

Forsaken Western Stories

Volume 5

False Face

**Bob Terry
&
Ernest Haycox**

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False Face

Is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the authors
imagination or are used fictitiously.

Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

**To my Wife and my Daughters
Who support me, encourage me
and help me in all that I seek to do.
God has truly Blessed me beyond measure.**

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Introduction

In my families library of thousands of books and other writings dealing with the American west, are several thousand books of western fiction. These are in printed form and there are also many in digital format. While combing through some magazines from the early 1900s, I often come across stories of the Old West. These were written by authors who were learning their craft, and shaping the way others would learn from and build upon.

Many of these stories are by authors who were popular in their time (over 100 years ago) but now their popularity and fame has faded to almost nothing. Their exciting adventurous tales of the American west have been forsaken, left to crumble, as the pages do of old magazines. I decided to set aside the books that I had been reading, and take a serious look at these magazine westerns. Now I am hooked! While I have found that some of the short stories are nice reading, I also discovered treasures of well done, gripping, action, adventures, that are difficult to put down. As I searched for more westerns in the pages of these ancient magazines, it occurred to me that unlike Zane Grey or Owen Wister, many of these tales were likely only printed once.

Deciding it would be such a waste not to share these with a world of western adventure fans, I have chosen some of my favorites for this collection. While there are many westerns in our collection that we do not have the rights to publish, we have made certain of the secure publishing rights for these.

I have found adventure, comedy, romance and extreme drama in the pages of these stories. Many of these stories were written around 100 years ago, when the west was still a bit wild in places, and some of the authors had a realtime knowledge of the ruggedness of the American west. I also found myself looking up a few words that seem to have left our American vocabulary, that I did not recall ever hearing or reading before.

Commentary on False Face and the Author

Ernest Haycox was born in Portland Oregon on October 1, 1899. He enlisted in the United States Army in 1915 and was stationed on the U.S. Mexico border by 1916. (While Pancho Villa was actively fighting and raiding). Ernest wrote at least two dozen books and hundreds of short stories. His stories were published the in magazines - Saturday Evening Post, Collier's and several pulp magazines. His 1937 story "Stage to Lordsburg" was made into the John Ford movie Stagecoach. Which skyrocketed John Wayne to becoming a big screen movie star. He also wrote "Trouble Shooter" for Collier's that became the Cecil B. DeMille movie "Union Pacific". This epic movie starred Joel McCrea and Barbara Stanwyck. Haycox also wrote the screenplay for the western movie Montana starring Errol Flynn and Alexis Smith. Ernest Haycox had fans in other notable writers. One being Ernest Hemingway, who stated he would most certainly read the Saturday Evening Post if Haycox had a serial being published in the magazine. Haycox was voted one of the best 24 Western authors of the Twentieth Century by the Western Writers of America in 2005. Ernest married Jill M. Chord in 1925, they had two children. Ernest Haycox died in 1950 after an unsuccessful surgery for cancer. He had just turned 51 twelve days before his death.

The short story False Face was published in a pulp magazine in 1926. This is a good solid short story western, with good characters.

Thanks for purchasing this story out of our collection of Forsaken Western Stories.

Bob Terry

False Face

By Ernest Haycox

“Now listen, you goo-durned, slab-footed curmudgeon,” exclaimed Sheriff Bart McKinzie, “you’re goin to take the deputy star I give you! Don’t want to hear no more objections. It’s my duty an’ privilege to draft an’ swear in whomsoever I choose. You ain’t got no right to stand-there an’ tell me you feel disinclined to serve yore country; it’s a downright perversion of public sperrit, and I’m not a-goin’ to stand fer it.

‘Don’t want nuthin’ to do with it,” repeated old Dave Budd with a still greater vehemence. “Ain’t goin’ to go around with that hunk o’ tin on my shirt lookin’ like a dumb fool.”

“Fool?” roared Bart McKenzie. “I take it I look like a fool fer carryin’ my star, then?”

“You’re a duly ‘lected sheriff,” explained Budd. “People wanted you to serve, or they wouldn’t have voted you in. As fer me, I’m a fat, old man, and my fightin’ days are plumb past. Git yoreself some young and spry feller that likes to ride saddle all night long, or live on a slice o’ bacon four days runnin’. Me, I got to have more comfort in my old age, Bart.”

The sheriff neatly strung together a series of strong words. “Why, you idiot, you’re no older’n me! Call forty eight old? Howsomever, I ain’t askin’ you to track no criminals across. the desert. You don’t have to. Yore word is pretty much law in these parts, anyhow.”

“Well, that bein’ so,” replied Budd, “why should I have to wear a goldurned piece o’ soldered tin on my shirt? Now you listen to me, oldtimer. I got my own way o’ dispensin’ sech justice as these parts need. It don’t have anything to do with totin’ a badge around, either. Why, that’d set all my folks agin’ me, Bart. No, sir, you let me be. We’re real peaceful at this end o’ the country and don’t need no deppities. When suthin’ outrageous happens, you git here soon enough, anyhow.”

McKenzie opened the clasp of the deputy’s badge and got hold of Budd’s dusty vest. ““Ain’t listenin’ to no more palaver,” he said, snorting, “Im a-goin’ to brand you right now, critter. There, Deppity Budd, you’re a handsome-lookin’ peace officer.”

The storekeeper’s huge face was wreathed in a scowl as he stared at the trinket of authority on his vest. “It’s all turrible foolish,” said he. ‘What’m I to look after? Jack rabbits and coyotes?’”

“You old maverick,” said the sheriff in placating tones, “I been lettin’ you alone fer a good while, but now’s time fer some serious work. Jest take a look out in yore front pasture, and I reckon you’ll know what I’m deppitizin’ you for.”

Budd had no need to glance through his front door. The invasion had descended upon him a week ago in the form of broken down farm wagons, old-time schooners, buggies, pack mules and solitary riders on every shade and size of horse. Mostly it was a family affair ; the clearing in front of the store was dotted with tents and lean-tos and stray baggage and fires. Men clustered in groups, speaking guardedly or else in heated discussion, while the women bustled about the flames and prepared the night meal. Even as the storekeeper scanned the group he heard the creaking of fresh wagons through the trees,

They came from every corner of the State and from adjoining States; rough people and refined, all eager to share in a new prospect of comfort and prosperity. The cause of this boom was a mere rumor, a thin, unsubstantiated report that the government, long idle in this part of central Oregon, was about to dam a distant river in the hills and construct great main canals to irrigate the land. Budd shook his head solemnly. It was, he repeated to himself, only a rumor—and rumors had ugly ways of dying out, never again to be heard. Nevertheless these hopeful people came, camped in his clearing, while preliminary scouts were sent out to find land that had not been homesteaded, and then vanished through the jack pines, bound for their new El Dorado, somewhere beyond in the open country.

“Reminds me of the old days in Oklahoma,” said Budd. “Dang me ef there wasn’t a rush fer the Indian lands. I can still hear the bugles sound for the sign we could cross in. By golly! Reckon I was younger then.”

“Ne’m mind that sad extemporizin’,” interrupted the sheriff. “Jest foller my ideas a spell. You see that red-headed young man with the scowl on his face? I want you should keep an eye on him, Budd. Folks have been complainin’ about losin’ money and valuables from their wagons and sleepin’ places durin’ the night. Well, now, he’s a recklesslookin’ son of a gun, and he’s been hangin’ round these diggin’s fer a week; hain’t he?”

Budd chuckled. “Huh, it’s a girl that keep him glued here, not money.”

“Powerful suspicious lookin’ to me, Dave. You keep an eye on him, been sizin’ the whole crowd up, and he’s the only one I’d figger to watch.”

“All right, all right,” agreed the storekeeper, turning morose again. “Got to be a cussed bloodhound, have I?”

The red-headed young man evidently had something on his mind; he fished through his pockets and fumbled among the few effects piled on the ground by his saddle; rising empty-handed, he turned toward the store. The sheriff clapped on his sombrero and started out,

“T’Il vamoze, Dave, and let you alone until next week.”

He climbed into the saddle as the young man swung to the porch. The

sheriff's horse, catching sight of a skittering sheet of white paper, reared and snorted, plunged against a porch column, knocked a board off with his feet, and drummed out of the clearing.

"Huh!" exclaimed the young man. "What's he aimin' to do, make a fence jumper out of that cayuse?"

"Horse is jest a mite skittish," said Budd mildly. He opened a fresh box of tomatoes and began packing the cans to the shelf. Halfway, he stopped to observe. "Horses are plumb like women that a way. Purty, but skittish."

"Yeah," said the young man, suddenly looking harassed, "Ain't it the solemn an' miserable truth?"

He took off his Stetson and scratched his flaming thatch. By no means could he be called handsome, with his pugnacious chin and nose, his slate-gray eyes and his gaunt, weather-worn frame, It seemed as if he might have been recently subjected to an illness, for he seemed a little nervous and finely drawn. "Yeah," he muttered. "I'll tell a man it's so. First you're it and then you ain't." His eyes were fixed on a couple that moved in and out of the trees,

Budd chuckled at the tomato cans and blandly asked, "What'd you say, Bill?"

"First you're it, and then next thing the earth ain't big enough to hold you." He wrinkled his nose in surprise. "How'd you know my first monnicker?"

"Heard a gal call you by it," said Budd.

"Huh! You won't hear her callin' me that no more. Oh, no, she don't know I'm a human bein' these days." He was talking as if half to himself, still keeping his slate-gray eyes fixed on the couple. They had advanced from the main road and were twining around the wagons and fires, a sturdy girl and a tall man in chaps. "Huh," he muttered. Then again: "Huh. Gimme a sack of tobacco, Budd. What road do I take out o' this country? South, I mean."

"Leavin'?" queried Budd. "Well, jest keep to the main way and you'll strike Klamath by'n by."

"Uhuh," said Bill. He rolled a cigarette, licked it and reached for a match. "Thanks."

He leaned against the counter and drew a mouthful of smoke. Budd saw his face turn perfectly bland and cheerful. There was a gay burst of laughter and a man's short speech. The couple came in the door. The girl, foremost, stopped short at sight of Bill, looked at him and through him; her smile disappeared and a color came to her cheeks. Bill drew a deep draft of smoke and spoke to Budd as if continuing the conversation.

"Yeah, first thing in the mornin', I guess. This country don't strike me so much. Guess you'd better lay aside a can o' them tomatoes and some bacon. I'll be back for the duffle later."

“Don’t let me interfere with your business,” said the girl haughtily. “Sam and I are only visiting.”

“Oh, no,” said Bill in sprightly tones, “there ain’t room enough for all of us in such a small place.” He walked by her and approached Sam. He had to look up a little to meet Sam’s eyes. The man was tall; his accouterments were neat and his clothes well kept. He had a face that, to the genial and shrewd Budd, seemed as uncommunicative as any a man could boast. It rarely smiled and it rarely displayed emotion. To cap off the expression, Sam was exceedingly sparing of his words. Bill ground his cigarette on the floor and spoke shortly, but to the point.

“So Sam’s the monnicker, huh?”

“Yeah”

“Huh. Don’t open yore mouth too wide, Sam, or you’ll show a tooth. Shucks, they named you wrong. It ought to be ‘Paralyzed.’ ”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah,” affirmed Bill. ;

He stepped back a trifle, teetered on his heels and swung his arms idly, the slate-gray eyes boring into the big fellow. Sam remained unconcerned; his face was perfectly impassive. It irked Bill. He snorted once, twice, and moved out of the door humming a tune to show his perfect indifference.

“Oh!” exclaimed the girl. “Did you ever see such an overbearing man?” She looked at her escort a little curiously. “What did you think?”

Sam seemed to ponder, “Didn’t want to hit him,” said he lazily; “might hurt him.”

“Yes,” responded the girl. Budd, keeping his own counsel as to that eventuality, thought he heard a minor chord of doubt in the girl’s voice: “Well,” said she, “I think we’d better run along and let Mr. Budd alone. It’s getting dark. Supper’s ready.”

Budd watched them go across the clearing, the girl waving her hand here and there to friends, the man bending a little under his height and moving as if he had all the time in creation. Finally they parted and disappeared in the shadows. The storekeeper set his shelves in order and cruised to the kitchen to make supper. It was not a complex operation, consisting of slicing a few potatoes into a pan and dropping several strips of bacon alongside to lard the frying. For the main part, Budd’s mind ran along its habitual channels, prying a little here and pondering a little there.

What kind of a man was this wooden-faced Sam, anyway? No, not wooden-faced, corrected Budd—pokerfaced was the better term. It was not the ordinary thing for a man to value his emotions and expressions so highly that he turned himself into a sphinx. You never could tell about those fellows—whether they wanted to give you a present or sink a slug of lead into you. Budd stirred his coffee and

chuckled. Now, Bill was a fellow that wasn't made to conceal much of anything. He had a fighting face and, to judge from his last speech with Sam, he had a fighting heart. Certainly, he was badly taken with the girl, and she hadn't found him so distasteful until the last day or two, at which period Sam had ridden into the scene. No, Bill had seemed to be the favored one until a quarrel blew up. 'What it was Budd didn't know—or care. He had seen many such spring up—and die away.

He ate his meal, washed down a good many cups of coffee, and treated himself to a cigar from the shelves. In striking the match his hands came upon the metal of the deputy's badge and he snorted in plain disgust.

"Shucks! Goin' to be a gol-darned snooper. Dave Budd, I'm plumb ashamed of yore unhan'some behavior. Paradin' around like a monkey on a stick."

It was in his mind to pin the thing inside his vest, but, having once taken the obligation, he found himself unable to hedge. He stepped down the porch and sauntered forward.

The fires veered and danced in the late twilight; a fog sank over the treetops, bringing with it a clammy touch. For the most part the people had finished with their supper and were now lying around, spinning yarns and weaving dreams. It was a time for babies to be cooing in the wagons, half asleep; for the younger boys and girls to be out among the shadows playing hide and seek. One darted up to Budd and used the storekeeper's vast bulk for a momentary refuge. A guitar strummed and a couple intoned a song about "Sweet Genevieve." It struck directly to the hearts of all the middle-aged in that particular circle and voices died away. Budd moved on with a feeling of compassion. These were his people, his kind of men and women. Then he saw Bill squatting, Indian fashion, before a solitary little blaze.

"No comp'ny?" said Budd.

Bill nodded his head to the group ten yards beyond. "Sam's there tellin' the gol-darndest stories. I don't need no comp'ny when I can listen in on them yarns."

Sam was, indeed, relaxing from his taciturnity. He sat with his feet crossed and illustrated his yarn with a jerky motion of his fingers and arms, greatly resembling Indian sign language. The girl sat across from him, her chin cupped in a palm, sometimes looking to him and sometimes away. Budd wondered if she had deliberately put her back to Bill.

"Spect so," he thought, chuckling, and went on.

His last glimpse was of her staring somberly into the fire. He paid his compliments here and there, answered a question or two and returned to the house. It was pretty late and he had worked rather hard. In ten minutes he had found his bed and was fast asleep.

Budd's manner of slumber was an inheritance from early range days. No matter how exhausted, he had trained himself to wake at the least untoward sound. So it was that an unusual commotion out among the wagons around midnight brought him up instantly. A moment later he was diving into his clothes upon hearing the repeated bark of a revolver.

A man's voice lashed out in the night, calling down all the wrath of heaven. A dog began to howl dismally and a woman screamed. Budd, forging to the porch, saw the glimmer of a newly lighted lantern and heard the mumble of a gathering crowd. He walked over to the scene where a dozen sleepy men had gathered. The lantern, held high, revealed an irate and whiskered citizen waving a gun and shouting :

"I'll get the ornery sneak! Come right into my wagon, by gollus! Snuck the wallet from under my coat." He saw Budd and reiterated his charge. "You got to do somethin' about this, Mr. Budd! Took four hundred an' ten dollars right from anunder my nose, by gollus! Jest stuck his hand through the canvas and helped himself."

A murmur ran through the group. Four hundred dollars was a large sum of money, and the manner of taking had been audacious. The thief had obviously threaded his way around sleeping bodies until he found the wagon. Equally obvious was it that he must have spent some few days in observing the robbed man's habits.

"That's a purty tidy sum of money," ventured one. Budd's vast presence seemed to absorb responsibility like a blotter. To a man they turned their attention his way. He walked to the wagon. "Stuck his arm through here?" he asked. On affirmation he plunged his own burly hand through the slit. "Put yore coat right where it was when the money was took." The man climbed inside and did as requested. Budd pawed around the wagon bed. "You shore that's where you had it?"

"By gollus, don't I know? Sure." Budd shoved the weight of his body against the canvas and by dint of an extra lunge his fingers touched the coat. He said to himself, "That feller's arm was right long to do things so quick and quiet." He turned. "What kind o' wallet? How'd you have the money?"

"One o' these twice-fold-over dinguses. It was black leather. My wife give it to me as a present nine years ago. Nine, wasn't it, Carrie? Yep, shore. Four hundred an' ten dollars in greenbacks. Sixteen twenties and the rest tens." He sat down weakly and ran a hand over his head. "By gollus, I—I don't know what to do about it! Powerful lot o' money to lose."

The crowd moved again. Sam's tall, impassive presence stood forth, "This ain't the first time," he added significantly. "Stealin? been goin' on for three days. Jest little things."

Other lanterns arrived and the circle became fairly well illuminated. Budd swept the faces, and for the first time made out Bill and his flaming red thatch standing silent and speculative with his slate-gray eyes fixed on Sam.

"Got to stop," continued Sam. "What I say is: Search every man here an' search his duffle."

There was a dubious approval. Men bent their mind to the feasibility of it.

A voice murmured, "Sounds kinda severe, but I'd be willin'." "Only way," asserted Sam. "Got to stop it now. Any man to object sh'd be considered guilty."

A dry answer met this. Bill rubbed his red crest and stuck out his chin. "Go lay down, Paralyzed. Yore voice makes me tired. Moreover, yore idea is plumb foolish. Search the whole camp? Shucks, the man that got this money aint an entire fool. He's cached it away by now."

"Mean to say," countered Sam in the same, unexpressive drawl, "you're unwillin'?"

"Yore brain does you credit. I said that an' I mean that. Don't care about a lot o' loose fingers pokin' through my war bag." The chin seemed to advance a little farther. Those slate-gray eyes fired a plain challenge at the big man. But Bill had reckoned without the sudden, unanimous spirit that sometimes takes hold of a crowd. A pair of arms pinioned him around the waist and the circle closed in like a rubber band. "See about that, young fella!" cried one.

The few women withdrew quickly. Budd, still a spectator, saw the girl's troubled face by the lantern's gleam. Then she was gone. Somebody took upon himself the task of inspecting Bill's clothes and for his pains found

nothing. Sam's curiously disinterested voice pointed the search in another direction. "His war bag, boys. Better look there."

Two or three left the circle with a lantern. Budd, waiting, found time to study Sam's face again and was compelled to mutter admiringly, "Ain't that a poker expression, though?" Bill was plainly outraged and bucked in his captor's arm. "Boys, you better hold tight. Dad gum my soul, somebody's goin' to dance fer this!"

"Hi! Boys, here's the wallet all right! Take a look, fella. That it?" The crowd moved over, the robbed one identified his wallet with a brightening eye and the crowd turned upon Bill with a satisfied sigh.

"Now, 'Red,' you're in poor compny. Better cough up the money or we'll get plumb mad." Bill stared around him in plain disgust. His gaze fell upon the cool and aloof Sam. "Paralyzed, I shore give you credit for 'bein' the little deteckatiff." Then he grew sober. "Oh, go home, you galoots, and get a night's sleep. I got nobody's money. Can't you see it was planted? That's terrible old stuff. Gamblers used to pull that in Montana when I was a little boy."

They were all silent and ominous. Some one spoke the popular opinion. "Talkin' ain't helpin' yore case at all, Red. Figger you'd like to dance a jig in the cold night air? Don't be foolish. Where's the man's money?"

Bill snorted in anger. "Money? I tell you I ain't got the money! Was sleepin' peacefullike when some ornery maverick stepped in my face and hollered there was a wallet missin'."

Once again silence and finally a slow, hesitant suggestion. "Mebbe a rope'd help things out consid'ble, boys."

Budd elected to become active. He put out his two arms and moved a half dozen men out of his path in the manner of one shoving aside the branches of a tree. "Reckon the talk is gettin' a leetle wild, friends. When a gent says 'rope,' the time's come for a mite o' mature reflection. Speakin' as deppity sher'ff, I guess I'll jest take the boy in hand. Mebbe a few hours' thought'll change his mind."

"Don't need no reflection," muttered somebody. "Need rope. Ain't goin' to be sidetracked this a way. The measly cuss stole a man's hard-earned money, and it ain't to be tolerated in these parts. I'm fer summary justice."

"Ain't carin' what you're for," stated Budd in flat finality. "Anybody wishin' to doubt my authority?"

Somehow in the lantern light the man had become as a mountain of purpose; his face, which in daylight looked bland and cherubic, was rock hard. He spoke easily and his movements were deliberate, but there was no single man to raise a voice in further protest.

"Bill, you just march in front of me to the store. Rest o' you night birds walk around a while and cool off. Don't get no queer ideas about rope and tree limbs; I don't aim to tolerate foolishness. We'll stick to plain law."

He marched Bill into the storeroom, shut the door, and put his lantern on the counter. "Regardless of circumstances and greenback bills," said he, "I reckon I'll have to tie you up for the night. Don't aim to make it any harder on you than I have to. There's blankets on the floor. Git down on 'em, young feller. I'll bundle you up so's it won't bind you."

"This," said Bill in a kind of restrained fury, "is plumb unreasonable and aggravatin'. First I get my face stepped on, and next they want to lynch me. Now I got to be wound up like a roll of fence wire."

Budd clucked his tongue. "Shore is enough to make a man swear. Git down, Bill. Now take it easy. But sometimes certain moves lead to certain other moves."

Bill submitted to the operation. "Yeah, ain't that as clear as mud? First you put out yore right foot and then yore left. But if I never do anything else in my life I'm shore goin' to change that waddy Sam's complexion. I shore am." He rested, finally, with his arms and legs more or less tightly bound, and yet Budd had done the trussing cleverly enough to allow the prisoner a certain comfort on his hard bed. Then he strung the free end of the rope through the kitchen door and tied it to a leg of the range. "Reckon if you go to threshing around too much," he observed, "I'll hear the stove creakin'. Now I aim to finish off a little business of six hours sleep."

Bill surveyed his bonds and cast a candid eye upon his captor. "Now listen, hombre, if a man wanted to wiggle out o' this——"

Budd looked him in the eye. "You dang fool," he muttered; "you dang fool."

The captive closed his mouth and opened his eyes a little wider. After a few moments silence he muttered,

“Oh.”

Then he turned his back to the big storekeeper and fell silent. Budd was as inscrutable as a man could be. He picked up the lantern, went back to his bedroom and blew out the light. “Feel a lot easier in the conscience,” he muttered, “if I didn’t have this cussed piece o’ tin.”

He stared at the ceiling and presently was asleep. No more strange sounds from the wagons awoke him that night, and if the kitchen range creaked, he gave no notice that he was aware of it. Yet he seemed fated to be wakened by another noisy event. When gray dawn seeped into the clearing a file of excited men trooped through the house, banged at his door, and brought him up from the pillow with one trenchant question.

“Whar’s yore prisoner?”

Budd yawned and reached for his pipe. “Guess you’ll find him sleepin’ behind the counter where I tied him.”

A sarcastic rumble greeted this. “Yes we will! Of all the fool ideas! He shucked himself out o’ that rope and vamosed.” “

The storekeeper’s heavy lids drooped ; he fumbled with his tobacco pouch and muttered, “Y” don’t say!”

Then he slid into his clothes and led the impromptu committee back to the storeroom. True enough, his bird had fled. The free end of the rope still was tied around a stove log, but the rest of it was slit in a dozen places. The cheese knife, which ordinarily rested on the counter, was stuck in the floor boards, mute witness of Bill’s manner of passage. Budd ruefully clucked his tongue. “Slick an’ clean. There’s a dum good six-dollar piece o’ rope made wuthless,”

“Huh—you’re a sweet deppity! Should’ve let well enough alone last night! Now what’re you goin’ to do?”

Budd picked up the knife and sliced

himself a piece of the cheese. “Well, now, first I aim to eat. Then I aim to take care o’ the store. Then mebbe I’ll do a little figgerin’. Might even send word to Sher’ff McKenzie to keep a lookout at his end o’ the county. Come back later an’ I’ll tell you the rest.”

“Meanwhile,” stated one of the committee, “he’s scootin’ with four hundred dollars of this man’s hard-earned money. Turrible!”

They conferred among themselves, found Budd strangely imperturbable and went out, unsatisfied. The storekeeper cruised back and got his morning meal.

As the day wore on he found part of his duty performed for him. The more determined of the landseekers organized a posse and galloped up the road toward Bend. Around

noon they came back with nothing for their efforts. A few beat into the jack pines a half mile or so and returned empty-handed. Budd, standing on his porch, gave them a few choice words of advice. "Takes an experienced hand to find anything in the brush. Not much good in yore tactics." They chose not to give up the pursuit and after dinner again scoured the road, this time to the south. Budd was not much interested in these movements. Such time as he spent on the porch was used to keep a shrewd watch over the girl and Sam. The latter had not elected to go with the posse, but at one point in the afternoon he picked up his gun and, seeming to have a plan of his own, marched directly into the pines and was lost for the best part of an hour. The girl, who had been idling around her wagon, watched him go and after a short interval vanished up the road. She was back in a little while, coming directly to the store.

"Mr. Budd, this is dreadful! Do you suppose any one will find him? If they do, they'll be sure to shoot."

"That's the portion of thieves, ain't it?"

"But he's not a thief!" Then she seemed to collect herself, and a color rose in her cheeks.

"No, I don't believe he did it. I don't believe it."

"Thought you didn't think so much of him?"

"Oh, that! We may have been quarreling, but—but I know him to be an honest man."

"How long've you known him?"

"Why, we met on the road about a week ago." She saw a question in the storekeeper's face and flushed again. "It doesn't take a woman forever to judge, you know. If Bill chooses to run off, I'm sure I have no reason to worry about his affairs." She spoke it primly, unaware that her eyes told another story. "But I'm quite sure he'd not be a sneak thief."

The girl changed the subject abruptly and asked a question about homesteading. Budd turned to one of his never-failing stories and kept drawling away until he saw Sam duck into the clearing and make for the store. He sighed, fingered the deputy's star on his vest and turned toward the cigar box which served as his cash till. "Storekeepin' used to be a nice quiet trade until this boom hit me. Now I got to be a regular bookkeeper." He was shuffling a pile of paper bills on the counter when Sam came in.

"Yore prisoner," said he in the same lazy voice, "is a slick one. 'Got plumb clean."

"Twen'y-five, thirty, forty-five," counted Budd, thumbing the bills. "You been chasing him, too?"

"Thought I had a scent, but it petered out." Sam's eyes followed Budd's pile of money.

"He's ducked. What I can't see is why he didn't make a stab to get his duffle and horse."

"Eighty-nine dollars and fifty-three cents," tabulated Budd, rumbling to himself. He made a few weird scratches with a stub pencil and thrust the money carelessly back in the cigar box. Sam watched the operation with his poker face, blandly uninterested. "Well,"

continued Budd, “he’ll be caught sooner or later. They always do. Never saw a crook git far yet.”

“That’s right,” assented Sam. He turned to the girl. “Care to amble around and scare up an appetite?”

“Yes,” she said.

Her eyes were likewise fixed on the cigar box. A swift look went to Budd. He was slivering off another piece of cheese, intent on the process. So the two walked out and circled around the wagons.

The storekeeper put the cigar box on the counter, ransacked the shelves for writing paper and sat down to compose a rather long letter. He was not a rapid penman, and before he had finished night once more was upon the

clearing with the fires sending their veering tongues of flame to the black sky. He went back to the kitchen, got something to eat, and sat down for a long, dark study over the tip of his cigar. Alternately he chuckled and frowned.

“That girl,” said he, “is shore a case. Been playin’ Sam agin’ Bill to even up a quarrel, and now she’s turrible sorry. Jest like what a woman’d do.” He looked down at the star and was acutely displeased. “This thing shore sets on my mind. Ef I was jest an ordinary citizen it wouldn’t be sech a risky experiment; bein’ an officer makes my conscience troubled, and that’s a fact.”

He went to the front door and swung his lantern idly to and fro, passing a glance at the wagons in which most of the landseekers were now asleep. Then he turned back, still swinging the light so that any one looking through the open portal might see him, and passed to the kitchen. There he blew out the lantern, turned. about, and tiptoed to the front room. He took up the blanket, wrapped it around him and sat down behind the counter with his back to the shelves and his revolver in his hand. Presently he dozed off and dreamed of his boyhood in Pennsylvania.

He seemed, after a time, to have trouble with his dream. It was winter and he was skating with his young companions on the ice. There was a crack in the middle of the pond and a danger sign pointing from it. But he felt as if he could safely dare that sign, so he skated to the very edge and turned away. He had-been too bold. There was a sharp cracking of the ice and— he woke with both eyes fixed upward. The illusion of cracking ice had been made by a loose board creaking under a weight. Budd took a firmer grip on his gun and breathed softly. Again the board registered protest; not a loud sound, but enough to tell the storekeeper that the bait in his trap found a willing stalker. Something very slight swept over the counter surface and struck the cigar box with an audible tick. Budd made out a dark, moving shadow in the gloom, He hoisted his body with surprising celerity and quickly snapped the revolver forward,

“Freeze right in yore tracks,” he commanded. “Hands above yore haid. Hurry now!”

The command was not obeyed. Budd, peering closely, saw the intruder's weapon arm streak downward. He moved aside and shook his head under the stunning crash of gun fire. A little finger of orange-blue momentarily flashed in his face. He jumped, and again the room shook under heavy echoes. The intruder let out a great breath of air as if he had been punched in the stomach, pawed at the counter and seemed to dissolve; first the gun struck the floor; then the body collapsed, muttering, "Got me, you sly ol' fox."

All was still. Then the wagons came to life and a few landseekers ran up to the store; a lantern swung and winked,

Budd lighted his own lantern and bent over the intruder. It was the man he had supposed—Sam, his long body sprawled awkwardly on the boards, his face white and wholly without expression, staring toward the storekeeper. He was dead. In falling he had pulled the cigar box with him, whose contents of greenbacks now scattered over the floor.

The landseekers crowded into the room, and the assembled lanterns made a great light. It was a story too plain to need explanation, and in the silence Budd ventured his mild explanation.

"I knew it was this feller all the time, and not Bill," said he. "But I wasn't plumb shore. So I arranged to let Bill escape and baited my trap with the money in the cigar box. Sam saw it and sprung the trap, shore enough."

"Why'd you let the other fella go?" inquired one.

Budd smiled and pushed through to the porch. He expanded his lungs and bellowed at the pine trees. "Oh, Bill! She's all settled!" Then he made further explanations. "I don't know that he's hereabouts, but I'm figgerin' so. He ain't the kind to run off 'thout tryin' to clear his name, and I guessed he'd try to catch Sam in the act o' cachin' the money somewheres in the woods, or else raisin' the cache."

Footsteps thumped on the porch, and Bill, drenched with the night dew and tousle-haired, came up. "You old son of a gun," said he. "You're purty shrewd. I figgered you'd make a play like that. Saw it in yore face last night." He held out his hand for a cigarette. "When mornin' comes I'll show you where Sam hid the four hundred dollars. I was in the brush an' saw him go to the place this afternoon. That's when all the boys were threshin' the thicket for me. Shucks, don't you know it's a hard job to ketch an old hand in the brush?"

There was a call from the porch; a woman's urgent command. "Bill!"

Bill grinned. "'Reckon she's been tryin' to clear me, too. Tried to foller Sam this afternoon, but got lost and ran plump into me."

"Still mad, is she?" asked Budd.

Bill passed him a wink and elbowed his way out of the room.

From Bob Terry

Born in Fort Worth Texas, I have spent most of my life in the Lone Star State. But I have also lived in Arkansas, Kansas and even British Columbia, Canada. Living and working on small farms and ranches. While living in lonely places, I started reading western paperback books that had belonged to my father. Books by authors such as Will Cook, Richard Brister, Norman A. Fox and many others. In Canada in my late teens and early twenties I spent some time working in some very remote places. One of the dearest friends I have ever had was Dan Brown. He was for certain a good young man to ride the river with. For a little while I worked with Dan for the forestry service. Our job was to do Scarification of the forest floor where logging had been done. This is basically tearing up the forest floors moss, so the pine cones will take root in the dirt instead of the moss. If a cone takes root in the moss, the tree will grow to about 3 feet tall and die. The forestry service frowned on a skid steer driver being 100 miles from the nearest town alone. They required at least two people be on the job. Dan and I worked together several times, one job was clearing fields for farming. So Dan asked me if I wanted the lonely job with him working for the forestry. My very important position in this operation would be as Chief Cook and Bottle washer. Also Doing whatever work needed to be done at camp and keeping a check on Dan. We would be gone weeks at a time before returning home, to restock on supplies and return to the camp. I did get to do some exploring in these remote places, even finding some large amounts of silver ore. (Years later I Also discovered silver ore in the Southern Arizona mountains which inspired part of my short story (Lightning in the Chiricahua's.) While working for the forestry Dan and I went to town (almost 100 miles from our camp) one Sunday to attend a church service in Vanderhoof. While in town we stopped at a small grocery store and purchased two paperback books. One by Zane Grey (The Arizona Clan) and the other by Louis L'amour (Sackett). Dan and I agreed to each read one, then swap. After reading both we would each keep one. After reading Sackett I was hooked, and was glad when Dan - (getting to choose first) - chose the Zane Grey book. That has been many, many years ago. The trees we helped to get started have probably all been logged and the next batch are likely half way grown. When I arrived back in Texas I went to thrift stores and trade days, buying all the different Louis L'amour novels I could find. Then waiting for each new one to hit the book stores. I could hardly wait to get

into the pages. While other authors had entertained me, Louis L'amour had become an entertainment hero for me. He kept me company during some mighty lonely times, with the adventures of the men and women of the frontier, as he did for millions of others.

Louis L'amour's people and places were no strangers to me. I had lived in the lonely places and done the back breaking work. I had also gotten to know the men and women who live their entire lives, working farms and ranches in these remote outposts, away from the very populated places of civilization.

From Mr. L'amour I caught the desire to write, just as many others did. Longing to share some of the characters of the people and places I have known, and experiences I've been through. To entertain, as I had been entertained. I am very blessed to be a part of the western entertainment industry. I have worked on western fiction films as well as many biographies involving the people and places of the American West.

Thank you for purchasing - (False Face) if you enjoyed this story you may be interested in all the other Forsaken Western Stories. I hope you enjoy reading each adventure.

Also If you are looking for direction in your life. Please look to God for the answers, because he loves you and truly cares about your direction and happiness. And my experience has been that God will take you through incredible adventures in this life. – John 3:16 of the Holy Bible says – For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Bob Terry