get a . . . damn lozenge?! Doctor?! Doc?!

(She wanders about in exasperation for a few more moments before slumping to the floor in defeat.)

CLIME

Damn! Damn . . .

(She opens a pocket watch and reads it expectantly. What she sees confuses her.)

CLIME

I lost track of time . . . shouldn’t I be dead by now?

(She looks down at her wound and examines her hand.)

CLIME

When did I stop bleeding?

(She glances around at a loss. She takes inventory of her other maladies, or lack thereof.)

CLIME

. . . Did I just walk it off?

(She prods at the arrow, wincing in pain.)

CLIME

Hnnng . . . not quite invincible. But . . . gah . . . this thing is getting on my nerves.

(She grips the arrow tightly, steeling herself to remove it. After some hesitation, she yanks it out. It is painful for a moment. She flings the arrow away and moves her hand to stop the bleeding, but no blood comes.)

CLIME

Haaa . . . alright, that's that. Not so bad.

(There is the sound of movement in a nearby room within the shop. CLIME, alert, arms herself with the arrow and gets to her feet.)

CLIME

Hello? Doc?

(The APOTHECARY enters. He moves deliberately, as if relearning the mechanics of his own body.)

APOTHECARY

Hello, young lady. Come to see the apothecary?

CLIME

Yessir. Where did you come from?

APOTHECARY

Oh, I had just dozed off in the back. I hope you haven't been waiting long.

CLIME

Heavy sleeper . . .

APOTHECARY

What can I do for you, miss . . . ?

CLIME

My name's Clime.

APOTHECARY

A delightful name. What can I do today for Ms. Clime?

(CLIME presents the arrow before tossing it away again.)

CLIME

I got shot. I was poisoned.

APOTHECARY

Hmm . . . does it hurt?

CLIME

No, actually. And what else, the wound stopped bleeding. That's not normal, right?

APOTHECARY

. . .

CLIME

And I checked my watch; the poison should have killed me twenty minutes ago, more or less, if I know my poisons, which I do, and now I don't feel any symptoms at all, so what the hell is going on? I didn't walk it off, did I? Is that possible? It's not, right?

APOTHECARY

It certainly is not. I would dare to say . . . it's miraculous. You've been saved . . . by a power far greater than yourself.

CLIME

Sorry, I'm afraid I'm not the church-going type.

APOTHECARY

No! This is not the work of God . . . death is his curse. But within this town, the curse is broken; death cannot reach you here.

CLIME

Where is "here," exactly?

APOTHECARY

Here is the blind spot of fate, the oasis within the desert of humanity's suffering; Atsom Point! It drew you here, Miss Clime, to receive it's gift. Remain here, and you shall be immortal.

(CLIME is unnerved, but does her best not to show it.)

CLIME

Is that right? Well, sure does sound like a swell enough deal. Why ain't nobody here, then?

APOTHECARY

To live apart from death is unnatural for the mortal soul. When liberated, many cannot reconcile with their new reality.

(The APOTHECARY places a hand on CLIME.)

APOTHECARY

But I can teach you how.

(CLIME pulls away and slowly makes for the door.)

CLIME

That's a generous offer, sir, but I have business elsewhere so I should be going. Thank you for your hospitality.

APOTHECARY

And where will you go, outlaw, that you will be welcomed?

(CLIME stops.)

APOTHECARY

You steal, you kill, you run. You've burned every bridge, and now it's all you can do to run in circles on your own little island of futility until you die an unloved criminal. But stay here, in Atsom Point, and you break that cycle. The criminal dies, and a goddess takes her place.

CLIME

. . . I've got family.

APOTHECARY

I know that you don't. And you know why.

CLIME

. . . Some goddess I'd be then, right? Besides, I saw your church; it's empty.

(CLIME moves to leave again, but the APOTHECARY grabs her. CLIME struggles to break free from his grip.)

APOTHECARY

You live now only by the grace of Atsom Point. Leave, and the poison that idles in your blood flows again! The blood that spills not from your wound spills once more!

CLIME

Get your hands off of me you crazy coot! You're out of your damn mind!

(CLIME continues to struggle before deciding to strike the APOTHECARY, who reels back.)

CLIME

Touch me again, and I'll kill you!

(CLIME turns her back and is suddenly sprang upon by the APOTHECARY. They fight, ending with CLIME dealing what would seem to be a fatal blow, knocking the APOTHECARY unconscious. CLIME, in pain, stands over the body and considers what to do next. She looks out the window.)

CLIME

Still twilight . . . won't make it far before nightfall. Maybe make camp back in the valley.

(CLIME looks down at the APOTHECARY.)

CLIME

Some god.

(CLIME exits.)

Scene 2 – The Edge of Town

(CLIME enters, slowly making her way to the edge of Atsom Point.)

CLIME

Where the hell did that damn horse go? Not like anyone's around to steal it.

(She whistles for her horse and waits for a response that doesn't come.)

CLIME

Damn mule! Not worth the nothing I paid for it . . . could have sworn I tied it down though . . .

(CLIME examines the horizon.)

CLIME

Well, guess I can't blame you for running.

(The APOTHECARY enters, still sore from the fight. CLIME turns to face them.)

CLIME

How in the hell are you—

(She is cut off by the APOTHECARY suddenly shooting her in the head. She falls to the ground, alive but too stunned to move. After a few moments, the pain hits her, and she writhes on the ground.)

APOTHECARY

You refuse the magnificent power of Atsom Point, yet it deigns to show you mercy! You see now that I speak the truth. Leave, and death will find you instantly! How many would do the unspeakable for the chance at immortality? Yet I hand it too you for nothing! All I ask in exchange is to work with me to bring prosperity back to my town. Atsom Point could be a haven for the weak, the one place on earth in which humanity can be truly at peace!

CLIME

Life's too short to waste it in this dustbowl, especially with such poor company.

APOTHECARY

. . .

CLIME

Besides, I'm an outlaw, not a businesswoman. Finances, connections, smooth-talking . . . no, not my wheelhouse.

APOTHECARY

Have you not yet grasped the meaning of immortality? You will have unlimited time to learn everything you could ever want to know!

CLIME

I'm not a very good student, neither. Unteachable, some might say . . .

(CLIME inches closer to the edge.)

CLIME

I'm only good for three things: stealing, killing, and running. You got nothing to steal, and I got no way to kill you, so . . . guess you got the place to yourself.

(CLIME walks past the edge of town. The APOTHECARY runs to stop her, but is too late. CLIME collapses on to the ground, dead. The APOTHECARY's vitality quickly drains as he withers back into a corpse. He gives an inhuman death rattle, then becomes lifeless.)

End of Play