



"SEE YOU AROUND BOY, EARN YOUR K

This Moment

Bobby W. Lee

He rode at a hard gallop, the little mustang at full stride. Behind and to the side of him rode Comanche warriors yipping and yelling, each wanting to get to him first. They were just out of bow range, if his pony faltered he would be one more white man to disappear on the plain. The wind whipped the horses mane across his face as Tom leaned forward and whispered in the pony's ear, "They'll eat you and torture me baby!" As if he understood the mustang stretched his gait a little further.

Racing across the plain Tom thought back to what had got him in this mess. Listening to that damn fool Jessy about all that money they could make buying horses from the Comanche and reselling them in Texas. Tom's eyes watered at the thought of Jessy lying in the dirt with arrows protruding from his neck and side. Besides, leading a string of ponies was a lot easier than herding cattle Jessy had said. Tom had liked Jessy so he had partnered with him on this crazy venture. Now Jessy was dead and Tom would be too if he couldn't out run these savages!

They had worked together on a ranch in Texas for four years together. Jessy was older, around thirty with long blond hair and blue eyes. Slim and supple he was a good all around hand and nobody could bust a bronc like Jessy! Tom was twenty one and considered himself an old hand. He had been at it since he could ride at age six. His old man didn't tolerate no slackards and his kids were no exception to that rule. He was a hard man scratching out a living in a hard land. His parting words to Tom when Tom left to work for Triple T Ranch was, "See you around boy, earn your keep." He had shook Tom's hand and that had been that. In the four years he had been there Tom had done exactly that.

Jessy had taken a liking to Tom right off. He saw quick that the quiet boy from Wyoming worked hard and didn't complain. Tom was lanky with shoulder length hair the color of a beaver's pelt but in his hazel eyes was a spark of intelligence that Jessy didn't see in most of the other hands. Tom pretty well kept to himself, didn't drink and was dependable as the day was long. But he had a quick temper and didn't take to being poked at much. Jessy took Tom under his wing and taught him everything he knew including how to use a sixgun. Tom was a natural shot and under Jessy's tutelage became fast and a force to be reckoned with if it came to a gunfight. Tom was yet untried and Jessy hoped it would stay that way but he also wanted Tom to have a fighting chance if it ever came down to it.

Jessy had a lot of experience with gunfights, he had grown up in a town in Texas where you couldn't cross the street without seeing one most days. He had killed his share of men by an early age and was getting a reputation. He had tried being a lawman for a while but the Mayor was a crooked sort and had almost gotten Jessy hanged over a dispute about some missing cattle. Jessy had done nothing wrong but the Mayor was powerful and had friends in high places. He had never liked Jessy anyway.

Luckily Frank Gurn who owned the Triple T was driving cattle through town that day and saved Jessy's neck. Frank was well known around that part of Texas as the owner of the Triple T, a man who had started with a dream and carved out an empire. He had a lot of friends in high places too, including even the senator. One of Frank's hands knew Jessy and told Frank that there was no way this man was a rustler so Frank took Jessy's part in the matter and the Mayor dared not go against Frank and the Triple T outfit so they took the noose from around Jessy's neck and untied him. Frank put Jessy to work as a hand and Jessy had been with him ever since. Jessy proved to be a valuable asset to the Triple T and all the men thought highly of him except one or two who seemed to have a beef with everyone.

Tom was branding steers when Jessy first came to him with the idea. Dirty and sweat rolling down his body from the exertion and the heat of the fire, he had listened to Jessy's plan. Jessy had ran a herd into Old Mexico for Frank and ordinarily Tom would have been with them but Frank needed him there to break a herd of mustangs he had bought and help with the branding of the new steers so Tom stayed behind. Jessy had been talking to some caballero's on the ranch down there and asking about the herd of prime mustangs they had for sale. They had told him they were taking the mustangs to middle Texas and the money they had made rounding up wild ones and buying others dirt cheap from the Comanche. They told him for a few blankets and some old rifles they had bought most of the herd he was looking at.

They told him where the Comanche camp was, two days ride from there and took him there to meet Grey Bear, the chief they traded with. That way if Jessy decided to trade with the Indians he could come back on his own. All the way back to the Triple T Jessy thought about it and about approaching Tom as a partner. If the venture went well they could own their own ranch soon. Jessy was excited and

when he finally made his mind up to something,he went after it whole hog.Now he just had to convince Tom.

Tom heard him out and told Jessy to let him think on it a spell.Frank had been good to him and leaving weren't going to be no easy matter. As Tom was washing up and putting up his gear he told Jessy to give him a week and he would give him an answer one way or another.Jessy was dissapointed Tom didn't get as fired up about it as he was but agreed to wait for his answer.

Tom went to Frank that night after chow and explained the deal to him and asked his advice in the matter.Frank thought it over for a few minutes with a serious look on his face.He stood to lose two of his best hands,and hands like Tom and Jessy were hard to come by.He looked young Tom in the eye."Son,I can't tell you what to do,that's your decision.I will say this though,anything you and Jessy do will probably be a success.Your both good men and have grit.I don't know if I would trust the Comanche myself but if I were your and Jessy's age I would most likely give it a whirl.I wouldn't hold a man back for wanting to better himself and the two of you work hard and there ain't no reason you shouldn't have something to show for it.If its what the two of you want to do then you have my blessing and if it don't pan out then the two of you can always come back here."

"Just some friendly advice from an old man who cut out on his own along time ago.Things are never as simple as they seem though,you two watch each others back.The two of you get together and let me know what you decide so I can hire on a few new hands if ya'll decide to do this thing."Tom shook his hand and promised to let him know something after he talked with Jessy. He walked out into the cool Texas night and headed to the bunkhouse to think it over and get some sleep.

Frank Gurn watched Tom go.Frank was getting older and the grizzled grey hair above his steely blue eyes testified to that fact.Running a ranch the size of the Triple T took a lot out of a man but it was worth it to Frank.The pot belly he had grown after forty didn't slow him down any but he knew his best days were behind him at sixty three.Part of him(the younger man who longed to come back in him)wanted to ride out and seek adventure with his two cowhands,but the older wiser part of him knew he had responsibilities here that required his attention.

He missed his younger days when the world still seemed new and adventure lay at every turn instead of the daily grind of decision making and playing mediator between the ever constant gripes of thecowhands.He remembered full well the thrill of exploring the unknown and the excitement of not knowing what the next day would bring sleeping under the majestic star blanketed Texas sky.He sighed and went back to his well worn oak desk.

First thing after breakfast he went and found Jessy down by the horse corral and told him,"I reckon we got to take some risk if we want anything out of this life so if you still want to do it I'm with you partner!" Jessy grabbed him up in a bear hug and shook him."We gonna have our own ranch to run partner just you see!"Then throwing his well worn hat in the air he let out a loud whoop."Lets go tell Frank so he can cut us loose!" Side by side they walked to the ranch house.

Frank was doing figures and looked up as they came in."From that shit eating grin on Jessy's face I guess he talked you into it Tom!If you boy's will give me till [next Saturday](#),I'll get some new hands and have the two of you some money ready! You two will need all the help you can get."They shook hands and agreed to wait till Saturday."Are you sure we won't put you in a bind"Tom asked."Naw,I'll just pick up a couple of cowboys from town to cover ya'lls share of the work.Or maybe just one small girl!"Frank teased.Jessy rolled his eyes and Tom flushed red.Frank laughed and told them to get out of there so he could get some work done.

They left the ranch house, Tom scuffing dirt with his boot heel."Frank has sure been good to us Jessy,you think it's okay to leave with all this work coming up?"Tom asked.Jessy grinned and grabbed Tom's hat throwing it up in the air making him run to catch it."Don't you worry about Frank Gurn partner,if any man can figure how to squeeze some extra work out of some hands it's him!Besides,you better start worrying about our ranch and what we're going to call it!"Jessy laughed.Tom looked at his friend smiling with that easy grin and his heart was lifted."The T and J ranch!"he said to Jessy.Jessy rolled his eyes again,"The J and T more like it!Hell,I always have to pull your weight any way!"he said and punched Tom's arm."I like that,the T and J it is!"

The week flew past and [Saturday morning](#) rolled around.Jessy was at the wood slatted bunkhouse before daylight shaking Tom awake."Get up partner,grab some coffee and grub,we got to pack!" Tom rubbed his eyes then threw his pillow at Jessy.He let Jessy lead the way to the

kitchen and they ate, Jessy talking excitedly about the venture the whole time. Tom listened and nodded but his mind was on the eggs and bacon and hot coffee in front of him. There would be plenty of time to talk on the way to Old Mexico. After breakfast they went to see Frank and get their pay. He had given each of them a bonus and wouldn't take it back when both of them offered. "You two are like son's to me, ya'll might need that impress them pretty señoritas they got down there." He awkwardly hugged both of them in turn. "Jessy, you look out for Tom. And Tom, you got to really look out for Jessy, he likes to try to get his next stretched sometimes! If you boys don't sell all them ponies bring what you got left to me and we'll trade for cattle or I'll give you fair price for them. Now git out of here before I change my mind and want my money back!" Frank said with a wink. "I'll check around for some land while you two are gone, I know some people and we'll get you fixed up." They thanked him again and went to pack their belongings and saddle their horses. Jessy picked up Tom's rifle sighting down the barrel. "When we get to town you need to get you a real rifle and get rid of this old squirrel gun! It's about to rust plumb through!" he chided Tom affectionately. "I might just do that, I might just get me one of them fancy repeating rifles like Jeb has a over at the Diamond X!" Tom said patting the bulge in his pocket. "No telling what we're likable to run across in Mexico, maybe even one of them Chupacabre's Jeb was telling me about. You ever seen one Jessy?" Tom asked. Jessy laughed. "No but I seen prairie wolves as big as mustangs afore. I heard them Chupacabe's eat Texans for breakfast and lunch though when they can get them!". Tom looked a little worried. "Don't worry partner, your'e to skinny and tough for one of them Chupacabre's to eat you, he'd get a bone in his throat and choke to death! Besides you can pop him with this squirrel gun if he licks his lips!" Tom grabbed Jessy and they wrestled around for a minute both laughing and out of breath then got busy packing their belongings.

They rode out from the ranch and toward the town to go to the general store to get supplies they would need on the trail and buy some blankets and rifles. It was early September and the weather was gorgeous. The early [morning sun](#) warmed their backs as they rode side by side down the dusty road cut with tracks from the iron wheels of wagons travelling to and fro. Frank had given them a two year old mule for a pack horse to carry their supplies.

Even Tom was excited now about the prospect of owning their own ranch. What had seemed like a far fetched dream was beginning to look like a possibility. They rode into town and hitched the animals in front of the general store. "You want to get a good rifle for yourself," Jessy reminded Tom. "We may have to hunt for food and you never know what you'll run into on the trail, maybe even a prairie wolf or a Chupacabre!".

Tom grinned. His old single shot had seen better days. The storekeeper showed him the latest new arrival, a Winchester repeater. It had a lever action and Tom fell in love with it on the spot. Tom loved the way the store smelled, like cinnamon and spices mixed with the smell of gun oil. Toeing the dirt floor with his boot as Jessy looked at guns. He bought the Winchester and some cartridges with it and put his old rifle with the ones they were going to trade to the Comanche, some lesser grade bolt actions and single shots. Jessy bought a double barrel shotgun for himself joking about his eyesight but Tom knew Jessy's eyes were like a hawks. The shotgun would be for close range if they got in trouble and it would take out more than one man in a single shot.

Hefting his new rifle they left the store in high spirits. Tom noticed a couple of hard looking men hanging around the front of the saloon, watching them but if Jessy saw them, he didn't let on as he loaded the mule and distributed the weight on his back. Tom had an uneasy feeling wash over him and some of the joy of the new adventure dissipated as the looks became stares and Tom could sense the eyes on his back as he and Jessy rode out pulling the mule behind. Once they cleared the town he asked Jessy if he had noticed. "Yeah I saw them, maybe they were just curious but we'll keep a check on our backtrail just in case. They rode on into the now hot Texas sun, hats tilted low and only the occasional jackrabbit or gopher to keep them company.

Three warriors rode into Grey Bear's camp just after dawn when the women were cooking on the fires and gathering wood by the river. They were Limping Coyote, White Eagle, and Buffalo Wolf named for the wolfs head cape he wore that his squaw had as a joke fastened buffalo horns on either side giving a frightening appearance. He was a mighty warrior and had counted coup many times as well as taking scalps. He was fierce and the other two rode behind him in respect for their leader who had heaped glory on them and had

caused many songs to be sung around their home camp.

Buffalo Wolf loved to raid and explore and their wanderings had brought them to Grey Bear who had a reputation among the Comanche as a mighty chief with more than his share of women and horses. Looking around Buffalo Wolf saw and he wanted! White Eagle and Limping Coyote stopped at the edge of the camp at a sign from Buffalo Wolf.

Buffalo Wolf rode through the center of the camp taunting Grey Bear. "Where is this mighty chief that hides behind his squaws when a real warrior approaches, is Grey Bear a woman gathering wood or tanning hides. I see no great chief, only women and skinny warriors!" Grey Bear threw the flap to his teepee open and stepped out his eyes flashing fire. He locked eyes with Buffalo Wolf. "And who are you with a dog pelt on your head to hide your fear under and throw your words of women before my warriors?" "I am Buffalo Wolf killer of many men. I am here to take from you all that you own and give you a death worthy of a chief so all the Comanche know you were killed by a great warrior and did not crawl off like a dog to die!" "Then you will die today Buffalo Wolf and all the Comanche will know your scalp hangs on my spear!" Buffalo Wolf threw his spear in the ground at Grey Bear's feet and slid off his pony. Both men drew their knives and Grey Bear walked toward Buffalo Wolf, the warriors gathering and making a circle around them. Limping Coyote and White Eagle watched intently from their mounts. Grey Bear rushed toward Buffalo Wolf and they met together each trying to throw the other and gain an advantage. The warriors yipped and yelped their excitement as the two combatants rolled in the dirt then sprang up on their feet again facing each other knife blades flashing in the early sun. Twice more they met and locked together before Grey Bear stiffened and grunted, a wash of blood running from under his left arm hanging limp by his side. His eyes never left Buffalo Wolf's as he stepped forward, stumbled and fell face forward in the dirt a puddle of blood under his massive chest slowly sinking into the dust and turning it to mud. Buffalo Wolf panted for a moment then knelt down grabbing the dead chief by the hair and cut around the hairline. He sliced under the skin to the skull and sawing the knife back and forth pulled his grisly prize from the chief's skull. Standing with bloody knife in one hand and the chief's scalp in the other he raised the scalp for all to see and threw his head back screaming out the victory chant! The warriors beat their spear shafts on the ground and screamed encouragement. They had a new Chief!

Over the next few days Buffalo Wolf enjoyed his new holdings, he culled through his squaws and gave each warrior a new pony from the old chief's herd. He strode the camp and got to know each of the warriors. From two warriors he now had a following of over sixty and he was pleased. His ambition was to become the most feared Comanche on the plains. He had more now than he had ever owned in his life but still he wanted more. He called a tribal meeting that night and laid plans with his warriors for a raid on the nearby ranches. He would become the chief the whole Comanche nation feared and sang about! Jessy couldn't believe their luck as they neared the Rio Grande river. No rain and no problems. They had slept under the stars taking turns standing guard. Each day they would check their back trail several times but if someone was following them, they were way behind. He rode with the new confidence of becoming a wealthy land owner and cutting out a good living for himself and his partner. His blue eyes scanned the horizon looking for trouble. "We ought to make the Rio before dark partner, then we'll cross in the morning and be in Old Mexico! Another three days ride and we'll be at Grey Bear's camp. You won't believe all the horseflesh he has!" Tom nodded and said, "I think I might be interested in having a woman before we go there, just in case!" he teased Jessy. Jessy replied, "I think that's a grand idea Tom, I was thinking along the same lines myself. There's a chicken ranch a days ride from Espolito's ranch where we sell the cattle, I think we'll just mosey over there and get a poke before we see Grey Bear. Couldn't hurt to have a little fun!" Tom reddened and grinned. "I ain't never been but with one girl and her daddy found out and shipped her back east!"

Jessy laughed. "Well in that case partner we're going to Erma's for sure, I wouldn't want you pissing Grey Bear off by trying to hump one of his daughters!" Tom was scarlet now. "Whatever you say, pard!" Tom muttered. Up ahead the winding roiling Rio Grande came into sight behind the cottonwood trees lining its banks. The water was not too deep but it was fast moving. The birds sang in the tree's and any worries Tom had were gone. The river was beautiful and they made camp in the sand under one of the tree's. Jessy showed Tom how to make a fishing pole out of a cottonwood branch and when both were done they scampered around like kids

catching grass hoppers for bait. Jessy had line and hooks in his saddlebag that he had bought from the general store and they spent the rest of the afternoon catching supper, a few browns and one nice rainbow that had almost gotten away from Jessy. A vermilion hued sunset painted the sky in cottony strokes, the sun dying in an ebbing of ever fainter hues. The two men were tired, happy, and hungry as they built a fire and cooked the trout. "I don't think I've ever had a finer meal!" Tom told Jessy as he bedded down letting Jessy take the first watch. He closed his eyes and drifted off.

Jessy shook him awake. "Riders coming, wake up, grab your iron just in case."

Tom rolled over and got to his feet. He strapped on his Colt and pulled the new Winchester from its scabbard. "Hello there, that's close enough friend. Who are what and what do you want coming up to a man's camp this time of night." Jessy called out.

"Why it's just ol' Willy from the Diamond X. Saw your fire and just wanted to get a hot cup of coffee if'n you got one." the rider called back. "Aint had no coffee in a week, sure could use a cup friend."

Jessy nodded to the side where the other rider had eased around to flank them. Tom eased the hammer back on the rifle and backed to the mule and horses glancing to check they were securely tied down. "Well come on in and get a cup and tell your partner he can have one too but he needs to come back around and ride in with you!" Jessy yelled loud enough to be heard.

The answer was gunfire as the two riders charged the camp from different directions. Jessy had no time to instruct Tom as two more volleys rang out and his rider came charging into camp. Fighting his adrenaline Jessy took aim on the riders chest in the tricky firelight and slowly squeezed the trigger on his Army Navy Dragoon. Flame erupted from his barrel and the big 45 caliber slug struck true flipping the heavy set rider over the rump of his mount as the chestnut colored stallion came thundering through.

He wheeled as Tom fired from the hip jacking the lever on the Winchester and hitting his man three out of five times. Somehow the rider managed to stay on his horse as it jumped the small campfire and disappeared into the night.

Tom let out the deep breath he didn't even know he was holding and his hands trembled slightly. "Are you hit partner?" Jessy asked worriedly. "I don't think so." Tom stammered. The man Jessy had shot gave a death rattle and his leg twitched for several seconds.

from town." Tom said, still in a daze. "Are you okay Jessy?"

"Yeah just a little jumpy, I heard one bullet go right past my head. You were right it was the bushwhackers from town." Jessy said rolling the dead man over face up. The night had gone silent after the gunfire and Jessy could hear nothing. "I think you hit your man, but lets be safe and move the camp." he whispered to Tom. Then he stripped the would be assassin of his gunbelt and possibles.

They got everything together and untied the animals. Tom stomped out the fire and they moved a few hundred yards up river leading the horses in the moonlight along the sandy river bank. Reaching a small clearing under the trees they settled in once again to a cold camp.

Buffalo Wolf gave Limping Coyote and White Eagle ten warriors each, Limping Coyote was sent to the west and White Eagle to the east with instructions to raid and steal horses along the way and to meet on the mountain in the distance. Buffalo Wolf would ride straight toward the mountain with twenty warriors of his own. He hated any one who wasn't Comanche and aimed on harassing the settlers and Mexican ranchers till they left his new land.

There was no room for anyone but Comanche in his plan and that meant wiping out the Apache and Sioux tribes that were scattered across his territory. The Comanche women cooked a great feast of horseflesh and prickly pear and the warriors painted themselves and their horses for war. Long into the night they caroused and at dawn they assembled loosely and rode out, a fearsome sight of terrible warriors.

A half mile past camp they split into their groups and the raid was on. Buffalo Wolf's party rode behind and in the middle and anyone fleeing the two parties on either side would run into the main body he led. A tribe of Apache was the first victims of the raid and Buffalo Wolf's warriors slipped up to their camp and charged in catching them by surprise and killing them all. Scalps were taken and several ponies and seven squaws were captured. Limping Coyote came across a settlement and wiped it out burning the encampment as they left leaving no one alive. A small party of Sioux were hunting buffalo but managed to out run White Eagles braves but before they reached

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