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Dr. Gingrich

Period 6

Out in the Old West

Prologue: "... and that's how I saved a whole farm of cattle from a burning fire" said the eccentric, young Jack to his band of bar buddies.

"Well that's not a bad saloon tale," I said with a hint of mockery in my voice "but I got a hundred stories, each ten times better than that trash, just building up in this here noggin, and mine are actually true."

"Hey my story was one hundred percent authentic!" said Jack, with a twinge of anger and annoyance in his voice.

"Well, it don't matter if yours is true or not, I got a story that will make yours look like a bedtime story for a baby lass." I pointed over at the saloon's bar counter, "Do you fella's see that old man o'er near the bar, the one with about sixty years weighing him down?"

"Yes" Jack and the guys agreed.

"Well," I said, "you may not be able to tell, but he was once the biggest hotshot cowboy there ever was."

“You’re full of more crap than Moe’s Manure farm.” Said Jack, causing the rest of the gang to laugh at what they thought was my naive confidence, for a fair minute. After they had all calmed down I decided to present my story.

About forty years ago in Old Western Austin, Texas, that drunk senior over there was a living legend, his name was Clyde Cooper. He was very tall, about six foot six, with jet black hair, well he said that it was black, but no one ever found out because he proudly wore his cowboy hat every second of the day, with the pride to match that of a patriot. His face was as rugged as the Grand Canyon itself, and his eyes were colored as a fiery dark blue. He was the cockiest gunslinger there ever was, but in his defense, he had every reason to be cocky. He truly was the best sharpshooter in Texas, everyone and their mother knew it. Rumor had it that at first he was modest about his skills, but after he took the life of Lane, the leader of the local thug gang, known as The Rustlers, he was never the same. The fame had gotten to his head, and he started to believe that he was truly invincible.

“Wait, wait, wait” said Jack with shock and disbelief, “Before you continue your tale do you mean THE Rustlers, as in the gang that killed over three hundred civilians and terrorized Western America for a decade?”

I retorted “Yea Jack, now may I continue my story or would you like to put us to sleep again with one of your lullaby stories?”

“No you may continue.” whimpered Jack.

“As I was saying...” I resumed.

After he took the life of the Rustlers leaders in a one-on-one quickdraw shootout, he became a new person. He shifted personalities from the modest kid from a small town personality, to the cocky young man attitude that he became known for. Because of his fame, he soon found himself married to the most beautiful girl in the West, Maria Arietta; she was described as having an angelic figure with hair like fine, black silk and eyes like an blue oasis surrounded by miles of sand. Clyde also took up drinking as his new and only hobby; spending each and every night passed-out in the various bars in Austin, always surrounded by admirers. As he started to live everyday with excitement and recklessness, The Rustlers gang's second-in-command Aiden was angered about the loss of his leader at the hands of Clyde, so he decided to rally the gang's forces and make a plan to take down the new-found hotshot. One late night, while Clyde was passed out in a drunken stupor, The Rustlers rode into town and devastated the entire town, burning down buildings, killing women and children, and worse of all, kidnapping Maria Arietta. As Aiden and The Rustlers fled the scene Aiden left a chilling message for one of the elder bartenders, Jayce, to relay to Clyde.

Aiden said, gripping Jayce tightly round the neck, "Tell Clyde that he better meet me in Wolfmouth cave, so that maybe we can trade Marias life for his own." He then shot the bartender in the knee, lit the Spittoon Saloon on fire, and escaped into the night with his gang by his side.

The next day, when Clyde woke up, he was shocked to find his wife gone and his town in embers. He had heard when he woke that his old bartender Jayce had a message for him, so he immediately rode to the old bar called the Spittoon Saloon. When he got there all that was left standing was the front porch where Jayce was sitting, crying, covered in ashes.

Clyde demanded, without pity, "Give me my message!" But Jayce was too busy weeping to pay any attention to the cowboy.

Jayce then said with no twinge of emotion in his voice, "Clyde, all that I own has just been reduced to ash because of your actions! And the way you react is to demand that I give you a message? Do you even feel any remorse for the pain that you have caused me?"

Clyde's pride refused to let him admit that he had done anything wrong. Clyde snapped back, "It's not my fault that you're too old to defend your own bar against a couple o' thugs, now either tell me where my wife is or tell me Aiden's message."

Jayce then said, with a depressed tone, "Aiden said to meet him at Wolfmouth cave tonight and he will trade your life for that of your wife's. There is no way that you can meet Aiden in the cave alone, he will kill you and Maria without a second thought."

Clyde chuckled, and he told the old man "Well I shall forgive you since you are old, but I don't think that you realize just who I am, I am the greatest cowboy and shooter in the state of Texas."

Jayce responded with true sincerity in his voice "Son I don't care if you are the President of the United States, if you go in that cave alone, you will die, and it is as simple as that."

Clyde responded with a snobbish remark "You know what you old geezer I am going to go into that cave to prove you wrong, and when I come out I expect you to rebuild your bar provide me with free drinks as long as I live."

Jayce then stood up and mounted his horse, saying "Son if you survive that alone I will give you the entire Spittoon Saloon. But I beg of you please reconsider."

Clyde did not respond, but instead mounted his horse and rode off into the cave all by his lonesome.

“Hold on,” Jack interrupted, “you mean to tell me that this one cowboy was so full of himself that he tried to take on a whole gang alone just to prove a point?”

“Yea, Jack.” I responded “When I said he was the cockiest cowboy in the West I wasn’t kiddin’. He once rode a horse backwards three miles just because a gal told him he couldn’t.”

“Dang I got tons of pride but even I ain’t dumb enough to go on a suicide mission” said Jack with a wide grin.

“Yea well you don’t have any points to prove, now do ya?”

“Yea. Yea. Yea. Finish the dang story!” Jack demanded.

“Okay” I continued. So after a couple hours galloping through the wide open desert Clyde had finally arrived at Wolfmouth cave. As he walked through the murky entrance he could hear the many distant whispers of The Rustlers thugs; he knew that this could be his last few hours on Earth. Before he entered the main chasm of the cave he loaded his gun and hid it under his holster. He knew that his only chance of survival was to challenge Aiden to a quickdraw.

Clyde entered the main hallway and shouted “I am here, now give me Maria!” As he yelled his foe Aiden entered from the other end of the wall, with The Rustlers right behind him. Aiden dragged the beaten Maria by her hair and threw her at Clyde’s feet. Maria looked like hell;

she had bruises all down the left side of her face and an endless amount of incisions on her back that bore the mark of the cat o' nine tails whip. Maria was within inches of her life.

“The lass will make it, but she might need a bit of patching up” Aiden said with a twisted smile crawling across his lips.

“What are you saying! She is all but dead!” Clyde said, close to tears.

“Well you should hope that she dies, so that way you can meet her in Heaven” Aiden said with the same, twisted smile.

“Aiden I challenge you to a Shootout, me against you if I win, then you let me go take Maria with me, and if I lose you may take her and my life!” he challenged.

“HAH,” Aiden responded with a sarcastic laugh, is no way you can expect to kill me you will do nothing but die trying.”

“Well I would rather die trying than die a coward! Do you accept the shootout?” Clyde said trying not to show his true fear.

“I accept; my right hand man, Gretts, will countdown. The rules are only one shot loaded in your .357 and you must wait until after Gretts counts to zero to draw.”

“I am ready” replied Clyde with startling confidence, knowing these may be his last words.

“Draw in five... four... three...” Said Gretts and suddenly a gunshot rang throughout the cavern. As Gretts looked down he realized that he had been shot. As a figure of an old man armed with two .357 magnums was visible near the top of the cave The Rustlers shifted their

attention towards the old man and pulled their triggers as hundreds of shells were ejected onto the ground.

Then the harrowing voice of old Jayce resounded as he warned Clyde “Run Clyde; take Maria and run!” Then as The Rustlers were distracted Clyde drew his gun and aimed it at Aiden pulling the trigger and sending one silver bullet straight through the skull of The Rustlers leader. Then, Aiden dropped his chrome gun in exchange for Maria and ran towards the nearest exit. As he began to see the light near the end of the tunnel, he heard the unmistakable voice of Jayce as he yelled in agony; it was certain...Jayce was dead. But Clyde could not stop for his fallen friend, he knew he must run. Clyde found a horse with a saddle that Jayce had left him. He saddled up on the horse and put Maria safely in the back of the double saddle. They were finally home free. After he had become readjusted into the everyday life and Maria had been returned from the hospital, he noticed that there was a note in a saddle pouch. He knew that this note must have been left by Jayce

The note read

“A cocky man is one who thinks he can do something, but a confident man is one who knows he can do it.”

Epilogue: “And that is the end of Clyde the Cowboy” I concluded.

“Completely right down to the very last detail,” said an old raspy voice coming from behind me. As I turned around I saw that the old man had been behind me listening throughout the whole story.

“This old man is full o’ lies” said Jack

“Really you think I’m full of nothings? Well here is proof that I am, in fact, Clyde the Cowboy” said old Clyde as he opened his money pouch and pulled out a note that read “A cocky man is one who thinks he can do something, but a confident man is one who knows he can do it.”

Clyde pronounced, “Now if y’all don’t mind I think I have a story to tell...”