

DELL

NO. 443 10¢

Wild

Bill Elliott



SQUARE KNOT

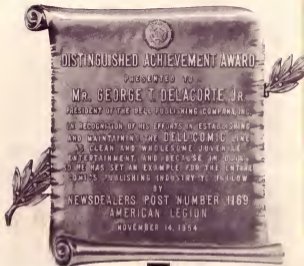
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Wild Bill Elliott

In MYSTERY OF FURNACE VALLEY



ONE AFTERNOON, WILD BILL RIDES INTO A FRONTIER TOWN.

SLOW DOWN, STORMY. I DON'T WANT TO MISS OUR OLD FRIEND, FURNACE VALLEY SCOTTY. HE WROTE HE WAS GOING TO MEET ME HERE IN MOJAVE.

THE OLD SOURDOUGH HAS AN OFFER TO SELL ALKALI---THE GHOST TOWN HE OWNS OUT IN FURNACE VALLEY. HE WANTS MY ADVICE ON THE DEAL.



MOJAVE IS SURE JAMMED WITH MULES AND WIGONS. NOT ENOUGH ROOM LEFT TO TURN AROUND!



AN INSTANT LATER.

OUT OF MY WAY, HONNOR. OR I'LL RUN YOU DOWN!

WHAT IN TARNATION?



LOOKING FOR TROUBLE, MISTER?

RECKON YOUR MA NEVER TAUGHT YOU POLITENESS, PARTNER---





---SO I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A LESSON IN MANNERS!

Woooo!



HEY, BOYS, LOOK! THAT STRANGER'S KNOCKING THE TAR OUT OF SHEP BRACY!

NOBODY'LL DO THAT TO ONE OF OUR MEN AND GET AWAY WITH IT! COME ON! WE'LL PUT OUR BRAND ON HIM!



HOLD IT, BOYS! KEEP YOUR SHIRTS ON!

BUT, BOSS, THAT HOMBRE'S GETTING THE BETTER OF SHEP. WE CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY WITH IT.



I'LL HANDLE THIS PERSONALLY! YOU MEN GET THOSE WAGGONS ROLLING. THAT BORAX HAS TO BE LOADED ON THE TRAIN THIS AFTERNOON.

OKAY, MIKE. YOU'RE THE BOSS.



MIKE GORIN! I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE ---

SINCE YOU HELPED SEND ME TO JAIL FOR RUSTLING, FIVE YEARS AGO!



THAT'S RIGHT! NOW I CAN'T HELP WONDERING WHY YOU KEPT THOSE MULE DRIVERS FROM JUMPING ME

RECKON YOU'VE GOT ME ALL WRONG ELLIOTT! MATTER OF FACT, I FIGURE THAT STRETCH IN PRISON STRAIGHTENED ME OUT---

AFTER I GOT OUT, I WALKED THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW. I BECAME A TEAMSTER. NOW, I OWN THE LARGEST FREIGHT HAULING BUSINESS IN THE TERRITORY!



JUST LANDED A BIG CONTRACT FOR HAULING BORAX OUT OF THE DESERT TO THE RAILROAD HERE FOR SHIPMENT BACK EAST.

BORAX? I HEAR THAT'S A BIG NEW INDUSTRY NOW THEY USE IT FOR MAKING SOAP, GLASS, AND MEDICINE.



MUST BE QUITE A LOAD IN THOSE WAGONS WITH TWENTY MULES HAULING THEM.

YES SIR! TAKE THAT LOAD I JUST DROVE IN. THERE'S TWENTY TONS OF BORAX IN THOSE WAGONS, NOT TO MENTION THAT TANK THAT CARRIES WATER FOR THE MULES.



A WATER TANK? SAY, STORMY AND I COULD STAND A DRINK IN THIS HEAT.

HEY, WAIT!



LOOKS LIKE THAT TANK IS DRY, GORIN.

Y-YEH! I FORGOT! THE MULES FINISHED IT ON THE WAY IN. IT'S A LONG, HOT HAUL FROM THE DESERT.

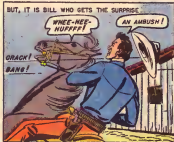
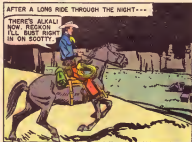


WELL, ER--- SO LONG, ELLIOTT. GOT TO BE MOVING ON. NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

SO LONG, GORIN.

HE SURE SOUNDS MIGHTY ANXIOUS TO GET AWAY ALL OF A SUDDEN.





WITH DEADLY ACCURACY, BILL RETURNING THE FIRE.

ALL RIGHT, YOU DRY-GULCHING COYOTES! TRY THESE FOR SIZE!

EYOW!

YIII!

MY GUN HAND!

BUT A FURTIVE SHADOW CIRCLES BEHIND BILL AND...

CHUCK YOUR GUNS, FRIEND!

RECKON YOU HOLD ALL THE ACES, HOMBRE!

THIS BLASTED MAVERICK SHOT UP THREE OF OUR MEN! WE OUGHT TO FINISH HIM RIGHT HERE!

THERE'S ALWAYS TIME FOR THAT LATER. LET'S BRING HIM TO THE BOSS. HE'LL WANT TO ASK HIM SOME QUESTIONS!

BUT WHEN BILL MEETS THE "BOSS"...

GORRW! SO YOU'RE THE BOSS OF THIS BUSHWHACKING OUTFIT! WHAT'S THE IDEA OF TRYING TO DRY-GULCH ME?

HOLD IT, ELLIOTT! I'M ASKING THE QUESTIONS. WHAT WERE YOU SNOOPING AROUND FOR?

I WASN'T SNOOPING. I CAME HERE TO VISIT MY OLD FRIEND, FURRACE VALLEY SCOTTY. HE OWNS THIS GHOST TOWN!

SCOTTY? WHY, HE SOLD ALKALI TO ME LOCK, STOCK AND BARREL A MONTH AGO, AND HIGHTAILED IT OUT OF HERE WITH THE MONEY.

THAT'S MIGHTY STRANGE. SCOTTY HAS CALLED THIS PLACE HOME FOR TWENTY YEARS. IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE HE SOLD IT!

WHY NOT? THE GOLD MINES IN THIS TOWN PETCHED OUT THIRTY YEARS BACK. ALKALI'S JUST A WORTHLESS COLLECTION OF SHACKS, NOW.



THAT'S TRUE, GORIN. SO MAYBE YOU WON'T MIND TELLING ME WHAT USE THE TOWN IS TO YOU!

THAT'S EASY. THE BORAX DEPOSITS ARE ONLY FIVE MILES FROM HERE. ALKALI IS A PERFECT PLACE TO PARK MY WAGONS AND HOUSE MY DRIVERS AND SWAMPERS.



RECKON MY MEN WERE A LITTLE TOO JUMPY WHEN THEY FIRED AT YOU. MIGHTY SORRY... HERE ARE YOUR SHOOTING IRONS, ELLIOTT.

THANKS, GORIN!



MEANWHILE IN A SHACK ON THE FAR SIDE OF ALKALI!

I'LL BE A COYOTE'S UNCLE IF THAT WASN'T SUNFIRE THAT WOKE ME UP!



SOME STRANGER MIGHT HAVE WANDERED INTO ALKALI! THIS COULD BE MY CHANCE TO GET OUT OF THIS SHACK! THEY LOCKED ME IN. IF I CAN JUST RAISE A LOUD ENOUGH RUCKUS!



HEY, OUT THERE! GET ME OUTA THIS PLACE! HELP!





THAT WAS CLOSE, BOSS! SCOTTY STARTED A RUMPUS, BUT WE QUIETED HIM DOWN, AND THEN STARTED HAMMERING ON THAT WAGON TO COVER UP.

FAST THINKING, BOYS! FOR A MINUTE I THOUGHT ELLIOTT WAS ON TO US, BUT I GUESS WE FOOLED HIM.

BUT WILD BILL'S SUSPICIONS HAVE BEEN AROUSED.

JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT. SCOTTY WROTE THAT HE WOULDN'T SELL THAT GHOST TOWN WITHOUT TALKING TO ME FIRST. I STILL THINK THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG BACK THERE.



MY NEXT BEST BET IS TO RIDE TO THE BORAX COMPANY IN THE MORNING AND CHECK ON GORIN'S STORY.



EARLY NEXT MORNING AT THE BORAX DEPOSITS, BILL TALKS TO THE MANAGER.

SCOTTY? SHUCKS, I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM FOR WEEKS. NOT SINCE BEFORE HE SOLD THAT TOWN TO GORIN.

I SEE. NOW WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THAT GORIN HOMRE?



WELL, GORIN WAS TRYING TO GET THE BORAX HAULING CONTRACT MONTHS AGO, BUT HIS BID WAS TOO HIGH THEN, HE DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE.

HOW COME YOU MADE A DEAL WITH HIM?



THAT'S A STRANGE STORY, ELLIOTT. RIGHT ABOUT THE DAY HE BOUGHT THAT GHOST TOWN, GORIN SHOWED UP HERE WITH A NEW BID. HIS PRICE WAS SO LOW I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. I SIGNED THE CONTRACT BEFORE HE COULD CHANGE HIS MIND.



AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DON'T SEE HOW GORIN MAKES A NICKEL ON THE DEAL WITH THE LOW RATE HE CHARGES. BUT THAT'S NOT MY BUSINESS.

IF I KNOW GORIN, HE'S NOT DOING IT FOR CHARITY.



BEFORE I LEAVE, WOULD YOU MIND IF I TOOK A CLOSER LOOK AT ONE OF THOSE WAGONS?

SURE, ELLIOTT, GO RIGHT AHEAD!



NOTHING SUSPICIOUS HERE! JUST A COUPLE OF EMPTY WAGONS AND A WATER TANK HOOKED ON.



STILL, THE MORE I HEAR ABOUT GORIN, THE MORE I DISBELIEVE HIS STORY. THERE'S A POLEGAT IN THE WOODPILE SOMEWHERE, AND I AIM TO ROUTE HIM OUT! LET'S GO, STORMY, BACK TO ALKALI!



SOON---

THAT'S STRANGE! THEY'VE GOT SOMEONE WORKING ON THOSE OLD PILES OF SLAG AND TAILINGS! I'D BETTER CLOSE IN AND SCOUT THE TOWN!



AND THEY'VE GOT THE OLD SMELTER WORKING, TOO. I WONDER WHAT'S UP?





UHNNNN!

I THOUGHT I SAW THAT ELLIOTT SNEAKING BACK INTO TOWN!



ALL RIGHT, ELLIOTT, LET'S HAVE IT! WHAT WERE YOU SHOOPING AROUND HERE FOR THIS TIME?

YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I GOT I'M STILL LOOKING FOR SCOTTY. YOUR STORY ABOUT SCOTTY SELLING YOU THIS TOWN IS AS FRONT AS A THREE DOLLAR BILL!



LOOK, BOSS, THIS BUZZARD'S MADE A LOT OF TROUBLE FOR US ---AND HE'LL MAKE A LOT MORE ---UNLESS WE PUT HIM OUT OF THE WAY, PRONTO!

I DON'T WANT ANY UNNECESSARY ROUGH STUFF!



WE'LL KEEP HIM PRISONER. TAKE HIM TO THE SLAG PILES AND PUT HIM TO WORK.

THE SLAG PILES, EH? WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GONNA EARN YOUR KEEP, ELLIOTT!



SCOTTY! I WAS LOOKING FOR YOU LAST NIGHT ---

WILD BILL --- SO IT WAS YOU! I MIGHT'VE KNOWN FROM ALL THE SHOOTING! TOO BAD THEY GOT YOU, TOO.



ALL RIGHT, ELLIOTT, PICK UP A SHOVEL AND START LOADING THAT ORE CART.

I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT, BUT I RECKON SCOTTY WILL FILL IN THE DETAILS.

AS THEY WORK, SCOTTY WHISPERS THE STORY.

PSSEET! SCOTTY! WHY ARE THEY KEEPING YOU PRISONER? WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

DUNNO FOR SURE! IT STARTED ONE DAY WHEN GORIN RODE THROUGH ALKALI ON HIS WAY TO THE BORAX FIELDS. HE GOT MIGHTY EXCITED ABOUT SOMETHING HE SAW HERE AND OFFERED TO BUY THE TOWN.

I STALLED HIM OFF WHILE I WAITED TO HEAR FROM YOU, BUT GORIN AND HIS GANG TOOK OVER ALKALI ANYWAY. HE'S KEEPING ME PRISONER TILL I SIGN OVER THE TOWN!



BUT WHAT ARE THEY USING THESE TAILINGS FOR? GOT ANY IDEA?

SEARCH ME! EVERY BIT OF GOLD WAS TAKEN OUT OF THIS ORE THIRTY YEARS AGO, BUT THEY'VE HAD ME PUSHING THESE CARLOADS OF CRUSHED ROCK AND SLAG DOWN TO THE SMELTER FOR THE PAST THREE WEEKS.

THE SMELTER, EH! WELL, MAYBE WE'LL FIND OUT WHAT'S UP WHEN WE WHEEL THIS ORE WAGON DOWN THERE!



ALL RIGHT, LEAVE THAT ORE CAR HERE. WE'LL TAKE IT INSIDE.

JUST TAKE THAT EMPTY CAR BACK UP AND START LOADING AGAIN, PRONTO!

BUT THEY'RE GETTING SOMETHING OUT OF THAT SLAG. LOOK! THEY'VE GOT A TWENTY MULE TEAM BACKED UP BEHIND THE SMELTER WAITING FOR A LOAD!

I FIGGERED THE SAME THING, BUT WAIT TILL YOU TAKE A LOOK AT THE WAGONS WHEN THEY PASS THE SLAG PILE.





AS THE WAGONS PASS...

NOTHING THERE! JUST TWO EMPTY WAGONS AND A WATER TANK.

SEE WHAT I MEAN? NO SIGN OF ANYTHING IN THOSE WAGONS. WERE UP AGAINST A BLANK WALL!



ALL MORNING LONG, THEY SLAVE IN THE SCROLLING HEAT UNTIL--

THE HEAT... (GASP!) IT'S... TOO MUCH FOR ME

HEY! CUT OUT THE STALLING! GET BACK TO WORK, YOU OLD POLECAT!



WHY YOU MISERABLE, HEARTLESS GONNE! I OUGHT TO---

BILL, NO! DON'T FORGET HE'S ARMED!



LUCKY YOU BACKED UP, HOMBRE!

SCOTTY'S RIGHT! CAN'T DO ANYTHING AGAINST THAT RIFLE, BUT I'LL HAVE TO MAKE SOME KIND OF MOVE FAST. SCOTTY CAN'T LAST LONG IN THIS HEAT!



JUST THEN---

PSST! SCOTTY! THOSE MEN COMING OUT OF THE SHELTER--- WHY ARE THEY GOING INTO THAT SHACK?

IT'S GOMIN'S GANG GOING FOR LUNCH. THAT USED TO BE THE DINING SHACK FOR THE SHELTER CREW YEARS AGO.



THAT'S RIGHT, BOYS. IT'S LUNCH TIME---AND HERE'S YOURS. A HEARTY MEAL OF BREAD AND WATER!

WHAT?

GIVE THEM THE USUAL FIVE MINUTES TO FINISH THEIR GRUB AND START THEM SHOVELING AGAIN. I'M GOING DOWN TO EAT WITH THE REST OF THE BOYS.

SO ONE OF THE GUARDS IS GOING DOWN TO THE SHACK. THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA!



BREAD AND WATER AND FIVE MINUTES FOR LUNCH! THE MARSH SUZZARDS!

EASY, OLD-TIMER! FIVE MINUTES IS ALL I NEED FOR THE LITTLE POW-WOW I WANT TO HAVE WITH YOU!



I THINK I'VE FIGURED OUT A WAY TO OUTFOX GORN AND ESCAPE. BUT IT'LL MEAN TAKING A LONG CHANCE---

I'LL TRY ANYTHING, BILL. I CAN'T HOLD UP MUCH LONGER --- WORKING ON THIS SLAG PILE IN THIS HEAT.



NOW LISTEN CLOSE, SCOTTY! WHEN OUR FIVE MINUTES ARE UP, WE START LOADING AGAIN, THEN---



A SHORT TIME LATER---

HEY, GUARD! COME HERE QUICK! SCOTTY'S FOUND SOMETHING!

A NUGGET! I FOUND A GOLD NUGGET!



A NUGGET? LET ME SEE--- UHHHH!

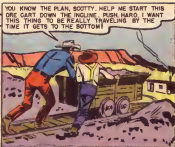
EASY, HONNRE! TOO MUCH EXCITEMENT'S BAG IN THIS HEAT!





I'LL HANDLE THE SK-GUN, SCOTTY. YOU TAKE THE RIFLE.

RIGHT! JUST LET ME AT THOSE POLECATS. THAT'S ALL I ASK!



YOU KNOW THE PLAN, SCOTTY. HELP ME START THIS ONE CART DOWN THE INCLINE. PUSH HARD. I WANT THIS THING TO BE REALLY TRAVELING BY THE TIME IT GETS TO THE BOTTOM!



OKAY, SCOTTY, THAT DOES IT! FOLLOW ME!

RIGHT BEHIND YOU, BILL!



IF THIS RIG CAN ONLY GET UP ENOUGH SPEED BY THE TIME IT HITS THE CURVE, THOSE SIDE-WINDERS IN THE DOOR SHACK ARE DUE FOR A SURPRISE!



JUST THE WAY I FIGURED IT! WE'RE LEAVING THE TRACK!



CRAR-A-A-SHHHHH!

TOPPET! IT'S AN EARTHQUAKE!

THE ROOF'S COMING DOWN! HEAD FOR COVER!



THE WRECKED SHACK RESOUNDS TO GUNFIRE.

GRAB YOUR GUN! IT'S WILD BILL ELLIOTT--- HE'S BUSTED LOOSE!

THAT'S RIGHT, BOYS. I'M READY TO TOTE UP THE SCORE!



EET OW!
MY RANG!

MY ARM!

HERE COMES THE OLD SQUADDOUGH WITH A RIFLE!



I'D BETTER WAMOOSE, AWOYD! THINGS ARE GETTING MIGHTY HOT AROUND HERE!

AND THEY'RE GOING TO GET A LOT HOTTER, BORN!



ELLIOTT, THIS IS THE LAST TIME YOU'RE GOING TO INTERFERE WITH ME!

I'LL MAKE SURE OF THAT, GORIN.



YOU ASKED FOR IT, FRIEND. AND HERE IT IS!



KEEP THEM COVERED, SCOTTY, WHILE I GET SOME ROPE TO TIE THEM WITH

OKAY, YOU THEIVING BUZZARDS! HOIST 'EM HIGH!

WITH GORIN'S GANG OUT OF ACTION, BILL INVESTIGATES THE SMELTER.

BARBS OF SILVER BULLION! SO THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE SMELTING OUT OF THE SLAG AND TAILINGS.



JEROSHAPHAT! I GET IT

THIRTY YEARS AGO THE MINERS WERE SO GOLD HUNGRY THEY NEVER REALIZED THIS ORE HAD SILVER IN IT, TOO.

THE SLAG THEY THOUGHT WAS WORTHLESS WAS ALMOST PURE SILVER.



THOSE GUMPS ARE MORE VALUABLE THAN ALL THE GOLD EVER TAKEN FROM THESE MINES. NO WONDER GORIN WANTED TO BUY THIS TOWN.

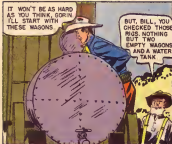
THERE'S ONLY ONE QUESTION THAT PUZZLES ME, AND I KNOW THE HONBRE WHO'S GOING TO GIVE ME THE ANSWER.



GORIN, YOU'VE BEEN SMELTING THAT SILVER FOR WEEKS. WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO KEEP IT QUIET? AND HOW DID YOU SNEAK THAT SILVER OUT OF ARLALI?



YOU'RE A PRETTY SMART HONBRE, ELLIOTT! SUPPOSE YOU FIGURE IT OUT FOR YOURSELF!



IT WON'T BE AS HARD AS YOU THINK, GORIN. I'LL START WITH THESE WAGONS.

BUT, BILL, YOU CHECKED THOSE RIGS. NOTHING BUT TWO EMPTY WAGONS AND A WATER TANK.



IT'S THIS WATER WAGON THAT INTERESTS ME, SCOTTY. I JUST REMEMBERED I TRIED TO GET A DRINK FROM ONE OF THESE TANKS BACK IN MOJAVE ONCE.



A SILVER INGOOT! YOU MEAN THAT'S WHERE HE HID THE STUFF?

THAT'S RIGHT, SCOTTY! THE BORAX SHIPMENTS WERE A COVER UP TO HELP GORIN GET THE SILVER OUT OF THE TERRITORY. RECKON THE RAILROAD AGENT IN MOJAVE CAN TELL US THE REST OF WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW.



THE NEXT DAY, IN MOJAVE, AFTER THE GANG IS JAILED.

BILL, DID YOU CHECK WITH THE RAILROAD?

SURE DID, SCOTTY. ALL THAT SILVER WAS SHIPPED TO DENVER. IT'S ON DEPOSIT THERE. IT'S ALL YOURS NOW, SCOTTY. AND ALL THE SILVER BACK IN THOSE DUMPS IN ALKALI, TOO.



BILL, ALL THAT MONEY--- I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD IT IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR YOU. BY RIGHTS IT'S HALF YOURS.

NO, SCOTTY, IT'S ALL YOURS.



THE ONLY REWARD I WANT IS THE PLEASURE I GET OUT OF PUTTING TWO-LEGGED GOYOTES INTO PRISON WHERE THEY BELONG. SO LONG, SCOTTY!

YES, SAW! IT TOOK WILD BILL ELLIOTT TO MAKE FURNACE VALLEY TOO HOT FOR MIKE GORIN!

Wild Bill Elliott

In PERIL AT SUNDOWN

BILL, I'M MIGHTY OBLIGED FOR YOUR FILLING IN AS SHERIFF OF SUNDOWN WHILE OUR REGULAR LAWMAN IS IN THE HOSPITAL.

IT'S A PLEASURE TO HELP MAYOR DOAN

ONE AFTERNOON, WILD BILL IS SWORN IN AS TEMPORARY SHERIFF OF A FRONTIER TOWN.

NEXT MORNING...

HOWDY, BILL! WILL YOU BE PASSING THE LAZY G ON YOUR WAY OUT OF TOWN?

YES, MR. BARNES. I'M GOING TO CHECK ON SOME TROUBLE ABOUT WATER RIGHTS UP ON SUGAR CREEK. ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU?

BANK OF SUNDOWN

WHY, YES. MY BANK OWES FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS TO GIL CARSON, OWNER OF THE LAZY G. ON A GATTLE DEAL I HANDLED FOR HIM. I'D LIKE YOU TO BRING HIM THE CASH.

GLAD TO OBLIGE, MR. BARNES! IT'LL BE GOOD TO SEE GIL CARSON AGAIN! HE'S AN OLD FRIEND.

MEANWHILE, AN UNWELCOME VISITOR ARRIVES AT THE LAZY G...

WELL, IF IT ISN'T MY OLD SIDERICK, GIL CARSON! HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE WE SHOT YOU THAT BANK IN THE DAKOTA TERRITORY, TEN YEARS AGO.

SLOP GAVIN!
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING, HERE?

THINGS GOT A WITE TOO HOT FOR ME AND THE BOYS BACK IN DAKOTA! FIGURED WE'D HEAD OVER THE STATE LINE AND HOLE UP HERE FOR A WHILE.

HOLD ON, SLOP! I'M GOING STRAIGHT NOW. I CAN'T HAVE YOU AND YOUR BOYS HANGING AROUND MY RANCH!

LOOK, SLIP, I'VE SPENT YEARS BUILDING UP A GOOD REPUTATION IN THIS TERRITORY. THEY'VE EVEN ELECTED ME PRESIDENT OF THE RANGERS ASSOCIATION.

THAT'S JUST FINE, AMIGO. THEN NO ONE WILL SUSPECT THAT YOUR SPREAD IS THE HIDE-OUT FOR BANK ROBBERS.

GET THIS, CARSON. MY BOYS ARE COMING HERE TONIGHT, WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT. STRING ALONG WITH US AND WE'LL VAMOOSE WHEN THINGS GOOL OFF.



BUT, IF YOU TRY ANY FUNNY STUFF--- LIKE TIPPING OFF THE LAW... JUST REMEMBER, YOU'RE STILL WANTED FOR BANK ROBBERY BACK IN DAKOTA. ONE WORD FROM ME AND---

GAVIN--- NO! Y-YOU WOULDN'T TELL ANYONE!



I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU SAY, GAVIN. JUST DON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT MY RECORD---IT WOULD RUIN ME!

RELAX, CARSON. I WOULDN'T DREAM OF DOUBLE-CROSSING AN OLD SADDLE MATE. NOW, SUPPOSE YOU RUSTLE UP SOME GRUB. MY BOYS'LL BE COMING IN BEFORE NIGHT-FALL.



THAT AFTERNOON...

HOWDY, GIL BARKER BARNES ASKED ME TO DROP THIS OFF. IT'S THE MONEY HE OWES YOU ON THAT CATTLE DEAL.

THANKS, BILL! I APPRECIATE THE FAVOR.



JUST A SECOND THERE, PARTNER. I'LL TAKE THOSE GREENBACKS!

N-NOW WAIT A M-MINUTE, GAVIN!





THAT EVENING THE GAVIN GANG ARRIVES AT THE LAZY G.

WELL, SAVIN, RECKON YOU WANT US TO HOLE UP HERE UNTIL THINGS COOL OFF?

RIGHT. BUT IN THE MEANTIME, I'VE FIGURED OUT A LITTLE DEAL THAT SHOULD KEEP YOU BOYS BUSY--- AT A FINE PROFIT. LOOK AT THIS LOCAL PAPER.



CATTLEMEN'S RANGERS PETITION FOR RAILROAD LINE.

EDITORIAL

THE CATTLEMEN'S GAZETTE SUPPORTS THE RANGERS AND HOMESTEADERS OF THIS TERRITORY IN DEMANDING THAT THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN RAILROAD CONSTRUCT A BRANCH LINE INTO THIS TERRITORY. FOR YEARS, THE CATTLE INDUSTRY OF THIS AREA HAS SUFFERED...

THIS EDITORIAL CALLS FOR A RAILROAD LINE INTO THE TERRITORY. HOW DO WE FIT IN?

THAT RAILROAD CAN BE A GOLD MINE TO US. GATHER ROUND AND LISTEN TO MY PLAN.



AFTER LISTENING TO GAVIN'S SCHEME---

OKAY, SAVIN! THAT RAILROAD DEAL SOUNDS GOOD. WE'LL RIDE TO BRAZOS CITY AND ORDER THE EQUIPMENT WE NEED.

FINE, BOYS. AND GIL GARSON HERE, WILL HAVE TO HELP US GET SOME PUBLICITY.



GIL, SPREAD THE WORD AROUND THAT THE BOYS AND I ARE A RAILROAD SURVEYING CREW, LAYING OUT A BRANCH LINE INTO SUNDOWN.

SAVIN, I HEARD THAT TINHORN SCHEME YOU WERE HATCHING AND YOU CAN COUNT ME OUT!



GETTING MIGHTY HEADSTRONG, AREN'T YOU, GARSON?



DON'T FORGET, YOU LILY-LIVERED WORM! ONE WORD FROM ME AND YOU'LL BE HEADING BACK TO DAKOTA AND PRISON!

---ALL RIGHT, BAVIN! I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU SAY!



A FEW DAYS LATER, IN SUNDOWN ...

ANOTHER SHIPMENT OF SURVEYING INSTRUMENTS FROM BRADDO CITY! THAT'S THE SECOND DELIVERY THEY HAD AT THE EXPRESS OFFICE THIS WEEK.

SURVEYING INSTRUMENTS? WONDER WHAT THAT'S ALL ABOUT? GOME ON, MAYOR. WE'LL CHECK!



THAT'S RIGHT, MAYOR. THOSE INSTRUMENTS ARE CONSIGNED TO A SURVEYING CREW OUT IN THE HILLS. THERE'S TALK THAT THEY'RE LAYING A BRANCH LINE INTO SUNDOWN.

THAT COULD MEAN BIG THINGS FOR THIS COUNTRY IF IT'S TRUE, BILL.



IF THE RAILROAD'S COMING IN, THERE'LL BE SOME BIG CHANGES IN SUNDOWN. RECKON I'LL RIDE OUT TO THAT SURVEY CREW AND GET THE DETAILS FIRST HAND.

I'LL RIDE OUT WITH YOU, MAYOR.



FIVE MILES OUT ON THE RANGE.

LOOKS LIKE THAT CREW OF SURVEYORS DOWN IN THE VALLEY, MAYOR.

LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN LEARN ABOUT THOSE RAILROAD NUMORS.



SAY, THAT MAN TALKING TO THE MAYOR IS THE MAN I TANGLED WITH ON CARBON'S SPREAD DIDN'T AGT LIKE A SURVEYOR THEN.

THAT'S RIGHT, MAYOR. WE'VE GOT ORDERS FROM THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN TO LAY A BRANCH LINE THROUGH THIS AREA WITH A TERMINAL AT SUNDOWN.



FRANKLY, I'M SURPRISED I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM THE STATE AUTHORITIES ABOUT THIS. STILL, I'M GLAD TO SEE THEY'RE FINALLY GOING TO BUILD THE BRANCH LINE.

YES, SIR! RAILROADS ALWAYS BRING PROSPERITY. IT'LL BEAR GOOD TIMES FOR THIS TERRITORY.



AS BILL AND THE MAYOR LEAVE...

MAYOR, I'VE SEEN THAT GAVIN BEFORE AT THE LAZY G. IF MY HUNCH IS RIGHT, THERE'S SOMETHING CROOKED ABOUT HIM.



BILL, I'M AFRAID THAT TANGLING WITH SO MANY DESPERADOES HAS MADE YOU A WITE TOO CASEY. YOU HAVE NO PROOF HE'S A CROOK.

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, MAYOR. REGGON THAT HONORABLE JUST PERS ME THE WRONG WAY.



DAYS PASS, AND GAVIN'S SCHEDULE IS IN FULL SWING.

HONOR, STRANGER! I OWN THE RANCH JUST UP THE CREEK. REGGON YOU'RE THE RAILROAD SURVEY DREW I HEARD TELL OF.

THAT'S CORRECT, FRIEND! WE'RE LAYING OUT THE RIGHT OF WAY, BUT RIGHT NOW, WE'RE STUMPED!



YOU SEE, WE'VE GOT A CHOICE OF PUSHING THOSE RAILS ACROSS THIS CREEK ON A BRIDGE OR TURNING THE TRACKS FURTHER UPSTREAM...

UPSTREAM? HEY, MY RANCH IS UP THAT WAY. I'D BE ABLE TO BRING IN SUPPLIES AND SHIP OUT MY CATTLE AT ONE-THIRD THE COST.



IT WOULD TRIPLE THE VALUE OF MY RANCH. SAY, IF YOU COULD SEE YOUR WAY CLEAR TO---

WELL, I COULD DO IT, FRIEND, BUT THERE'S A LOT OF EXTRA LABOR AND EXPENSE INVOLVED...





BUT IF YOU COULD DIG UP ABOUT FIFTEEN HUNDRED DOLLARS TO COVER THE COST...

IT'LL BE WORTH IT! I'LL HEAD FOR THE BANK AND BRING YOU THE MONEY THIS AFTER-NOON!



THERE GOES ANOTHER ONE, BOYS. THAT'LL MAKE ALMOST TWENTY THOUSAND WE CLEARED SINCE WE STARTED THIS SCHEME.

THIS BEATS BANK ROBBING ANY DAY, AND THE BEAUTY OF IT IS WE DON'T HAVE ANY BULLETS TO ODDGE.



BUT, OUT IN THE HILLS, A SILENT FIGURE SHADOWS SAVIN'S BARG.

I'VE BEEN TRAILING THAT CREW FOR A WEEK, BUT I HAVEN'T SPOTTED ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS YET. RECKON I COULD BE RIDING A FOOL'S TRAIL.



LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE GOING TO LAY THOSE TRACKS PAST EAGLE CANYON AND THROUGH BUFFALO GAP.



JUST THEN, IN THE VALLEY BELOW...

HERE COMES THE HOMESTEADER WE TALKED TO EARLIER. HE'S PROBABLY GOT THE MONEY HE PROMISED US FOR PUSHING THE RAILROAD PAST HIS SPREAD IN EAGLE CANYON.

I KEEP WORRYING, BOSS. ELLIOTT IS STILL WATCHING US. WHAT IF HE GETS WISE?



RELAX, AMIGO! WE'VE BEEN PULLING THE WOOL OVER HIS EYES FOR DAYS. WHY SHOULD THAT TR-BADGE TUMBLE TO OUR SCHEME NOW?

RECKON YOU'RE RIGHT, SAVIN!

UP ON THE RIDGE, WILD BILL KEEPS A CLOSE WATCH...

SAY, THAT'S JAKE HARPER WHO'S JUST DRIVEN UP. HE SEEMS TO BE HANDING GAVIN A WAD OF GREENBACKS...



HMM! NOW GAVIN'S CREW IS TURNING UP EAGLE CANYON. THAT'S STRANGE! BUFFALO GAP WOULD BE THE LOGICAL PLACE TO LAY THOSE TRACKS!



LET'S GO STORMY! I THINK WE'D BETTER PAY JAKE HARPER A VISIT!



HONKY, BILL! HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS? THAT NEW RAILROAD WILL BE CUTTING RIGHT PAST MY HOMESTEAD. MY PROPERTY WILL BE WORTH A FORTUNE!

SO THE TRACKS WILL BE COMING UP EAGLE CANYON, HUH? THAT'S STRANGE! I THOUGHT THEY WERE SURE TO CUT THROUGH BUFFALO GAP.



THEY WERE, BUT I TALKED THE SURVEYORS INTO CHANGING THEIR PLANS. I HAD TO PAY THEM A THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR THE EXTRA EXPENSES BUT IT'LL BE WORTH IT!

A THOUSAND DOLLARS! I SEE!



LET'S GO, STORMY! I THINK I'VE GOT A HUNCH ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND HERE! WE'VE GOT SOME CHECKING TO DO!



THAT AFTERNOON, WILD BILL
QUESTIONS THE RANGERS
ALONG THE RIGHT OF WAY.
EVERYWHERE THE STORY
IS THE SAME.



NEXT MORNING, IN THE MAYOR'S OFFICE.

I TELL YOU, MAYOR, SAVIN HAS FLEED THE RANGERS OF THIS TERRITORY OUT OF TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS!

BILL, AN ACCUSATION LIKE THAT CAN LAND YOU IN A HEAP OF TROUBLE-- UNLESS YOU CAN PROVE WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE.



HERE, LOOK AT THIS MAP. I'VE MARKED OFF ALL THE RANCHES SAVIN HAS PROMISED TO PASS WITH HIS RAILROAD.

GARRATION! WHY, THAT RAILROAD WOULD BE ZIGZAGGING THROUGH THE WORST COUNTRY IN THE TERRITORY.



BILL, THAT MAP OF YOURS IS A DEAD BREAKAWAY! WE'VE GOT TO RIDE OUT AND WARN THE RANGERS NOT TO GIVE SAVIN ANOTHER CENT!

RIGHT! WE'LL FORM A POSSE AND CALL A SHOWDOWN WITH SAVIN.



SOON AFTERWARD, AT THE SURVEY CAMP.

SOMETHING'S COOKING, SAVIN! ELLIOTT SPENT ALL YESTERDAY CHECKING WITH THE RANGERS THAT WE FLEED. THIS MORNING HE AND THE MAYOR HIGH-TAILED IT OUT OF SUNDOWN.

HE MUST'VE TUMBLED ON TO OUR GAME! NOW HE'S WARNING THE RANGERS. I TOLD YOU ELLIOTT WOULD MAKE TROUBLE FOR US, SAVIN!



KEEP YOUR SHIRTS ON, MEN. THIS MAY JUST BE A FALSE ALARM. WE'LL HEAD OFF ELLIOTT AND THE MAYOR AND TRY TO FIND OUT JUST HOW MUCH THEY KNOW. LET'S GO!



LOOK THERE, ELLIOTT, IT'S GWIN AND HIS COYOTES!

EASY, MAYOR! WE'RE OUTNUMBERED! LET ME DO THE TALKING!



GOOD MORNING, GENTS! YOU SEEM TO BE IN A POWERFUL HURRY TO GET SOMEWHERE.

THAT'S RIGHT, YOU THIEVING SIDWINDER! WE'RE ONTO YOUR CROOKED GAME AND WHEN WE SPREAD THE WORD...



BUT THE ANGRY MAYOR CANNOT CONTROL HIS TEMPER, AND ---

I HATE TO SPOIL YOUR PLANS, MAYOR, BUT YOUR RIDE JUST ENDED!

WHY YOU...
UNHHH!



WILD BILL GOES INTO ACTION WITH BLAZING GUNS...

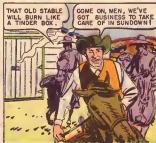
IF IT'S SOMEBODY YOU HOMBRES WANT, I'M HERE TO OBLISE!

YEOWWW! MY HAND!

MY SHOULDER!









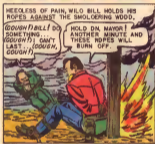
BILL, WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING, QUICK!
(GOUCH! GOUCH!)

IF I COULD FIND A WAY TO GET THESE ROPES OFF...



IF THE FLAMES DON'T GET US, THE SMOKE WILL! I CAN'T BREATHE!
(GOUCH!)

I THINK I SEE A WAY OUT. THAT CHARRED TIMBER IS STILL BLOWING!



NEEDLESS OF PAIN, WILD BILL HOLDS HIS ROPES AGAINST THE SMOLDERING WOOD.

(GOUCH! BILL! DO SOMETHING... (GOUCH!) CAN'T LAST... (GOUCH, GOUCH!)

HOLD ON, MAYOR! ANOTHER MINUTE AND THESE ROPES WILL BURN OFF.



THAT DOES IT! NOW TO UNTIE MY LEGS...



THAT ROOF'S COMING DOWN ANY SECOND! I'VE GOT TO MAKE MY PLAY **PRONTO!**



WITH THE STABLE DOOR LOCKED, BILL TAKES A LONG GAMBLE.

THE FLAMES MAY HAVE WEAKENED THE STABLE WALL. IF I CAN HIT IT HARD ENOUGH ---



AND JUST IN TIME!
ANOTHER MINUTE AND
I'D HATE TO THINK WHAT
WOULD HAVE HAPPENED
TO US.



THANKS, BILL!
YOU SAVED MY
LIFE. HATE TO
SEE GAVIN
GET AWAY WITH
THIS THOUGH!

WE STILL HAVE A CHANCE
TO TRACK 'EM DOWN,
MAYOR. I FOUND OUR
GUNS IN THE HOUSE
AND OUR HORSES ARE
IN THE CORRAL.



I'LL BE SWITCHED!
THEIR TRAIL HEADS
STRAIGHT FOR
SUNDOWN!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT
THEIR GAME IS, BUT
WE'VE STILL GOT A
CHANCE TO TAKE THEM
BY SURPRISE.



MEANWHILE, AT THE SUNDOWN BANK...

CARSON, DO YOU
MEAN YOU'RE WITH-
DRAWING ALL THE
MONEY IN THE
RANGERS' ASSO-
CIATION ACCOUNT?

LOOK, AMIGO, CARSON'S
THE PRESIDENT OF
THE ASSOCIATION AND
HE CAN TAKE OUT
THE MONEY WHENEVER
HE WANTS TO!





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THAT ELLIOTT'S A SHOOTING FOOL! GET BEHIND THIS WAGON! IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE!



WE'RE SITTING DUCKS HERE, OUT IN THE OPEN! THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO!



WHEE-NEEE, HAHN!

UP AND OVER, STORMY!



BACK INTO THE BANK, QUICK!

I'LL HAVE TO GO IN AFTER THEM!



HOLD YOUR FIRE, MAYOR! SOMETHING'S GOING ON IN THERE!

WHAT'S HAPPENING? SOUNDS LIKE A VOLCANO BROKE LOOSE!

CRACK!
BANG!



DR. GARDNER!

ALL RIGHT, BILL! IT'S ALL OVER. GAVIN AND HIS BUNCH WON'T GIVE YOU ANY TROUBLE. YOU CAN GART 'EM OFF TO THE GALA-BOOZE NOW!



GIL, WHAT HAPPENED? HOW'D YOU GET MIXED UP WITH GAVIN AND HIS CROWD?

IT'S A LONG STORY, BILL...--AND NOT A PRETTY ONE. IT STARTED BACK WHEN I WAS A WILD, HEAD-STRONG KID...



AS CARSON FINISHED HIS STORY...
SO YOU SEE, I'M NO BETTER THAN GAVIN AND THE OTHERS. GUESS YOU'D BETTER SHIP ME BACK TO DAKOTA TO STAND TRIAL.

EASY DOES IT, GIL. WE'LL TALK ABOUT THAT LATER. RIGHT NOW WE'RE GETTING YOU TO A DOCTOR, FRONTS!



A FEW DAYS LATER... AT THE CARSON RANCH.

GOOD NEWS, CARSON! GAVIN AND HIS GANG WERE JUST CONVICTED AND WE RECOVERED EVERY PENNY THEY SWANDED FROM THE RANGERS!

GOOD! AT LEAST I WON'T HAVE THAT MONEY ON MY CONSCIENCE WHEN I GO BACK TO DAKOTA TO FACE THE MUSIC!



GET SET FOR A SURPRISE, CARSON! WE'VE BEEN IN TALKS WITH THE GOVERNOR OF DAKOTA. HE FIGURES YOU'VE RED YOUR DEBT TO SOCIETY BY HELPING TO CAPTURE THE GAVIN GANG. THEY'VE GARGELLED THE OLD CHARGES AGAINST YOU... YOU'RE A FREE MAN!

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