

## Pascoe's Prediction,

### The Story

Deadwood, 1887. The Bleeding Dollar Saloon was thick with smoke and bad debts when Joseph Pascoe invited Malachi Dunn—a merciless loan shark—to join him at the table.

"Malachi," Pascoe said, "let's play a game. I've got a red chip and a blue chip in my wallet. Each round, I'll take one out—you call the colour before I show it. Best of five. If you win, I owe you nothing. If I win, you'll wipe clean that rancher's debt you've been squeezing."

Dunn smirked and agreed, but before the first chip was drawn, Pascoe scribbled a quick note and folded it neatly on the table.

"Just a little foresight," Pascoe said. "We'll open it when we're done."

The game began. Dunn was sharp—he won the first two rounds, grinning wide. But then the tide turned. Dunn missed the next three calls, frustration mounting with each one.

Final score: Pascoe: 3 — Dunn: 2.

Pascoe slid the folded note across the table. Dunn opened it and read:

"You'll start strong, but I'll take the last three. That's the only part that matters. — J.P."

Dunn stared, his grin gone. Pascoe just smiled, pocketed his winnings, and tipped his hat.

"You played well, Malachi," he said. "But some games were decided before they're played."

Then he left, leaving behind a cleared debt and a bitter man with nothing but questions.