SHORT STORIES OF WESTERN PIONEERS

BY BOB SELF

THE MCBAYS

THE MCBAYS AT AUTUMNS CROSSING

THE MCBAYS ACE ANGEL COMES TO TOWN

SHORT STORIES OF WESTERN PIONEERS

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO MY WIFE KAREN OF FIFTY YEARS PLUS

WHO HAS ALWAYS STOOD BY MY SIDE AND BELIEVED IN ME

PLUS MY DAUGHTER AUTUMN WHO HAS BEEN THERE FOR ME AND

HAS BEEN A LARGE PART IN MY FOUR BOOKS

THEN ALSO MY GRANDSON DAKOTA WHO I COULD NOT BE MORE PROUD OF AND I THANK MY WIFE MY DAUGHTER MY GRANDSON PLUS GOD FOR THE LIVE I HAVE LIVED

THANK YOU YOUR FRIEND

BOB SELF

THE COLLINSVILLE AUTHOR

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BREWSTER

By Bob Self

The year was 1853 and a man rode into Waco. The man rode down the middle of the street on his horse. Tied to his horse was a pack horse heavy with furs and then another horse with a saddle but no rider.

The man rode tall in the saddle and was dressed from head to toe in buckskins. His trouser’s, shirt and his knee-high moccasins were all leather and he had a colt .44 on one hip and a large bowie knife on his other hip. Both in very worn leather sheaves, plus, he had a colt .44 tucked in his belt behind him. There was a repeating rifle lying across the man’s legs and he had a tomahawk in a strap across his chest. His face carried many scars from many fights some with his fist and some with weapons.

As the man rode down the middle of the street in Waco the Marshal Edward Jones Stepped out into the street and stood in front of the man and his horse. The man asked is there a problem Marshal? The Marshal said, I don’t know, but it looks like you are planning on going to war. Well then, if war comes, I will be ready Marshal, it won’t be my first one. So, Marshal, Edward Jones said I am Marshal, Edward Jones and my friends call me EJ or Marshal Ed. What is your name?

My name is Brewster and I live up in those hills behind me. Okay Brewster what brings you to Waco? Edward Jones asked are you planning on selling your furs or is there something else? Yes, I am going to sell my hides but I am also looking for someone. Who would that be the Marshal asked?

In a low voice Brewster said I am looking for three men that killed my partner while I was gone helping a friend who was fighting some renegades. Marshal Edwards Jones said I was there and I seen you out on the prairie with a couple other mountain men, but after the fight you didn’t stick around.

I knew I needed to get back to my hides and my partner but I was too late they had already killed my partner but they did not find my hides because me and my partner had our hides hid in a real safe place.

I tracked them here after I buried my partner Brewster said. Then the Marshal said they were here but now there is only two not three. Five days ago, one of the three slapped Michelle St Clair then tried to pull his gun on Kid Montana and kid filled him full of holes but the other two had already left.

Do you know where they were headed Brewster asked. I need to find their trail and track them down. I can show you if you like, but I will first tell you they headed to Autumns Crossing because one of their horses threw a shoe and they were going to see if they could get it replaced.

Brewster said I knew about the shoe because I was following the busted shoe and I do know where Autumns Crossing is. It is where The McBays have their ranch so I will head out there and find their trail. First the Marshal said let me tell you that the McBays are friends of mine and you need to know Shermon McBay will not tolerate or cotton to rude people.

Brewster then said Marshal I am not here to be rude or cause unneeded trouble for you or the McBays. I just want to sell my hides and find the men that killed my partner. Then I will head back to the hills where I live.

How long have you been up in those hills the Marshal asked? And Brewster asked, the Marshal what year is this? 1853. 1853 Brewster said well then, I guess I have been up in those hills for 8 years, time flies for sure.

That is a pretty long time 8 years so I guess that you must really like them hills? Well I guess you could say I like them as much as any other place I have been. Marshal me and my partner lived in those hills for a long time and probably never said more than ten words to each other in any one year so if there are no more questions I need to be on my way.

No more questions but Brewster but remember be careful at Autumns Crossing.

Brewster said okay Marshal then said come on Dutch to his horse let’s see how much we can get for these hides then we will head over to that general store.

When Brewster stepped on the boardwalk in front of the general store Micka Grant said hi and asked him if he needed some supplies? Brewster said he could use a few things he said. I have a couple empty saddle bags that I would like to fill.

Micka asked Brewster if he had a list and Brewster said no but I know what I want and then Brewster told Micka what he needed and Micka wrote the items down and said no problem I have all the items you mentioned even the colt 44 longs. Good Brewster said plus would you have a large can of peaches? Micka said I sure do you want them in your saddle bags, Micka asked? No, I will eat them now Brewster said.

Brewster asked how much the tally was then after paying the tally he stepped out on the boardwalk and threw the saddle bags over his pack horse then pulled a large jack knife from his pocket and cut open the can of peaches After sticking each peach with his jack knife and eating them he drank the juice from the can and then rinsed out the can and put it in a cloth sack and said to his horse Dutch you never know when you might need a good can.

Then Brewster lead his three horses over to the horse trough and told his horse Dutch to have a drink and all three horses drank from the horse trough in front of the general store. Brewster nodded to Micka and turned Dutch towards Autumns Crossing with the two other horses trailing Dutch.

When Brewster reached Autumns Crossing, he seen the marks of the broken shoe as he rode thought the gate. Kid Montana, Harry Austin and Elrod all three met Brewster at the gate plus, there was other cowboys close by but Brewster kept his eyes on the tracks and said I have been trailing three violent men that killed my partner Brewster said. I heard you killed one Kid so now there is only two.

Kid Montana said let’s ride over to where Shermon is then Shermon can and will tell you about the two men that you are looking for that killed your partner. Shermon called out to Brewster and said let’s have a cup of coffee I want to thank you for your help the other day are you hungry? Brewster said I could wrap myself around a plate of beans and I have some in my saddle bags.

Shermon said save them for the trail. We are getting ready to eat and I would like for you to join us and Brewster said thanks but I should get back on the trail of the two men that killed my partner because now I don’t have a busted shoe to help me trail them. We marked all four shoes of both horses so come on up and I will tell you what to look for while we have a biscuit Shermon said. Okay, but I would like to get back on the trail as soon as I can Brewster said.

Well we knew those two were running from something Shermon said so we marked all four shoes on both horses with four notches. How where you able to do that Brewster asked? We told them for the practice we would not charge them anything and they went for it and believe me they will be easy to find.

Then Shermon said I can send a couple of men with you Brewster.

No thanks Shermon Brewster said I will find those two and plant them in a shadow grave one day real soon.

As Shermon was about to say something Cap said let eat. Brewster looked at the meal and said I wasn’t really expecting all this. Shermon said we do eat good thanks to cap so eat what you want there is plenty.

After Brewster ate his full, he thanked Shermon and Cap then filled his canteens and said let’s go find them two Dutch. They all shook hands and Brewster lead Dutch away with the other two horses trailing Dutch.

Then five days later Marshal Edward Jones rode into Autumns Crossing and told Shermon that he received a wire from the Marshal in Laredo.

The wire said there was a man that rode into Laredo and killed two men in a fair fight but in a way that he had not seen before.

The Marshal of Laredo in his letter said The man’s name was Brewster and when I first seen him he was riding down the middle of the street and I walked up to him and after I asked him a couple of questions Brewster said the Marshal in Waco asked me the same questions a few days ago

Brewster told me about the two men he was following and about the marks that the McBays had put on the shoes of the two horses .I told Brewster that I would not stand for any gun play and there wasn’t any.

Brewster walked up to the two men and when they seen Brewster the two of them tried for their guns but It happened real fast Brewster first threw a very large tomahawk and it when deep into one man’s chest then Brewster took one step and sliced the other man throat with a very large razor knife

The two men were down and they bleed out quietly neither one cleared their holsters with their colt 44’s, I don’t even think they seen it coming because I can’t believe how fast it happened myself.

The Marshal from Laredo said I told Brewster you sure do have a mean streak in you then Brewster said Marshal I just do what I have to and I try to be good at it, plus there was no gun play like you asked.

Then Brewster said take their horses and saddles and use it to bury them in a shadow grave on the hill then Brewster put both their guns in a cloth sack and handed me their rifles.

Next Brewster deposited three thousand and two hundred dollars in the bank of Laredo in his name and told the banker to use his money but that he would be back for it someday.

Brewster mounted his horse and said let’s go Dutch and rode off towards the hills and never looked back.

THE END

Heather and Matt Garret

Heather was hanging wet clothes up on a clothesline that Matt had built for her in their back yard out of two large post and 25 foot of strong gauge wire. Matt was in his tool shed where he spent a lot of his free time or any spare time he had.

Matt loved making things with his hands and was very good working with iron and other metals.

Matt was a large man but also very gentle with Heather and other people who were his friends. While in his tool shed Matt heard Heather talking but Matt also heard Heather’s voice sounded very nervous or it sounded nervous to him. Then Heather called out to Matt and said there is a very large dog out here and he has a lot of blood on him.

Matt stepped out of his tool shed and Matt had an axe handle in one hand and a short handle sledge hammer in his other hand. The large dog backed up a little and Heather said don’t hurt him Matt I don’t think he is here to hurt us and Matt said I don’t think he is either but I think we should see how bad he is hurt and where all the blood has come from.

I think he is here because he wants our help, let’s give him some water and I will try to see where he is hurt. Heather get a small pan of water and I will get a bucket and some towels then when Heather sat her pan of water in front of the large dog he drank a little water and watched Matt then he started drinking again as Matt started wiping some of the dried blood off the dog.

Matt said Heather there is a lot of blood in these wet towels but I think only a very little is the dogs and it is not a person’s blood. I think it is another animals blood.

Then the large dog pulled away and went a few steps and looked back at Matt.

It looks like he wants me to go with him Matt said to Heather. Heather I will need my rifle and a box of 44 longs and maybe a few corndodgers. While Heather was in the house she said to herself that she knew Matt was going with the large dog so not only did Heather get Matt’s rifle and a box of 44 longs but with the corndodgers she put a few other things in a cloth sack.

Matt went to his tool shed and got a good size rope his canteen and a large bowie knife plus a flint fire starter and as Matt stepped from his tool shed Heather was there and asked Matt if he needed anything else.

Matt told Heather he did not want to take more than he had to because of the extra weight plus he did not know how far he would have to travel or how long he would be gone so Matt asked Heather not to worry but he felt he had to go with the dog and Heather said she understood that Matt had to go with the large dog but she would worry till Matt returned and she would pray for his safe return.

After Matt said he was ready Matt and Heather held hands and bowed their heads and prayed to God for Matt’s safe return then Heather watched Matt and the large dog till they were out of sight.

Matt followed the dog for a long way then called to the large dog and said we have covered pretty much ground and I don’t know how much farther we still need to go but now we need to find a good place to make camp for the night.

We will start out early in the morning but now I am going to build a small fire and then we will have a couple corndodgers. While building the fire Matt said to the dog you see corndodgers are just a little corn and flour that you fry so we will have a little water with our corndodgers then call it a night.

But when Matt started threw the cloth sack that Heather sent with him there was coffee grounds his coffee pot plus not only corndodgers there was beef jerky and biscuits and Matt said will you look at this.

Matt threw the large dog a corndodger and said I am going to make some coffee for me you will have water and noticed the dog had already ate the first corndodger so Matt gave the large dog a couple more and poured some water in a small pot for the dog.

This is like a picnic Matt said as he poured himself a cup of coffee and sat down with it plus some beef jerky and a couple biscuits and after another cup of hot black coffee Matt said we better get some sleep morning will be here before we know it and then we will head out again.

The next morning when the sun was just starting to light up the sky Matt woke up with the large dog growling at something in the dark of the trees Matt said I didn’t see anything but I sure heard a lot of noise as it crashed thought the brush he told the big dog and thanks because whatever it was did not come in our camp because of you, I’m sure.

Let me have a little of this coffee and then we will head out Matt said to the large dog and the dog seemed to know what Matt said to him.

This day is going a lot slower than yesterday Matt said because we are going up a incline and there are a lot of stickers from these black berries and the only good part of this trail is the black berries and as Matt was saying it the large dog started growling because there was something moving off to the side of them so Matt said I have my rifle if I need it and kept ready.

Let’s move over this way some he said to the dog because I think that is a bear out there and he wants these black berries to himself. I have seen some bear signs and I think it is time for us to break free of these stickers and the black berry’s.

After a couple more hours of walking up the hillside Matt said Well it looks like we have reached a small knoll and it also looks like a pretty good place to set up a camp for the night. I will make a small fire for coffee, plus it will help to keep the bears away so between you and the fire I feel pretty safe plus I hope I won’t have to use my rifle but I will if I need to so let’s try and get some sleep because that hillside we walked all day was a litter more than tiring.

You know big boy I don’t know who yet but I do know someone is very lucky to have you as their dog ,So after I finish this coffee, I will keep my rifle handy and again say I hope that I won’t have to use it while we get some sleep. One time Matt woke up and the large dog was growling and Matt heard something moving away in the dark and Matt said good boy then drifted back off to sleep.

The next morning was a little cool but the light breeze felt good and Matt told the large dog that he was glad that the trail was no longer up hill and also it looked like they were away from the black berries and the nasty stickers. But more than that they were now in the open where they could see a good distant in all directions.

Just as Matt was saying Well big boy I hope it is not much farer to where you are taking me the large dog ran in front of Matt and was looking over the edge of the cliff .Matt walked over to where the dog was and when Matt looked over the cliff Matt seen a man lying on a narrow edge with his arm behind him and Matt knew the man’s arm was broke the way the man was lying on his arm and he was in a very bad way on that narrow ledge.

Matt called to the man and the man groan but managed to say can you help me? Matt knew it had been at least a couple of days since the man had any water and Matt said I am here to help you and I will get down there to you and get you back up here somehow.

Matt was trying to decide how the best way was to get the man up to where he and the large dog was when he noticed that the large dog was looking over the cliff not far from him and growling. Matt walked over to where the large dog was and when Matt looked down Matt seen the bear lying at the bottom of the cliff and Matt knew the bear was dead but he did not know what had happened.

Then Matt said I need to tie this rope to that tree and then get down to the man who I am sure is the reason you came and got me. So Matt tied the rope to the tree and threw the other end over the side off the cliff and climbed down the side of the cliff to where the man was.

First Matt gave the man a little water and then Matt asked the man about his pain and the man said is my dog up there and is he okay? Matt said your dog is fine and he is the reason I am here.

Good the man said my name is Fred Bates and my arm is broken for sure and it did hurt bad but now I guess it is numb and my ankle might be broke, but I am not for sure.

Your dog came to my place and he had a lot of dried blood on him but when I cleaned off the blood, I seen that most all the blood wasn’t his and I knew he was wanting me to follow him so here I am. That big dog is something and you are lucky to have him but I am sure you know that .His name is Casey and yes I know I am lucky to have him Fred Bates said.

Matt was trying to make small talk while he was trying to move Fred Bates but Fred Bates passed out and Matt figured it was from the pain but Mattalso figured he should try to get Fred Bates to the top of the cliff before he came to again.

Matt tied the rope around Fred, plus Matt tied the rope to Fred’s belt so he could keep Fred upright when he pulled Fred up to where Casey was.

Then Matt pulled himself up the rope hand over hand and when Matt reached the top the large dog had the rope in his mouth and Matt said not yet Casey, we will pull your master up in a minute Matt took a large flat rock over to the edge of the cliff and laid the rope over the flat rock so the rope wouldn’t hit any sharp edges.

Then Matt sat down and dug his feet in and said here we go Casey it’s now or never big boy. But first Matt closed his eyes and prayed please God give me the strength I need in Jesus name I pray and then Matt pulled up the rope with Fred Bates tied to the other end and as Matt pulled up Fred Bates Matt was thanking God for the strength and courage to do what needed to be done.

Fred Bates was at the top of the cliff he was awake and he was hurting Matt helped Fred over to some shade and gave him another drink of water and as Fred laid back Matt said go ahead, rest a little the hard part is over I will find a couple sticks for your arm and ankle.

When Matt returned with the right size branches for the two splints, he needed to make Casey was lying next to Fred but as Matt returned Casey watched Matt real close but it was like Casey knew what Matt was doing.

Matt took the first branch and spilt it so he would have two flats where he could have one for each side of Fred’s arm then he did the same to a shorter branch for Fred’s ankle then Matt cut his rope to different lengths and Matt said Fred I am afraid this is going to hurt some but it has to be done. Fred said I know it has to be done so go ahead and do it.

Then Matt straighten Fred arm with a strong jerk and Fred passed out and Matt said sorry Fred but when you come to it will be over and you will feel better, So Matt took the longer two branches and tied them in place to Fred’s arm and he tied the two shorter pieces to Fred’s ankle one on each side after that Matt sat back with a cup of coffee which was ready on the fire that Matt had made earlier.

While Matt was drinking his coffee, Fred came to and asked Matt if he had some coffee for him and Matt said sure and asked Fred how he felt.

Fred said I feel better but my arm hurts some. And Matt said I’m afraid it will for a while but its set and will heal in time.

Matt then said we need to get back to my place but it will be dark in a couple hours and I think we will stay here until morning then head out Fred and Fred said he thought they should wait until morning also.

I have some corndodgers and biscuits and beef jerky here Fred so if you feel like eating something let me know. Then Fred said you know it has been a couple of days since I have eaten anything so I think I am ready to eat a little something now.

That is good to hear Matt said we have plenty, my wife Heather packed a cloth sack full in case I would be gone for a while.

Matt gave Fred some corndodgers some biscuits and a couple pieces of beef jerky and a cup of hot black coffee. Then ask Fred if he felt like talking because he was still not sure what happened.

Sure, Fred said me and Casey was cooking up some black berries and I had just said how good the berries were smelling when I notice Casey was deep throat growling. Then I seen a very large bear and he came right into our camp He had got a whiff of the berries cooking.

Casey was darting back and forth in front of the bear plus circling him and I know Casey was trying to protect me from the bear and I was worried about Casey getting hurt but the bear was between me and my rifle.

I took the black berry juice I was cooking and tried to hang it on a small tree at the edge of the cliff plus I was watching the bear so while I was watching the bear I slipped and the small branch I was holding onto gave away and I fell and landed on that ledge but I guess I was lucky because the bear went all the way down and the fall killed him. Well that’s my story so what is yours how did you find me?

I was in my tool shed when Casey came to our place and I knew he wanted me to follow him and I did and he led me here so like I said Casey did save you. Now I think we should get some sleep then we will head back in the morning.

When Fred woke up the next morning the sun was up and there was a light breeze plus Matt was at the small fire drinking coffee. Fred asked if there was any coffee left so Matt handed Fred a cup of coffee and said you slept pretty good for all you been threw and Fred said I didn’t sleep much on that ledge plus I feel a lot better than I did while I was on that ledge.

That’s good Matt said are you hungry and Fred said maybe a little so matt said here is a biscuit and some beef jerky. I will hunt up a crutch for you while you drink that coffee.

It wasn’t long and Matt had a comfortable crutch made for Fred and they were moving towards home .They were making good time because not only did Fred feel better, they were heading down the hillside and not up. They walked the whole day and Fred did not complain but he was worn out by the time they did stop.

Matt made a small fire under a large cotton wood and set the coffee pot on a flat rock in the fire then he turned to say something to Fred but Fred was already sleeping with Casey next to him so Matt let him sleep.

The next morning when the sun just started to break through the light blue clouds Matt was up and was already drinking a cup of coffee when Fred rolled out of his bedroll and said that coffee sure smells good.

Matt walked over to Fred and handed him a cup of coffee and a biscuit and asked how he was feeling? Fred said he didn’t even remember climbing into his bedroll last night Matt said you laid down on your blanket and fell to sleep so I threw one of mine on you.

I will break camp and we should be back midday then Matt asked Fred again how he was feeling and Fred said I am feeling better than I deserve to, I’m sure.

Matt said I don’t know about that but if you feel up to it, we will push straight though today. Fred said let’s do it I would like to sleep in a real bed tonight and also meet that wife of yours and thank her for letting you go with Casey to bring me back.

Then like Matt said it was about midday when they reached the open ground leading to Matt’s and Heather’s place and they seen Heather running to meet them First Heather hugged and kissed Matt then as Heather hugged the large dog. Fred said his name is Casey and my name is Fred Bates and your husband saved my life.

Heather said hi to Fred Bates and then asked if he was hungry and also said Casey was a great name for a great dog like Casey. Matt said for Fred to rest and he would be back with Doctor Cain and Matt pulled up a couple chairs in the shade.

While Matt was gone to get the doctor, Fred told Heather how he had fell off the cliff and how Casey had kept the bear from him and that the bear had backed up and fell to his death. Then Fred said what seem like forever was me on that edge of the cliff and Casey looking down at me. I guess I passed out and Casey went for help.

The next thing I remember was your husband throwing a rope down to where I was on that edge and after climbing down to me and tying the rope around me and my belt, Fred stopped for what seemed like a full minute and then said your husband pulled himself up the side of the cliff then your husband pulled me up and over to where him and Casey was all by himself. Fred was shaking his head. I don’t know how he did it but he did it.

Heather said MR Bates I believe God helped Matt and you on that cliff and sent Casey to us so you would have the help you needed .But before Fred Bates could say anything doctor Cain and Matt walked up and after doctor Cain looked at both Fred Bates arm then his ankle doctor Cain said Mr. Bates I believe you are truly a lucky man First for having that big dog who loves you enough to save you from the bear then to find Matt here who got you off that ledge and back here.

Then doctor Cain looked at Matt and said Matt you did a great job on MR Bates arm and ankle plus getting him back here I don’t think anyone could have did better out there than you did.

Then Dr. Cain said MR Bates the splints are a little different than what I would do in my office but they look like they are doing good so you can keep them if you like or I can replace them in my office.

Matt said doctor I can’t take all the credit what do you mean Matt the doctor asked. Was there someone else there with you?

Yes, there was Matt said as he bowed his head and said out loud----Thank you Lord for sending Casey to me and then giving me the strength needed to pull Fred up the side of that cliff wall to safety and then seeing we all three made itback .In Jesus’ name I pray then when Matt said Amen his wife Heather plus doctor Cain and Fred Bates all three said in JESUS NAME AMEN

**THE END**

**THE JADES WAY**

**By BOB SELF**

Flint Starr and Bart Mason had just finished their trail drive and was standing in line to get their pay and while in line an older man came up to them and asked if he could have a word with them when they finished their business in the pay line. Flint and Bart both said they would see him after they got their pay.

It was no time and the line started moving and all the cowboys that were on the trail drive with Flint and Bart plus Flint and Bart was handed their final pay.

When Flint and Bart walked up to the older man, they shook hands and then the older man said my name is Wade Harper and I would like to buy you two cowboys dinner and also offer you both a job where you can make a lot of money.

Flint then asked what kind of job Mr. Harper and Wade Harper said an honest job with good pay if you agree to my offer. Flint then said go on Mr. Harper we are listening and Wade Harper said hold on a minute what‘s your hurry?

Flint said a real smart man told me not to long ago that a man needs to say what’s really on his mine because too many people with two much time on their hands ask three questions then finely ask or say what’s really on their mine so let’s just skip everything else and talk about the real reason while you are buying our dinner Mr. Harper.

Wade Harper said Well Flint that is fine with me because I am not just talking to hear myself talk I do have a job offer for the two of you but there is a little more to it so how about we order some dinner? Then I will tell you what I have in mind for the two of you.

Flint said Mr. Harper we do have some time and it was real early this morning when me and Bart wrapped ourselves around a plate of beans at the chuck wagon, so I am ready for a good meal and to hear what is on your mind. Good Wade Harper said, let’s grab that table on the back wall and I will call the waitress over and get our dinner started.

As Wade Flint and Bart sat down a young waitress came over to their table and Wade said we will have three black coffee’s and three specials and then ask Flint and Bart if that would be okay and Flint said knock his horns off and wipe his butt and put it on my plate and the young waitress smiled and ask will there be anything else and Flint said if you would bring us a pot of coffee because I have a lot of dust in my throat then smiled.

And the young waitress said my name is Jade and as she was smiling at Flint, she said I will keep the coffee coming and then Flint said my name is Flint and thank you Jade. Wade Harper said Flint you are quite the lady’s man aren’t you.

Flint said Mr. Harper I meant Jade no harm and I am sure she knows that and weather you do or not I don’t know where it concerns you. Wade Harper said Flint I am sure that Jade knows that you meant her no harm but as far as I go Well when Jade is not here at this dinner she is at our small ranch because Jade is Jade Harper and she is my daughter.

Flint said Mr. Harper I guess I owe you apology but like I said I did not mean her any harm but if it is okay, I will say I like her, Flint I’m glad you do because I know Jade likes you or she wouldn’t have given you her name so fast. Flint Jades mom just passed away a few days ago and we are still trying to put the pieces together if you know what I mean. Yes, I do Mr. Harper and I am sorry your wife died.

My wife was sick for some time and we knew she was dying but they are right when they say you are never really ready for a loved one to die. Then for the first time Bart spoke up and said Mr. Harper I lost my dad a few months ago and it hurts but then you put them in a special place in your heart and go on.

Bart I was beginning to think you couldn’t talk Wade Harper said but it looks like you are a man that only talks when he wants to talk. Well like Flint will tell you I don’t normally talk much but also as you can see Flint talks enough for both of us.

But before anything else was said Jade came up to the table with another pot of coffee and three large steaks with all the trimming and Flint said thank you Jade Harper and Jade looked at Flint and said you are welcome Flint Starr and smiled then walked away. Flint said I wonder how Jade knew my last name was Starr

Wade said Flint I know your brother Ringo Starr the deputy in Waco and him plus others told me that you and Bart would be right for the job that I want to offer the two of you.

I see you knew who we were when you came up to us in the pay line Flint said. Yes, I did Wade said and I was going to tell you after we ate our steaks that I was asking around about needing some help and it was your brother Ring plus Harry Austin and Wes Montana that told me that you and Bart was back from a trail drive and I would fine you both at the end of the pay line.

Bart said yea I guess we always end up at the back of the line somehow so you did know where to look didn’t you? Yea I did but I was also told that just because I would fine you at the back of the line it would be because you two wanted it that way because you two were leaders not really waiting to be told want to do or when to do it which I also like in a man.

As Flint picked up his coffee cup to take a drink he stopped and said Wade the steak was real good but now I would like to know what you would like for me and Bart to do for you.

Okay Wade said I always wanted to buy more cattle and for some reason my wife was always against it but then on her death bed my wife said Wade you need to buy more cows, She said sell the dinner and have the cattle ranch that you always wanted.

What does that have to do with me and Bart, Flint asked? It has everything to do with you two there is beef for sale, young cows and a young strong bull, but we have go get them and bring them back to our ranch. Shermon McBay has made me a great price on the cows and bull, so like I said we need to go get them and bring them back to our ranch The Jades Way so Shermon will have more room for his horses at Autumns Crossing.

We will brand our beef with a JW brand we will have cattle to brand and a cattle ranch to run so do you want to see the Jades Way Ranch and see if you are interested?

Flint said Wade we know Shermon McBay and he will do what he says he will do but he does have a very large ranch with a lot of ground and I know if he wanted to he would have his horses and still have room for cattle.

Wade said you are right Flint, Shermon does have a very large ranch and plenty of ground but the Calvary has signed a contract with Shermon to supply horses to them and they want more horses then Shermon had thought they would want so he is going to be working with a lot of horses with very little room for cattle.

Any way me and Shermon has worked a deal for 300 young cows and a prize bull at a real good price where I will pay half the money now and the other half in two years.

When Wade, Flint and Bart rode up to the Ranch Jades Way, Flint told Wade he was really impressed at the large main house, the good size bunk house and the lake plus the large corrals.

Flint asked Wade how many acres he had with the ranch and Wade said there was 6400 acres 10 miles by 10 miles with real good buffalo grass, plus plenty of water because of a large stream and the land had three strands of barb wire fence covering it all plus a pretty new three rail wood fence and large gate protecting the upper part of the lake from the cattle.

Then Wade looked at Flint and Bart and said $50.00 a month and found and plus there will be a 10% bonus for you both when we take our beef to market the first year and every year after.

But first I want you both to know my full name is Jed Wade Harper me and a partner Scott Andersen sold Shermon McBay some beefs a few years ago at a good price anyway my partner is dead now. I also had a son Rocky Harper, Rocky was looking for a reputation and pushed Kid Montana into a fight and Kid Montana sent my son Rocky to an early grave. Kid Montana tried to avoid it but Rocky pushed Kid to hard so Kid had no choice but to defend himself.

So, after I got my half of the money for the beefs, I brought my daughter Jade and my already sick wife here to Laredo and bought the dinner, the dinner is busy from open to close but still raising and selling beefs is what I want to do so now I have my chance to be a real cattle rancher with the help of you two.I have told you both everything there is to tell and I have been very clear on what you both can expect with a little hard work.

I have the full amount needed for the stock but Shermon said we have history and he would rather do our deal in threes. 50% now then 25% in one year then the final 25% after the second year all with no interest.

We will hire four more cowboys and build us a cattle ranch after we bring home our cows there will be branding cows calving and more branding then our first cattle drive to market in one year all with the help of God. So, what do you say are you two interested?

Bart said no disrespect Wade but I think you talk more than Flint does and I was sold a couple of hours ago, then Flint said so was I. Where do we sign on boss?

THE END

**DESSERRAE AND KIRBY BROWN**

**By BOB SELF**

Marie said Brett it sure is a beautiful morning for a picnic while they were setting up a small camp at the river’s edge and Brett agreed with her then said I bet the fish will be biting as he was getting a couple of poles ready with hooks.

Marie said Brett we need to do this more often and Brett said Marie I would love to but it seems like I have less time because our pig farm keeps growing but don’t get me wrong, I’m not complaining about all the work but maybe we should think about hiring us some help for our growing pig farm.

Maybe you should put a sign in town when we get back from our picnic that we are looking for help because you are right, we could use some help and I am sure that there is someone out there that likes bacon as much as we do and Marie laugh out loud and so did Brett but Brett did say he would but a sign out in town in the morning’

As Marie and Brett started to throw their lines in the water for the first throw Marie said I bet I catch the first fish and Brett said you can have the first fish because I am going to catch the biggest then they laugh again.

But as they laugh, they notice a young lady on a large black horse riding the ridge line, then when the young lady seen Marie and Brett, she turned her horse towards them and while still at a fast run the young lady was yelling can you help my dad?

Brett said Marie I know she is in a hurry for us to go with her but that horse is played out so we better let him rest a little and have a little water while she tells us what she can about needing our help. Marie said we will help you but first your horse is run out so tell us what happen while we tend to your horse.

The young girl said my name is Desserrae Brown and my dad’s name is Kirby Brown and we need to help my dad as soon as we can. Marie said we will, is your dad hurt? Is that why you need our help? He wasn’t when I left him but he is with our wagon and everything we own is in that wagon and the wagon wheel is busted and I tried to help my dad with the busted wheel but I couldn’t, plus I seen a wolf on the ridge close to where the wagon wheel broke.

Brett said okay I think you horse has rested enough and has his fill of water so if we don’t push him to hard, I think we can go help your dad. Desserrae said thanks because my dad also made me take most of our water and I am sure he could use some water by now.

Marie was making small talk by trying to ease Desserrae mind a little and said Desserrae sure is a pretty name you have. Thanks, my mom named me Desserrae before she died, she died when I was born and it has been me and my dad ever since.

Then Marie said my name is Marie Clay and my husband’s name is Brett and we own a pig farm, do you like pigs Desserrae? Desserrae said I like bacon but I don’t like to think of pigs when I eat bacon.

Brett said let’s fill your canteen I have the wagon hooked up and if it’s okay I will tie your horse to the back of our wagon and you can ride with us on the wagon seat. Desserrae said okay then patted her horse on his head and climbed up and sat next to Marie. Thanks for going with me and I am sorry for ending your picnic.

Well it is a good day for a ride and we can go fishing another day and then about an hour later Brett, Marie and Desserrae all three heard a rifle shot and another one right after the first one then they heard someone yell come on try to get me. And Desserrae said that’s my dad yelling.

As Brett pulled the wagon towards the rifle shots he handed the reins to Marie and grabbed his rifle from under their wagon seat and they all seen three dead wolves on the ground in front of Desserraes dad and her dad had his gun over his head and holding it by the barrel as another wolf was growling and barring his teeth at Desserraes dad, then the wolf sprang at Desserraes dad and Brett put two bullets into the wolf and the wolf fell and was dead when he hit the ground so there was four dead wolves laying in front of Desserraes dad as Desserrae jumped from the wagon and ran to her dad.

Desserrae was crying and asking her dad if he had run out of bullets and her dad said he had plenty of bullets but his gun had jammed again and good thing they got back before the wolf got him. You need to buy a new gun dad Desserrae said and her dad said I think you are right then asked who did you bring back with you Desserrae?

Brett said I am Brett Clay and this my wife Marie as he shook Kirby Browns hand and said Desserrae told us you could use some help and I am glad we got here when we did , let’s look at that wheel and see how bad it is. Marie said Brett while you men are fixing that wheel me and Desserrae will make some coffee and Brett said he could use a little coffee. Desserrae gathered a little dead wood and in no time there was a fire going and Marie set the coffee pot on a flat rock placed in the fire.

After looking at the busted wagon wheel Brett said Kirby, I think with a little bracing we can make this wheel work and get it back to my place. I have some metal banding and heavy tie wire under my wagon seat and we can use it to hold this wheel together and after we get back to my place, we can replace the wheel with another wheel if you would like to and I think we should.

Kirby said sounds good to me Brett and thanks. Brett said Kirby you can thank me later when we get this wagon back to my place, oh by the way do you like pigs Kirby, Brett asked? I like bacon so I guess I do like pigs, why did you ask Brett? Because I do have a lot of pigs back at my place, Marie and I have a large pig farm.

Brett went to work on the wagon wheel and the pigs were forgotten while they worked on the wagon wheel and when the wheel was as good as they could get it until they got back to Marie and Brett’s pig farm. Brett said now I think we should try to lighten the load in this wagon by putting what we can in my small but heavy wagon but first let’s have some coffee.

While Brett and Kirby drank coffee, Marie handed a cup to Desserrae and said it’s tea try it. Desserrae said she liked it but then she heard Brett say it will be dark soon so let’s lighten this load in your wagon and put it in mine, then we will move to the top of this hill and out of this valley we can build a fire under that large cotton wood and the smoke will drift up though the tree plus the tree will give us some shelter if needed then we will head out to my place in the morning.

Let’s stake our horses where they can reach that patch of buffalo grass so while we sleep the horses will be there to alert us if needed. Marie and Desserrae can make some floor place in your wagon and then we can throw our bedrolls on the ground under your wagon if that is okay with everyone. After all four agreed Brett said Well let’s get some sleep. The weather looks like it couldn’t be any better so after a little sleep we can head out in the morning.

First I need to say my prayers Desserrae said if it’s okay and Marie said me and Brett need to say ours so I will be in a couple of minutes. Brett and Marie could not help but hear Desserrae praying as she thanked God for her dad and for her dad being safe plus she thanked God for Brett and Marie and prayed for her and her dads future and that their future could be with Brett and Marie Clay, then Desserrae said Dear Lord in Jesus name I pray Amen. Brett said Desserrae said her prayers real good and Marie said she sure did.

When Desserrae woke up she woke up to the smell of coffee and Marie had eggs frying in a skillet over a small fire and Desserrae said I haven’t had eggs in a long time where did you find eggs? Brett said me and your dad walked over to water where we seen some ducks flying and there was plenty of eggs so we took a few.

Marie asked Desserrae if she would like some hot tea with her eggs and after Desserrae said thanks she would Desserrae hugged Marie and Marie hugged Desserrae then Marie noticed a tear in Kirby’s eye as he turned his head and Marie said let’s eat so we can get home. Desserrae said home that sure sounds good and I know me and my dad will have a home someday.

Marie and Brett looked at one and another but neither one said a word but they knew they were both thinking the same thing that they needed help on their pig farm and Desserrae and her dad Kirby needed a place to live.

After almost two hours on the trail from where they started out Brett said there’s our place. Kirby said you do have a lot of pigs Brett like you said and then Kirby noticed the tall hillside at the back side of the valley and the fence and gate at the front side of the long valley where the whole pig containment was mostly all natural with only a small added fence and gate at the front that kept the pigs content and safe in the long valley.

Desserrae said what a beautiful house and Marie said would you like to see the inside of my house? I sure would and as they pulled up Desserrae could see another house off to one side and said it looked as pretty as the first house Desserrae had seen and Desserrae asked who lives in that house? Marie said no one now that was the house me Brett lived in before we built the new one that we live in now.

Can I see that house too? Yes, you can see both houses plus your dad can see it and might want to see Brett’s large work shop and even the building that Brett butchers the hogs in. Marie said our first house might be a little dusty because it has been a year since we moved out and moved into the new house, but there is nothing wrong with the first house other than I wanted to have more room if Brett wanted to have kids.

Desserrae asked are you pregnant? Marie looked at Brett and said yes I am pregnant. Brett took Marie in his arms and with tears in his eyes Brett said you are pregnant and kissed Marie, then Marie said Brett show Kirby your shop and I will show Desserrae our first house that has no one living in for now and smiled.

Brett said come on Kirby lets go see the work shop then I will show you where I butcher the hogs and the spring that brings all the water to us, I am sure you would like to see that while Desserrae is looking at our first house that you and your daughter could move in to, because Kirby I could use your help and the work isn’t bad and we can pay you a good months pay every month plus Desserrae can help Marie now and when we have our baby and also be paid while helping.

Before you say anything there is a lot that Marie could help Desserrae learn as far as cooking, sewing and many other things that Desserrae might want to know when she gets a little older so if you are interested let’s come up with an amount of pay and the house is ready for you and Desserrae to move in. Kirby said Brett I am more than interested. I want to thank you and believe me I won’t let you down, so let’s go see Desserrae with the news.

As Brett and Kirby walked to the first house Desserrae ran out to her dad and said dad Marie said we could live here in this house and call it ours and you could have a job making real good money plus Marie could show me how to cook and sew plus much more if you are interested dad. Are you interested dad?

Kirby said I think we should live in this great house and me work for Brett and stay forever if you want. Desserrae jumped straight in the air and then hugged her dad and then said God has answered all my prayers. Then Marie said Desserrae God has answered all our prayers and welcome to your home and all four of them had tears in their eyes but also were smiling from ear to ear.

THE END

DAWN MARIE and LEXI LEE

By BOB SELF

It was Sunday morning when Dawn rode up to Ringo Starr and said Ringo it is a beautiful day so t thought me and Hedi would go for a ride .Hedi has not had a saddle on for quite some time .Ringo would you like to go Dawn asked?

Ringo Starr the deputy of Waco said Dawn I would love to go but the Marshal is out of town for a couple of days so I better stay close to town while he is gone. Ringo asked Dawn if she was going without him and Dawn said because he couldn’t go, she thought she would ask Lexi Lee if she would like to go, then Ringo said to be careful and he would see her soon.

Dawn Marie rode out to Autumn’s crossing then asked Lexi Lee if she would want to go with her, Lexi said she would but first she would tell her uncle Shermon as she called him, then she would saddle Blackie her horse. Shermon said for Lexi and Dawn Marie to have a good ride but to be careful. First Shermon asked Dakota to saddle Lexi’s horse then Shermon asked Lexi to wait a minute.

Shermon stepped inside and came back out with Lexi’s dad’s rifle and told Lexi to take it with her so she would have it if she needed it but Shermon also said he hoped Lexi would not need it. Then as Dakota came up with Lexi’s horse Shermon hugged lexi and Lexi said see you in a couple hours uncle Shermon. So Lexi and Dawn Marie rode away as Shermon and Dakota waved to them and Lexi said we won’t be gone long, see you soon.

The weather was really good and because Hedi and Blackie both had not had a saddle on them for some time the two young women thought they should let their horses run a little to burn off some energy.

After Dawn Marie and Lexi had let their horses run for a while, they showed them down to a nice walk to let them cool down a little. Dawn Marie and Lexi had both said how good the weather had looked when they left Autumns Crossing but now, they both notice the clouds were getting really dark and the wind was blowing.

They knew that they had let their horses run at least three miles and then walked them for near another mile so they knew they were at least four miles from Autumn’s Crossing.

Dawn Marie said Lexi this weather is going to get real bad real fast so I think we should try to find a place to hold up for a little while don’t you and Lexi agreed they should then noticed a tree with a lot of small limbs and very large leaves and the tree was growing on the side of a hill and Dawn Marie agreed with Lexi it looked like the perfect shelter to wait the storm out. Let’s turn Hedi and Blackie loose they will probably stay close and maybe find a little cover of their own.

At first there was only a light drizzle and some loud thunder but by the time Dawn Marie and Lexi reached the tree they had picked for shelter it was raining very hard and the sky’s where almost black, the lightning was flashing across the sky and the thunder was louder than they had ever heard before, plus they both noticed the small creek had turned into a raging river and there was a lot of water coming over the hillside where Dawn Marie and Lexi was holding onto the tree that they now felt moving.

It had rained for some time and Dawn Marie had just mentioned how fast the water was flowing and at the same time Dawn Marie and Lexi yelled the tree is starting to slide down the hill side .Dawn Marie yelled hold on to the tree because we might need it in that fast-moving water.

The water was very deep and very wide when Dawn Marie and Lexi went into the water but they were still holding onto the tree plus one another and they had no idea how far the water had already carried them, then about an hour later Dawn Marie said look Lexi the skies are starting to get lighter and the rain is letting up so maybe our water ride will be over soon.

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Like Dawn Marie said the water ride was starting to slow down and they felt the tree drag the bottom some and a few minutes later the tree wasn’t moving anymore because the tree was stuck in the mud.

Lexi asked Dawn Marie now what and Dawn Marie said I think we should try and make it to dry ground. So they climbed out of the water and up the bank a ways, the two young women laid back on the dry bank and Dawn Marie said let’s enjoy the sun that is peaking through the clouds for a minute.

After a couple of minutes Dawn Marie said Lexi, I really don’t know how far that water carried us but it did take us a ways ,so we could be ten, fifteen miles or more from Autumn’s crossing and I am sure Hedi and Blackie headed back to Autumn’s crossing and I hope they did.

Dawn Marie said Lexi when you are ready, I think we should head back up stream and stay close enough to the water where we can see it and follow it back. Dawn Marie then said Lexi I don’t know how long it will take us to get back to Autumn’s Crossing but we will.

Well I know we won’t be back tonight but the sooner the better and I do hope Blackie and Hedi got back to Autumn’s crossing and there is cowboys heading our way. Dawn Marie said I am sure that there is cowboy’s from Autumns Crossing coming our way now, but we will not be able to travel at night and it will be dark soon, so I think we should fine us a dry place for tonight and head out in the morning.

Lexi said we don’t have any food and that water is really muddy. Dawn Marie said the water should be running clear by morning and I hope it is and as for as food we will fine berries to eat I am sure, but the best part is there will be cowboys heading our way from Autumn’s crossing and will find us so we don’t have to worry about starving.

The next morning before Dawn Marie and Lexi woke up for the day, Harry Austin and Elrod was pulling away from the line shack when Elrod noticed the two horses at the gate and said Harry isn’t those horses Dawn Marie’s and Lexis? Harry said they sure are and I wonder what they are doing here.

Elrod said I was drinking a cup of coffee with Shermon yesterday morning when Dawn Marie and Lexi left Autumns Crossing to take a horse ride and I hear Dawn Marie say they would be back in a couple hours but it looks like something went wrong.

When Harry and Elrod rode up to Shermon, Ringo was already telling Shermon that he was worried about Dawn Marie and Lexi. T hen when Harry and Elrod rode up with their horses Shermon said Ringo I wasn’t to concern, but now that their horses came back with their saddles on and no riders, I would say them two young ladies are on foot.

Elrod said they are sleeping in the dark with no food no water and no gun, we need to go after them Sherm. Shermon said you are right. Ringo. Elrod and Harry plus, Kid will go with you let their horses eat and drink while I have Cap throw some food in a couple cloth sacks and get a couple extra canteens of water.

In no time Kid Montana, Harry Austin, Elrod and Ringo was ready with the food plus the couple extra canteens of water then they all bowed their heads and Shermon said Dear Lord we are praying to you to let us find Dawn Marie and Lexi safe and help us bring them back home and when we do, we thank you again for your help in Jesus’ name Amen.

Then Shermon said I wish I could go with you four, but as you know there will be soldiers here in the morning picking up quite a few horses and this will be the first time of many times to come. Ringo said Shermon we all know how bad you want to go with us, but I will tell you we will be back and we will have them with us when we return.

Then the four cowboys with the two extra horses turn their horses and headed out to find Dawn Marie and Lexi Lee, Shermon stood there watching until the cowboys were out of sight and then looked up to Heaven and said God let them be safe Amen.

As they went through the gate at the line shack Wes Montana said Ringo there was a real nasty storm two days ago and just maybe their horses run off without them. I know we will find them safe. Ringo said I blame myself for not going with them but like you said we will find will them and they will be happy to see us Dawn Marie and Lexi are smart women then Ringo didn’t say anymore.

Elrod said I haven’t seen any tracks but look how high this water was and there is quite a few of trees uprooted and I would say we will find them up ahead walking back. Ringo then said I hope so but you know when Dawn Marie has decided to do something she is going to do it.

Wes Montana said well I think we all know it looks like the water has taken them down stream, but how far I don’t know but I do know it will be dark soon and we have to make camp then start out at first light.

Ringo agreed but said I hate to stop but I know we need to, but I sure hate to knowing that Dawn Marie and Lexi are both out there by their self’s and in the dark and this will be their second night.

Harry said it will help knowing that we are coming to find them and believe me they know that someone is on their way to find them. No one said anything for a full minute then Ringo said I was going to ask Dawn Marie to marry me next week when I picked her up for church but now, I think I will ask her as soon as I see her.

Elrod said the coffee is ready. Harry and Wes was gathering dead wood then walked up to the fire and dropped the wood and Elrod handed them both a cup coffee and said the first cup is on me. Harry said, I will buy the second cup then they all had a plate of beans and a biscuit and Harry grabbed the coffee pot and filled all four of their coffee cups.

Elrod drank his coffee then added a piece of wood to the small fire, then shook out his bedroll and pulled off his boots and Wes Montana said he thought Elrod was sleeping before he got his boots all the way off .Harry said he thought he was ready for sleep.

Wes Montana said see you cowboys in the morning and rolled out his bedroll ,then the next morning when the sun was about to break through the clouds all four cowboys were sitting in their saddles and ready to pull out to find Dawn Marie and Lexi Lee.

Wes said, me and Harry will ride this side of the bank while you two ride the other side, I don’t think we will see any tracks but just in case. I am sure they wouldn’t leave the water too far but I wouldn’t want to miss them either.

The sun rose high in the sky and the day warned up and then after hours of following the bank, they all notice that the sun was starting to drop down behind the trees, None of the four cowboys wanted to stop but they knew they needed to.

Harry said we have gone a ways today and also; I am sure that Dawn Marie and Lexi are approaching us from the other way and they will be holding up for the night the same as us. So, I think we should maybe make a night camp over on that ridge and wrap ourselves around a plate of beans ,drink some coffee and get an early start in the morning.

That night Wes Montana said I know we all hate sitting around this fire while Dawn Marie and Lexi is sitting in the dark in a cold camp but I feel hopeful that we will find them safe tomorrow. Ringo said I hope we do, it’s been three nights in a cold camp that would work on any one sitting in the dark all night, then Ringo turned his head and said I’m calling it a night and rolled out his bedroll then laid down and turn his back to the fire.

The sun was just starting to break through the clouds and Wes Montana was stirring the coals and adding a couple pieces of dead wood when Elrod sat the coffee pot that was full of grounds and water on the flat rock at the fire.

No one had much to say because all four cowboys were thinking of the two women who had spent three nights in the dark with very little to drink or eat, plus no one said anything when Wes Montana dumped the water and grounds on the fire and climbed in his saddle, but in less than five minutes there was four cowboys sitting tall in their saddles and heading down the bank to follow the now small stream.

Ringo said the sun is warming up pretty fast and I hope Dawn Marie and Lexi has had cool water and maybe found something to eat. Wes Montana said I am sure they have had water and I have seen a lot of berries that they could have ate.

Elrod said there’s a chance that they have had plenty of water and berries and that the cold camps did not bother them. Ringo said I not sure about the water and the berries but I am sure they wouldn’t have cold camps on purpose and I am also sure they are hoping to be found soon. As the day went on and on all the cowboys were only thinking of Dawn Marie and Lexi and what Dawn Marie and Lexi might be thinking and how they were feeling.

But then as they all seen the sun dropping in the sky all four cowboys dropped their heads a little and even shook their heads from side to side and Ringo said I am sorry Dawn Marie and Lexi that we have not found you let, I know it will be your fourth night but I am praying that we find you both safe tomorrow

Ringo said in Jesus name I pray then Wes, Harry and Elrod said Amen as they walked their horses up to a little ridge and made camp.

The night drug on for what seemed like forever and all four cowboys were at a loss for words, one by one they tossed and turned all night but morning finally came and they rode out of a cold camp, cold camp means no coffee because of no fire.

Then Harry Austin said we will find them today or we will find them in the dark because I just left my last camp until we find Dawn Marie and Lexi. Wes, Elrod and Ringo had made up their minds not to stop again until the four of them, plus Dawn Marie and Lexi was sitting around the fire with them.

The stream had broken off in a couple different smaller streams. Wes Montana said, looks like we will have to spilt up to follow the water because there is no way of telling what was and what is but maybe the stream will come together again down the line, If you find Dawn Marie and Lexi fire three close shots. They all shook hands and headed down separate small water ways.

Elrod was taking a small drink of water from his canteen when he heard a shot then another then a third shot, the same as Wes Montana and Ringo heard the three shots. Wes Montana, Elrod and Ringo was following Harry up the hill side as Dawn Marie and Lexi was making their way down the same hill side.

Dawn Marie and Lexi was overwhelmed with the sight of the four cowboys and as hard as they tried to hold their tears back, they couldn’t plus there was four big cowboys with tears in their eyes, they all hugged and tried to talk at the same time then Harry started gathering fire wood and Elrod helped Harry make a large stack of wood as the sun was dropping then Harry stuck a match to it. Wes Montana asked did you to go swimming and Dawn Marie said we sure did first it was a small creek but then it turned into a razing river in no time.

Dawn Marie said that is a really big fire and four cowboys said you went four nights without a camp fire so that is not going to happen tonight and they all felt the joy of the fire and they thanked God for the night.

As they were pulling food from the cloth sack that Captain George had prepare for them, Elrod filled the coffee pot with grounds and water then said Kid, when I sit this pot on that flat rock you aren’t going to dump it out again are you? And laugh a little then kid laugh and said it’s safe. Then Harry and Ringo also laughed.

Dawn Marie and Lexi looked at each other but just smiled because they weren’t there when Wes Montana had dumped out the coffee after Elrod had just sat it down on the flat rock at their last camp fire so there was no more said about it.

Wes Montana said at least we found you two alive and safe. Then Ringo said as soon as you two rest Well head out it will be dark in a few hours and we will have to stop for the night and we will be out here for two more nights but we will have a fire and food.

Elrod said we have your two horses unless you prefer to walk. Lexi said she would ride and so did Dawn Marie and then Dawn Marie asked if they found her and Lexi’s horse on the trail when they came to look for her and Lexi.

Harry Austin said no Hedi and Blackie showed up at Autumns Crossing with their saddles but no riders so that’s when we came looking. You know Shermon was very upset that he could not leave Autumns Crossing to come with us and find you two, but he had a large deal to close with some soldier boys in the morning so we told Shermon we would bring you two back safe.

Dawn Marie and Lexi Lee hugged all four of their brave cowboys again and thanked them and God, then Lexi said she understood it would take a couple more nights to get back to Autumn’s Crossing but it would be more like a picnic with a fire and the cowboy’s company and not being in the dark just her and Dawn Marie. Like Ringo had said it did take two more nights to reach Autumns Crossing but compare to their nights in the dark it was like a camping trip with friends.

Then as the six of them rode up to where Shermon was sitting Shermon jumped up and rang the large Kansas City bell then thanked God for Dawn Marie and Lexi’s safe return the same as the rest of the McBays as they all hugged Dawn Marie and Lexi.

After everyone wiped their tears of joy to see Dawn Marie and Lexi safe, they all started wiping their tears again when Ringo got on one knee and asked Dawn Marie to marry him and Dawn Marie said yes

THE END.

KATIE AND MICHAEL COOPER PLUS FIVE COWBOYS

By BOB SELF

Daniel said to Micka we are already getting low on a few items and the freight line has only been down for two weeks. Yea Micka said the freight line sure picked a bad time to regroup its operation it happened so fast with no notice.

But when Jack and Jackie Parker up and retired and their son decided to take over the fright line there was very little time for Larry Parker and his wife Jamie to take the business over and get everything in order.

Micka said, But from what I have heard the changes they are going to make with the freight line will help us get our freight faster and for less cost so that will be good, they are going to do all their pickups in New Orleans and it will cut down on the time from start to finish

.

Jamie has made arrangements for us to make one pickup in New Orleans for our supplies while the Parkers are regrouping their freight line. Larry Parker said it would be at least another 30 days before they would be up and running again ,then said a number days to get the supplies to their customers. What are we going to do about our shelves needing products Daniel asked?

I have given it a great deal of thought Micka said and I think I should get at least three or four cowboys to go with me to New Orleans to get the supplies we need with our two freight wagons. We need to have the supplies that our customers are depending on us to have when they come to our general store.

Micka how long do you think it would take to get to New Orleans Daniel asked? She also asked about their horses being able to pull their two wagons to New Orleans and where he thought there might be four good cowboys looking for work.

Hold on Daniel, Micka said those are all good questions and I think I know where to find the cowboys and the horses, plus I have checked the trail on two different maps.

First, I will check with Marshal Edward Jones and Shermon McBay. I will also hang a sign over the boardwalk in front of our general store that says we are looking for four cowboys for a trip to New Orleans to bring freight back. Then as far as the horses I am sure that Shermon will either sell or rent me six horses to help our horses pull our two freight wagons.

Now for how long will it take, I am sure we could make it to New Orleans and back in 20 days. Daniel said 20 days is a long time to worry, I will send you a wire as often as possible Micka said to let you know I am safe and like we both know it has to be done in order to keep our store open, so try not to worry. Daniel hugged Micka and said I know it has to be done but I can’t help to worry about you and I will pray to God to bring you back safe to me.

I will have men with me that are good with guns and you know I can handle a rifle and a hand gun if I need to. Then Micka finished the sign he was working on and said let’s see what this sign will look like over the boardwalk next to the double doors out front, then Micka hung the sign and read it out loud to Daniel.

Looking for four cowboys to go to New Orleans with me to pick up supplies and bring them back here to Waco in my freight wagons. You will need to be able to handle a gun if trouble comes plus handle a team and wagon. Bring your bedroll and gun and the general store will supply anything else needed. The trip should take 20 days round trip. If interested see Micka Grant to sign up.

Daniel asked Micka if he thought he could bring back enough supplies on one trip for their general store that they would need until the freight line was up and running ?Micka said with our two wagons loaded I know I could bring back the supplies needed without over loading the wagons.

Micka said he would be able to install the bonnet on the larger of the two wagons then he could incorporate a bonnet for the smaller wagon with no trouble. Both our wagons are made to haul and both are in very good shape so I don’t see having any problems. I will check the wheel hubs and axle plus make sure the grease bucket is full of grease.

I will go see Shermon in the morning about the horses and see what he would need to have to sell me 6 horses or rent me 6 horses for the trail.

The next morning when Micka rode up, Shermon was standing up and looking out over his horses, but he called to Micka and said come on up in the shade and have a cup of coffee. Shermon said pull up a chair and tell me what brings you out here to Autumns Crossing.

Well Shermon the freight line is down and we cannot get our freight without going to New Orleans and bringing it back or waiting a very long time for our supplies, then our shelves would be empty for sure. Shermon said I know empty shelves are a bad thing to have in your line of work, so what is your plan?

Shermon I have two freight wagons like you know, but I only have two horses so I need to buy six horses or if you would rent me six that would even be better. I would like to have four horses pulling each wagon to New Orleans and back. That sounds about right to me Shermon said, so it looks like you need 6 horses and maybe 4 cowboys to help you bring back the supplies.

Micka said that is right Shermon and like always you do come right to the question. We could make small talk all day or we could ask our question first then make small talk when our business is done Shermon said and that is the way I like to do it. How much will the six horses cost me Micka asked?

You don’t need to buy 6 horses I will give you 6 horses to use, but if you don’t bring back my 6 horses it will cost you $100.00 for each horse you don’t bring back. Micka said you don’t want me to pay you when I take the horses? No, I don’t. Everyone at Waco plus everyone here at Autumns Crossing depends on your general store for our supplies so just bring back my horses when you return from New Orleans.

Now the four cowboys I have two working at the sawmill that are good with horses and wagons plus also good with a gun if needed and now is the perfect time to be needing them because we are caught up at the mill and I was thinking about moving them to Autumn’s crossing while there was no real work to be done at the saw mill.

I am sure that they would like to go with you but first I have two other cowboys in mind that I think you should also take. The two at the mill is Rio Smith and Travis Hill then the other two is Mario Austin and my nephew Dakota they are all four in their twenties Mario being the oldest and Dakota being the youngest, but they are all men that has been there and back and they will do what needs to be done.

Micka said Shermon if you say so that is good enough for me, I have a sign to take down and two wagons to check, so I will see you later Shermon and thanks.

Shermon talked to Dakota and Mario first, but after he talked to Mario’s dad and Dakota’s mom and dad, he thought they could maybe use a little different scenery. They were all in agreement then Shermon went to town to see Rio Smith and Travis Hill, then Shermon took the four cowboys to see Micka Grant.

As Shermon and the four cowboys reached the general store Micka had just stepped out onto the boardwalk, Micka had a colt 44 in a worn holster on one hip plus a large bowie knife on his other hip and not only did Micka have high cowboy boots on, he had a good-looking cowboy hat on his head and a repeating rifle in his hands.

Shermon said it looks like there is five cowboys going to New Orleans, then said I am heading back to Autumn’s crossing while you five make your plans and I will have six horses here later today. Shermon shook Micka hand and rode towards Autumns Crossing.

The next morning the four cowboys said good bye to everyone at Autumn’s Crossing and they shook hands then headed to town and as they pulled up to the general store, Daniel was hugging Micka and said Micka it sure looks like you and these four cowboys will be able to handle whatever comes your way plus, get the job done.

Dakota said Micka me and Mario have been on a couple trails and if you and Rio plus Travis can handle the wagons me and Mario will switch lead plus drag there and back on our horses .Micka said that sounds good, you and Mario have lead and drag and I will sit the seat on the smaller wagon and Rio you and Travis will take the larger freight wagon because of more room for the two of you.

They headed out of town with most of the town waving to them as Dakota took lead and Mario was bringing up drag. Micka had told Dakota and Mario they would keep the two wagons between them and also said he would be open to any advice they had for him.

Micka had told them that he had food for 12 days and they would buy food for the trip back before leaving New Orleans, he also had a full water barrow and extra 44longs that he hoped they would not need. Micka took Dakota’s advice and stored half the food and half the extra colt 44 longs in each wagon just to be safe.

Dakota had told his uncle Shermon to keep the coffee hot and his uncle Shermon had told him and Mario to keep their powder dry and to watch their back side. Now they were on their way Dakota had just asked Mario ,you ready partner then said let’s put some miles behind us.

Daniel was just about to step back up on the boardwalk when Lexi lee called to her and said Micka and Shermon had asked her to stop by and see her, Lexi said I hope you don’t mind. Daniel said she like the ideal and to come on in.

Daniel told Lexi that she could use the company but she did not want Lexi to stay if she would weather not stay .Lexi said they just asked me to stop by but it was my ideal to stay if you think you can put up with me. I already brought my things and I think it will be fun and Daniel agreed. Lexi asked how long did Micka say it would take for them to get to New Orleans and back? Daniel said Micka said he thought it would be 20 days but maybe a day or two more.

Daniel, you know Micka has for good cowboys with him that my uncle Shermon handpicked and uncle Sherm said that he was sure that if trouble came, they would be ready, but he also was pretty sure there wouldn’t be any trouble.

The weather was good and the trail was even better and they were putting miles behind them and Mario was bringing up drag and Dakota was on point when Micka seen Dakota riding on a long ridge then cut down towards them, then as Dakota pulled up to the wagon, he told Micka that he was sure they made better than 20 miles today and there was a real nice place up ahead that they could make camp for the night if Micka wanted to and Micka said he was ready to climb off the wagon seat, so let’s head to that camp site.

As they pulled up to the site Dakota had picked out Mario pulled up and said good pick Dakota there’s plenty of dead wood and there is a creek to water the horses. Micka said I will water these horses then I will start a fire and then get us something to eat.

Dakota said Rio you and Travis pull the wagons together and after you unhook the horses give them a drink and then stake them in that buffalo grass, me and Mario will start a fire under that large cotton wood and let the smoke drift up through the limbs, then put the coffee pot on a flat rock in the fire.

While Micka was going through a couple of the cloth sacks of food Dakota and Mario had a fire going and the coffee was almost ready as they pulled some more dead wood closer to the fire. Micka had some smoked bacon and beans plus a biscuit on five different plates and asked if they were ready to eat, then pulled five tin cups from another cloth sack, while eating Micka said do you think we will need a night guard while sleeping tonight?

Dakota said Micka my horse Grim and Mario’s horse Trigger plus the other 6 horses will warn us if we get any unwanted visitors, so you get some sleep and we will let you know if any visitors stop by. Then Micka said Dakota I am curious what made you name your horse Grim it sure is an unforgettable name isn’t it?

Yes Micka Grim is an unusal name and also unforgettable, but you can look at it two different ways You see Grim means Thunder, Courage and Relentless force even Frightful humor or you could see it as respect for the dead and hope that death does not find you to soon so that is the reason I named my horse Grim

Micka said you sure have given it a lot of thought haven’t you ?Yes, I have because the way I see it a name is something that you carry to your grave so why not a good name and not a name that you don’t care to much for. Micka said that makes a lot of sense.

Dakota said morning is coming soon so let’s get some shut eye see you in the morning. Then Micka seen Dakota roll out his bedroll next to where his horse Grim was standing and Micka was sure Dakota was sleeping as his head touched his saddle.

The next morning when Micka opened his eyes Dakota was sitting on his heels and pouring himself a cup of coffee at the fire with his back to Micka. Dakota asked Micka if he was ready for a cup of coffee and Micka said how did you know I was awake and Dakota said you talk in your sleep and you weren’t talking anymore.

What was I talking about? Dakota said you were praying and Dakota handed Micka a cup of coffee. Micka said I didn’t keep you awake, did I? Dakota said no this beautiful morning woke me. Let’s eat a biscuit then put some miles behind us.

Mario kicked the coals around then poured the little bit of coffee that was left on the fire, and they finished breaking camp, Dakota had mounted grim and was sitting in his saddle and looked around in all four directions then said I won’t be far ahead then took the lead.

As Dakota pulled away Micka said Dakota sure reminds me of someone we know Mario said Dakota reminds us all of Shermon Robert MaBay because they are alike in every way which you will see before this trip is over but that is also a very good thing.

The weather was great and they were still making good time and Dakota said we should make New Orleans in two more days then pulled ahead again, then about an hour later Micka seen Dakota cut across in front of them to a ridge where there was a woman waving both her arms, then as Dakota talked to the woman Dakota waved for them to follow him and the woman so Micka and the other three cowboys turn off the trail and followed Dakota and the woman.

When Micka, Mario, Rio and Travis pulled up to where Dakota and the woman was they seen a man with dirt up to his chest and he was in a bad way and wasn’t far from going to an early grave it looked like. They found out that the woman’s name was Katie Cooper and her husband’s name was Michael Cooper and her husband Michael was trying to dig a well when a lot of dirt caved in around him.

Dakota asked Michael if he thought he was hurt anywhere and Michael said he thought only his pride Was hurt, it was going well when the dirt started caving in around me. I am sure that this rope I have tied around my waist and Katie is the only two reasons that I was not buried alive. Mario said let’s see if we can get you free.

Katie said we had decided that it was time to get some water close to the house so we decided a well was what we needed and here is where we ended up with Michael trapped, we have been carrying water for better than a year so we decided now was the time for a well.

Dakota said let’s get the tailgates from the two wagons to work off of. Dakota said if you three grab the tailgate from the larger wagon me and Mario will get the other tailgate from the smaller wagon then we will set up to get Michael free from his almost early grave as safely as possible by using the tailgates to help hold the dirt back. Dakota said we will take our time and place the boards inside the hole as we dig so we can keep dirt from sliding in around Michael, so let’s be real careful as we dig the dirt out.

Then after more than two hours Michael was almost free and Mario said should we see if we can pull Michael from the hole, and Dakota said let’s try and then told Michael if anything hurt when they started pulling to let them know and they would stop pulling.

Dakota said the sun is starting to set and I am sure Mike would like to be free from that hole before it gets dark. And Mike said he would. And then Michael said you five sure have moved lots of dirt and the day is almost gone but I can’t thank you five enough. Dakota said don’t thank us yet let us get you out first then you can thank us it won’t be much longer and you will be standing up here with us.

Then Dakota and Mario got a hold on Michael and pulled him free from his almost early grave and as Michael climbed out of the hole with Dakota’s and Mario’s help Katie rushed in and hugged Michael and they kissed through dirt and sweat then, Katie had tears of joy running down her face. Katie hugged all five of the cowboys and Michael shook hands with the five hard working cowboys.

Katie said I have a large pot of stew with a lot of meat cooking and it should be ready so if you would like to wash up some I will put it on the table .Michael said we will be right in.

After the cowboys and Michael washed the dirt off them they stepped into Katie’s and Michael’s home .Dakota, Mario, Rio and Travis all were impressed, the room was very large with a stone fireplace covering the whole back wall and the heavy long table had eight large chairs, the house had a wood floor with throw rugs covering most of the floor then there was a big bowl of stew and a cup of coffee set at all seven places at the table plus a large plate of biscuits set in the center of the table.

Katie said I know that you have to be hungry so eat up there is plenty more stew and all the coffee you can drink. But first I would like to say a prayer and everyone bowed their heads. Katie said thank you lord for the five cowboys that saved Michael from his almost shallow grave and thank you for the food that you have made possible for us to eat and I pray in Jesus’ name Amen then there was six other Amen’s.

Dakota said he could not eat another bite .The other three cowboys plus Micka said the same thing then Dakota said he was really impressed with their house and Michael said we have three bedrooms off of this large room because some day me and Katie will have two sons then looked at Katie and smiled.

Dakota said morning will be here before you know so I will say goodnight now and see you in the morning and thanks for the stew and coffee then Dakota stepped out into the night Mario said he would not have to eat again for a couple of days and said thanks then also stepped out of the house then Rio and Travis got up and said how good the stew was and they also were going to get some sleep.

Katie said she knew Micka had to be tired but she was wondering about the two large wagons and the five of them so Micka said let me have another cup of coffee and I will explain what we are doing. The five of us are going to New Orleans to buy supplies for my general store, the freight line is down and my store in Waco needs supplies then Micka asked if there was anything he could bring them back from New Orleans and both Katie and Michael said they thought they were good but they would think on it some and let him know in the morning.

The next morning did come early as Dakota said it would and all five cowboys were feeling the digging from the day before and Dakota said let’s have a little coffee and a biscuit then we can put some miles behind us and they all agreed. But it did not work out because Michael was at the door and said breakfast is ready come and get it.

All five cowboys looked at the other and Dakota said it’s ready so let’s have some coffee and a biscuit because Dakota knew they all did not feel very hungry but it was ready. When the five cowboys sat down to the table there was smoked bacon a platter of eggs and biscuits plus a large pot of hot black coffee.

Katie said eat up there is more if you want more then Dakota said Katie you are a great cook but if we don’t stop eating soon and get back on the trail you are going to make us fat. And Katie said it looks to me like you all could use a few pounds and Mario said if we don’t quit eating so much our horses will run from us and not let us ride them, then they all laughed out loud and then thanked God for all the food and then ate their full.

When Dakota pushed his chair back, he told Michael he would like to talk to him about his water needs and asked Michael to step outside with him and they walked around the back side of the house.

Dakota said Mike I know you would like to have your water closer to your house and you can but without a well and Michael asked what Dakota had in mind. Dakota said the way that water is running and I know it runs all year so I think you should trench a line as close as you want to you house then with a little piping and a handle pump you could pump water when ever needed.

Michael said that would be a lot easier than me digging a well and Dakota said and a lot safer to. I can pick up the piping and handle pump while in New Orleans then on our return trip stop by here with it and Michael said great, I will start drenching a line today.

Then Michael said Dakota there is something else I would like for you pick up for me while you are in New Orleans and Dakota asked what would you like Michael.

Michael said some dress material a real pretty flower pattern would be really nice and Dakota said he would be happy pick it up then Dakota shook Michael’s hand and they walked back around the front of the house and Katie had just said thanks to Micka.

Then Dakota climbed up in his saddle on Grim and Mario was already sitting in his saddle on his horse Trigger and Micka was sitting on the one wagon seat and Rio plus Travis was sitting on the other wagon seat and Dakota took the lead and said let’s put some miles behind us and as all five cowboys headed away Katie and Michael waved until the cowboys were out of sight.

Katie said I still thank God for our five cowboys and Michael said he did to but now he had some trenching to do before they return.

The next couple of days went well, the weather was good and so was the trail and all five of the cowboys talked of Katie and Michael and how they were looking forward to seeing the Coopers again on their return trail and before they knew it the five cowboys were in New Orleans.

While the dock men were loading the two freight wagons with Micka, Dakota went and bought a large handle pump and roll of piping so the coopers would have water up to their house then Dakota found some real nice red and white material which he had the clerk wrap up all he had plus Dakota bought some red and white thread.

Micka had asked Mario to fine a Winchester repeating rifle and a hundred shells for Katie to give to Michael when they returned and have it wrapped in brown paper and make sure there was a card saying happy Anniversary.

Then Micka went to the telegraph office and sent a wire to Daniel and before he left the telegraph office there was a return wire coming back that read.

Micka, Katie and Michael have already sent a wire and they really sound nice and I am glad that you were able to help them and be careful and hurry home. I need you and our shelves need supplies. Love Daniel.

The wagons were loaded and after Micka filled the cloth food sacks Dakota said let’s roll ,we have our supplies, food and coffee for the trail plus a pump with handle and piping plus a couple real nice gifts for Katie and Michael to exchange.

The trail back to the Coopers could not have been any better the weather was good and the trail was almost smooth and they made good time then they seen Katie and Michael waving and Dakota said I don’t know who is happier the coopers to see us or us to see the coopers.

After the hugs and the handshakes Dakota pulled the pump with handle and the long roll of piping from the wagon and him and Micka walked around to the back side of the house. Dakota said you have been busy you have the whole trench dug and even a wet well for the pump and handle to sit in.

Dakota said you already have most of the work completed so let me talk to Mario, Rio and Travis and I will be right back and in no time all five cowboys were back and digging. Dakota said we have light enough to finish what you started and we will be bringing water to the house before we quit.

So, the six ran the piping and installed the pump then they backfilled the trench and they were ready to prime the system. Michael called to Katie and then poured a small amount of water into the top of the pump and pumped the handle a couple of times then everyone watched the water as it ran from the pump.

Then Katie bowed her head and thanked God for the water and her and Michael’s five cowboys and when Katie said Amen, Michael and five cowboys said Amen

Dakota said the piping and the pump is our gift to you two then handed Katie a gift that said from Michael and handed a gift to Michael that said from Katie then said in two days is your Anniversary so you guys can open them then but now I am ready for a little shut eye and then we will pull out in the morning.

The five cowboys threw their bedrolls on the ground and it looked like all five were sleeping before Katie and Michael stepped into their house. Katie said it looks like our five cowboys really need some sleep. I hope we didn’t work them too hard. And Michael said being a cowboy is hard work and it takes a real man to be a cowboy.

The next morning when Michael came to the front door the five cowboys were ready to pull out and Michael said you guys are up early, don’t you want something to eat before you pull out and Dakota said we have drank a pot of coffee ate some smoked bacon and a couple biscuits and we need to get on the trail, then Katie came out and said I hope you weren’t trying to leave and not say goodbye. Dakota said we wouldn’t do that. Then Katie hugged all five of her cowboys and Michael shook their hands.

Dakota said I won’t be far up ahead, are you cowboys ready to roll out and put some miles behind us? Then Dakota took the lead and Mario fell back and took drag and Katie and Michael watched their five cowboys until they were out of sight.

The trail back to Waco was good but also a little sad because all five cowboys were regretting leaving the Coopers, but they also wanted to get back to Waco and Autumns Crossing and just maybe they would see the Coopers again someday.

So, when the five cowboys pulled up to the general store Daniel and Lexi came out to meet them the same as most of the town Daniel hugged and kissed Micka then Daniel hugged the other four cowboys the same as Lexi hugged all five cowboys.

Then Tim Gates the owner of the telegraph office walked out on the boardwalk in front of the telegraph office and called to Micka and said I have a wire here for five cowboys and handed the wire to Micka then Micka read the wire out loud.

To Micka, Dakota, Mario, Rio and Travis, you never know who you will meet or when you will meet them but God knows and when the time is right you will meet them. We want to thank our five cowboys for what you did with God’s help.

We opened our gifts the morning of our anniversary from one and another and we both cried tears of happiness and we both agreed that one day we will visit Waco and Autumns Crossing to see our five cowboys and meet their families

LOVE ALWAYS, KATIE AND MICHAEL

THE END

**ED AND LINDA BOOTH BUYS THE SAW MILL**

**PART ONE**

**By BOB SELF**

Marshal Edward Jones was sitting at his desk looking threw some wanted posters and drinking a cup of coffee when a young couple walked into his office, the young man was tall and largely built and the woman had curly red hair and a smile on her face where you couldn’t help but to smile back.

The Marshal asked how he could help them the man said my name is Ed Booth and this young lady is my wife Linda Booth as he shook the Marshals hand and then said we have two sons in the wagon out front.

The Marshal took a drink of his coffee and said I am glad to meet you and your wife Mr. Booth so what brings you to Waco and Ed said we are here to buy a sawmill. The Marshal said a saw mill we have a saw mill and Shermon McBay owns the mill and I haven’t heard he was wanted to sell.

Then Ed said would you know a man named Shorty Davis, yes I know Shorty Davis, he works for Shermon McBay at the saw mill the Marshal said. Well Shorty is a friend of ours and told us that Shermon McBay mentioned selling the saw mill.

Well Shorty does help Shermon at the mill and if anyone knows if Shermon is planning on selling the mill I guess Shorty would know.

Ed said Marshal I would like to talk with Shermon McBay and Marshal Edward Jones said you will find Shermon at his ranch Autumns Crossing and I will ride out there with you if you like. And Ed said Marshal we would love for you to ride out with us so we could meet Mr. McBay at his ranch.

Marshal Edward Jones said let me get my horse Butch and we will ride out there, just let me let my deputy Ringo know and we will go see Shermon .so the Marshal pulled up to where Ed Booth and his family was sitting and said let’s go see Shermon and they headed towards Autumn’s Crossing.

When they pulled into Autumns Crossing Shermon was looking out over the open area pass the corral of horses and Linda said this is some horse ranch for sure. Look at all those horses then the Marshal asked Shermon if he had time to meet the Booths and that they were looking to buy a saw mill.

Shermon said we are getting ready to have a biscuit Mr. Booth so why don’t you and your family join us at the table then we will talk after we eat. Ed said Mr. McBay, we will join you at your table if you are sure there is enough and Shermon said there will be enough. Then Captain George came out and rang the dinner bell. There was smoked ham, sliced beef, corn on the cob, greens and biscuits and of course hot black coffee and even sun tea and Shermon said eat up and we will talk after we eat.

Ed and Linda could hardly believe their eyes and Shermon then said eat up there is plenty so if you get up hungry it will be your fault and 20 minutes later Ed said he could not eat anymore and Marshal Edward Jones said thanks for the meal Sherm but I better get back to town and then said Mr. Booth I will be in my office all night if you need to see me, I will be there. Then after shaking hands Marshal Edward mounted his horse Butch and rode back to town.

Shermon then asked Ed Booth what was on his mind and Ed said Mr. McBay I am interested in buying your saw mill and Shermon said what makes you think the saw mill might be for sale, plus call me Shermon. Ed said okay Shermon I will and Shorty Davis is a friend of ours he was married to another friend of ours but she died about five years ago and Shorty just rode away after his wife died but then about a month ago we received a wire and Shorty said he was running the saw mill for you and you had mentioned selling the mill and if we bought the mill he would stay on and help us at the mill so here we are .

Well I did mentioned maybe selling the saw mill but why don’t you bring Shorty out here in the morning and we will discuss me selling the mill. Ed said we will be back in the morning and we will go see Shorty now before it gets any later then shook Shermons hand.

When Ed Linda and their two sons pulled up to the saw mill Linda said she loved the large windmill and Ed told her it was the waterwheel that was used by the mill to generate electric and also it was a great windmill. Then they noticed how neat and clean the mill was then Shorty walked up told them he was happy to see them.

Ed said he was concerned that after seeing the mill the price might be out of there reach then Shorty said the mill the cabin the property that they could see was only part because there was also a large piece of timber that would be in the price plus two wagons for hauling lumber from the mill and timber from the track of trees.

Then Ed said he was really concerned with what the price might be, and Shorty said you will be surprised if Shermon wants to sell it to you he will make it affordable, Shermon says God has been good to him and his family and when he has a chance to show how grateful he is by helping others he will.

Shorty then said when Shermon makes a deal he makes a deal that is good for all he makes sure that there is plenty of room for the buyers to profit with a little hard work and the deal is still affordable and enough profit for him. Linda said from what I have seen from our visit to Autumns Crossing and this mill Shermon McBay is a very smart man who has worked hard to get to where he is. Shorty said you are right Linda and Shermon likes people who will take the chance and put in the work to get what they want

Believe me Shermon would not even consider selling the mill to you or anyone else if he thought it would be a mistake for either side Shorty said, then Shorty said Ed you and Linda are young enough and smart enough to make this work plus you have two boys to help and me and I know we could make it very profitable with a little hard work. So, let’s get some sleep and then go see Shermon in the morning and like I said Shermon will make the price right, plus will do whatever it takes to see it works out for both parties

The next morning Shorty, Ed, Linda and the two boys had breakfast at Potter’s café and Linda asked about the school she had seen at the edge of town and Shorty said the school mom was Dawn Marie and everyone liked her and he knew the boys would like her, so Linda said she would go see her later after they returned from Autumn’s Crossing.

Shorty said there was two young men in town that worked for him at the mill and where also good carpenters that would come in handy later when Ed and Linda decided to build their house. Ed said I would like to meet them later but first I want to know Shermon is going to sell the saw mill to me and Linda.

Well let’s go see Shermon plus Linda I was going to say we are having a pig roast Sunday after church and that would be a good time to meet Dawn Marie and other town’s people. That sounds like fun and I will be looking forward to it Linda said.

Linda said Ed would it be okay if me and the boys stay in town while you and Shorty go to Autumn’s Crossing and see Shermon and Ed asked do you feel okay? Linda said yea. I just think that you men need to be able to talk and you know whatever deal you and Shermon make will be okay with me. I will be waiting to hear the good news.

When Ed and Shorty rode up to where Shermon was Shermon said come on up in the shade and have a cup of coffee and while Shorty was pouring himself and Ed a cup of coffee Shermon said you have seen the mill, the cabin that Shorty stays in and I guess you seen the track of timber so now I have to ask you how much ready cash do you have to spend?

We sold our homestead for $42,000.00 and we have $8,000.00 that we have saved Ed said. Then Shermon said we bought the mill for $30,000.00 and we did do some improvements. Plus, we acquired the track of timber, we also built the cabin that Shorty stays in, we have milled wagons of lumber and saved a great deal of money

We will need more lumber at a later time which we would buy from the mill at the going price I have always said God has been good to me and my family and I feel that when you do right by people good things will always come your way.

Now business is business so let me step inside a minute and then I will run some numbers by my family and I’ll be right back and I will give you one price for the saw mill and all things included.

So, Shorty and Ed walked down by the lake and Ed said Shorty I am worried that the price will be more than I have and Shorty said don’t give up yet Ed. Shermon will sell you the mill for a price that he knows you can handle and also make back the money he feels that he needs to. Then Ed and Shorty noticed Shermon back on the boardwalk under the shade and walked back from where they were to where Shermon was.

Shermon looked at Ed and did not say anything for what seemed to Ed like it was forever then Shermon said I have talked to my family then stopped again and then Shermon said Ed I like you and I like how you look into the eyes of the people you talk to and I feel like I am a good judge of people And I do feel that with Shorty’s help plus those two sons of yours I know you and your family will make a good living at the saw mill.

So here is what I would feel good about, I would like to sell you and your family the saw mill complete with the track of timber for the $42,000.00 and I do not want the $8,000.00 that you and Linda saved there is a chance that you might need it but I hope you add to it and it grows in your savings.

Ed, it takes a brave man to sell his homestead and follow his dreams plus a good woman helps when she is standing with him. You and Linda sure remind me of what my family and I did when we left Kansas City Mo.and we then built this ranch here in Waco Texas.

Let’s meet at the Waco bank after lunch and finish the deal and then by tomorrow morning you and your family will own a working saw mill that you bought and paid for. Then Shermon shook Ed’s hand and then he shook Shorty’s and Ed could not get back to town soon enough to tell Linda and when Linda seen Ed she knew they owned a saw mill and she said thank you God and to herself she said thank you Shermon.

THE END

ED AND LINDA BOOTH

ONE YEAR LATER

PART 2

BY BOB SELF

Ed said Linda it has been a year since we bought the mill from Shermon McBay and I think it is time to build a home .We have stayed at Jill Penny’s boarding house for one year and Jill offered us the same good price for another year or 6 months so I think we will go for the 6 months. And start building and he seen Linda trying to hold her tears of joy back while she was laughing at the same time.

Jill was very happy for Linda and Ed but she told Linda that she was also sad because she would miss their time they had together at her boarding house and Linda said that she would still see her at her boarding house when she could plus Jill would be able to visit her at the mill whenever she wanted to.

Ed said let’s look at the spot you picked for our house and see if it is close to the spot that I have picked and on the way to the mill Linda told Ed she loved living in Waco the only way she could be happier is to be living in her own house.

When Ed and Linda walked on the back side of the saw mill Ed waited to see where Linda thought their house should be built and it was the same spot as where Ed had hoped to build their home.

Ed knew how much Linda loved the water wheel, she had said she could sit and watch it for a full day and never get tire of watching it turn so Ed said now you can watch it every day if you like because when you look out the window or step out our front door you will see the water wheel. Linda said she would never get tired of watching the water wheel or smelling the fresh cut wood being milled at the saw mill.

Then Linda asked Ed when he was going to start building their home and Ed said he was going to start staking the corners tomorrow then the next day would be Sunday so Monday would be the day that he would hope to start the house.

How long do you think it will take to build Linda asked Ed and Ed said depending how much help I get on building our house and also on the orders I get at the mill while building our home. It could take only three months and it could take five months to complete. I am hoping to keep Shorty busy at the mill and only stop on building our house to help Shorty if I have to with larger orders or rush orders.

There could be times when Shorty might need to help me with beams and or roof framing but with Rio Smith, Travis Hill and hopefully two or three others I would only ask Shorty to help if he was caught up at the mill but I still believe the building will go good and hopefully pretty fast.

Rio and Travis have really been good help at the mill and I know they both are skilled carpenters they have worked with Jesse Ladrue and Shane Madison on at least three building projects one was Jill’s boarding house which would be like building three houses attached to each other. I was told not only was Rio and Travis both good framers but they both were good finish carpenters which is very important for the final work.

We have plenty beams and planks milled now and I will have Shorty to continue milling and stacking lumber and I am sure we can keep up with any orders that we might get and if not, I will see that Shorty has the help he needs to fill the orders while I continue working on our house.

Linda said I will take our two boys with me to the track of timber and we will replant as many young tree starts as we can then Sunday I would like to talk to Dawn Marie about our two boys starting at her school Monday And Ed said that sounds good to me and then said thanks for your help and hugged Linda.

Linda poured Ed a cup of coffee and asked if he thought three rooms would be enough and Ed said with the large great room with the kitchen off to one side, the three bed rooms would be plenty because the two boys slept in the same room on separate bunks that would leave a extra room that she could use for storage or whatever she liked and they could always add on across the whole back of the house if they ever wanted.

There will be a covered porch across the front of the house so you can enjoy watching the water wheel while sitting on the porch plus it will be a good place to drink coffee or even have a biscuit if someone wanted to.

I would like to have a garden and also have some chickens Linda said and Ed said there is plenty of room for a large garden, a chicken coop and a fenced chicken pen if you want eggs and maybe a chicken on Sunday after church with some greens would be perfect. Ed said Linda I will build a chicken coop and pen as soon as our house is done if that will be soon enough and Linda said she could wait that long and would.

I have seen fish in that deeper water under that cotton wood tree so maybe we should plan on having a picnic there one of these Sundays Ed said and Linda agreed with him.

Well I think we should go see Jill and let her know of our plans and see about giving her payment for three months with the option of paying more if needed Ed said and also at our three-room rental price, I will show you the drawings that I have and if there are any changes to be made now would be the time to do so. Then when Ed rolled out the drawings, he had of the house Linda said she wouldn’t change a thing but she was wondering what the small building was next to the house and Ed said it was an outhouse. Linda said an outhouse and asked if Ed thought the outhouse might be too close to their house and then Ed and Linda both laugh out loud.

Saturday morning came and Linda told the two boys they were going with her to replant some small trees while their dad laid out the corners of their house and Linda told Ed that she would have lunch for her the two boys plus also for him.

Lunch time came and Ed headed towards the track of timber where Linda and the boys were and as Ed pulled up Linda was spreading a blanket out on the ground to put their lunch on.

Ed looked at the food Linda had put on the blanket and asked when she had time to make such a lunch and Linda said she had gone to Potter’s café and picked up the chicken and potato skins plus the biscuits for making a chicken sandwich if he wanted to and as Linda was saying it Ed was already cutting a couple biscuits in half.

Ed said Linda I took a very large order on ruff sawn boards for a large fence this morning and the customer is in a hurry to get them and it is really a good paying order And Linda then asked so is our house on hold is that what you are trying to say Ed? No what I am saying now we can build a two-seater out house and then laughed and Linda laughed and the two boys laughed as they ate their lunch.

After lunch Ed said Shorty said he would be able to take care of the rough sawn fence board and post himself, because all the material is no longer than eight foot and he is use to handling up to 12 footers by himself and was sure he would have the boards needed milled in two days and the customer said he would bring some help with him to pick up the milled lumber and he had a old strong wagon to load the material in so there will be no down time on house building and Linda Ed and both boys thanked God for the large fence board order.

Then Linda said you know Ed you are always making a joke or making light of something and most of the time it’s okay but we have lived in a boarding house for over a year and will be there longer so I guess what I am saying is I want a home for us and the boys and the sooner the better and before Linda said anything else Ed said Linda, I know how you feel and believe me I won’t make light of it. Then Ed kissed Linda and hugged his two sons and told them they were doing a great job and he would see them later then rode towards the mill.

When Ed got back to the mill Jesse Ladrue plus three other men from town was at the mill waiting for Ed and Jesse said Well are we going build a house or not and the first thing Ed though of was what he would have to pay for their help.

Jesse seen the look on Ed face and said this is how we do it here, we help one and the other, we had some time on our hands and we are here to help so don’t try and pay us because we are not here to get paid, we are here to help and at first Ed just looked at Jesse and the three others, then Jesse said let’s dig some holes and set a couple of beams.

Then Rio and Travis rode up and Shorty said Ed take one of these loggers with you and leave one with me so we can cut some rough sawn boards and start on the next order while you five work on holes and setting beams

Ed still wasn’t saying anything as Jesse and the three people from town walked towards the site where the house was going to be built but when Rio said I will stay with Shorty and Travis you go with Ed then we can switch later if you want.

Then Ed said out loud THANK YOU GOD then headed to where Jesse was pointing and then Ed said Well thanks for the help and I guess we will see how much we can get done before I lose my help are you all here for the whole day?

And Jesse said today and a few more days then Ed said Believe me I am not complaining but still I don’t know why free? Jesse said time is free and I have found that when I keep busy, I feel better. Ed didn’t know what to say so he did not say anything out loud but to himself he said. Again, God thank you

That evening Ed told Linda about all the help that showed up at the mill to help build their house. Ed said with all these people helping build our house and not charging us anything to help I told Jesse that I did not know how to charge them for the lumber that they might want from me. And what did Jesse say about charging them?

Well Jesse said you charge the price you need to charge for the lumber and then you deliver it for free and I told Jesse that that sounded pretty good to me and it also helped me to understand working for free. Because everyone knows the wood isn’t free but my time is, which is the time it takes to deliver it will be no charge or free. Linda said that does make sense I like it, I like it a lot and smiled.

Ed said I worked hard today but I know I feel better than if I hadn’t done anything and Linda said are you ready to eat something and Ed said maybe, but when Linda returned Ed was sound asleep.

The next morning Ed woke up to the smell of coffee and Linda poured Ed a cup of hot black coffee then Linda set a plate of eggs, smoked bacon and biscuits in front of Ed then when Linda turned to get Ed another cup of coffee Ed was whipping his mouth and saying how good it was. Ed got up and said I have a house to build and I will see you later thanks for the breakfast and after hugging Linda Ed walked out with a smile on his face. Linda said I will bring lunch and Ed waved as he headed to the saw mill.

They made real good time on the house and before they knew it, it was lunch time and when Linda pulled up, she could not believe how much had been done to the house. Linda told Ed I would like for everyone to stop for lunch. I have fried chicken, vegetables, biscuits and of course hot black coffee so with Linda there was eight people sitting where they could and having a great lunch

Ed asked about the boys and Linda said she had dropped them off at school and they could hardly wait to see Dawn Marie, Lexi Lee and all the other kids. Linda said Ed I am worried that you are working too hard and Ed said Linda we are way ahead of where I was hoping to be because of all this help and the way we are going it won’t be long and we will be moving into our home. Linda said that is good but I don’t want this house if I don’t have you.

Linda made Ed lunch every day she would either bring it to Ed or Ed would come to where ever Linda was with his lunch. But one day when Ed opened his lunch there was a note and the note said today I am buying your lunch at Potter’s café so pick up all your tools because it will be Monday morning when you start back on our house P.S. I AM WAITING.

Ed was puzzled but he gathered all his tools the same as Jesse and all the other men working on their house and Shorty shut down the saw mill and walked over to Ed and the other men and Ed asked Shorty do you know what’s going on and Shorty said may be Linda just wants you to take a break.

Ed was confused but he dusted off and washed his face and hands the same as the rest of the carpenters, then they all headed towards Potter’s café and there were horses on both sides of the street and Ed said as busy as this place is we will never get inside yet alone find a seat.

Linda said let’s go in and see if we can find a seat and when Ed stepped into Potter’s café the place was packed but then Ed found out the reason Potter’s café was so busy was because they were there for Ed’s birthday and because of being so busy Ed had forgot all about it being his birthday. Then Ed notice a large package on a table wrapped in brown paper and there was a note on the package that said happy birthday Ed and not to be opened until your house is completed.

Ed was confused but he was also hungry there was burgers that Potter’s café was known for plus there was fried chicken and many sides plus hot black coffee and sun tea and everyone ate their fill. Ed told Linda that the roof would be completed next week and within one more week the house would be ready for them to move in then Next Monday morning there was many people from town plus even cowboys from Autumns Crossing helping to finish Ed and Linda home.

The home was finished and Ed, Linda and their two sons moved in, then Ed thanked God and then he thanked all the people that was there and helped him on his and Linda home. Then Linda said open your package we all are waiting.

Ed tore off the brown paper then read the sign out loud.

WACO SAW MILL OWNER ED BOOTH

ALL LUMBER SOLD AT A FAIR PRICE

AND IF NEEDED DELIVERY WILL BE FREE

THE END

**EIGHT REAL BAD MEN SHOW UP AT WACO**

**BY BOB SELF**

It was almost sundown when eight men rode down the middle of the main street in Waco and they were yelling and firing their Colt 44’s. They were shooting through windows and firing at signs hanging over the boardwalks in front of the shops.

The Marshal Edward Jones was out of town and would be gone at least a couple more days So Chester St Clair the deputy was the man in charge. So he stepped into the street with a double barrel shot gun.

The deputy did not have a chance against the eight gunmen because the eight bad men were like eight cats toying with one mouse between them. One gunman grabbed the double barrel shot gun from the deputy as another one kicked the deputy in the back, then as deputy St Clair went for his colt 44, he got shot in his gun hand and he dropped his Colt hand gun in the dirt.

Then there was a rope thrown around Chester St Clair and the deputy then was dragged up and down the main street of Waco. One of the men from town tried to help the deputy and got a rope thrown around him and he also was being dragged up and down the street. Chester St. Clair made it to his feet somehow but he was in a real bad way after being dragged up and down the street and also shot in his hand plus he was hit and kicked a number of times.

One of the gun men yelled let’s hang him, then another one yelled let’s hang them both so as the Deputy and the man that tried to help the Deputy were being drug to the only large tree on main street, the eight bad men started laughing.

Dusty Rodman poked a double barrel shot gun threw the swinging doors of the Rusty Spur saloon but there was no way that he could shoot without hitting either the deputy and or the man that try to help the Deputy. And the eight gun men kept the Deputy between them and the double barrel that Dusty Rodman had pointed their way.

Then Dusty Rodman had the double barrel jerked from his hands and a rope thrown around him and then he was being pulled from the Rusty Spur Saloon. The large gunman had a large scar on the left side of his face and was yelling watch both ends of the street and don’t let anyone slip out of town ,when we are done here we will go to Autumn’s Crossing and burn them out.

But it was too late because Dusty Rodman had already sent Carson Lane to find Ringo Starr and to bring help as soon as they could. And also tell Ringo that Chester St Clair had already been shot and he was worried there would be more.

Carson Lane came up fast on Wes Montana and Michelle St Clair and was yelling where’s Ringo there is eight gun slingers in town they have already shot Chester St Clair and maybe more by now. Michelle asked is Chester, okay? And Carson Lane said he was already in a bad way when Dusty Rodman had me slip out of town to find Ringo and to bring help. Michelle said I have to go and try to help my brother and Wes Montana said let’s go to Autumns Crossing and get some men first then we will go to town.

Wes Montana told Carson to go back to town and to be careful but let Rodman know we are coming we will bring Ringo plus others. Michelle said what are we going to do kid and Wes Montana said lets go see Shermon and let him know what is going on and when Wes Montana and Michelle St Clair rode into Autumn’s Crossing both Shermon and Ringo knew something was wrong.

Wes Montana yelled there are some gun slingers in town they have shot Chester St Clair and maybe more by now they are talking about burning down the town then coming here. Shermon looked at Remington and said ring that bell and Remington pulled the bell rope three times and when the cowboys and the McBays heard the Kansas City Mo. Bell they came from all corners of the ranch some had rifles and some had their colt 44’s but they were all ready at the sound of the large Kansas City Mo. Bell.

When Shermon was sure that every one that was coming to hear what he had to say was there Shermon said there are gun men in town they are bad men they have shot Chester St Clair and maybe others by now. Then Shermon said Kid I want you plus Harry, Luther and Sundance to go with me and Ringo, get your horses and saddle Buck and meet me in 10 minutes the six of us will go to town.

Remington break out some rifles and I want everyone here at Autumn’s Crossing to be ready for trouble ,we will try to stop it in town but if one or more makes it to Autumn’s Crossing be ready. Michelle said Shermon my brother has been shot and I am going to ride with you or I will ride by myself but I am going to town to help my brother if I can. Shermon knew that Michelle had to go and he did not try to stop her.

Shermon kissed Cheyenne and hugged his brother’s wives and then Shermon shook hands with his three brothers plus Dakota, Mario and others then Shermon stepped into Buck’s saddle looked around and said let’s go save our town.

As they reached town Shermon said Michelle I know Chester is your brother but try not to be a target, try to hang back a little and maybe even find some cover, they could see that Chester St Clair, Dusty Rodman and Benny Thomson all three had been hanged after being drug up and down the street plus shot more than a few times. Michelle fought back the tears as she looked at her brother then said Shermon what are we waiting for, Shermon lets go get their killers. Shermon said we will get them but let’s think a minute and be smart about it.

Ringo said Shermon I could push back those swinging doors on the Rusty Spur and invite them to join us in the street. Michelle said let’s do it. Shermon said let’s think about it a minute. You see those eight horses tied to railing why don’t we untie them, then run them off and as they are running Kid you yell there stealing the horses then they will run out but remember they will have their guns ready so we need to get the drop on them. Michelle said as they run out of the Rusty Spur, I will unload my rifle into them.

Shermon said I know talking is to late but Michelle I am sure that once we start shooting that one or more will try to make it to that alley and without thinking Michelle said let them because I will be in that alley waiting for them. Then Michelle walked over to the alley and said I can see good from here as Shermon, Luther, Sundance and Ringo all four took a stance in front of the Saloon.

Shermon said Kid you and Harry untie those horses then slap them on their back side and yell there sealing the horses. So Kid and Harry made sure all eight horses were untied then slapped them on their back side and yelled there steeling the horses and the horses made a lot of noise as they ran off.

Like Shermon had said eight gunslingers bolted out threw the swinging doors, first they watched their horses running down the street, then they seen six brave cowboys standing in front of them with their guns pulled. Michelle stood frozen as the large gun slinger with the nasty scar on his cheek said I only count six cowboys, you want us to wait while you find some more cowboys to help you.

Kid Montana said you talk too much, are you ready? The big man said ready for what? Kid Montana said to die. The big gun slinger said no one lives forever but maybe I won’t die. Kid Montana said you will die because I am going to shoot you first then he Winked at the big ugly gun slinger. Everyone was firing their guns except Michelle she was praying and she was glad she was in the alley because she had never been in a gun fight or even this close to one before.

Kid Montana got hit in the arm the same as Shermon had and Luther was hit in the leg but after the dust settled there was eight bad men lying in the street seven was dead and the large man with the scar was dying. The large gunslinger asked Shermon who he was and why he made this fight his. And Shermon said my name is Shermon McBay and you made it my fight when you picked this town and Autumns Crossing .And then the large gunslinger took his last breath and fell over face first in the dirt.

Ringo staggered a little and almost fell but Harry Austin kept him standing and looked to see where he was hit. Shermon said Sundance get some help and cut Chester, Dusty and Benny down, then burn that hanging tree.

Michelle then moved from the alley where she was frozen during the shooting and ran from Wes Montana to Ringo to Luther then to Shermon as Doctor Cain came up. And Doctor Cain said Shermon have you been hit and Shermon said it’s only a scratch and after the Doctor was satisfied it was only a scratch, he said I need to get Kid, Luther and Ringo to my office and Shermon I want you to stop by as soon as you can so I can put a bandage on your arm.

Then Shermon had a few of the towns people take the eight bad men down to the undertaker so they could buried on the hill at a later time plus told them to take their horses and saddles and give them to the undertaker. He could sell them or keep them for the eight shadow grave sites that would be needed.

Shermon then walked down to the hanging tree that Sundance had just torched and he told Michelle how sorry he was about her brother plus Dusty Rodman and Benny Thomson and Michelle said her and Chester had talked about the chance of him getting killed and Chester told her that that was a chance he would take.

As Shermon was watching the tree burn Cheyenne, Dakota and Mario rode up and Cheyenne hugged Shermon and noticed there was blood on Shermon’s buckskins and Shermon told Cheyenne it was only a scratch and that Doctor Cain had already looked at it. Cheyenne then asked about the other cowboys and Shermon told her Kid, Luther and Ringo was hit and they were down at the Doctor’s office but he thought they were okay.

Dakota shook hands with Shermon and said he was glad that he or any of the other good guys weren’t killed and then Mario shook hands with Shermon and asked about Harry and Shermon said lets walk down to Doctor Cain’s office, Harry is there with the three cowboys that took a bullet.

A couple of the towns people told Michelle that they wanted to help but Deputy St Clair wouldn’t let them. He said it was his job and he didn’t want them to get hurt and then they told Michelle how brave her brother Chester was and Michelle said thanks then looked away.

At the Doctor’s office Doctor Cain told Shermon that he would release Kid and Luther but they would have to take it easy for a few days and Shermon said he would see to it that they did. Shermon asked about Ringo and Doctor Cain said he was keeping Ringo overnight but Dawn Marie asked if she could stay with Ringo and maybe sleep on the couch and I told her it would be okay.

Then Shermon asked Sundance and Harry to stay in town until Marshal Edward Jones returned then he would come back to see the Marshal and he had heard the Marshal would be back sometime tomorrow afternoon. Shermon shook Sundance’s hand then he shook Harrys hand and thanked them for standing with him and said I thank God that neither one of you were hurt plus I thank God that none of us were killed

Wes Montana and Luther walked up and shook hands with Shermon and Shermon said thanks for standing with me, but I am really sorry that you both got hit but I am also glad that none of us got killed.

Wes Montana said Shermon your plan probably saved a few of us and also the town plus the town’s people and I think I will stay in town tonight with Michelle at the Rusty Spur. Shermon said I will see you later kid and thanks again but watch your backside.

Then Shermon, Cheyenne, Dakota, Mario plus Luther tuned their horses towards Autumns Crossing and after they pulled into Autumns Crossing everyone was there to meet them. Hugs and hand shake’s and then Shermon told what took place in town.

After that Shermon Robert McBay plus all the other McBays and all the cowboys bowed their heads and thanked God that the trouble in town was over and that it did not spill over into Autumns Crossing and that no good guy lost their life in the gun battle with the eight gun slinglers.

**THE END**

**BRADY PRATHER**

**TELLS THE MARSHAL THAT HE HAS A SCORE TO SETTLE**

**BY BOB SELF**

Marshal Edward Jones had just sat down at his desk with a cup of black coffee when a man stepped into his office and said my name is Brady Prather and six men jumped me beat me up plus took my horse and all my clothes a few days ago.

The Marshal said Well I guess that is why you are standing there in your long john’s. Do you need to see a doctor and Brady said maybe later but first I would like to tell you what took place not far from here.

I would like to hear the whole story but first would you like a cup of coffee and Brady said sure and thanks as Marshal Ed handed Brady a cup of coffee the Marshal said I hope you like it black and Brady said black is good.

Brady said where should I start and Marshal Ed said, why not start at the beginning. Okay Marshal six men left me for dead and maybe I was for a short time a few days ago. Because I know they thought I was dead. I was washing some dust off me at a small stream when my horse brought his head up real fast and even started backing away but it was too late for me to do anything.

There was six men, five were sitting their horses and one was on foot but all six had their guns pointed in my direction and my gun was hanging on my saddle horn which was probably a good thing that it wasn’t hanging around my hips or I might have got shot full of holes. They all had cold eyes but one was twice as big and twice as ugly as the other five and walked with a bad limp and he had a smile that would sour milk plus he had a very bad attitude.

The big guy stepped up behind me and hit me in the middle of my back, then hit me on the side of my head with his colt 44 and I went down, but I was doing whatever I could to protect my head as all six gunslingers were kicking me. I never said a word but I was listening to every word that any of the six said and the large ugly man said you know they say it is better to give than to receive then they all laughed out loud.

The large ugly man was called Dutch plus there was an Edmund, Cruz and I also remember one being called Hector as they were kicking me and talking. Then I guess I blacked out or was knocked out because it was late in the day when I opened my eyes and I knew I was left for dead.

I was very thirsty and I hurt everywhere that there was a place to hurt. I felt like I had to vomit but I had not eaten anything for at least two days before the beating that I received from the six gunslingers.

Marshal it was almost impossible for me to even take a breath because I hurt so bad and I was almost paralyzed from the pain I was feeling so I just laid there but I was so thirsty and I knew I needed water and it was getting dark so my thoughts were not only water but also of Wolves and Mountain Lions and I was hoping I would not be eaten before morning. I got my wish because when I opened my eyes the next morning the sun was breaking through the clouds and no animal had taken me for a meal during the night.

The pain was almost unbearable but I was lying really close to the water’s edge so I reached out and felt the cold water with my fingertips but It hurt when I extended my arm and stretched my fingers and it even hurt more when I brought my wet fingers back to my lips, but I managed to do it a couple times because I knew I would surely die without at least a little water.

I knew I had received a lot of damage from the six gunslingers because I could barely move and it hurt really bad even when I tried to take small breaths so I figured I had at least a couple broken ribs and maybe even other broken bones but I was still alive and only because the six bad men had thought they had beat me to death. As I laid there next to the water’s edge, I tried to determine how bad I was beaten by the six gunslingers.

My face was very sore and swollen and I was sure there was dried blood on me from head to toe and every time I took a breath no matter how small, it would cause me a lot of pain. Brady Prather stopped a minute and then said Marshal Ed ever since my beating I kept telling myself I have to stay alive because I have a score to settle. And Brady stopped. Then Marshal Edward Jones said go on Brady tell me the rest of what happen and how you got here.

Well, it was a very long night because I slept off and on most of the day in between wetting my fingers in the stream and then touching them to my lips. So, when night came, I laid in the dark waiting for the night to end and the day to start. I noticed the first little light starting to break through some very dark clouds all the stars were gone and the clouds were getting darker. I said to myself, but out loud dark clouds means rain!

And as soon as I said it, I felt rain. At first it was light rain then it started raining harder and pretty soon it was raining very hard and the little stream that I was laying close to was already getting wider and deeper. My first thought was now I am going to drown but I said to myself I can’t drown because I have a score to settle.

Marshal Ed as the water got deeper, I felt myself getting lighter ,what I mean is as the water got deeper it started carrying me and I am not sure how far it carried me but somehow I got my one arm around a small but strong tree and I held on for what seemed like forever. But then the rain stopped as fast as it started the sun was back and the clouds were almost gone.

I felt very stiff and very sore but I soon realized that the stream did not have a hard bottom because the water receded very quick and now I found myself a long way from the water so there was no way for me to reach any water now. Then I seen something moving on the other side of the tree line and I was sure it was a wolf.

So that was the first time I prayed. I closed my eyes hard and I prayed out loud I said God why did you not just let me die from the beating I took or let me die from thirst or even drown when the water had me, did you save me so I could be eaten by Wolves? I guess I was praying so loud that I did not hear someone trying to talk to me but then I felt myself being shook and I opened my eyes and it was no wolf . It was an old man with long white hair and a long white beard plus he was wearing a long white robe and he was holding a curved stick that he used as a cane.

The old man gave me bread and thick broth and the old man touch me every place I hurt and I was feeling better and I could not believe how much better I felt but I did feel better. Then I was really shocked. The old man said let me help you up son and I said help me up, I can’t even move. And the old man then said Brady you have no broken bones you have no internal bleeding. Your body is bruised and swollen but you will heal now stand-up Brady.

I could not believe what happened with the old man’s help I stood up and then took a few steps and when I turned to say thanks, the old man was gone and before I could make sense of it, I seen something else in the tree line. It moved towards me and I could see it was a donkey and there was a canteen full of the thick broth, the same as the old man had gave me earlier.

I climbed up on the donkey with almost no trouble and then I didn’t know rather to go right or left but then the donkey started moving straight ahead, we went through the trees up and over ridges threw some valleys and then the donkey brought me here. Marshal Edward got up and looked outside and said Brady there is no donkey out here. But you have to believe me, Marshal I was left for dead by six very bad men!

Marshal I was beat by them, they left me for dead plus I almost drowned and I almost died of thirst and hunger they have to be punished for what they did to me. I gave you four names plus my left boot was missing a small part of the heel and they took them so I am sure one of them is wearing them now.

There was an old man and a donkey and the old man helped me and the donkey brought me to your town, I was hoping that you would believe me but I guess you don’t. I will find them and then I will settle the score with them. Then Marshal Edward didn’t say anything he just looked at Brady Prather, then the Marshal said son I do believe you. That’s what the old man called me SON plus he called me by my name BRADY and I know he never asked me my name but somehow, he knew it!

Brady put these trousers on plus those boots. Brady was puzzled as he picked up the boots and said these are my boots, see a small part of the heel is missing. Where did you find them Marshal? Slip them on then we will take a walk. When Brady and Marshal Edward walked across the street and stepped up on the boardwalk Marshal Edward and Brady stepped into the undertakers with me.

First Brady seen the undertaker, then Brady was speechless and he couldn’t say anything, his body was drained and he sat down hard in a chair as he looked at six dead gunslingers. He was confused as he felt all the anger leave his body. Brady asked what happened and Marshal Edward said Brady they were drifters and gunmen and normally when you live by the gun you will die by the gun. But how did it happen Brady asked?

Well five days ago these six bad men stood in front of four brave cowboys from Autumn’s Crossing and when the dust settled the four cowboys were still standing tall and these six were lying face down in the dirt.

So, Brady Prather there is good size rewards on all six of these gunslingers and I think you should have the rewards and also, I think the score has been settled what do you think?

Marshal Edward I have been told the heaviest thing a person can carry is a grudge and now I know it to be true so thanks for believing me.

And thanks to the four brave men from Autumns Crossing. But most of all I want to thank God for being with me out there and for bringing me to your town. AMEN

**THE END**

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**CHUCK HORN JOINS RUSTLERS**

**BY BOB SELF**

Chuck Horn yelled hello in the camp and he was praying that the three men he seen sitting around the small camp fire was good cowboys and not outlaws as he looked into the camp. The three men all pulled their guns and one man yelled who is out there show yourself. Chuck said my name is Chuck Horn as he stepped into the light of the small camp fire. A Mountain lion scared my horse, so I found myself on the ground and I lost my gun in the dark when I fell from my horse.

Well have yourself a cup of this coffee the water is so sour that we didn’t need grounds but we added some for color and you might as well wrap yourself around a plate of these beans. Chuck said that sounds good to me I have not ate for two days and I am sure the coffee is not as bad as you say it is. The man with the large voice said try it for yourself and when Chuck took a drink of the coffee he could not help but to make a face but he chocked it down anyway and the beans where no better than the coffee but he was hungry.

Chuck wanted to ask them their names and what they were doing there but he thought it might upset them. He had no horse and worst he had no gun. But then the large man with the large voice said my name is Red and that is Curly over there and the young one is Cody.

We have a few cows, we are taking them to market and now we have you to help us. Chuck said why should I help you? And the large man said because you ate our beans and drank our coffee plus if you don’t help, I will shoot you.

The sun was coming up and now Chuck knew for sure the three where rustlers anyway Chuck was sure Red and Curly was but he wasn’t sure about Cody yet.

Chuck reminded himself that he did not have a gun and he knew that Red and Curly was not to be taking lightly they could be very dangerous if he wasn’t careful, he was sure of that.

He was wondering who the beef belonged to because Chuck knew the cows were not Reds and Curlys and then he seen the brand A/C, Autumns Crossing so Chuck knew the beef belonged to Shermon McBay. Red said what are you looking at and Chuck said I was looking at that horse because I will need a horse and gun if I am going to help you with those cows and Red said you can use our horse but we have no gun for you and Red told Cody to bring the horse over and Chuck knew the horse was Blue his horse but Chuck didn’t say he knew it was his horse, but he was sure that Red knew it when he seen the horse react to Chuck.

Now besides owing me for a meal you owe me for a good horse and saddle plus who knows what else you will owe me for before this trail is over. Chuck said well thank you for this great horse and the meal partner and Red said we are not partners and if you aren’t careful I will take my horse back and maybe shoot you.

Chuck seen that Reds eyes were cold and Chuck also knew that Red was the kind of guy that would shoot him just to be shooting someone, so Chuck said hey you are the boss and I am glad to be riding a horse and not walking.

Then Red said don’t piss on my boots and then try to tell me it’s raining ,you are here because you walked into my camp by mistake and Chuck knew he had better think of something to say and fast. I was not hunting trouble I was looking for a meal and maybe a horse and you are right I do owe you, but if you want me to I will ride out and Red said if you try to ride out I will shoot you in the back and Chuck knew Red would so Chuck said Red I will be here as long as I need to.

Red said Horn don’t get any ideals and do what you are told and I will let you know when I don’t want you around anymore. Chuck knew that Red was planning on killing him either when the trail was over or sooner so he also knew that he would have to be careful and somehow find him a gun.

Red had a very unpleasant laugh and it made Chuck feel uneasy but he did not want to let on how he really felt about Red and what his plans where so he told himself that as soon as he got a chance, he would make his move but until then he did not want to cross Red. Chuck was hoping that his derringer and boot knife was still in the hiding place that he had made for them in Blues saddle and he would know real soon.

Red said let’s break camp and move these cows to market, Horn you take point and if you run for it or I think you are going to I will shoot you and leave you for buzzard bait You got that Horn?

Chuck said I heard you Red but I am staying until my job is over and to himself, he said I am staying until I can take these beefs back to Shermon McBay at Autumn’s Crossing where they belong.

Red said Cody you flank the cows on their left side and I will flank them on the right and Curly you bring up the drag. Let’s go. Chuck heard Curly complaining about him being on drag but as soon as Red looked at Curly, Curly did not say anything else. Then Chuck found that his derringer and boot knife was not in Blues saddle where he had them hid, so he decided that Cody had them because he was sure that if Red or Curly had found them, they would have said something about finding them.

Chuck was watching all three men close and he had determining that Cody and Curly both did not like Red and Chuck knew that he did like Red but he had to be really careful until he got the chance he was watching for. Also, Chuck figured that Curly was with Red because he had nowhere else to go and he smelled so bad was probably the reason that Red always stayed upwind from Curly but Chuck was asking himself why Cody was with the two rustlers and when he got the chance he would find out.

Chuck also knew that the reason that Red kept to the trees and not in the open was because he did not want to be seen on the open prairie and Chuck was glad that there would be more time for him to make his move.

Red said let’s pull back into these trees a little more and make camp, then after the cows drank there full and were grassing on buffalo grass, Chuck said hey Red how about me walking upstream to get some clean water so I can make some good coffee. Red thought a minute then said Curly you go with him and you two can bring back some dead wood along with the water then we will have a campfire.

Curly followed Chuck over to the spring and sat next to a large rock as Chuck was filling the four canteens, he noticed that Curly had his eyes closed, it had been a couple long days and short restless nights. Just when Chuck thought he might get his chance Curly opened his eyes and said you got those canteens full yet? Chuck said one more and he handed three of the canteens to Curly and then acted like he still had to fill the fourth one and curly closed eyes and Curly never seen the large canteen as it smashed into the side of his head.

Chuck wasn’t surprised how the large metal canteen had knocked Curly out and at first he didn’t notice the canteen full of water had also broken Curly’s neck and curly was dead. Then Red yelled what are you two doing, bring that water the fire is ready Chuck worked his best Curly voice and hoped that Red would believe it was Curly and it worked. Red then said Curly I know you don’t want to get to close to that water so hurry back or I will come over there and hold you under water until all the fish die and float to the top, then Red laughed his very unpleasant laugh,

Chuck reached down and unbuckled Curly’s gun belt and strapped it around his hips and then holstered Curly’s gun and started back to where Red was, Chuck knew he was going to have to shoot Red but he was hoping he wouldn’t have shoot Cody.

Chuck stepped out into the open and said are you ready to die for those cows Red? And Red said no one lives forever and went for his colt 44 but was to slow. Chuck pulled the colt 44 from the worn holster he had strapped on and put two bullets into Red’s heart. And Red was dead when he hit the dirt. Don’t pull that gun Chuck said to Cody and Cody moved his hand away from the gun and put both hands up and said I didn’t want to steal those cows Red made me do it.

Well I could use your help getting those beefs back to Autumn’s Crossing where they belong and on the way, you can tell me why you were with these two rustlers. Cody said my mom died and Red was her brother and before she died, she asked Red to take me with him and he did .My mom did not know that her brother was an outlaw and I didn’t either at the time we left but then it was too late. Red told me he would kill me and dig my mother’s grave up if I tried to leave and I believed he would.

Well Cody it is never too late to do the right thing Chuck said then Chuck asked Cody where his derringer and boot knife was? Cody reached in his saddle bag and said I took them and hid them from Red and then I didn’t know who they belonged to but I knew if I didn’t take them Red or Curly would. Chuck reached over and took Cody’s gun and spun the cylinder and like he thought the gun was empty and Chuck asked do you know how to use a gun?

And Cody said I am very good with a gun but Red said maybe an empty gun would get me killed someday and he wouldn’t have to worry about me shooting him in his sleep. Then Chuck handed Cody a box of 44longs and said load your gun and keep the rest.

And then Chuck said I knew I was right about you Cody let’s stop at this next little town and leave Red and Curly with the Marshal and send a wire to Shermon McBay I am sure there is a couple wanted posters on these two plus Shermon McBay might be looking for these 30 head of beefs. Cody then asked Chuck who he was and then said you are very good with a gun and then Cody asked Chuck if he was a gun hand? And Chuck said you might say that.

I am a bounty hunter and showed Cody a Gold badge and a paper he had from the state of Texas and said I was hoping that Red would not find it on me but then he wasn’t really that smart was he and Cody said no he wasn’t. How do you know those cows or as you call them those beefs belong to Shermon McBay Cody asked? If you look there is a brand on them A/C for Autumns Crossing and that is Shermon McBays ranch.

Chuck and Cody seen the Marshal and like Chuck said there was reward posters on Red and Curly and after the Marshal handed Chuck the reward money for Red and Curly the Marshal asked Chuck did you see anyone else out there with these two and Chuck said no why?

The story that I heard was Red had a young man with him and Curly, but you said it was just the two of them. That is right me and Cody took the two rustlers and brought back Shermon McBays beefs and we already sent a wire to Waco about the beefs. So, if you are done with us we will be on our way Marshal.

The Marshal looked at Chuck Horn then he looked at Cody then said you never said who this young man with you is. Chuck Horn said his name is Cody Horn and he is in training anything else Marshal Chuck asked? And the Marshal said no I don’t guess .Then Chuck said lets go Cody. Shermon McBay will be watching for us and Chuck and Cody never looked back as they headed out of town with the beefs.

Shermon was standing and looking out over the lake like he did so often when Chuck and Cody rode in with the beefs. Shermon asked a couple cowboys to take the beef to the lower side of the lake so they could drink and cool off then he shook hands with Chuck Horn and Cody and said lunch will be shortly, dust off and we will talk. So Chuck and Cody walked over and dusted off then walked back up to where Shermon was.

Shermon said there is hot black coffee and tin coffee cups help yourself and there will be something to eat in a little while you two hungry? And Chuck and Cody both said they could eat something and Chuck said I hope the food is as good as this coffee. What I mean is I have drank some pretty bad coffee in the last few days and this coffee is really good and then cap rang the dinner bell then McBays and cowboys came from all directions and Chuck and Cody could not believe the spread.

Shermon said eat up and we will talk after we eat and Cody said thanks Mr. McBay and Shermon said call me Shermon or call me Sherm you two have earned it. Then Wes Montana walked up and shook Chuck Horn’s hand and said how have you been Chuck and who is your sidekick? Chuck said I have been good how about you? Good Wes Montana said then Chuck said this young cowboy is Cody and he is in training, then Wes said eat up we will talk more later then everyone ate there fill and drank black coffee and sun tea so Cody tried a little sun tea and liked it.

After they were through and the table was cleared off all except the large coffee pot and the tin cups. I would like to know how you came across my beefs Shermon asked? And what do I owe you for the return of my beefs. Chuck said Shermon there is no charge, this meal was enough and there was a bounty on those two rustlers so we have already been paid but I will have another cup of that coffee if you don’t mind, then we will head back out.

First Shermon said I received your wire then I received another one from the Marshal where you sent your wire from, would you like to hear what the Marshal had to say. What did the Marshal have to say Shermon Chuck asked?

The bounty hunter Chuck Horn and his partner left the two rustlers horses and saddles and asked me to see that they were buried in a shallow grave which I did but also I had been told that there was another third rustler and Chuck Horn told me there was only two, so what is your thoughts on this matter .Waiting to hear back from you before I close this case.

Thank you, Marshal Logan

So, I will wire the Marshal back tomorrow morning and say like Chuck Horn said there was only two the third one must have been killed before Chuck and his partner took the two rustlers and saved my beef. Do you think we should thank god for you and your partner taking the two rustlers and bringing my beef back and you two being safe and there was only two rustlers being buried in a shallow grave and both Chuck and Cody both said thank you God and AMEN.

THE END.

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**RICK BURNSTIEN (BUDDY) COMES TO WACO**

**BY BOB SELF**

Dakota was telling Micka and Daniel Grant the owners of the general store about Buddy the young man that he and Mario had come across earlier that morning.

He goes by Buddy because that is what his mom always called him but he said his name is Rick Burnstien but he prefers to be called Buddy.

Anyway, me and Mario was trailing a couple of beefs that that had escaped Autumn’s Crossing .The gate had been left open and the two beefs slipped through the opened gate. Me and Mario was up on the roof of the line shack when we seen the two cows go through the partly opened gate so when we finished attaching the new chimney cap to the stove pipe, we went to find the beefs.

But that is when we came across Buddy, we heard someone calling to us and he was saying hey you two cowboys, I could use some help over here and then me and Mario seen him. He was in a sink hole and the quick sand was up to his chest and he was struggling to get free. Mario told him to lay back and not to struggle anymore because struggling would only make it worse. And I said try to put your arms over your head and lay back as far as possible and we will get you free from that quick sand.

Buddy said so its quick sand and I was thinking it was some kind of strange mud. And Mario said you can call it a strange mud but it is quick sand. Dakota said I told Buddy that I would throw him a rope and for him to slip it under his arms and for him to try to move his legs back and forth a little at a time and maybe the quick sand will let go some. And Buddy asked if I was going to tie the rope to my horse.

And I said he wouldn’t want me to do that because if the quick sand did not release him and Grim pulled to hard he would be hurt for sure.

So, I threw a rope to Buddy and he slipped it under his arms and in no time I and Mario had Buddy free from the quick sand. And the first thing Buddy wanted to know was how quick sand became quick sand and Mario told Buddy first it is very fine sand on very heavy larger sand and normally there is upward water flowing from a underground spring and that is all above a sinkhole and then the /sand collapses on the surface and funnels into the sinkhole

Then it becomes quick sand with no bottom. Buddy said thanks and then said that is very interesting and I guess if you laid real still you could lay on top of the quick sand forever.

Then Mario said you probably could stay on top for a while but you would need to worry about predators. Vultures would attack your head if you lay still for a time and wasn’t struggling plus the sand would be very cold at night and you could die of thirst. Then Buddy said I am thirsty so I gave Buddy a drink from my canteen. I said the best thing to do is try to avoid the quick sand if possible , and Buddy never stopped asking questions in between the time we first came up on him until the time that I left him at Autumn’s Crossing this morning.

One thing Buddy said was he really wanted a job and asked me if I knew anyone looking for help. And I said I might know someone. So the sun was starting to lower in the sky and I told Buddy that we would start back in the morning and we started gathering firewood and as we were I asked Buddy if he was hungry and Buddy said it had been four days since he ate anything.

Then Mario said Buddy that is a long time to go without eating and Buddy said he has gone longer without eating many times. Then Buddy started talking about his past. Buddy said I stayed on our little dirt farm with my Ma until the day she died. My Ma was tired and she was a lot older than her age. I cried when my Ma died and almost a day later after she died I buried her then took two sticks and tied them together in the shape of a cross the best I could and put the cross on my mom’s grave that I had dug with only a stick and my two hands.

I ate a handful of wild onions like me and my Ma did so many times before because that was about the only thing that grew close to our house but every once in a while I would be lucky enough to get a rabbit or possum. I either would catch them in a snare or sometimes I would be lucky enough to hit one in the head with a rock or a stick which wasn’t very often.

My Ma would have me read every night from one of the two books we had. I could almost read them with my eyes closed because I had read them so many times plus, she would have me spell words and we had almost five dollars in change that my Ma would have me count ever so often. My Ma would say reading and doing numbers would keep our minds sharp and someday I would be happy that we did our nightly schooling she would say.

She would say we are doing what we have to now, but some day you will do what you want when I die. I want you to leave this old shack there is a big world out there and I want you to have a large piece of it my Ma would say. Every time we ate, whether it was a rabbit a possum are just greens my Ma would say thank you Lord for this meal and the one that you will give us later. And please help my son when I come to be with you, then she would have a tear roll down her face and she would say it was a happy tear. But when I thought of her leaving me my tears weren’t happy tears.

Dakota said I asked Buddy how long it took him to get from where he buried his mom to where we were now, And Buddy said it was either nine or ten days. Buddy said he had a stick and he would cut a notch in his walking stick every morning before he started his next day and he would walk all day until dark. Buddy said he would take cover in a small cave or under a hillside or even under a falling tree for the night then when the sun started breaking through the dark of the night, he would notch his stick and then start walking again.

Anyway, I lost my walking stick and my busted pocket knife that is now at the bottom of that sinkhole as you called it. Mario said it looks like you also lost your boots. I never had any boots on Buddy said then he said he hadn’t had a pair of boots for quite a few years. Buddy said when he got a job he would buy a great pair of boots plus a good pocket knife.

Then Buddy said his dad left him and his Mom when Buddy was very young and his dad said Rick Burnstien I am leaving here because this place is making me grow old before my time and I am giving you this knife because I think every young man needs to have a pocket knife. Buddy said the blade was broke but my dad said the blade was broke when his dad gave it to him then my dad climbed up on our only horse and rode away and never looked back. My Ma said I was four years old when my dad gave me that knife and left. It still hurts when I think of my dad leaving me and my mom but now, I lost my knife the only thing that my dad ever gave me.

Mario told Buddy he was sorry that he had lost his knife and Buddy said it wasn’t that good of a knife and he should have thrown it away but he felt safer with the knife than without it because it was the weapon he had other than his walking stick.

The coffee had started to run over in the fire and Dakota said I said how about some coffee Buddy and Buddy said he would try some but he never had any before and after a couple sips Buddy said he liked it, Mario handed Buddy some beef jerky and Buddy loved it also, he liked the corndodgers and asked a lot of questions about the corndodgers and the beef jerky.

Buddy said he and his mother had nothing to drink but sour water so he had enjoyed the water from the stream after he left the old dirt farm. Buddy said when his dad left he took the small amount of coffee his Ma had and he knew his Ma missed her coffee but he was sure his Ma was more upset about his dad walking out on them. I know my Ma choked back her tears from me but almost every night I would go to sleep hearing my Ma cry herself to sleep after my dad left us Buddy said. And at first I missed him but then the hurt turned from missing my dad to me being mad at my dad and never wanting to see him again and I didn’t.

Dakota said I asked Buddy how old he was and Buddy said he was four when his dad left and his Ma kept track of the time his dad was gone and she marked on it on her head board every night when she went to bed and Buddy said from the marking his Ma made it would have been 12 years since his dad left and he was 4 when his dad left so he would be 16 years old.

Mario said Buddy you have had a hard life but that is behind you and like your mom said we are doing what we have to now but soon you will be doing what you want and it really sounds like your mom was a very smart woman. Then Buddy said thanks, my Ma was a very smart woman and I never mind being with my Ma but now she is gone so it is only me and I am ready to take on whatever comes my way if you know what I mean? And Mario said I do know what you mean.

Buddy then asked me what is this Autumns Crossing, and I said it is a large horse ranch where Mario and I live with many other people and you will see it tomorrow. But it is getting late so I think we should get a little shut eye and I am sure tomorrow will look better but before I finished saying it Buddy was sleeping.

Then the next morning the sun broke through the clouds and it was the start of a beautiful day and the first thing Buddy asked was is there any more of that great coffee. Mario said there is plenty of black coffee and he also said he had beef jerky and corndodgers if Buddy was hungry and Buddy said thanks he was hungry.

Buddy asked do you always carry coffee and food with you and Dakota said I told him we always make sure we had water in our canteen and beef jerky in our saddle bags if there was a chance that we would be out overnight we always had a coffee pot, coffee grounds and some food with us. And I told Buddy we had learned it from Shermon who he would meet later. Dakota said we then broke camp and we found our two cows on the way back to Autumns Crossing and Buddy asked if he could ride one back to Autumns Crossing and he did. Buddy enjoyed riding the cow and the cow seemed okay with it.

Dakota told Daniel and Micka Grant that Rick Burnstien or (Buddy)as he liked to be called was at Autumn’s Crossing and Buddy had said he would like to work in town plus live-in town, He would like to visit Autumn’s Crossing but live and work in town. Dakota then said he would recommend Buddy and even that Buddy was only 16 years old Buddy had been a man for most of those 16 years. Buddy knows hard times and it would not take much to make Buddy happy.

Buddy’s mom taught Buddy how to read and write and even count money plus Buddy believes in God and even prays to him, so Buddy’s mom has got Buddy ready for life and Buddy said his Ma would tell him that he would need to know what she was teaching him when he left the old dirt farm someday. I think Buddy would make a real good employee Dakota then said I know Buddy would be a hard worker and also from talking to Buddy I know he would be an honest employee.

Plus, if Buddy lives in the back room where Hank stayed, he wouldn’t have far to travel from home to work and back, then Dakota started to say more, when Daniel and Micka stopped Dakota at the same time. Micka said Dakota you know we could use the help and Buddy seems like he would be right for the job from what you have told us. Daniel then said Dakota I think you could talk the stinger off a bee and laughed.

Micka and Daniel asked if Dakota would bring Buddy buy to see them in the morning and Dakota said he would but first he wanted to pick up a couple items for Buddy. Dakota picked up a shirt for Buddy and a pair of Jeans some flannel long Johns and a great pair of boots and handed it all to Daniel and Daniel asked will he need a belt and Dakota said yea we better add a belt.

After Daniel handed it all back to Dakota, Daniel said she was going to get the back room ready for Buddy and she had the total of the things on a tally sheet and she would see Dakota and Buddy in the morning.

Then Micka told Dakota that Buddy had the Job if he wanted it but he would like to talk to Buddy first then tell him he has the job. Dakota shook hands with Micka and said thanks then Micka said no thank you Dakota and I am looking forward to seeing you and Buddy in the morning.

The next morning Buddy stepped out of the bunkhouse where he had taking a bunk the night before with a large smile on his face. Cap George Preston had trimmed Buddy’s hair and showed Buddy how to shave with hot water and a soap brush earlier that morning and even ran Buddy’s belt threw the belt loops in Buddy’s new Jeans and gave Buddy a pair of socks to wear with his new boots.

Shermon said Buddy you are a tall good looking young man and Buddy smiled from ear to ear and as Shermon smiled he shook Buddy’s hand and said I really like that saying that you told Dakota. The one your Ma always said to you. And Buddy said you mean we do what we have to until we can do what we want and Shermon said that is the one. So, it will be up to you what you do with your life now that your Ma has gone to Heaven to be with God.

Buddy said I won’t let you down Mr. McBay and Shermon said I know you won’t let me or your Ma down Buddy. Then Buddy said I will pay you for these clothes as soon as I make some money plus, I would like to buy a horse and saddle from you if you will let me make payments Mr. McBay.

You don’t owe me anything for the clothes they are a gift from your Ma. And as far as the horse and saddle I have a horse that I will sell you for 10.00 and the saddle comes with the horse. Will a dollar a week be okay for 10 weeks Shermon asked Buddy? If that is the price it is good with me, and Shermon said that is the price Plus you will have to pay a dollar a month to keep your horse at the livery stable in town and only a dollar as long as you take care of feeding your horse every day and checking your horse’s water. I will take care of my horse every day and take it for a ride or walk every day.

Okay then it is a deal and Shermon shook Buddy’s hand and said it’s still early so let’s eat a biscuit and then you and Dakota can pick out a horse for your very own. And remember if you are good to your horse your horse will be good to you.

Buddy said that he could not eat another bite and asked if he and Dakota could go look at the horses and Shermon said sure but to take his time and ask for Dakota’s advice. As soon as Dakota and Buddy climbed up on the top rail of the rail fence it did not take Buddy very long to see the horse that he wanted, it was a tall buckskin horse and it came right up to Buddy and Buddy said look he is saying pick, me pick me. I will call him Golden Boy and Dakota said Golden Boy that sounds like a great name for a great horse lets go pick out a saddle and bridle and see what Golden Boy thinks about it.

When Dakota and Buddy came back with the saddle and bridle Golden Boy seemed more than ready so Dakota and Buddy fasting the saddle on top of a horse blanket and Buddy patted Golden Boy then hugged him and when Buddy stepped up on Golden Boy. Golden Boy brought his head up and down as to say yes and Buddy said look Golden Boy already likes me. And Dakota said it looks like he picked you the same as you picked him, well he is a very smart horse and he is easy to handle so if you let him he will become your best friend the same as my horse Grim is my best friend.

Buddy pated Golden Boy and said I love you Golden Boy. I never had my very own horse before but I promise I will always put you first and treat you good and it did look like Golden boy was happy the same as Buddy was. Buddy said Dakota your uncle Shermon is very good to people the same as you are and Dakota said my uncle Shermon the same as me will do whatever we can for people who deserve it but neither one of us will tolerate rude people.

Well you are my friend Buddy said to Dakota and I won’t let you down. Thanks for everything and if you ever need my help, I with drop whatever I am doing to help you. Then Buddy and Dakota shook hands and Dakota said good hand shake Buddy and Buddy said you to Dakota and they both smiled.

Let’s go to town and get you that Job after we go see Shermon. Buddy shook hands with Shermon and said thanks and Shermon said very good choice. This Buckskin will make a very good horse for you. Then as Dakota and Buddy headed to town Buddy was grinning from ear to ear and Buddy said you know Dakota I have never had so many reasons to smile before.

Dakota said let’s pull up to that hitching rail in front of the general store and as they did, they seen Micka and he was sweeping off the boardwalk in front of the general store. How you doing Micka Dakota asked? And Micka said good as he shook Dakota’s hand then Micka called for Daniel and then Micka shook Buddy’s hand as Daniel walked out on the boardwalk, she smiled at Buddy but she also was holding back her tears because as she looked at Buddy, she could feel Buddy’s pain. But somehow Daniel held back the tears and smiled at Buddy as she shook his hand and Micka was thinking how tall and also how strong Buddy was for being only 16 years old.

Micka said Buddy you seem very strong for your age so I don’t think you will have any trouble holding or unloading a wagon, do you? And Buddy said he knew he could handle the Job and he was ready to start. Okay Buddy the Job will pay

$ 30.00 dollars a month plus you will have a sleeping room at the back of the store and oh I almost forgot this Jackknife is your starting bonus it also comes with the Job and Buddy felt his eyes starting to tear up as he looked at the beautiful pocket knife that he was holding in his hand.

Then Daniel came up and hugged Buddy and Buddy said I have only cried one time and that was when my Ma died and Daniel said Buddy I have cried because I was sad and I have cried when I was happy and now I am very happy and Buddy said I am very happy also.

Then Buddy wanted to move on so he wouldn’t let the tears flow. Buddy said Mr. Grant I won’t let you down and Micka said call me Micka and call my Wife Daniel, I know you will work hard and someday soon we will bring you in as a partner where we all will have stock in this general store if it works out the way I plan for it to and I know it will.

Buddy our room is upstairs and you can knock on our door anytime if you need to. Would you like to see your room and then Micka and Buddy walked to the back of the store and when Buddy seen his room he said is this whole room mine and then Buddy said this room is bigger than the house me and my Ma lived in.

Buddy shook Micka’s hand and said I have bought a horse from Shermon McBay a great horse, he is a tall Buckskin horse and after I see about leaving him in the livery stable I can start working. I will finish sweeping the boardwalk then you can show me my daily duties if you like.

Micka said you will start in the morning so ride your tall Buckskin horse and check out the town you now live in and here is $10.00 advance on your first month also take this key, it is to the front door plus it fits your door in back so you can use either the front or back door. Buddy put the key on a chain he had around his neck and dropped it inside his shirt and told Micka he has had the chain for a long time and now he has a key to put on it.

Then Micka told Buddy let everyone you talk to know you work at the general store and tell them your name is Buddy. So have a good time and I will see you when you get back home. Then Micka shook hands with Dakota and turned and stepped in the general store. Dakota said Well I should get back to Autumn’s Crossing unless you want me to stay with you awhile and Buddy said he would be okay and shook Dakota’s hand and said thanks for everything you are a good friend, then Dakota got in his saddle on Grim and tuned him towards Autumn’s Crossing.

Then Buddy stepped up on his horse Golden Boy as the tears rolled down his face he said out loud. Ma I will always make you proud and I will never forget you and the tears kept rolling down Buddy’s face .Then Buddy said thank you Ma for the lessons night after night that made me ready for the things that I wanted to do and that I couldn’t do before.

Buddy bowed his head as the tears kept rolling down his face and again Buddy said out loud Thank you God and in Jesus name, I pray that I always make my Ma proud of all the things I do now and forever plus I thank you for all my friends in this town that you led me to.

Amen

**THE END**

**MATT NICK AND JORDAN**

**THE ARMSTRONG BROTHERS**

**BY BOB SELF**

Shermon asked Reminton to ring the Kansas City Bell as he moved into the shade and poured himself a cup of coffee. As the McBays and all the cowboys came into the open and moved towards where Shermon was. Shermon said make your selves comfortable and I will try to explain what all took place the last three days. First as you know the stage coach was robbed and the driver and the two passengers were killed.

So, me , Kid and Doctor Cain went with Marshal Edward Jones and we found the stage coach off the trail and not only was the driver dead but he was almost cut in half by a shotgun at very close range then one passenger was already dead and the other one died before we could find out very much. The one passenger told us before he died that there were three outlaws and one was very tall, but that was about all he could tell us. There were lot of tracks and looked like more tracks than just three horses.

Kid was going to bring back the stage coach with the three dead but then Shawn Cain, Dr. Cain brother was coming to see his brother Doctor Cain and happened to meet us on the trail and said he would drive the stage coach back and then Doctor Cain went with his brother back to town. But first I asked Shawn if he had seen anyone on the trail and Shawn said he had heard someone coming his way so he moved off the trail and waited behind some short but leafy limbs and then he seen three riders moving his way.

Shawn said one man was very tall with a scar on his face who was riding a brown chestnut horse that he called Lou. He had Colt 44 pistols in worn hostlers strapped around his hips and was carrying a mean looking tomahawk in his gun belt.

Then the second one was wearing an eye patch and he had a single colt 44 on one hip and a very large bowie knife on his other hip and he was sitting in his saddle on a solid black horse.

The third man was riding a black and brown paint horse with a little white mixed in with the black and brown colors plus he was carrying a double barrel shot gun across his hips and he was telling the other two they needed to go slow and not be seen.

The Marshal asked Shawn if he seen anything else and Shawn said he did. I seen a large strong box on the trail between where we are and where I seen the three riders it had been busted open and was empty.

Dr. Cain’s brother asked the Marshal if he thought he might know who the three riders might be and the Marshal said with the description you gave us Shawn I am sure we all know who you seen back there on the trail and I hope those three are on the trail of the killers and not the killers. Shermon said the three men you seen back there on the trail was the Armstrong brothers for sure it was Matt, Nick and Jordan Armstrong. You said one of the three was carrying a shotgun and the driver of this stagecoach was almost blown in haft from a shotgun at close range.

So, the Marshal ask Doctor Cain if he and his brother Shawn could take the stagecoach back to town and maybe not say too much about what they had seen and that him, myself and Kid would follow the Armstrong brothers.

Wes Montana asked Shermon if he thought the Armstrong’s would kill in cold blood and Shermon said I don’t want to think they would Kid but someone did and there was a shotgun that was used in the killing plus Matt Armstrong is a big man and a big man was there, so let’s find them. Kid I have seen men do some bad things when they get hungry enough the Marshal said and Kid said ,Well if it was them let’s hope they aren’t still hungry when we find them.

We headed out and there wasn’t much light left so we started looking for a good camp site and it wasn’t long we found a campsite with water and a large cotton wood tree on a small knoll. We built a small fire and let the smoke drift up through the limbs of the large cotton wood tree and then we looked all around us and seen no smoke where there could have been another camp site so I said if the Armstrong brother’s are close they are in a cold camp and a cold camp means no fire and no coffee so that means if they are close they don’t want to be seen.

Kid said Well if they don’t want to be seen they wouldn’t build a fire, so they are hiding from us or they are hiding from the men that they are trailing and I hope it is the men they are trailing. I looked at kid and said Kid I know it wouldn’t be an easy task but if we have to, we will take the Armstrong brothers down, we know that Matt would rather fight than to listen to reason and it has been a few days since I have been in a good fight, so if it comes to a fight I will take Matt then you and Ed pick one of the other two brothers.

So, after a little coffee and some beef jerky and a biscuit we rolled out our bedrolls. I told Buck to let me know if we got any visitors in the night and Kid told Blackjack to wake him if trouble came and Marshal Ed told his horse Rocky to get some sleep Buck and Blackjack was on watch. All three of our horses looked at us and it was like they were saying we got this, get some shut eye, morning will be here before you know it and then all three horses when back to eating some more buffalo grass.

The next morning the sun came up and it was the start of a beautiful day, we drank some hot black coffee, ate a little beef jerky and a cold biscuit then we threw the rest of the coffee in the fire and saddled our horses.

After a very short time we seen three riders on a ridge up ahead of us and one was much taller than the other two and the taller one was on a brown chestnut horse and one of the other riders was on a black horse and the third rider was sitting in the saddle of a painted horse. But what really surprised us was they were heading our way and they had three horses trailing there three horses and as they got closer you could see there was three men rolled in blankets one on each horse.

We sat there and let the three Armstrong brothers ride up to us. Matt Armstrong asked are you looking for someone. Ed said we are and we have a couple of questions and I think you and your two brothers have the answers we are looking for. Matt said Marshal Ed, you have known me for some time and I am sure I know why you are out here so ask away. Ed said Matt first I would like to see the three men you and your two brothers have rolled up in those blankets and thrown over them saddles.

Me and Kid sat our horses and did not say anything the same as Nick and Jordan did and I kept one eye on the double barrel shotgun nick had on his lap and the other on Matt

Then Shermon said Matt was a little taller than Ed so I knew he was my height and at least 10 pounds lighter and I could tell he had been in a fist fight not long ago. Nick and Jordan kept their eyes on Matt and Ed and they both seemed a little nervous as Ed pulled the blanket back on the first man and it was Wade Madison and he also had been in a fist fight. Matt said he started it Marshal he hit me first.

Ed did not say anything he just stepped over and pulled the blanket back on the second man and the first thing we seen was a sawed-off shotgun in a large holster and Ed pulled the shotgun from its holster the gun was unloaded but it had been fired and both barrels were full of gun powder. Ed handed the sawed-off shotgun to Kid and Nick said Marshal I would like to have that gun and Ed said you can have it later but for now it is evidence.

Then Ed pulled the blanket back on the third man and said Wade Madison has a brother in the Texas prison because I put him there a few years back and there is reward posters on Wade Madison plus you can bet there is on these other two also.

Matt said Marshal I know you will find reward posters on all three of these killers when we get to Waco but now, we could use some coffee and maybe some beef jerky we have been without for a couple days. You still drink coffee don’t you Marshal? So, I said let’s move over under those trees and we will make a fire and see what is in this cloth sack that cap George has sent with us.

When all six men climb down from there saddles Nick said Matt that cut over your eye looks pretty bad and it is bleeding again and I think I should put a few stitches in that cut. Matt said do it while we are waiting for the coffee.Then Ed said Matt after you get your stitches and a cup of coffee, I would like to know what all took place out there with you three and the three outlaws plus I would like to know where the money is that was in the strong box.

Matt said Marshal if you want the money that was in the strong box you need to look in their saddle bags because they took time to spit it and that is the reason we caught up with them when we did. Ed walked over to their horses and pulled money from all three saddle bags and asked is it all here? And Matt said whatever they put in there is there and now you have it. So, what else do you have on your mind Marshal?

Then I said Matt I watched Nick put five stitches in that cut over your eye and you never changed your facial expressions one time so I bet this is not the first time you needed stitches or had stitches and I have had my fair share of stitches so I know what it takes to sit there.

Dakota spoke up and said uncle Sherm I have seen you get many stitches and you have never flinched or changed your facial expressions. And Shermon said I told Matt that he had real strength for not showing any pain and Matt said pain don’t hurt. Then Marshal Ed asked Matt how they came across the stagecoach and what all took place.

Matt said we heard the shooting but by the time we reached the stagecoach the driver was dead and we thought the two passengers were also dead and we noticed the three sets of tracks we hated leaving the three but we knew we had a better chance of catching the three if we didn’t wait too long so we took out after them.

Matt said We followed their tracks and they were easy to track, they were moving fast at first but then they stopped to split the money and that is when we caught up to them and we caught them off guard. The larger man that you called Wade Madison had his gun hanging over a tree limb and his two friends had their backs to us as we rode into their cold camp and then I said in a loud voice you go for those guns and I promise you. You will die.

Then Jordan said that big Wade Madison looked at his gun and then back at us and then said to Matt, Sonny you know you should never ride into someone’s camp without calling out first so maybe I should give you a whipping for that. We knew he knew that he couldn’t get to his gun fast enough so we knew he was trying to turn things his way and he also must have thought he could whip Matt. Matt said you want to try and whip me as he climbed down from Lou’s saddle.

Jordan said as Matt unhooked his gun belt and went to hang his guns on Lou’s saddle horn Madison charged Matt and threw a haymaker to the left side of Matt’s head right above Matt’s eye then Madison caught Matt in a bear hug and as Madison tried to break Matt’s ribs, he then head-butted Matt in the same place as he hit him earlier above his left eye. But Madison screwed up because as he loosened his grip on Matt to throw Matt to the ground Matt took over the fight.

Matt landed two quick punches to Madison’s stomach and they were solid punches and Madison felt them as Madison fault for air, then Matt hit him with a upper cut and a punch that looked like he brought it from the ground that hit Madison right between his eyes and made him count stars .Then matt threw a round house and drove his knee into Madison’s groin and as he bent over with the pain Matt drove his knee into Madison’s face.

But somehow Madison had enough left where he fell back and grabbed his gun hanging on the tree limb but that was another mistake he made because as Madison turned to fire his gun Matt threw his tomahawk and it struck Madison in his chest but as it did Matt jumped up and with his foot, he drove the tomahawk deep into Madison’s heart.

Madison’s two friends stood there for what seem like a full minute then they pulled their guns and I put two slugs in one Jordan said and Nick pulled his shotgun and unloaded both barrels into the other outlaw. So we tied them in their bedrolls and to their saddles and here we are, any more questions Marshal Jordan asked?

Ed said I think you covered it and I said Matt I think you might have a mean streak in you and Kid said yea like you Shermon, then said Well are we going to head for Waco? Ed said I think we should if these brothers want their reward.

We started back and after one night’s camp where there wasn’t much said we pulled into Waco and Ed pulled wanted posters on Wade Madison and his two friends and the three rewards made the Armstrong brother’s richer than they had hoped for. Matt said Marshal you can take their horses and saddles plus if you need their handguns to bury the three gunslingers on the hill take them but I would like to have the saw off shot gun for Nick if that is okay. After Ed said Nick could have the shotgun he said he would see that the three were buried on the hill and Matt said Marshal I would like to see those papers about us being legal bounty hunters.

Okay Shermon you can witness this Ed said, then Ed brought out three folding pockets wallets and filled out the cards then he had all three brothers sign one of the pages then the cards plus me. Shermon said then we all held our right hand on the good book and Ed said. As the Marshal of Waco and witness by Shermon McBay you Matt, Nick and Jordan Armstrong are now legal bounty hunters and here is a stack of wanted posters.

Then I, Ed and all three Armstrong brothers bowed our heads and thanked God for now and the future. Then Ed said look him up if they ever needed to and Matt Nick plus Jordan said thank you Marshal and they also thanked me Shermon said.

Then Shermon stood up and looked around plus looked out over the lake and up to the heavens and said thank you God then he smiled and said it is a good life and the future is ours, then shook hands, gave hugs and smiled again then said he thought he was ready for some shut eye as he stepped inside of his two-story ranch home at Autumn’s Crossing.

**THE END**

**BREWSTER’S FINAL RIDE**

**BY BOB SELF**

Marshal Edward Jones stepped out of his office onto the boardwalk and was watching three large men riding down the middle of the main street towards him.

It was easy to tell it was big mountain man Jack Turner on his very large horse Clyde plus Jack’s Brother Jed Turner on his large mule and also Brewster was with them sitting in the saddle of his horse Dutch.

The three mountain men had pistols, rifles and tomahawks plus Brewster had a long saber with a curved blade, then Jack and Jed also had a bow with arrows on their back. The Marshal said to himself every time I see one or all three of the large mountain men they either look like they are going to war or coming from a war but this time there was something else.

There was a beautiful woman sitting a horse and she was wearing a dark buckskin dress full of beads plus she had beads threw out her hair, she also was wearing knee high moccasins and she had dark long hair but she was holding a small child with curly blond hair.

As the three mountain men plus the woman and small child pulled up to where Marshal Ed was standing on the boardwalk in front of his office there was already a crowd starting to gather, so the Marshal said let’s step into my office.

When the Marshal plus the three mountain men and the woman holding the small child closed the door to his office, Marshal Ed said I bet there is a story and I sure would like to hear it. Then Marshal Ed sat the coffee pot on the table with some tin cups in front of the three mountain men and offered some water to the woman and little girl as they all sat down.

The Marshal smiled as big jack and his brother squeezed into the chairs but he didn’t say anything, but Jack Turner said it looks like me and Jed got the two smaller chairs.

Then Jack Tuner said let me see where to start and Marshal Ed said I have always found that the beginning is a good place to start so why not start there, Jack.

Okay Jack said, we were tracking a mountain lion that killed one of our dogs. And the Marshal then asked was it one of the large blood hounds that you got from Shermon? No Jack said those two are always together and Jed had them up in the hills when a mountain lion caught a young hound that was off to himself and it was too late for him. But then the lion drug off a small goat.

Anyway, I ran into Brewster then, me and Brewster came across Jed and another mountain man and they had Jocko and Rocko so the four of us plus the two blood hounds tracked the mountain lion and when we caught him, we skinned him then we heard the shooting. There was a lot of smoke and a couple more shots so Jed’s old friend took the Lion skin and the two blood hounds back to our place and me Jed and Brewster headed to the where the smoke was drifting into the sky.

We seen a lot of dust from what we knew was horses leaving from where a wagon was almost completely burn, there was a woman and a man dead on the ground and believe me it wasn’t a pretty sight. Then we found a doll so then we figured who ever burnt the wagon and killed the man and woman took a small child with them because there was none where we were and we looked around the place and we saw eight sets of tracks so we trailed them. The tracks led into a narrow canon so me and Jed took the higher ground and Brewster here headed straight into the narrow canyon.

Brewster then said my eyes moved from side to side. I watched the right side and left side of the canyon walls then the canyon started to narrow so I stayed as close as I could to the left walls of the canyon because there was more cover on the left side of the narrow canyon. As I moved down the left side of the canyon I seen eight men sitting in a cold camp by cold you know I mean no fire and that means no coffee but the sun was up and it was getting warm.

I looked for a small child but I didn’t see one but then one of the men stood up and splashed water in his face from the water he had in his canteen and looked into the sun and said that sun is hot and one larger man said you better save that water you might wish you had it later. Then I notice two shinny objects above me and I figured it was Jack and Jed anyway I was hoping it was and I also was hoping no one else seen the sun reflecting on what I knew had to be two rifles that Jack and Jed was carrying above me.

Then the larger men stood up and stuck his thumbs in his gun belt and his shirt was heavy stained with sweat and he was wearing almost knee-high boots but what really caught my eye was the double belt of shells he had wrapped around his chest and shoulders. But then he said in a real loud mean voice Chico cigarette, then a guy pulled a tobacco pouch and some papers from his pocket and rolled a cigarette and struck a match on his jeans and lighted the cigarette.

Another guy spit a large stream of tobacco juice and then looked right at me and his eyes were cold as he went for his gun but he fired into thin air as he was knocked off his feet from a heavy rifle from the ridge from above. They were all on their feet except one who was already dead then another guy with a mouth full of chew spit and said I see your two friends up there and I said you wouldn’t see them if they didn’t want you to.

The large leader of the gang asked how long you think you will last standing in front of us. And I said long enough to kill you and a couple others but I will kill you first .He swallowed hard and went for his gun but I put two bullets in him and he fell face first in the dirt. One guy was sitting his horse as he pulled his gun and he was blown out of his saddle and the others were starting to lose their nerve but they went for their guns so with Jack and Jed firing from the ridge and me with both my colts we finished the eight bad men.

I was nicked in the arm but I figured I was lucky because it could have gone bad and I was glad it didn’t, then I seen Jack and Jed coming down a narrow path and the three of us found the woman and girl tied to a tree. Brewster then said my arm was still bleeding so Jack poured a little gun powder in the hole in my arm and lit it, the flame shot threw my arm but then the bleeding stopped and luckily the bullet did not hit any bone or do any other damage as it went through my arm.

We gathered up their guns and turned six of their horses free after we stripped their saddles, we kept two of their horses but the little girl rode with the woman so we strapped their guns on the one extra horse with the cloth sack that the woman had with her. Then we saddled up and as the sun was setting, we found a nice place to camp for the night we built a small fire and made coffee, the water was sour and the grounds were bad but we called it coffee. We offered some to the little girl and the woman plus food that we had in our saddle bags.

But the woman had good water and a little food that looked better than what we offered them so we ate our food and drank the coffee we had made and the woman and little girl ate a small amount of the food the woman had stored in her cloth sack and drank a little water. The smoke was drifting up through the trees that was on our small knoll that we had picked for our camp site .Then Brewster continued by saying I threw a couple more sticks on our small fire and handed the woman four blankets.

She laid two blankets on the ground one for her and one for the little girl then covered the little girl with both blankets then she stretch out on her blanket and closed her eyes. So then I walked over and laid a blanket over the woman and she opened her eyes and then closed them again but I noticed a little smile on her face and it was a real pretty smile. Then she rolled over and put her arm over the little girl. I admit I had a smile on my face when I walked a little ways from her and threw my bed roll on the ground and maybe I smiled a little all night but the sun came up and it was the start to a great day.

There was coffee cooking on a flat rock placed in the fire and as I climbed from my bed roll, I was handed a cup of coffee and the coffee tasted good for the first time in a long time plus I was looking into the eyes of a very pretty woman. The Marshal looked towards the woman and she was smiling then the Marshal looked back at Brewster and Brewster was smiling. The Marshal said this sounds a little like a love story and not just two females being saved and brought to Waco so Brewster is there more to this story?

Brewster said there is not a lot more other than me Jack and Jed all tried to make the woman and little girl feel safe with us. Me, Jack and Jed did all the talking and probably me the most like I am now. I don’t think I have talked this much my whole life but I told them that I knew a place that I could take them and here we all Brewster said. Well, it does sound like they have been through a lot and do you know if they can understand what we are saying or should we maybe check with Dawn Marie to see if she can help us with the conversation we are trying to have.

Then to everyone’s surprise the woman talked and said my name is Victoria Josephine Patterson and I used to live in Laredo. And first I would like to thank my three brave men that risked their lives to save me and this little girl here. I went for a buggy ride by myself some years ago, my horse almost stepped on a large rattle snake and took off running .I tried to stop him but I couldn’t. The small buggy flipped over and I was thrown out and then when I woke up after hitting my head. On what I guess was a rock because I remember a large knot and bruise on my head when I first came to laying on the ground and there was a rock close by.

Also, I was living with a small band of Indians, the chief Standing Bear wanted to take me for his wife. But I wouldn’t have it, I was there but it never felt right and I could not remember where I belonged at first but I knew it wasn’t with this band of Indians. One night Sanding Bear beat me and I fell and hit my head and I started to remember things, just a little at first then one night while I was laying in the dark my past life came back to me.

So, I knew I would have to try and escape but I would have to be very careful because if I escaped and got recaptured Standing Bear might kill me for causing him trouble. The next night I slipped away and I was hoping that I was going in the right direction towards Laredo it had only been one full day and my worst nightmare happened. It wasn’t the band of Indians that I had slipped away from but it was some very bad men. And it was the same bad men that you three saved me and this little girl from.

The eight men all wanted to have their way with me at first, I thought they would but the leader of the gang wanted me for himself and luckily, he was biding his time and he thought I would give in to his wants so he was waiting and giving me the time that he thought I needed to give in to him. But I knew that wasn’t going to happen. I was worried but then we came across this wagon, there was a woman her husband and this little girl. The eight men tortured the man and had their way with the woman more than once until she finally died and then they killed her husband.

Her husband was forced to watch the eight men have their way with his wife and I covered this little girl’s eyes and closed my eyes tight but we could not block out the screams and the terrible sounds that this little girl’s mom and dad both made for what seemed like it would never stop. But then it finally did stop and I worried we might be next Victoria said but I was holding this little girl tight and they let me because they had already decided to sell this little girl down the trail plus me but if either one of us cause to much trouble they would have their way with us and then kill us like they did this litter girl’s mom and dad earlier.

Well like I said earlier you two have been through a lot but I would like to send a wire to the Marshal in Laredo. And Victoria said Marshal if you would tell the Marshal, Victoria Josephine Patterson, is coming back to Laredo and I am bringing a little girl with me and she is my girl or anyway she will be and the little girl smiled at Victoria with tear filled eyes.

Then as the Marshal left to send a wire to Laredo Victoria said Brewster, I would like to hire you and your two friends to take me and this little girl to Laredo I will pay you three whatever needed to see that we make it to Laredo. Brewster said Victoria I will take you and the little girl back to Laredo and if these two lunk heads want to ride along they can but there will be no charge.

And Jack said Brewster me and Jed will go with you so you don’t get lost and then the two large mountain men laughed and Brewster said lost and also laughed. Brewster said let’s go down to the Potter’s café while Marshal Ed is at the telegraph office.

About the time the three mountain men were digging in their pockets to pay the tally the Marshal walked in and said the tally is covered, let’s have a cup of coffee while I read this telegram and sat down with the wire in his hand. This wire says Victoria Josephine Patterson is a very good and well-liked person in Laredo it also say’s they had searched for a full two years for her and the Marshal looked at Victoria and then said the wire say’s you own land and you have a great deal of money in the Laredo bank and a very long line of young men wanting to court you.

Victoria said Marshal there has been quite a few young men at my door step but I never let them in because until now I have never met a real man that I was drawn to and as she said it, she looked at Brewster and Brewster’s eyes met Victoria’s but Brewster looked away. But then Brewster said why don’t I take you and the little one down to Jill’s bordering house and after a good night’s sleep we will leave in the morning for Laredo.Victoria asked are you staying at the bordering house?

No I guess I didn’t mean it the way it sounded I will go see Shermon McBay before it gets any later and see about a wagon and then we will get supplies in the morning for our trip to Laredo and Victoria said sounds good and then Victoria hugged Brewster and kissed him a short but meaningful kiss and Brewster did not know what else to say so he just backed away and his face felt hot, but he did not know why.

After Brewster told Shermon the story he had told the Marshal and that was the reason he wanted to rent a wagon. Shermon said for Brewster to take the chuck wagon and a couple horses and there was no charge just to bring the chuck wagon and the two horses back when he was done with them.

The next morning after the three mountain men slept in the alley next to the boarding house because Brewster did not want to leave Victoria’s and the little girl by their selves, when Victoria and the little one as Brewster called her stepped onto the boardwalk Brewster was there to meet them. Victoria said what a pleasant surprise and Brewster asked what she meant and Victoria said you know that we happened to meet here at the same time and Brewster confessed that he had planned it that way.

Brewster asked if she or the little one was hungry and Victoria said no, they had a little something at Jill’s boarding house, so Brewster said he had the wagon down at the general store and gave the owner Micka Grant a small list to fill for them. Well let’s go see that list and I will send a wire for some money to pay for the supplies and Brewster said it had already been taken care of but she could see if they needed to add anything to the list he had gave to Micka.

When they got to the general store and Brewster introduced Victoria and the little girl to the Grants the only thing Victoria added to the list that Brewster had already gave Micka was some penny candy for the little one because the list had everything else that they could ever need. There were four new blankets, coffee, smoked bacon, beans, plus more. Brewster showed Victoria that the water barrel was full of fresh water and then he showed her all the floor space for her and the little one that they could use for sleeping.

Us three men will be sleeping either under the wagon are very close to the wagon, Plus Victoria, I want you know we will get you and the little one to Laredo and you have nothing to worry about, I will be here for you and the little one as long as you would like for me to be here. Victoria said I feel very safe when you are with me so I am not worried about us getting to Laredo and I don’t want to think about you leaving me when we do get to Laredo, then Victoria kissed Brewster the same as she had on the boardwalk in front of Jill’s bordering house but this time Brewster kissed her back and said maybe I won’t leave and smiled. Then Jack looked at Jed and Jed looked at Jack and Jack said it looks like we are going to lose a partner in the hills and Jed said it does look that way doesn’t it.

The next morning Jack was sitting his horse Clyde and Jed was in his saddle on his big mule but Brewster tied his horse Dutch to the back of the chuck wagon and climbed up and sat on the seat next to Victoria after he put his saddle in the back of the chuck wagon.

The time on the trail to Laredo went really fast because Victoria was enjoying her time with Brewster the same as Brewster was enjoying his time with Victoria and the little girl. But then the second night on the trail the little girl started to tear up then started crying as Brewster was bouncing her on his knee and Brewster thought at first, he had hurt her and made her cry and said I am sorry if I hurt you little one.

But then they were speechless when the little girl said you didn’t hurt me, I love all four of you but I can’t forget my mommy and daddy. Then Victoria picked up the little girl and hugged her and said you may not ever forget them and you don’t have to but you will see it will get better and we will help you if you let us. The little girl said my name is Emma, then looked at Brewster and said but I like it when you call me your little one and Brewster said well if it’s okay, I will call you Emma, my little one and Emma smiled from ear to ear and said Emma, my little one, is good.

Victoria wiped a couple tears off Emma’s face plus on her own face and then said I think we should get some sleep, Emma then tomorrow we will be a lot closer to Laredo then Victoria tucked Emma in the blankets kissed her on her forehead and said she would be right back. As Victoria stood outside of the wagon with Brewster, they heard Emma praying. Emma asked God to take care of her mommy and daddy in heaven and then thanked God for Victoria and Brewster and said she would like for them to be her new mommy and daddy then Brewster wiped the tears away on Victoria’s face and kissed her gently and said sleep good I will see you in the morning Victoria Josephine Patterson and smiled.

When Victoria crawled into her blankets next to Emma, she had a lot running threw her mind but the thing that maybe concerned her the most was Brewster he never said he was staying in Laredo and he never responded to Emma saying she would like to have him for her Daddy and her for her Mommy so Victoria had a little trouble falling to sleep but finally she did.

The next morning, they all agreed the day was starting out to be a good day then while they were breaking camp Brewster said we will be in Laredo later this afternoon and Victoria said that will be good but I have to say I have enjoyed this trail and Brewster said I have to and smiled.

When they pulled into Laredo the street was full of people all waiting to see Victoria plus the little girl Emma that they had heard about in the wire from the Marshal Ed in Waco.

After many hugs Victoria heard one woman say that child is blond so I guess it isn’t hers and Victoria said be careful what you say because she will be after the papers all filed. Then Victoria seen Brewster falling back farther and farther from the crowd and called to him then what stopped him was Emma ran to where Brewster was and said don’t leave us, we need you. And Brewster reached down and picked up Emma and said I’m not leaving I just don’t want to be in the way.

Victoria said you are not in the way like Emma said we need you and then Victoria kissed Brewster the same meaningful kiss that Brewster had remembered and Brewster liked it and then he kissed Victoria and said I don’t think I have kissed a girl before you. Good Victoria said, save your kisses for me because I have saved myself for you. But first I want to check with the banker and Brewster said he needed to see the banker also and Victoria said you do, why?

Brewster said I left $3,200.00 here at the bank a while back so now I need to check on it, then I have something to ask you Victoria. Then Brewster ,Victoria and Emma stepped up on the boardwalk in front of the bank as the bank’s president open the bank’s door and said come on in and hugged Victoria and shook Brewster’s hand. The banker said when you left your money with me you had $3,200.00 and Brewster you said I could use it and some day you would be back for it. Well I invested it and made some good money for you and the bank.

You now have $5,300.00 and it is yours, all you need to do is sign for it and you can take it with you if you want the banker told Brewster. All of it or any part of it is up to you. Thanks Brewster said then he looked at Victoria and said Victoria Josephine Patterson I would like to add Brewster to your name if you would have me, I have a bank roll and I would like to build a home for you, Emma and me and I think Victoria Josephine Brewster sounds good.

And Victoria said I thought you would never ask and yes, I will marry you and I would like for you to build our home on the land my dad left me that is not far from town and the three of us will be close to town but not living in town then Brewster picked up Emma and asked her if she would like it and Emma said she would, so Brewster hugged Victoria and Emma.

When Brewster Victoria and Emma stepped out on the board walk in front of the bank Jack said to Jed, I think we lost our Brewster and Victoria said no you gained me and Emma you two will always be welcome at our home.

Then Victoria picked up Emma and reached for Brewster and said you have made me a very happy woman and I thank God for bringing you and Emma into my life and I knew if I never gave up some day something really good would happen and today is the day.

VICTORIA LOOKED TO HEAVEN AND SAID THANK YOU GOD AMEN

AND NOT ONLY DID SHE SAY AMEN BUT EMMA AND THREE LARGE MOUNTAIN MEN SAID AMEN AS THEY LOOKED TO HEAVEN

**THE END**

**FOUR BAD MEN ESCAPE FROM PRISON AND HEAD FOR WACO FOR REVENGE**

**BY BOB SELF**

Ringo Starr rode out to Autumns Crossing to see Shermon McBay and show Shermon the telegram that he had received from Marshal Edward Jones.

When Ringo rode into Autumns Crossing Shermon was standing on the boardwalk in front of the large two-story ranch house looking out over the lake at many horses like he did so many times. Shermon seen Ringo and said for him to get down and have a cup of coffee with him and Ringo said he would but he had a wire from the Marshal and Shermon asked if Ed had bad news? And Ringo said it was bad news.

Ringo stepped up to where Shermon was standing and as they were sitting down Ringo handed Shermon the telegram and Shermon read the telegram while Ringo poured himself and Sermon a cup of coffee.

To Ringo Starr from Marshal Edward Jones

This morning I was informed that four men escaped from the state prison

Their names were Red Monday

Slim Madison

Levi Beckman

And

Stumpy Davis

Ringo these are four real bad men and I am afraid they kill just to be killing, they all four were doing 20 years plus life in prison but now they have escaped and I am sure they are heading for Waco.Myself, Chester St. Clair plus a couple other deputies were in a nasty gun battle with these four plus three others a few years ago in St Louis and Kid Montana stepped in to help us and these four promised to finish the fight someday. After talking with Shermon, make sure to see Kid. Ask him to fill you and Shermon in on all the details of that gun battle in St. Louis.

I will be back as soon as I can but it will be at least three days and hopefully I will beat the four or more gunslingers to Waco and make our town ready for some real trouble without scaring them anymore than needed.

Marshal Edward Jones

Shermon spotted Wes Montana and waved for him to come up to where he and Ringo was in the shade then handed him the telegram and said what do you think Kid? Wes Montana said Shermon these four are cut throats and I am sure they will stop at nothing. They swore to finish the fight someday so they will come hunting trouble and we had better be ready for a gun battle.

You know there’s a lot of unmarked graves out on the hill because of men like these and you might remember Wade Madison he was the brother to Slim Madison that the Armstrong brothers took down a while back. Yea I do remember that lot of bad men and the beating that Matt Armstrong gave to Wade Madison that he deserved it and more and he got it, but kid tell me what took place in that gun battle and how you got involved that day with Marshal Ed. Is that when you met Ed and Chester St Clair in St. Louis?

Well, there is a lot to tell but I will tell you what I can and Wes Montana reached for a tin cup then filled it with hot black coffee and sat down across from Shermon in the shade. First, I can tell you anyone that was in St. Louis that day remembers that gun battle. There were seven bad men that came to rob the bank and six brave men standing in their way in front of the bank.

Marshal Ed was the Marshal of St. Louis then and said out loud you came to the wrong town and I won’t let this bank be robbed today or any other day and Chester St Clair was standing next to Marshal Ed and there was four more Deputy’s standing with them. Ed called out to Red and said Red I want you and your friend’s to drop your guns and Red and the other six gunslingers laughed and Red Monday said Marshal I want you and your friends to back away because we are going to rob the bank and we will shoot anyone that stands in our way.

Marshal Ed said Red Monday this is your last chance for you and your friends to drop your guns and Red said Marshal I am through talking and after Red Monday took a long deep breath, he had his thumbs in his gun belt and he was slowly moving his hands to his guns.

Then Red Monday had his thumbs free and had pulled both his colt 44’s and there was thirteen men all firing their guns there was seven bad men shot at least once or more and three of them were laying face down in the dirt.

Plus, there was four deputies’ lying in the street and both deputy Chester St Clair and Marshal Ed had been shot more than once and Red Monday pulled a gun from the back of his belt and pointed it at Ed so I pulled one of my colts and put a bullet through Red Monday’s hand and as the bullet hit Monday’s hand, he dropped the gun he had pointed at Ed.

As the dust cleared the Marshal and deputy St Clair had each been hit twice and the four other deputies were dead plus three of Red Monday’s men so they doctored up Red Monday, Slim Madison, Levi Beckman and Stumpy Davis and as they sentenced the four to life in prison all four threatening to finish the fight someday.

Later the Marshal that we now call Ed and Chester St Clair who we know is dead had come and seen me to say thanks for my help but also said if the four ever could they would come after us and finish the fight and I know that Ed has lost sleep the same as me. So now I guess the day is close to finish this and in a couple of ways I am glad to get it over.

Shermon then said Kid you know I won’t let you and Ed stand alone. I will be standing with you and Harry Austin said you know I also will be standing there. We’ve ridden the same path for a while and we aren’t done yet, we have more paths to ride. Kid Montana said I knew someday that Red Monday and his friends would show up again and I would rather be standing in front of them than to be shot in the back if you know what I mean and Shermon said yes, I do know what you mean Kid.

Then Shermon said well we know they are coming so we need to get ready and we need to keep the town safe and also the towns people safe plus maybe we can come up with a plan to keep ourselves safe and still be standing when this is over. Kid is there anything that you can tell us that might help us when we stand in front of Red Monday and the other gunslingers? Shermon asked.

Yea Kid said I know that Red Monday will be standing with his thumbs in his gun belt and he will laugh out loud and as he laugh’s he will slid his hands to his guns the same as everyone that stands with him will slowly move their hands toward their guns so they can hope to draw on us first.

Jill Penny and Michelle St Clair rode up to where the cowboys where and Michelle asked Ringo why couldn’t he just arrest the gun slingers instead of having a gun battle in the street with them. Wes Montana said it’s not that simple it should have been finished that day in St. Louis but the mayor and others wanted Ed to talk more, they would say don’t use your gun without talking first Marshal and that is the reason the gun battle wasn’t finished that day as far as I am thinking.

There were too many shots that wasn’t kill shots, like me when I but a bullet in Red Monday’s hand and not his heart as he pulled the gun from the back of his belt to shoot Ed. Since then, I have woken up in the middle of the night many times from a dream with a bullet in my back from either Red Monday or one of his friends that we didn’t finish that day in St. Louis and I am done with that dream.

Because it will be a different day and a different town and this gun battle has to be finished or it will never be over Kid Montana said.

So, Michelle said Kid I know you only use your gun when there is no other way out the same as Shermon and the others here but I will be there and when the dust settles, I pray that you are still standing tall and I just hate that we know the gunfight is coming and we have to wait for the dust to settle for the outcome.

Kid hugged Michelle and said it’s always easier when it just happens and you don’t have to wait on a gunfight that you know is coming and up to now, I have never given it much thought but before now I didn’t have you on the side lines to worry over so we will talk about us after this gun battle is over.

Shermon said after I talk with Cheyenne I will be in town and I will stay until this is over and we will handle it ourselves if the Marshal does not make it to town before the gunslingers, so Ringo check to see if there are any other telegrams from Ed then we will keep the town safe from Red Monday and whoever else that might be riding with him.

Then kid walked up with his horse Black Jack and Harry had his horse Rusty plus they had Buck and Shermon shook the hands of his three brothers plus Dakota’s and Mario’s And Dakota and Mario both said we will come with you and we will stand with you. Thank you Shermon said but I want you two here if trouble comes to Autumns Crossing I hope it doesn’t but if any of these gunslingers slip by us they could head this way to Autumns Crossing So after hugs and handshakes. Shermon said a short prayer with his family and cowboys.

Well, we better get to town Shermon said as he climbed into his saddle on Buck and looked at Kid and Harry then back to Cheyenne and Shermon said we will be back as soon as this is over .Then the three brave cowboys sat tall in their saddles as they rode towards town. When they reached town Shermon said kid I am hoping that Red Monday or no one else sees you before we are ready to meet them in the street or make our move.

Michelle said Kid we can stay in my room at the Rusty Spur or even go down to the river if you want. And Kid said I will try to stay out of sight but I want to be close by and I will not hide, only try and stay out of sight until I can show myself to them when the time is ready. Kid said I think Potter’s café might be a good place we can have something to eat and some hot black coffee and Shermon said I will join you two, I would like a cup of coffee plus we can see the street good threw the large window.

It wasn’t long and Harry came in Potter’s café and told Shermon we have company as Ringo stepped up on the boardwalk and came through the front door Harry said it looks like there are five of them and Ringo said with me there will be five of us when the Marshal returns. It would be better to meet them at the edge of town plus I wonder why they stopped at the edge of town. Shermon said Harry I hope they are not waiting for more gunslingers. Then Ringo said they are moving up the street now.

Then as the five gunslingers moved up the street Shermon said there’s Ed and it looks like he rode hard to get here before these five. The five gunslingers seen the Marshal as he rode past them and up the street to his office so Shermon said let’s walk down the boardwalk and meet Ed at his office and the Marshal said Ringo I would like for you to block the Rusty Spur Saloon, if they ask tell them it is closed to them.

Sure, enough Ringo was standing in front of the swinging doors of the Rusty Spur saloon when the five gunslingers rode up. Ringo said the saloon is closed then Red Monday said the lights are on and there are people in there so it must be open. Then Wes Montana walked up and stood next to Ringo and said the saloon is closed to you and your friends. Stumpy Davis said look Red that is the one they call Kid.

Red Monday said I see him Stumpy then Red said THE GREAT KID MONTANA. I still have a hole in my hand where you decided to interfere that day in St. Louis and then Red Monday said you tried to ruin my gun hand but you are about to find out I am still faster than you and Red Monday stuck both his thumbs in his gun belt.

Kid Montana said you don’t look any faster to me as the Marshal, Shermon and Harry walked up and took a stance across from the five gunslingers and Red Mondays stare went from Kid Montana to the Marshal. Now I don’t know who I will kill first because you both need to be killed and Wes Montana said I am the one that butted in so I think you should stand in front of me.

Red Monday said maybe you will try to kill me while I am climbing down from my horse and Kid Montana said no, I will kill you while you are laughing and looking into my eyes. The Marshal waved a couple people off the street as ten men were taking their place in the street.

Shermon stood in front of Slim Madison. The Marshal stood in front of Levi Beckman, Ringo stood in front of Stumpy Davis and Harry stood in front of the fifth gunslinger because Kid Montana wanted Red Monday now as bad as Red Monday wanted him. Red Monday had both of his thumbs in his gun belt and he laughed out loud as he slowly moved his hands toward his guns but then he thought of what Kid Montana had said you will be laughing and looking into my eyes when I kill you.

Then as Kid Montana had said Red Monday was looking into his eyes as Kid put two bullets into his heart then Red fell face first in the dirt. Then it sounded like a war with nine other men drawing their guns and firing them as fast as they could and it seemed like it was never going to end, then it did.

There were five brave cowboys standing with the help of each other and five gunslingers lying in the dirt and the only one moving was Stumpy Davis. Stumpy Davis’s gun was lying just out of his reach so the Marshal walked over and with the toe of his boot he kicked the gun over to where Stumpy Davis could reach it.

And Stumpy Davis grabbed his gun and when he rolled over on to his back and took aim the Marshal put two bullets into Stumpy Davis’s chest and Stumpy rolled his eyes and took his last breath.

All the towns’ people came from their shops and homes Michelle St Clair ran up to Kid Montana. Jill Penny was with the Marshal and Dawn Marie was holding onto Ringo and there were two young ladies talking with Harry. Doctor Cain came up and said let me see who is hurt and was surprised to see no one was hurt badly then Michelle said she would be right back and as Michelle started to walk away Wes Montana said Michelle, again I will say I hate to see you leave but I do like to watch you walk away and smiled and Michelle St Clair Smiled back with tears rolling down her cheeks as she walked away.

Shermon heard someone say hey big man and when he looked around he seen the love of his life, Cheyenne plus with her was Remington, Kasandra, Dakota and Mario and Cheyenne had tears in her eyes and said they are happy tears big man. And Shermon and Cheyenne kissed what seemed like forever.

Then Shermon shook his Brother Remington’s hand then Shermon shook Dakota’s and Mario’s hand and then he shook the hands of the other four men that stood on the front line with him. Kid Montana said no more sleepless nights with Red Monday in my dreams and Ed the Marshal said no more looking over my shoulder to see if he is following me.

Then they all bowed their heads and thanked God then Shermon said Autumns Crossing is calling me and I could sure use a biscuit and a cup of hot black coffee and Dakota said I could to uncle Sherm.

THE END

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BREWSTER AND DUTCH TRAIL SIX KILLERS

BY BOB SELF

Ed the marshal of Waco was looking out his office window while drinking a cup of

Coffee when he seen Brewster riding down main street on his horse Dutch and Brewster was dressed for war.

As the marshal stepped out on the boardwalk in front of his office Brewster pulled his horse Dutch up to where the marshal was standing and Ed the marshal said good morning Brewster every time I see you it looks like you are going to war.

Brewster said Ed I am looking for a man that rode into town in the last couple days

Have you seen any strangers in town? Yea I have, a man rode into town yesterday and did not say much other than when you came looking to let you know where he was and that your place was burnt to the ground.

That’s right they burnt my place, killed my stock and shot up my hired man James.

There were six sets of tracks heading west plus the set that I trailed here, I believe that man is the one who stopped at my place after the other six had left and he also buried James .So I need to talk to him Ed where’s is he at?

Yea Brewster he is over at the Rusty spur saloon and his name is Dutch and he told me he buried James but before James died James told him what had happened and he will tell you what James told him before he died when he see’s you.

Brewster said thanks Ed then turned towards the Rusty Spur and as he did the marshal said Brewster I will walk with you and Brewster said suit yourself Ed Then after stepping up on the boardwalk the marshal and Brewster stepped through the swinging doors of the Rusty Spur Saloon and the marshal said that is him at the end of the bar and Dutch turn to look at Brewster and Ed.

Dutch was dressed in all black his shirt his pants, boots and his hat was black plus he had a Colt 44 in a worn holster on one hip and a rifle lying across his lap.

Brewster said you must be Dutch my horses name is Dutch and Dutch said good name and you must be Brewster and Brewster then said I followed your tracks here

From my place so you must be the one that buried my hired man James I would like to hear what he told you before he died, okay pal Dutch said.

I will tell you but first let’s get some coffee Dutch said as he waved Michelle St Clair over and she bought a coffee pot and three coffee cups with her and sat them on the table, then asked will there be anything else and Dutch said not now and thank you Michelle and Michelle St Clair spoke to the marshal and Brewster then turned and walked towards the bar.

Dutch said that Michelle St Clair is a find looking woman but maybe a little stuck up and the marshal said Michelle is Wes Montana’s woman friend and she is not stuck up but she is busy .Then Dutch said Wes( Kid )Montana’s woman ,Well I have heard of Kid Montana and I have not seen him in a long time and I am not here to fight Kid Montana.

Then Brewster said tell me what you know so I can get on the trail of those six killers and Dutch said Brewster I am going with you because I have been on their trail. They hit my place a couple weeks before hitting your place. The six of them burnt my place and killed my two mules and my brother Granger plus my dog and I will hunt them and they will pay for what they did.

Brewster said okay Dutch I normally fight alone but you have the same reason as I do to fine these six killers and plant them in a shadow grave and I have to say the sooner the better so let me send a wire to my wife Victory and my little girl Emma and we will go pick up their trail.

The marshal said Brewster I know that you have to do this and I wish I had the manpower here where I could go with you but if you two could wait a few days my deputy Ringo will be back and then I would go with you two.

This can’t wait Ed and before their tracks dry up we have to get on their trail and the marshal said he understood and then said do what needs to be done to stop them and hopefully before they strike again but also to stay within the law and to let him know when it was over and Then Brewster and Dutch shook hands with Ed and climbed into their saddles then turned their horses west towards the hills.

The sun is pretty high in the sky so we have a few good hours of day light left and we should come to a good watering hole up ahead Brewster said then after that we should pick up their trail and even if most tracks are gone the set with the heavy rider and the set with the large m on them should be still easy to see.

Then less than hour later Brewster said there is good water at the base of that large cotton wood tree and it will give us some shelter for the night plus we can let the smoke from our camp fire drift up through the tree limbs and at that ridge we will be able to see for a ways.

Dutch said it looked like a good place to stop for the night then after climbing down from his saddle he cupped his hand and gave smoke some water from his cupped hand then after a little time he pulled his saddle off smoke and Smoke started to eat some buffalo grass.

Brewster had a small fire going and said the coffee will be ready soon and walked around the area and said it looks like three maybe four days ago the six we are trailing camped here and it doesn’t look like they are in a hurry anymore.

I am glad you know this territory pal Dutch said and you said you also know those hills that it looks like the killers are heading for and Brewster said I lived in those hills for eight years before marrying my wife Victoria and adopting our little girl Emma after her mom and dad had been killed by some bad men.

After eating a plate full of beans and some smoked bacon and drinking his second cup of coffee Brewster said Dutch we have some time so I would like to know about your place being burnt and your brother being killed plus whatever you can tell me about my place and James.

Dutch said okay Brewster I was tracking a bear that my brother Granger had stuck with a knife and the bear was wounded and he was mad and dangerous, We figured the large bowie knife that I had gave Granger last year might have saved his life, even thou Granger had been mauled and badly clawed up he was still alive.

I started tracking the bear and it wasn’t long and the bear was tracking me and my horse smoke and it took me three days to outsmart that bear but I was waiting and ready for the bear when he charged at me, I was heading back to Granger with a very large bear hide when I seen the smoke .

Our place had been burnt and all our stock plus our two prize mules were dead plus our dog shot glass was also dead and then I seen Granger his hands were tied and they hanged him in the only tree we had on our place so I cut Granger down then buried him then told him who ever beat him up then killed him I would find him and do the same to him and I will.

I seen the six sets of tracks and followed them and they brought me to your place,

Your house plus your barn and even your outhouse were burn to the ground and all your stock had been killed your man James was in a very bad way but was still alive and James told me the large man’s name was Drake and was saying mules were just dumb horses.

Brewster said James said the large man’s name was Drake so did he catch any other names and Dutch said yea he did James said there was a Juan and a Miguel and also a Torres but he did not catch the other two men names but that one was tall with tall boots and the last one was very short.

Then Dutch said you know Brewster James even said, can you believe they even burnt the outhouse then tried to laugh but then James said find Brewster and you two find them and I said we would then James took his last breath.

Okay Dutch let’s get some sleep, we have killers to track in the morning then Brewster threw out the last of his coffee that was in his cup, pulled his boots off and rolled out his bed roll next to his horse Dutch and said see you in the morning.

The next morning there was some white clouds and you could see darker clouds to the east and Dutch asked Brewster how far he thought the rain was from them and Brewster said he thought it would be late in the day before they got any rain and there was a cave up ahead maybe a little better than a halve of days ride from where they were and he was sure they would be dry for the night.

They watched the skies for most of the day as the clouds became darker and the thunder moved in and there was heat lightening all around them but then as they started to feel a few rain drops Brewster said the cave that we want is up ahead maybe fifty yards and Dutch said good I won’t have to pull out my rain gear then.

As they reached the mouth of the cave the rain was on them and Dutch said I am glad the mouth of this cave is as large as it is and so are our horses because they will stay dry in here and Dutch handed his horse smoke an apple then a little water.

Brewster said the coffee is on and it won’t be long and it will be ready are you hungry and Dutch said I could wrap myself around a plate of beans pal, then Brewster said you see that creek below us it is called beaver creek but with rain like this it will fill and we will be calling it beaver river.

Dutch said this rain will wash away all the tracks and Brewster said we won’t lose them .There is a town about a day’s ride from here and I am sure they will make a stop there and if they move on then they will be in my hills so we will catch them in town or in the hills where I told Victoria that I had made my last ride to but then maybe this will be the last time I have to ride into those hills.

The next morning as Brewster was pulling his boots on he told Dutch we are about to have company do you here those two Renegades talking they are close so as Brewster stepped to one side of the cave opening with his tomahawk and was listing to the bird calls by the renegades he seen Dutch putting some nice size rocks in a cloth sack.

Dutch stood just inside the opening of the cave and as the first renegade came in the cave to where Dutch was standing Dutch swung the cloth sack with the rocks inside and hit the Renegade so hard he broke the Renegades neck.

Then as the second renegade came in the cave Brewster threw his tomahawk and as the tomahawk sunk in the renegades chest Brewster jumped and drove the tomahawk in farer.

Well we hardly made a sound Dutch said and Brewster said I am sure there is more close so maybe we should let them have this cave and Dutch said I am with you Pal.

As they pulled away from the cave they could see smoke and Brewster said it looks like they hit again and headed towards the black smoke but as they hugged the tree line they could see it was a wagon the smoke was coming from, then they seen a man and a woman and they both were dead.

Dutch said I don’t see any dead mules and Brewster said they had four horses pulling this wagon but they took them so I would said it was Renegades that burnt this wagon and killed the man and woman.

The bonnet is completely burnt but the wagon is not Dutch said as he climb in the wagon to get a shovel then he said what is this, it is a strong box and he handed the strong box to Brewster then climbed down with the shovel.

Brewster pried the strong box open and said let’s see what is in this box you found Dutch and as Dutch walked over to where Brewster was Brewster said there is a lot of folding money also some gold coins and three letters and one of the three letters is still sealed .

Dutch said what do you think we should do with it Brewster and Brewster said you found it but I think we should show it to the marshal when we reach town and Dutch said we will and maybe there will be a reward so why don’t you keep it until we reach town and see the marshal.

Then Brewster said that town is five miles maybe six miles from here so I think we should wait and then ride into town at first light and there is a ridge that we can camp on outside of town tonight where we will be able to see a long way.

After about five miles Brewster said see that ridge with the large cotton wood tree there is some good water and also some buffalo grass for our horses plus there should be some dead wood that we could use for a small fire if we want some coffee and Dutch said that sounds good to me pal.

The coffee is ready Dutch said plus there is beans and smoked bacon if you are hungry and Brewster said he was ready then asked Dutch if he was going to eat and Dutch said does a black bear shit in the woods, Hell yea I’m going to eat pal.

When Brewster and Dutch had finished the beans and smoke bacon Dutch filled his and Brewster’s cup with coffee then sat back and pulled a small cigar from his shirt pocket then lighted it with a wooden match and then said Brewster do you think they will be waiting for us when we ride into town in the morning?

Brewster said I think someone will be waiting for us and I hope they are and then Brewster threw out the last of the coffee he had in his cup and said I am ready for a little shut eye and threw his bedroll down next to his horse and said let me know if we get any company before morning then Dutch said the same to his horse smoke.

As the sun was breaking through the clouds Brewster and Dutch were sitting their horses at the edge of town and Brewster said are you ready Dutch there looks like two of the killers are waiting for us on the boardwalk in front of the saloon and Dutch said I am always ready pal.

Brewster and Dutch pulled their horses to the hitching post across the street from where the two men were standing and then dismounted their horses but leaving their horses between them and the gunslingers then Brewster and Dutch stepped out into the open and Dutch said it looks like these two bad men are waiting for us.

The two gunslingers stepped off the boardwalk and stood in front of Brewster and Dutch and Dutch said one is tall with tall boots and one is short so I would say here’s is two of the killers who don’t like mules.

And the taller man said we don’t like mules they are dumb horses and Brewster said without showing any emotion or facial expressions what about the people you killed and the shorter man said we did not like them either and Dutch said and we don’t like you .

You talk too much Brewster said are you ready to die and the taller gunslinger of the two said no one lives forever, then all four went for their guns and Brewster put two bullets in the heart of the taller gunslinger and then Dutch but one bullet between the eyes of the shorter bad guy with another bullet within a inch of the other and there was two killers lying in the dirt.

Brewster said Dutch watch your back, there is four more and they would shoot us in the back I am sure of that, Dutch said there was a large man standing in the doorway of that saloon when the shooting started but I don’t see him now.

So as Brewster and Dutch stepped up on the boardwalk in front of the saloon Dutch said let’s see who is hiding in here then they stepped inside the saloon and as they did there was a very large man that stepped between them and the doorway and said I am not hiding.

Dutch said you are a big man and we are looking for a big man named Drake and I bet you are him and the big man said my name is Drake and you just killed two of my friends and Brewster said maybe you should pick better friends then Drake said I have never been beat in a fist fight so who is first or maybe I should beat you both at the same time.

Brewster started to unbuckle his gun belt and said get ready for your first beating big man but then Dutch said Brewster he is mine ,I know he is the one that beat my brother to death even after Granger had been mauled by a bear.

Oh yea I remember him he fought a bear with a knife than lost then he lost to me Dutch said Well I beat the bear and now I will beat you and the large man started laughing but Dutch was not in a laughing mood and was through talking.

Dutch hit the large man with a stiff left followed by a hard right then dug three solid punches to the big man’s stomach and danced around Drake throwing wicked hard punches to all sides of the big man’s head then landed a very hard upper cut to Drake’s chin that looked like it came from the floor then Dutch threw a hard right followed by a hard left then Drake threw a roundhouse that busted the big man’s nose then Dutch jumped up and brought both fist down on the top of Drakes head but as the big man was falling to the floor Dutch sat him down hard in a chair.

Brewster looked at Drake and his face was Battered and Swollen and wet with blood and Brewster said Dutch you move good for big as you are, that was some fight and I know it wasn’t your first fist fight and Dutch said I have did some bare knuckle fighting in ST.LOUIS so when he is ready I think he will tell us where his friends are hiding or I will continue hitting him where I left off.

But then Drake the big man grabbed the old man’s gun that was at the same table that Dutch had sat Drake down at and Drake yelled I will kill you but Brewster threw his tomahawk and it went deep in Drake’s chest then Brewster jumped up and drove the Tomahawk in farer with a kick.

Dutch said that was now the second time that I seen you throw that tomahawk and I am sure you saved my life both times pal but we can’t ask drake where his friends are and it might be a little tough picking up their trail with the large rider dead and the horse with the large m on it shoes rider also being dead.

We will find them because like I said I know them hills and that is where they are going I am sure and if not the hills there is another town to the east of those hills so let’s go find there trail and then we will find the last three killers and end this thing and then Brewster and Dutch notice all the town people cheering them and patting them on their backs as they stepped onto the boardwalk as they were leaving the saloon.

Then a woman came up to them and said my Name is Goldie Harp and the other three men that you are looking for rode out before sun up this morning towards them hills but the two gunslingers and the large man in the saloon said they would stay here in town and wait on you two.

Brewster asked Goldie if they had a marshal and Goldie said yes but he was out of town on business ,then while Brewster was talking with the undertaker and telling him to keep the horses and saddles and whatever gear the three outlaws had so he good bury them on the hill he seen Dutch talking with Goldie Harp.

Dutch said Brewster Goldie s said her hair was strawberry blond and she was kinda pretty wasn’t she and Brewster said Well she ain’t ulgy, so do you want to stay here while I go after the other three and Dutch said I told Goldie when this was over maybe I would ride back this way and see her.

And what did Goldie say, Goldie said for me to hurry back because she was not getting any younger and Brewster GOLDIE KISSED ME and told me that her and the town was glad we showed up and did what we did and so would the towns marshal be when he returned.

But you know Brewster I have never thought about wanting to get back to somewhere before now and Brewster said I know what you mean, I feel the same way about wanting to get back when I leave Victoria and Emma.

Then Brewster said are you ready to get on the trail of the other three and finish this and Dutch said you know I am pal, so after five hours on the trail of the three outlaws Brewster said there is a cave up ahead of us where we can camp for the night and I could use some coffee and Dutch said he could also.

As they pulled up to the front the cave they heard a guy yelling not far from where they had stopped for the night and Dutch said do you want to see what all the yelling is about and Brewster said I think we should so we can sleep tonight.

When Brewster and Dutch walked over to where the yelling was there was a man lying on a ledge inside another small cave and the guy said can you help me I think I broke my leg and they are coming for me.

Dutch said who is coming for you and the guy said the rats they are everywhere don’t you see them? And Brewster then asked the guy what his name was.

Brewster knocked a rat off his shoulder and said tell me your name and I will help you and the guy said my name is Juan help me So Brewster picked up the gun the man had dropped when he fell and spun the cylinder and unloaded all but one cartridge then handed the gun back to the outlaw.

What is this gringo you want me to shoot you? And Brewster said it is up to you

You don’t like mules and I don’t like you but you can let the rats eat you while you are alive are you can kill yourself and not feel the rats eat you then Brewster turned and walked out with Dutch.

Dutch then asked Brewster if he really thought the outlaw would shoot himself and Brewster said he will take the easy way out and kill himself then they heard the shot ring out and Brewster said there is two more and I am ready for some coffee and Dutch said me too pal.

Brewster and Dutch sat down to have a plate of beans and a cup of coffee and Brewster said Dutch I never use to talk this much until I married Victoria and we adopted our little girl Emma after Emma’s mom and dad had been killed by men like the ones we are trailing now.

Well I hope we catch up to the last two killers real soon and end this nightmare Dutch said and Brewster said we will start out at sun up and I am sure they are not far ahead of us and then we will be heading back so you can see Goldie.

That will be good Dutch said but I want to be able to offer Goldie a good life and not one with a saddle bum if you know what I mean and Brewster said I do know what you mean and I am betting you will be able to when this is over and Dutch said I think that would be good.

The next morning when Dutch opened his eyes Brewster asked him if he was ready for some coffee and smoked bacon and Dutch said I am ready but did you sleep any last night and Brewster said he had a few winks but he could not get the last two killers out of his mind and he hopped they could end this today.

Brewster and Dutch were sitting their saddles when they heard gun shots and Brewster said let’s see what all the shooting is about, it sounds like it is maybe a mile from here.

As they climb a small ridge they could see maybe a dozen renegades shooting into some large rocks and Brewster said they have someone pinned down in them rocks then Brewster and Dutch rode in as they were shooting their rifles at the renegades.

After knocking three renegades off their horses the other renegades headed for the trees and Brewster and Dutch rode up to where the two men had been pinned down in the rocks and the two men stepped out and Brewster asked them their names.

One of the banditos said our names what is your name gringo and spit a stream of tobacco Juice and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand but the second man said my name is Miguel and do you have some water we can have because the water we have is full of salt.

Brewster said then your name must be Torres as he looked at the first bandito and the bandito said so you know our names but you don’t know us gringo and Brewster said we do know you because we have been trailing you for better than three weeks for what you did and now it is your turn to die.

The second bandito said kill us, you two have your guns holstered and we have ours in our hands Then Dutch said maybe we should think about this and took two fingers and pulled a small cigar from his shirt pocket and lighted it with a wood match then held the match out in front him.

As the wood match burnt and the two banditos watched the match burn that was the break Dutch and Brewster needed because they both pulled their colt 44’s and when the smoke drifted into the air there was two dead banditos lying in the dirt.

Dutch said Well it looks like it is over and Brewster said now we need to get you back to Goldie Harp and see the marshal and as Brewster and Dutch rode into town Dutch seen Goldie standing on the boardwalk in front of the bank and Dutch said Brewster you go see the marshal while I talk to Goldie if you will pal.

Brewster pulled the strong box from his saddle bag and stepped up to where the marshal was standing in front of the jailhouse and Brewster asked the marshal if he could have a little of his time and the Marshal said sure but as you can see the years have caught up to me so talk fast youngster and smiled at Brewster.

Then the old marshal said step into my office and we will have a cup of coffee and you can tell me what is on your mind youngster and I will see if I can help you.

Okay first I guess you know me and my partner killed three men here in your town and we were within the law when we did it and the marshal said yea I know what happen here in town and then Brewster said there was six of them they burnt my place and my partners place plus killed our stock and they killed my hired hand and killed my partners brother so we tracked them.

We tracked three here then the other three we caught up to on the trail and we killed two in a gun fight and one killed himself, he was hurt and in a rat den so I handed him his gun with one cartridge and he killed himself.

The marshal said Well from what heard from you and all the people in town it sounds like you stayed within the law so what else is on your mind youngster and I hope you don’t mind me calling you youngster because you are a lot younger than me and you do look like a fighter son.

Brewster said Marshal my partner found this small strong box as he handed it to the marshal Brewster said we came across a burnt wagon and there was a man and woman that had been killed by some renegades and this strong box was in the wagon.

Well let’s see what is inside of this box and when the marshal opened the box he said there is a lot of paper folding money here plus there is some gold coins and three letters and after reading the letter that was sealed the marshal said this letter says who ever find the strong box it is there’s to keep.

That is great Brewster said I am sorry that the man and woman were killed but I know that my partner can use that money because Dutch has met a girl and said if he had something to offer her he would maybe stay and ask her to marry him.

The marshal said your partner has a great deal of money here and as far as a job I know he is a fighter because he whipped a man bigger than him with his bare knuckles and I know he can handle a gun because of what you just told me.

What I am getting at is that I was a great marshal in my time but the years have caught up to me and this town needs a younger man and I am ready to hang my gun up and turn my job over to someone who can protect this town and the people in it and I think Dutch would be the man for the job.

Then Dutch stepped into the marshal’s office and Brewster said where is Goldie and Dutch said I told her I would be back when I had something to offer her and Brewster asked and what did she say and Dutch said like she said before, she told me not to wait too long because she wasn’t getting any younger and that was all that was said pal.

Brewster said well Dutch you better go get her because all this paper money and gold coins are yours now plus the marshal is ready hang his gun up and turn his job over to you and before Brewster could say anything else Dutch bolted out the door.

Dutch seen Goldie Harp on the boardwalk in front of the stagecoach ticket window and out loud he said Goldie Harp I have a job will you marry me and then Goldie said I won’t need that ticket and turned and crossed the street to where Dutch was and said Dutch I thought you would never ask YES I WILL MARRY YOU DUTCH MONTANA.

The End

(To be continued, watch for Short Stories of Western Pioneers, Part 2)