The Dark Haired Stranger

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It has been increasingly felt by educationists that kids introduced to science through narratives do well in their science and communication careers later in life. In India science and communication careers are not a craze. It is with the purpose of provoking kids to the fascinating careers in neuroscience that some stories by accomplished scientists are being introduced in order to investigate if these pages in a neuroscience journal can kindle interest in neuroscience by popularizing the Journal in High schools. The story presented here, in series, revolves around the experience of a lead scientist and author with the reviving of this Journal. At the request of the author the names of the characters have not been changed.

Chapter 1

Yeah, I recall an editor who asked me for a revision of one article one time. Hell, it was back in the 60s, probably earlier. There we were, in a Saloon – in Tucson Arizona.

Surrounding me were my usual friends, Jessie liked to refer to them as a gang. Hell, me and Jessie were good friends and all, and I liked his name, gang, so I decided to refer to my friends as the Jame's Gang. Later, the name would take on profound significance when Pat Garret, gunned down Jessie in cold blood. OK maybe it was Billy, you know– the kid. But he was gunned down and it was in cold blood. Someone named Truman, no not the president, the mobster, Truman Capone, or was it Capote, yeah that was it, Truman Capote would later write a book a lot of people would read about the gunfight at the OK Corral; at least that's what it's all about since he titled the book **"In Cold Blood"**. *(It must be good; won a couple Pulitzers).*

Back in Tucson..... there I was, putting 'em down with Jessie, his brothers and some friends; Bob Gallo, Robert Good, even Doc made it, Dr. Summerland. (Look him up on Scholar one if you want to see the results of a real cold blooded killer).

Suddenly the door swung open. Forming in the settling storm of dust that exploded under each hoof of his horse as he raced to the saloon, an image of a man emerged. It appeared to be due to the presence of a formidable man. Fast moving, clean shaven, shiny black hair under a Stetson the likes of which I'd encountered only in Spain, the stranger stood between the sides of the entrance of the saloon, a determined gaze in his eyes, eyes that were fixed on me and never once looked elsewhere. I knew then that this man had come for me; I wasn't ready to check out, but figured that day was as good a day as ever if I did.

I rose to approach the challenge waiting at my saloon's open door. Jessie held out his right arm to hold me back, but I knew this dude was coming for me and was not going to be stopped. I walked right on by–Jessie quickly went for his side arm, but before his hand even touched its handle, the stranger between the doors had drawn both Colt 45's housed at his sides, and fired each 3 times. If there is any consolation, it is clear that Jessie never knew what hit him, nor did he see it happen. Before

Jessie began his descent to the barroom floor, 6 shells in his heart, the black haired stranger had replaced his guns in their homes at his side, flipping both 3 times in the air before the landed exactly in their intended target. Jessie was gone before he hit the floor, deader than a deer in Pennsylvania on the first day of hunting season.

{Note added in proof...scientific studies have now shown that almost the entirety of the total deer kill in Pennsylvania is now and probably has long been— due to suicide. This is especially problematic in animals who wait in the forest aside SR 62 for approaching SUVs that exit Interstate 80 after leaving New York City in order for their passenger's to enjoy what is referred to as a "hunting weekend" in Pennsylvania. The myth that deer are actually killed by hunters in Pennsylvania was popularized by the movie, "The Deer Hunters", which while purporting to show the tribulations faced by a steel worker from Pittsburgh drafted to fight in the Vietnam war, actually portrayed peaks of the Rocky Mountains, snow caps and all, as those of the Alleghenies. Needless to say, after seeing that, it was difficult for any observer to evaluate any scene of the movie seriously.

While deer clinics have lowered the deer suicide rate in Pennsylvania by dispensing Prozac to troubled animals at no cost, clearly more effort is needed to stop this senseless tragedy. Moreover, despite rising costs, it doesn't appear that the New York SUV craze— a condition that has to date defied explanation— is going to cease any time soon. While the author commends the efforts of "Save our Dear Deer" and other benevolent organizations, he emphasizes that the mass deer suicide is likely to continue each fall. Indeed, the possibility of the syndrome effecting other species is currently being considered as 14 individuals who survived suicide attempts in Northern Pennsylvania last October stated that they were compelled to take action because, in the words of one survivor, "I cant stand those freaking SUVs, I cant stand them, I cant stand them".

Well, I am sure we all feel his pain. If it is of any comfort, the author notes that the deer have nothing to worry about from the hunters who come to shoot them, as he has not noted the former to ever once successfully attain that goal.}

The stranger took two steps towards me; I began to tremble.

"Howdy Partner" I murmured to the response I expected:

"I'm no Partner of yours', Professor", he stated with no uncertainty. "Give me a damn drink".

Jessie's brother Matt already had got a bottle of drink ready; pouring half on Jessie's mortal wounds to wash away some of the blood and downing a good portion of the rest. He tossed what remained in the bottle to the stranger in front of me; he grasped the twirling bottle in mid air downing its contents before his arm fell to his side. I didn't know who he was. How did he know I was a Professor? Where did he get his drive, his speed, his determination. And where did he get that hat, I need

to get me one. His precision and the acuteness of his senses became legend as the bar cleared that night; word quickly spread. We stood face to face for 4 hours as no fewer than 20 gunmen entered the bar behind him, each to find their destiny as soon as they summoned his attention... "Hey Stranger". He would quickly turn, shoot and return his frightening glare at me once again.

"Aint you gonna kill me too put kid?" I finally asked.

"I need you now; I'll kill you later"

"Yeah, what does a fancy city slicker like you need with a rebel rousing country man like me?" I asked with some despair.

"Words"

"Words?" I responded again "Words...what? Are you nuts? You want ... Words?"

I couldn't help but laugh. "Matt", I shouted, "the dude wants words".

Matt hesitated, then joined me laughing as he uttered.... "Words?? He wants words. Why I'll give him some words... once upon a time, a stranger came to Tucson and ..."

Before Matt could utter another sound, the twin Colts re-emerged; two bullets left each. All 4 pierced Matt's chest so close together that it appeared he'd been hit by a single bullet. Matt fell to the floor, coming to rest on top of his brother.

"What's your name stranger, and what do you want", I asked with some courage.

He didn't hesitate to respond..."Name's Anand, Akshay Anand, and I want you to write me something nice".

"Something nice"? I inquired. "Nice like, 'ohhh that's nice' or nice like,.... 'hey that's a nice car".

The stranger answered; "Hmmm, I hadn't thought about that, how about nice like, 'hey, would it be nice to live until tomorrow?" With that, Anand walked slowly to bar. He didn't have to ask, the bar keep knew what he wanted and immediately provided the best in the house. The stranger sat, removing his jet black hat while untying the black scarf he then used to wipe his brow. The bar keep took a barrel of Ale out the front door to quench the thirst of Anand's horse, a wise move that possibly limited bloodshed. The dark haired stranger placed his silver ring - adorned Stetson aside the bottle on the bar as carefully as a neonatologist hands a baby to its mother. He folded his black scarf and placed it carefully on his hat. Unzipping his back

pack, he pulled out a T4321.10A HPMAc computer, the first I'd ever seen. He uttered 3 words: "One second Professor".

I waited intently.

The stranger pulled out his cell phone; he tapped it 3 times and a voice came thru...

"Yes sir" came the voice from the phone, "this is the President".

"Hey Barak, whatsup?" replied the Dark Haired stranger.

"Same ol same ol", the President replied.

"I found Dusty Deek, Want me to string him up?" Anand asked.

"Do it tomorrow...make sure he gets that message out tonight, OK?".

"No problem, Mr. President".

"Call me Barak, Akshay...I owe you a lot. Say hi to the Prime Minister for me".

"Will do; see you tomorrow".

The phone went dead. Anand glanced at the Colt 45 on his left. I asked him who would receive the bullet left in the other, knowing the one in the gun in observation had my name engraved upon it.

Akshay Anand never answered that question. I penned the words he sought in a few minutes and handed them to him. The Dark Haired Stranger read them quickly, smiled and with a single word... "Thanks"..... replaced the computer in its pack and put on his hat. As if summoned, that beautiful white horse walked into the bar as if he owned it; hell, he may well have.

Tying his scarf, Dr. Anand lept to the saddle, grabbing the stirrups; the horse then stood upon its two back legs while Anand tilt his hat in respect as the horse turned in mid air, landing with its left front hoof forward to begin its fierce gallop towards the setting sun.

A few men died that day; some good, some who we could do without. Anand got his revision, Annals of Neurosciences I got my reward; ten days later, the horse returned with the hat and scarf, but no sign of Anand.

No one has heard from the Dark Haired Stranger since. I figure that he made it to LA, if that's where he was headed. Maybe Reno. Hell, for all I know, he may be in India.

I only wonder about those two remaining bullets.

(.....to be continued in next issue)