

## A Patriot's Duty

I was about 17 miles out from the nearest town. I was out in the east of Missouri Territory, before Kansas, where there ain't nothing for miles but tumbleweeds and grass. It was about an hour before sunrise, and I needed to get across Kansas to a frontier town in Colorado or at the time Western Missouri territory. One of the folks in Iowa sent a message to a family member, and I was the courier or the mailman. I always liked to call myself a courier, the job sounded better that way.

So, there I was riding on my horse, enjoying the silence until I smelled smoke and heard gunfire in the distance. I got off my horse, "Stay," I commanded. The horse snorted, laying down in the foliage. I walked towards the smoke shielding myself in the patch of trees until I slowly walked towards what looked like a bandit camp. I took out my Revolver pulling back on the lever.

I saw 3 Men in Overalls and Ten Gallon Hats, but it seems they saw me first. A shot rang out as I jumped for cover, hiding behind one of the trees. I fired a bullet of my own and hit one of them in the arm. It seems that was enough as the first fella dropped, and they picked him up and ran for the hills. They left their weapons on the ground as I walked over to see what the ruckus was about. When I looked at the fella's rifle, I saw there were empty casings all around. These guys were all out of supplies, but I need to go deeper. "Why on earth, what are these folks out here?" I thought to myself. I found a bit of cash in their tents, and I had decided to bring it with me on the way to the town. "Hopefully, I can find some marshals out in the town," I walked back out to my horse as I started riding to Western Missouri Territory.

I made it to the nearest town, finally, and I looked for the Marshal station to turn in what I found. I hopped off my horse as I walked towards the little rundown pueblo building. As I entered it cooled me down from the belching heat, my face was sweating after the time it took me in the heat to get to the nearest town. I saw the US Marshal with boots up on the desk and a ranger hat over his eyes as he was sleeping. I rang the little metal bell next to his desk as he looked up at me. "What can Old Pete do for you?" he said with a deep voice as he looked up at me, I saw his mutton chops mustache, it was the same color as the bell on his desk. "I found a bandit camp near your town; I was able to recover some counterfeit money," I said as I put a bag of money with the dollar sign on it on the side of his desk. He nodded toward me "Thank you for your service, sir." he said in his deep voice as he picked it up to move it inside of their contraband room before we heard a large bugle outside.

As we looked outside, we saw some folks with bandanas over their faces and hoods covering their heads. They were armed and tough. They held out their revolvers with levers pulled back, I could tell they were ready to fight. The Marshal finally stood up, he started walking outside and I walked with him, hoping to get some answers. It was a sweltering day outside. I was surprised they were wearing those black hoods at all in this weather.

There were 5 of them walking in a line, "Well Marshal, I have a package to deliver, and I don't get too long until I'm out of time." I hollered over to him. I saw him nod to me as I mounted my horse and started to leave town. I kept walking until I heard a gunshot, I quickly turned to pull the lever back on my revolver, drawing it up ready to fire. Two were down, and so was Pete. I fired a round at one of the bandits but the other turned to me holding the gun to my head. Some of the folks rushed out of the saloon to help the sheriff up as they brang him into one of the houses down the road. The bandit looked at me, he held his revolver toward me as he spoke "What's your name, errand boy?" he said as he looked at my engraved bronze star with the word 'Courier' on it. "Nick, what's what is your name, bandit?" I tried not to show fear but I'm sure he could tell. "The name is Bruiser Blake," he said to me.

He lowered his bandana to beam a smile before he started walking off, still with his pistol at my head of course. Once he was out in the hills, I saw that he dropped a card. When I looked at it, it had a picture of a red lake on it and arrows pointing from several towns nearby. I put it in my pocket as I remembered poor Marshal Pete as I rushed down the square to find him. In a small building on the right, I saw several doctors working on his gunshot wound. I thought it would be best not to bother him, I was only glad he was all right.

I had decided I was going to track down this red lake and find the bandits. I hopped on my horse and headed north-west, that's where the card pointed me towards anyway. It was only a few miles until I reached up ahead where I pulled out my Old Galilean Binoculars my dad had bought my before we lost him in the war. As I looked out to the bandit camp I saw him, this would end, and I'd stop them for those poor townsfolk and Old Pete.