The Dark Haired Stranger

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Chapter 3

The next day, after Sis and me dome done our thing yeah, we robbed the Oil City Wal-Mart of a Pack of Ju Ju Beads, Kyle came rushin' to my tent screaming "Paw. Paw. Ya gotta wake up, get yer rifle 'n come quick. Pa, Pa, You gotta come. There's been a shootin' at the OK Corral and Pa, Jim's dead. Pa wake up", screamed Kyle until I freaking woke up.

It was clear that Anand had killed Jim, I quickly concluded. But why?, I wondered. A brain surgeon couldn't figure this out. Why would the dark haired stranger kill Jim, and how the hell did I get from Tuscon to oil City?

Clearly a brain surgeon couldn't figure this one out. No this would take the brain power of a rocket scientist. I used my Cell Phone to summon my cousin Angelo, who was finishing up his most recent job, the NY Times Sunday Crossword puzzle in Pittsburgh and tried to explain to him the facts.

He cut me off abruptly. "Deek" asserted Ange, "There you go again. No one's gonna believe you. If you continue with this story, they are going to commit you!!"

"Ange, they committed me 3 years ago and I escaped, remember? No one knows where I am".

Hell, I didn't know where I was, I thought, during what writers refer to as a 'pregnant pause' in our conversation. I quickly grabbed my notebook and wrote a note for later perusal..."why the freak do we call that a 'pregnant' pause. Irritated, Kyle demanded, "Pa, get yer gun and come now. Come now".

I was facing 3 problems. How did I get to Oil City, where did Anand find Jim and what rifle? Hesitant to encumber Kyle with these facts, I told Kyle I'd be there after I spoke to a rocket scientist.

Ange thought for a second as he finally came up with the answer to "Oil City Product".

"**Petroleum**, it fits, shouted Ange who shortly thereafter continued "Deek, I have this ear burning and I wanted to ask you if...."

Cutting him off, I said "Ange, would you listen to me? This dude I know from way out West went nuts and caught me an Sis messin' up Jim and"

"Jim, the guy with the drinking problem?".

"Yeah Ange and..."

What, you and sis took advantage of him by exploiting his drinking problem then robbed a Wal-Mart?"

"Something like that", I responded.

"Deek, you should have known that putting Jim out there with a new shirt on soaked with wine would result in disaster", said Angelo.

"We knew that, but we had to get rid of him so we could..."

"Get Ju Ju Beads from Wal-Mart. Deek, you gotta stop your Ju Ju bead addiction".

"So suddenly you became an addiction counselor? Did you get a diploma yesterday?"

"Deek, you have a problem and..."

"Ange, this is big, really big."

"So now you're Bill Shatner?"

"Deek" Ange replied with a rather long D-e-e-k. Again, "D-e-e-k".

"OK Ange, I'll call Linda tomorrow".

"Tomorrow. Tomorrow. With you it's always tomorrow. Face it Deek. You have a problem and you need to call Linda now. Bye".

Ange hung up.

So I called Linda, who was even more unsympathetic. "I'm going to the Mall with Lauren, Deek, and I don't have time to listen to your bull shit today".

"OK Linda" I said, "But Dale may be next."

"Dale. how did Dale get mixed up in this".

"Oil City, does that tell you anything Lin?"

"We'll be up there in 4 hours with Sara Jane"

"Sis is with you?"

"Never mind Deek, see you in a few hours", retorted Linda, slamming the phone to the receiver.

Sis got to New York, Anand shot Jim in Tucson, I was in a tent in Oil City with Kyle. I just couldn't figure it out. Thinking I was next on his list, I recalled that my last sight was that of Anand's horse between me and Sis's 8 mm Magnum in Tucson. If Anand wanted to finish me off, he would have then, but where was he then? A flash occurred.

"Kyle, what is today?"

"Today is the day of the present. Today is the first day of the rest of your life Dad. Today is a day of wonderment, a day of rejoicing a day of...."

Suddenly Amanda entered my tent with Cherry Doughnuts, which immediately silenced Kyle, fortunately.

"Amanda, what is today", I again asked.

"Thursday".

That explained a lot. I knew I arrived Tucson on Tuesday, because air fairs are always lowest on Tuesdays. What transpired on Wednesday?, I wondered.

Did Dr. Sanberg cut the break kins of my car so that I would wreck it? Then when driving to Oil City, I hit a tree in Montana. Did Sis drop me off after finishing off Jim with the help of Anand?

"Kyle, get Little Joe and my white horse and we'll go to the police."

"Dad, the police are looking for you, and Little Joe and 'your horse' are on 'Bonanza'. This is the set for 'The Rifleman', remember".

"Kyle, you know I cant remember who I work for. This is the Rifleman Stage?"

"Yes Dad. You signed a contract with Universal last month. I told you not to. Your job with Colombia was great".

"You just liked what's her name there".

"Her name is Amanda and we got married last month and she is standing right here Dad".

"Oh yeah. I remember", lying like a rug.

"Where's the rifle?"

"Dad, they make me keep it when you are "sleeping"... "Sleeping it off".

"Very funny you little shit"

"That would be Doctor."

"Get the rifle. Where are we supposed to go?."

"To work".

"You mean I have to gun down 30 or 40 guys in cold blood today? I don't want to work today."

"Dad, you never want to work, but they have this contract which commits you to working Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays as the Rifleman for Universal. See Dad, a contract binds both parties or neither party. It can't bind Colombia, I mean Universal, and not bind you. Since you cashed their last paycheck, you're bound and if you don't show up today, they will file a suit against you for what is called "Breach of Contract" and since you did this a few years ago with MGM, they may charge you with fraud, and Dale for abuse if authority, and they will win", suggested Kyle, my eyes glazing over.

"Yeah Kyle. You know when you start with your legalese, my eyes glaze over".

"Well they shouldn't cause sooner or later, you're going to take a hit."

"I guess you're right".

"You guess". Remember Tucson?"

"No, what happened in Tucson".

"You and Sis robbed a Wal-Mart and then drank a bottle of cough syrup, then you got a DUI and I had to bail you out. Fortunately, your Brother Dale is the sheriff there. Then you told the police I gave you the cough syrup. After that, you set up Jim for his money and called Anand to silence him. Then you stole his black horse, bleached it white and registered it in Montana and drove here, you idiot. And on the way, you put all our money in your name, cutting me out of everything. Dad, I loved you, but that was a bit much. So I called Dr Anand to finish you off. But now I regret that, but you know Anand. He's on his way and he is going to charge you with theft, horse laundering, dissipation of horses, and lying to a police investigator".

"Lying to a police investigator?"

"Yes Dad. The one that they sent from Cheyenne, after you cashed checks from my account."

"Oh that is still an issue?"

"Dad, bank fraud is a federal offense and I was 17 at the time, aggravating the charges to the level of a felony."

"Kyle, you did that to me? I brought you up. I remember giving you money to go to school and buy a car."

"A car you tried to put in your name and steal. I don't think you are any loving father. I think you only want what will benefit you. You even had your former wife, my mom, help you hurt me".

"Kyle, I am really sorry."

"Sorry don't make it Dad. You need to go to work and pay me back or I am going to have you charged if I have to visit Julia Carson's son"

"You wouldn't"

"Yes I would, so get your rifle and let's go, and if you think killing me is going to resolve your problems, think again. I wrote a letter and gave it to a lawyer in case anything happens to me."

"OK, OK, let's go to work".

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