

Halfway to nowhere

'Fed-up mopping this floor. Two days since our last customer.' Leeroy mumbled.

'Be one today,' Max grunted.

'Sure hope so. Don't know what you were thinkin'. Building a bar two days ride from the nearest town. Aint been no real trade since they closed the railroad. Gad dam horseless carriages.'

'Watch your mouth,' Max growled, 'the horseless carriage is a pioneering invention.'

'Pioneer my backside.'

'You just mop that floor, Leeroy. Afterward you can go fill the gasoline bottle up one-third.'

'Not gonna need no gasoline today.'

'Leeroy, as God is my witness I will pistol-whip you if you don't do like I tell ya.'

'Sumbitch...' Leeroy whispered, 'you hear that?'

'Told you we'd have a customer. Now you go fill that gasoline bottle. One-third exactly. Be quick about it.'

'Be right back.'

'Jesus,' Max groaned, 'do you despise me so much as to inflict that simpleton upon me daily?'

'Howdy!' A voice called from the porch.

'Come on in, stranger!' Max beamed.

'Name's Bill. Bill Murphy from Tennessee.'

'What'll it be? Bill Murphy from Tennessee. Whiskey?'

'Whiskey suits me fine, but first I'll welcome a tall glass of water and a sympathetic pair of ears to my woeful tale.'

'Drop your saddle and pull up a stool,' Max grinned.

'Ahhh,' Bill sighed, 'hit's the spot. Two days since water passed my lips. Thought me a gonner.'

'Then take another. On the house. Now, about that tale of woe you promised me?'

'Well... I been following the old railway line. All the towns since Oaksville are now ghost towns. My horse got sick from drinking poisoned water from the troughs along the railway line and died. Decided my best bet was to continue following the line.'

'Been carrying that saddle all that way?'

'No sir. You see, after a half day's walk I found myself one of them horseless carriages. Good as new! Abandoned right by the track. Gasoline ran dry just as soon as I got outside here.'

'That's some good fortune.'

'I guess so! Hey- my throat... so dry... you put something in that water?'

'Hell,' gasped Leeroy, 'he keel over already? I only been gone a minute.'

'I'm bored of hearing that old story anyway,' Max sneered, 'check his pockets and saddlebags. Did you pour one-third of gasoline? Reckon there's enough day left to go park that horseless carriage back down the line.'