

## Wolf

A hard knock banged on the door. *Knock, knock, knock.*

“Huh,” I groaned, the sun hadn’t even risen yet, it must have been early. *Knock, knock, knock.* This clearly wasn’t a dream. I rose from my flimsy bed and across the creaking wooden floors to the door. I looked through a hole in the door to see who it was. I didn’t recognize the man, I had never seen him before. He had a long grey beard that came almost to his shoulders, his eyebrows were untamed, and he wore an old brown cap on his head, in some places there were large holes in his hat. He just stood there, not moving, just looking into the distance.

I decided to open the door, of course peeking over my shoulder to make sure my mom was asleep. The door creaked as I opened it, “Is there a Mortimer that lives here?” asked the old man. “Yes,” I replied “that’s me.”

The old man paused, his pale blue eyes seemed to glaze over. Then, he shook his head, his wrinkly skin flapped around as his head shook. “Good.” That was his only response. I thought in my head *I woke up in the middle of the night to talk to a crazy man for just “good” you’ve got to be kidding me.* “Good, what?” I said, still utterly confused. “Good, your here,” said the old man. “I need to ask you a favor, I need to go some where and I hear your good with a horse and a wagon.” I looked around, *Me good with a horse and a wagon? Sure I could get him some place but not on the fast west schedule.*

“I mean you kid,” he pointed towards me. He kept wriggling his toes within his boots which was starting to drive me nuts. I noticed something odd, there was quite a large gap at the end of his left boot where a toe should be. “That’s odd” I thought to myself. He quickly banged one of his spurs onto the floor putting a dent in it. “Son, up here” he pointed to his eyes and raised his eyebrows. *I’m just tired there is no way he only has four toes.* “How did you hear about me?” I asked the old man. “ Oh, just an old,

old friend of mine,” he said, *How could some friend of his know I had a wagon and a horse?* then I replied, “ Who are you, where do you-” I stopped, faster then a bullet a large wolf ran across the street and then out of sight. The old man didn’t even flinch or turn his head.

“I can’t tell you my name because I am wanted by the sheriff a few towns over. Well, you can call me Hank if you like,” he paused again his eyes seemed to glaze over. Then he shock his head and yelled “ARGH!!!”. He sounded as though somebody had just stabbed him with the sharpest knife in the whole west. “I don’t have much time, so I want you to take me to Las Vegas and fast. Get that scrap of a horse and God knows what of a wagon and get me outta here!”

After his rant was done Hank ran off towards where the wagon and horses where kept on the side of the house. I walked towards my mother who was surprisingly still asleep. I touched her forehead as a sign of good-bye. She only stirred a little bit, but I decided it was my time to go. I walked out the door and ran to go get the wagon ready.

\*\*\*

Fame, a glorious paint mustang struggled to pull Hank and me though the scorching desert. “You call this speed?! Move faster!” He ordered me. I couldn’t push my horse much more, but, I had no choice. As I cracked the whip again, Hank took a swig of God knows what in a brass flask.

The days and nights seemed to blend together after that. Hank would yell practically every few minute and Fame would stop and his legs would almost buckle. At night Hank would yell some more and flinch making it impossible to get one-second of sleep.

The day we entered New Mexico I asked what I should have asked before we left, “How much will I be paid?” I asked Hank. All Hank did was chuckle like an old coot, “That depends.” His sentences where slurred, he’d been drinking whatever that was he

had in his flask. Afterwards he chuckled some more. If I didn't get paid for going to one of the biggest most dangerous towns in the West, I would be pissed.

Three more long hard days passed before we reached Las Vegas, New Mexico. The streets were so dusty whenever you walked on them a cloud of dust followed you like a shadow. It was so quiet you could hear every saloon door creak, every spur clank on the dry ground. It was an eerie town indeed, but, that didn't seem to bother Hank at all.

"This is my stop, Mortimer," said Hank. As soon as I stopped the wagon in front of the Snake Eye Saloon, he hopped off. "Thanks, kid," he muttered. I was shocked, *no money!!* "Oh wait." Hank took a few coins out of his pocket and flipped them to me. *Twenty-five cents, not that bad Mortimer.*

"So long Hank," I called, I at least should say good-bye. "Pshtt!!!" He brushed me off, well at least I tried. Then, he disappeared into the Snake Eye Saloon, *probably drunk already*, I thought. I turned the wagon around, Fame bucked his head, I knew he wanted to rest but I needed to get home.

\*\*\*

It was hot, dry, and miserable. Fame's mouth was frothing and he was coated with a white layer of sweat, as was I. Tumble weeds blew in the wind across the ground. I whistled a little tune and flipped one of the coins Hank gave me for payment. The whole trip was just that sweat, whistle, flip, sweat, whistle, flip and on and on and on. Until I reached home, excitement bubbled inside me, but, regret and guilt accompanied it as well. As we wheeled into town there was nothing but silence. Where I lived it could be silent but not for long. I looked around bodies lay in the street, doors were open held ajar by dead bodies of my neighbors and friends. Tears streamed down my face as I jumped off the wagon. Fame just stood there, and looked around. I kicked the stones on the ground. I didn't dare to go to the house at the end of the street, my house. I almost set my foot on the ground then I saw something, a wolf paw print imbedded in the

ground. I followed them across the dusty ground. Then something caught my eye, a foot print. This wasn't any old footprint, it only had four toes.

\*\*\*

Even though Fame only had a few moments to rest, I hopped back into the wagon. I whipped the whip across Fame's quarters, he reared up almost knocking me off the wagon. Then, he thundered into the desert, the wagon bumping up and down making me sick.

"Las Vegas, New Mexico here I come" I yelled into the sunset.

\*\*\*

As I wheeled into Las Vegas the town was the same as I left it. Men sat on porches chewing their tobacco, staring at me, never taking their eyes off of me. I spotted the Snake Eye Saloon, yelling and music was coming from inside. I stopped the wagon and tied Fame up to a post. I opened the Saloon doors and I couldn't believe what was inside, well I should have expected it. At the bar was Hank, overtly drunk in a fight with some other man. I walked in and looked around people dressed in rags where sitting at beat up tables cheering on Hank and who ever it was he was fighting. A small band was playing on a slightly raised up stage, 2 fiddles and bass was all. Hank took a big swipe to the head and then fell to the ground. Everyone cheered and chanted for the winner. Hank lay there in a small pool of his own blood. I reached my hand down and pulled him up, and dragged him outside.

"Hank, Hank," I nudged him, he was out cold,"Hank,Hank,HANK!" I yelled and pushed harder. Hank coughed up something, what it was I had no idea. "Whatcha doin' here kid," Hank's speech was slurred. "I am here because you killed my whole town!" I barked at him. " Mortimer, go to sleep you ain't making no sense-," he said. Then he went back to sleep. *He is the one making no sense! He doesn't normally talk right, but this is even worse!* I just sat there Hank's sweaty and bloody head lay on my lap, a bead

of drool came out of his mouth. After a while I grew sleepy too and went into a deep sleep.

\*\*\*

After Hank was no longer drunk I could ask him questions,

“So, after I dropped you off here did you go back to my town?” I asked him. “Kid, you saw me go into the saloon, I went to the Inn across the street and then back to the Saloon, okay?” Hank raised his eyebrows “Tell me what happened?” asked Hank. I told him the whole story and why I thought it was him that killed everybody.

“Well, things do point in my direction, but it wasn’t me. Ask the bartender.” Said Hank. He pointed to the Saloon.

\*\*\*

“Yep, he was practically here all night, I had to kick him out.” Said the bartender. I was puzzled *if it’s not Hank then, who?* “Thank you for your time sir,” I said to the bartender. “No problem kid.” He nodded towards the door. I walked out, Hank sat there,

“So not me, huh?” He did his irritating eyebrow raise again. “You said your wanted, know anybody with a wolf or has killed a whole town before?” I asked him. “Nope, I do know somebody with a parrot, if that helps,” He chuckled at his little joke,

“Out!” I yelled. He raised his eyebrows. “Out of my wagon!” I yelled again. Hank hopped out of the wagon. I grabbed the reins and whipped them. Fame bucked his head as we thundered down the lonely street.

15 Years later

\*\*\*

I saw Hank 5 years after I found my town dead, he had heard of somebody that

was a mass murderer. I have been working ever since to try and find him but have had no luck. My journey of revenge is never ending until I find that four toed man and that wolf.

Wolf, 6-8,

1