

GOLD DUST

FADE IN

EXT. 1940'S SMALL TOWN TEXAS - DAY

SAM DONAVAN -- 30's, handsome, well-dressed -- stands on the ground next to a wooden storefront sidewalk.

Next to him sits a large, wooden box with gears, levers and fasteners on it. The box sits on a step halfway up a set of wooden stairs. Six identical boxes sit in a row on the sidewalk.

Sam gestures to the box to attract attention from passing people.

SAM

(to himself)

This just might be the day, Sam Donavan, this just might be the day.

(loud, to the people)

C'mon people, look here, you see this invention? It cuts your workload in half. Honest and for sure, this contraption sitting here before you does all the work your ax can do in less than half the time.

He plays to the crowd that gathers, winking to a few women who stop to listen.

INT. - BENEATH THE RAISED SIDEWALK - SAME TIME

HORACE FLETCHER - 30's, goofy, brawny -- crawls on his belly, pushing a bundle of firewood ahead of him. He is under the wooden sidewalk Sam is standing on, and we can hear Sam muffled overhead.

EXT. SIDEWALK - SAME TIME

A small gathering of people has assembled in front Sam.

SAM

Good day, my fine people. My name is Sam Donavan and I'm with Chop-O, Inc. I'm here today to show you something that just may make your life that much easier.

He directs their attention with a flourish to the box with gears and levers.

Introducing CHOP-O! That amazing wood-splitting device that handles the back-breaking work of an entire day, in less than half that time! That is correct! You heard me right - Chop-O, when properly operated, takes whole logs - up to twenty inches in diameter and 18 inches in length - and gives back precision cut fire wood!

MAN

How's it do that? It's jest a box.

SAM

"Just a box"? My good man, this is a highly technical instrument developed by Dr. H. Theopolous Fletcher, who, as a young man in the Oregon Territory, worked in logging camps and foresaw - if you'll excuse the pun - the need for just such a system of changing bulky, rough-hewn logs into entirely manageable smaller pieces of firewood. Observe - I place into Chop-O,

Loudly, for Horace to hear, as he opens the lid.

an 18 inch pine log,

Drops log in with a thunk.

I crank this dial to accommodate the length, activate the safety feature, pull this lever, turn this crank, and voila!

He opens the front panel and inside is a pile of chopped firewood. The crowd "oohs" and "ahs."

SAM
Amazing, isn't it?!

INT. - BENEATH SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

HORACE
(Mocking)
"Amazing, isn't it?" It's
amazing I let him talk me into
this crap.

We hear a muffled voice from above.

SAM VO
. . . 12 inch cedar log.

Horace hustles, checking tags to find a pile of cedar wood. There is a thunk and he opens the back hatch, places the cedar wood in, and takes out the log.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Sam opens the front hatch to reveal the split wood

SAM
And Voila! Perfect the first
time, every time. And now,
ladies and gentlemen - the offer
- I have here six identical
Chop-O Firewood splitters - each
for the stupendously low low
price of twenty-five dollars.

WOMAN
That's a lot of money.

SAM
When compared to the time and
toil you could save, my dear
lady, it's no money at all - in
fact, I am authorized by Dr.
Fletcher himself at Chop-O
headquarters, to go as low as
twenty dollars during this first
week of direct sales - thirty
dollars for customized versions
for shingle makers and spindle
turners.

MAN
Wow! Can that thing cut
kindling too?

SAM
Can it cut kindling?

(loudly, stomping
foot)
Can it cut kindling?

From inside sidewalk, Horace thumps the box

SAM
(with a loud cough)
Why sure it can! Observe, this
Ten inch siding board, oops.

He drops it on the sidewalk, it lands with a thunk.

Excuse me folks it's my first
day with my new fingers!

The crowd laughs, he bends down to pick it up, and as
the crowd watches, Horace opens the back hatch, drops
in a pile of cut kindling, and feels around for the
board.

The crowd shouts "cheater" and "get them" threats.
Sam looks up at the crowd, follows their gaze to
Horace feeling around inside the box.

SAM
Oops, forgot to activate the
safety feature.

The crowd moves in as Sam hurriedly pulls Horace out
through the hole.

SAM
That wound heal yet, boy?

HORACE
Which one?

SAM
Alabama.

HORACE
Yeah, why?

SAM
Cause I'd hate it to re-open
while these fine people give us
new ones. Time to go.

They hustle out of the immediate area.

Sam and Horace run down a dirt road with an angry mob chasing them.

SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Sam and Horace on a street of a different town selling bottles of stuff. Horace takes a swig from a marked bottle, then flexes his muscles to show how strong he feels.

People buy bottles, just as a frantic WOMAN shows up with two POLICE OFFICERS in front of her. She points accusingly at Sam and Horace through the cops.

The crowd glares and chases them off.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Sam and Horace are backed up against a dead-end alley with an angry mob moving in slowly.

EXT. BUSY STREET - DAY

Horace, with bandaged body parts, running a "shell game", he keeps winning.

A MAN becomes angry, grabs his arm. Horace's coat flies open and a huge load of "peas" spill onto sidewalk. Horace smiles weakly and runs.

Sam shakes his head sadly.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

In front of a gazebo a sign reads "From far off India, See Fletcher the Fakir". Sam plays the crowd as Horace, in boxer shorts, lies down on a bed of nails. The crowd makes astonished faces and points at the sight.

A real FAKIR (in turban and loincloth) enters and starts shouting at Sam and Horace. It becomes apparent that Horace has "borrowed" his bed of nails.

Horace gets to his feet and turns his BACK to us in argument. A sheet of heavy rubber cut out in his outline is attached to his back. Cops break up the conflict.

EXT. BUS STATION - DAY

Sam and Horace hurry onto tour bus, then the bus pulls away from the station. A few seconds later another mob descends on the bus stop and watches as the bus distances itself from them. They shake their fists at it, some throw things.

END OF SERIES

Bus tools through desert, dust is flying. It is an old tour bus, dirty and worn. Sign in front window of bus reads "Mexico City." The bus passes a road sign and as the dust clears we see the sign reads "Mexican Border 40 miles."

INT. OF BUS

A mostly hispanic crowd of hot and tired people occupy the seats. Sam and Horace sit near the back.

HORACE

"Let's go on a trip" he says,
 "See the world" he says, "No" I
 says, "I want to go back home to
 Piney Falls" I says, "Let go of
 me and stop whining" he says,

SAM

Oh, c'mon, Junior, a trip
 south'll do us good this time of
 year-it's still snowing in Piney
 Falls.

HORACE

What am I, a goose? I can't take
 a little snow, I gotta head
 south? What's so great about
 Mexico anyway, what d'they got?
 Just a lot of bandits and sand
 and dust and,

More than half the Mexican men and women turn and glare at Horace.

HORACE

Heh heh, and those wonderful
 bullfights.

SAM

That's Spain.

HORACE

You're darn right it's a pain.
Do you have any idea how long it
took to save all that money we
had? Then one word from you and
pow! We're on the road again
and nearly broke!

SAM

Now, now, we're not broke.

Horace opens a change purse, dust and moths fly out.

HORACE

No, we're not broke, we've got
moths leasing our wallet for a
dollar and some change, and
they're behind on their rent.

SAM

Oh come off it, Horace, we
needed a vacation, we've been
pushing too hard for too long,
wearin' ourselves out,

HORACE

"Wearin' ourselves, "YOU been
wearin' MY-self out, you have.
"Fearless Fletcher the Fire
walker" you make me do.

SAM

Ah, The Fire Walker.

He smiles in fond remembrance and he leans back in
his seat.

HORACE

Yeah, you rake me over the coals
and YOU rake in the loot.

SAM

You're the one who blew all that
take for YOUR foot surgery.

HORACE

Well I wouldn't have needed foot
surgery if we'd a just painted
the coals red like I wanted
instead of usin' real burning
ones. Cripes, who woulda known
the difference?

SAM

Well maybe YOU can live with yourself doing something only half-way, but not me, son. We used real coals for one reason, and one reason only - I'd know the difference, I would, and so would Aunt Margie.

HORACE

Aunt Margie, Sam.

SAM

No, Junior,

Sam takes out a pocket watch, opens it and sees a picture of Aunt Margie.

SAM

I promised your dear old Aunt Margie on her deathbed that I'd watch over you when she was gone. "Watch over my Horace" she said, "Make me proud of him" she said "I will" I said, "Don't let him take the low road" she said, And then she left us.

HORACE

Golly. I'm sorry Sam, I didn't mean to be selfish.

SAM

No, Junior, you never MEAN to be, but, never mind. Just remember next time we do "Horace the Hulk, Boulder Catcher," you're doing it for Aunt Margie and me, not for YOUR own gain.

Sam puts the watch away, wipes at a tear, and turns to window.

HORACE

Aw gee, Sam.

Horace hangs his head and whimpers just as the bus lurches to a halt. Sam and Horace look to the front of the bus.

The driver looks into mirror over the back of his seat.

DRIVER

Okay, we got a ten minute stop.
You kin stretch yer legs and get
a snack, don't wander off too
far.

HORACE

Aw, what're we, babies? "Don't
wander off," like we're gonna
get lost or,

Horace suddenly can't find Sam and panics

Ahh! Sam, where are you?

He turns, Sam is standing next to him in the aisle

Hey, how'd you do that?

SAM

Let's go, Horace. If you're a
good boy I'll get you a soda.

HORACE

Great. I got this taste in my
mouth that feels like a New
Jersey landfill looks.

SAM

Must be those taco wrappers we
had for breakfast. Come on,
let's go.

EXT. OF BUS - DAY

We see people as they exit the bus. Sam and Horace
exit, stopping to wait for people ahead of them, some
who give them dirty looks.

HORACE

Speaking of which, when is it my
turn to eat again?

SAM

What's today?

HORACE

Saturday, why?

SAM

Well, I've got weekends,
remember? And weekdays with an
"S" in them.