

HANNIGAN

WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE

CHAPTER ONE

Dead Man

Bishop Hannigan pulled his collar up around his neck just trying to keep out the blowing November wind. He had left Banks, Idaho four days ago working his way along the railroad tracks, trying to get to Idaho City before the first snow. Cold, wet and hungry, He tilting his hat against the wind and hunkering down lower into his coat, he let his mind drift to the past, looking back to his family and the small cattle ranch in King Hill, Idaho. He was raised to work hard and gain respect by being a better man. Hannigan had found it came easy as people were drawn to him. After killing

a man over a girl, in a fit of rage he ran until he was caught up in the war between the states, he really didn't care much about it, but he knew he needed to keep a low profile and figured the war was what he needed. It had been Dodge City after the war where he saw the wanted posters, and he decided right then and there it was time to right the wrong. That was a year ago before and now he felt it better to stick to himself to avoid any unneeded attention as he headed home, to find justice.

Hannigan knew it had been a fair fight, Buck had pulled first, but if I would have only waited a second longer because by the time his gun reached half way out of his holster I had already put two slugs in his chest and his gun fell back into his holster. Looking like I had drawn and killed him without a chance... Plus all the witnesses were Buck's friends just my luck!

Wiping the ice from his beard, Hannigan looked around trying to get his bearings, he needed to find some shelter for the long, cold night that was coming.

Hannigan noticed an outcropping of rock up a draw ahead so he coached his horse towards it, patting him on his neck, "been a long trail old boy but we'll be home soon".

Just as he was nearing the bottom of the draw, he heard the whine of a bullet as it bit off a chunk of bark in the tree next to him. Hannigan dove off his horse rolling behind a tree as he pulled his Colt 45. His fingers were numb with cold as tried to draw the hammer back, making it difficult and painful. He should have known better, always keep one hand warm just in case.

He yelled... “Quit shooting I'm a friend, I don't want any trouble, just need a place to bed down for the night and get out of this weather”..

He waited for a few minutes, looking around the tree trying to locate the shooter.

Hannigan shouted again... “Hey I mean no harm whoever you're shooting at; I have nothing to do with, Hold your fire I'm coming up, my gun is holstered”

While keeping his right hand away from his Colt 45 he let his other hand hang loose so that he could pull his cross-draw modified Colt .38 Lighting from his back holster, if needed.

Hannigan kept talking as he approached the outcropping, not seeing any movement he began thinking, *maybe whoever shot at him had already hightailed it outta here*. A light snow was starting to come down as the darkness crept in, making it even harder to see. With his right hand he

pulled his hat off and started waving it figuring it might draw out the shooter. That's when he heard someone wet coughing and not in a good way. Hannigan had heard plenty of people coughing like that from chest wounds when he fought in the War Between the States and he knew without medical attention they would die.

As he poked his head above the entry to the outcropping, he said; "Friend sounds like you're in a bad way" all he heard was more coughing as his eyes adjusted to the dim light. He could make out a man lying on his side holding a Winchester across his lap. Cautiously he moved up and over the ledge, the man was laying still so he moved to the man's side, rolled him over.

He had a bad wound in his chest and it was bubbling which meant the bullet went through the lung,, not good without a Doctor close by and even then it was only 50/50 he would survive. What bother Hannigan even more was this was just a boy, maybe 20 or something, Hannigan had seen too many boys die bringing back a bad taste in his mouth. The kids' eyes flutter open and Hannigan asked him how this happened? The kid's eyes shot open with fear, he grabbed at his Winchester.

"Now hold still I'm a friend. I don't know what happened to you, but I mean you no harm"...

The kid fell back passing out again. Hannigan felt the kid's head and he was hot as hell, looking around he surveyed the outcropping and it was really a shallow cave, but had enough room for them and his horse. Knowing that a fire was a necessity he moved around the cave looking for kindling for a fire. In a corner of the cave, he found some dry kindling and firewood from others that had used the cave in the past. Moving back to the fire pit he got a fire going.

Hannigan moved the boy closer to the fire but he needed his bed roll to get him covered up and warm, he pulled his handkerchief from his pocket and pressed it over the wound until he got back with his horse and medical kit he kept close.

So he headed out to get his horse and to figure out what his next move was, he wondered who the kid was and who shot him. And, if they were still out looking for him, he figured he would sleep with one eye open just in case.

Who would shoot a kid for no apparent reason was starting to get under Hannigan Skin? And, he didn't like it. Looking around, he thought that they were hidden up, this draw pretty good and even if whoever shot him came up here they would have to be directly in front of the outcropping

to see the fire because he couldn't even see it from where he was while getting his horse.

So for now they were safe, Hannigan didn't like getting involved, with the price on his head and any unwanted attention wasn't good, but soon he would take care of that too... He was innocent and he was tired of running for nothing, he wanted to go home, so he could see Ma and Pa. He didn't expect much since he'd been gone for over ten years.

Being tied up in the Civil war and then the Indian wars, had kept him away but that was all past now, it was time to go home. Getting his horse unsaddled and rubbing him down, Hannigan fed him some oats he had in his saddle bags. Turning from the horse he moved to the kid to see how he was doing and checked the dressing he had applied earlier. It was saturated with blood; Hannigan shook his head and prayed the kid would, last the night. Lifting up his head, he gave him a drink of water and the kid mumbled a "Thank you"...

Looking up at Hannigan, the kid said, "I'm Bill Waters, Who are you friend?"

Hannigan looked at the kid and figured what did it matter if he gave him his real name? The kid probably wouldn't make it through the night anyway...

“It's Hannigan, Bishop Hannigan” the kid nodded and said something that surprised Hannigan

“Mr. Hannigan I'm not going to live out the night” and he started coughing again a little blood flowed from the corner of his mouth,

“But I need to tell you something... I need you to do something for me please”...

“Son "Bill" I will do what I can, but I've somewhere to be so I can straighten out a wrong doing”...

Grabbing my slicker collar he pleaded

“Sir... please I need you to tell Sadie I'm sorry”!

“Son you will be able to tell her yourself, now just relax”.

“Please... Hannigan just find her ... Our farm is outside Idaho City”...

The kid went into a coughing fit again and collapsed back onto his back with blood flowing out of his mouth.

Hannigan wiped away the blood and said...

“OK I'll find her Bill” “

“Hannigan....please tell her I love her and I was jumped by her brothers”.

“Who is Sadie?”

“Hannigan they were waiting for me”...

Bill coughed again and fell silent. Hannigan checked his pulse, and there was still one, but faint. He went to his saddle pulling out his medical kit and a blanket from his bed roll and put it around Bill after he dressed his wounds, Hannigan had found another wound in his stomach. There wasn't much he could do for the boy but he had to try and give the kid a fair shot.

As Hannigan waited for morning he sat staring into the fire....wondering why this Sadie's, brothers would do this shit... As he stared into the fire, he felt the fire in him match the fire he stared into burn for burn, flame for flame ... consuming him, fucking animals attack a mere boy and for what? Well he made up his mind to find the murders and make them pay one way or another. Hannigan sat with the Boy throughout the night, Billy would wake, mumbling something and fall back to sleep. He listened to the boy, crying, coughing on his own blood throughout the night Hannigan had to fight down the rage that had been building since he first saw the kid. By morning, Bill Waters had died, Hannigan felt like something had curled up and died inside him too because sometime in the night the boy had died by himself ... no love ones around to comfort him. No one to hold him close as he cried for his mother, No man should die

alone Hannigan thought and the fire in his soul burned bright they'll pay,
Goddammit they will PAY!

#

Sheriff

Hannigan had a fitful night of sleep, seeing Bill shot like he was and his dying breath of remorse and love for his family. Brought back memories of the past and how many friends of his, died this way, Jim his friend in the War was the first one he found that didn't judge him for the past because being they were both from the north which gave them a common bond which in war was enough to create a friendship. Jim died charging a hill that didn't really matter. The Capt. wanted to make a name for himself, but he never faced a bunch of southern boys with squirrel rifles. They picked us off like it was target practice. One minute Jim was next to me the next he was gone, I kept moving, but got winged and fell into a pit made by a cannon ball. The next thing I knew the asshole Capt. called a retreat and I was left to fend for myself, which I did. I waited for nightfall before I could look for Jim.

I found him back down the hill he had been gut shot, I could tell he struggled with the death that was surely coming.

I dug his grave with my bare hands because he was a friend and found a deep respect for him and everything we had been through.

I fought the feeling that I should have tried to make my way back down the hill to find him sooner, I could have tried to dodge those squirrel rifles or die trying.

But I left him to die alone and this made me real angry, so I made my way back to camp the next morning. That asshole Capt. was stamping around yelling at everyone, that's when I knew I'd had enough of him and walked up to him and Knocked him on his ass. He got up and charged me, I popped him a couple of times and swept his feet from under him and he fell like a sack of potatoes. The others were clapping and hooting. The Capt. got up and said you're going to pay for this and stalked off to his Tent ... Before he could file his report he was killed trying to take that good for nothing hill again. Stupid ass.

Hannigan knew it was crazy, but the little he had known of Billy he seemed like a real stand-up guy. He was going to find Sadie to tell her what happened and then find her brothers and make things right. It's what he does, making wrongs right again he seemed to have a knack for it.

Bundling up the kid in his bedroll and tying it up so he could put him on the back of his horse for the ride into town. Hannigan was deep in troubled thoughts about Bill's family and this woman called Sadie, what was he going to tell them? He didn't savor that much because this was the

part he didn't like about death. Hell the dead didn't care anymore, but the living has to get it out of their system, the morning was about the living not the dead. After getting Bill's body on his horse he headed out of the cave and was surprised to see the snow had melted. Taking it slow down to the trail he was able to move off at a faster pace, he should get to Idaho City by noon. Hannigan figured he's scout out the Sheriff's office and tell him what he knew and then head over to the Saloon for a drink and room, He savored the idea of a hot bath some good cooking and fixing this wrong.

He'd have to wait out the weather before heading to King Hill and his folks' place which was OK with him because for now he had a promise to keep.

Then once and for all make things right there like he'd been doing for everyone else, it was his turn to get off the Wanted list and become Bishop Hannigan again.

What he wasn't ready for was how Idaho City had changed with the silver mining. The place had grown 10x at least. Finding the Sheriff was going to be harder than he thought, but at least he wouldn't be noticed because every other guy had a beard and looked like he had been through hell. Hannigan stopped one of his look a likes and asked for directions to the Sheriff's Office.

Followed the gentleman's directions down a side street and finally he saw the Sheriff's sign hanging on a simple building in the middle of the block. Getting off his horse he stamped the blood flow back into his legs and unbuttoned his slicker letting his hand stay close to his Colt, Hannigan scanned the area looking for hiding spots for shooters and watched for people that didn't look like they belonged there.

Old habits were hard to break... entering into the office, he saw A duded up gentleman with a handlebar mustache and a round hat. Standing up, he offered his hand

"I'm Sheriff Dodson" and who might you be Sir"...

"Well Sheriff I'm here to report a killing"!

"Oh you are and your name sir",

"Look my name doesn't matter, I've got Bill Waters out there on my horse and someone shot him".

The Sheriff said, "You said, Bill Waters"?

"Yea that's what he said his name was before he died, someone put two bullets in him".

The Sheriff sat back down with a strange look on his face....

"Sheriff did you know him"?

"Well a little"

“Maybe you can tell me where his farm is I need to tell his family and a woman called Sadie”...

“Mister whoever you are. I'll take care of that, you can pat yourself on the back and move on”

I was taken aback by the change in the Sheriff's demeanor, but I persisted...

“Well I feel like I should relay a message he gave me to give to this Sadie”...

The Sheriff stood back up and said.

"What message"?

“Sir I mean no disrespect, but he gave it to me to pass along to her”...

“Oh alright. And then I think it best if you move on. We don't need no mystery cowboys here... causing me trouble”

“I'm not here to cause trouble Sheriff, but I made a dying man a promise and I mean to keep it”...

“And what promise is that”..... On that, I turned and headed for the door ... before I went out I turned and gave him a dead man's name “Jim Trainer that's my name and I promised to kill the chicken eating coyote or coyotes that shot him”.

After going outside I mounted up, and headed for the Caretaker's office, which was at the beginning of the street, how convent I thought... After taking care of Bill and paying for a nice box for him, I headed for the Livery Stables and paid the old man to take care of my horse and an extra helping of oats.

The old man asked me staying or riding through?

“Well depends”

“Depends on what?”

“Well you’re kind of a nosily old coot”

He laughed at that and said

“Well I’ve been called a lot worse you young whipper-snapper”

I laughed at that one and said

“Well to be honest here I’ve brought Bill Waters Body to town”

The old man looked at me and saw a hardness past over his face which made me drop my hand close to my Colt.

“Son you better think twice about saying here if you killed Billy Waters”

“I didn’t kill him”

I saw the old man relax a little

“Who killed him?”

“I don’t know I found him holed up in a small cave all shot up, I did what I could but his wounds were bad and he didn’t last the night”

The old man looked at me like he was trying to decide something, finally I saw his shoulders drop and him finally relaxed.

“What’s your name Son?”

“It’s Jim Trainer” *I hated lying but I didn’t need any unwelcome attention while looking for Bill’s killers”*

“Yea well Jim or whatever your name really is, everyone liked Billy and they aren’t going to take to his killing much”

“Well I promised Bill I would right this wrong and I keep my promises”

“I don’t want any trouble with anyone other than his killers”

“I’ll pass along what I know you look like a standup guy”

“Thanks Sir and I’d appreciate if you hear anything please pass it to me, you can contact me over at the Saloon, I’m getting a room there.

“I’ll do just that”

And he shook my hand.

His hand felt like it had seen a thousand miles and moved mountains of stone and his grip felt like a horse had stepped on my hand...

I headed for the saloon next, to get a room and a hot bath... I managed to get a room as far from the Bar as possible because I just wanted some good ole' sleep. But first I needed a drink while my bath was being prepared.

I found barkeeps were one of the best sources of information or one of the bar girls if I wanted to deal with that. *The Barkeep looked like a man of knowledge*, I smiled to myself and I asked for a whiskey. He brought me one of the watered down whiskeys, he eyed me as I took a drink, turning my head I spit it into the spittoon.

“OK now give me the real stuff or Mister we are going to get off on the wrong foot”... The Barkeep smiled at me as his hands moved to something under the bar, probably a double barreled sawed off shotgun, a man killer for sure. I stared at him and threw clinched teeth I said...

“Blink and you're dead”

He wavered in his conviction for a moment, but then he noticed my gun hand was still holding the piss water. And he smiled until he noticed my other hand and a shortened customized Colt 38 Lightening (Storekeeper Model) and it was staring right back at him. Sweat broke out on his forehead as he stared down the barrel. *I could see his brain working*

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