

Desert Run

By

Nick McCann

EXT - OPEN PLAINS, HIGH NOON

All is quiet on the vast plains of the Western United States. A coyote and her pups are munching on the carcass of a previously eaten deer. As the vultures swoop down for some of the kill, the mother coyote growls and wards them off.

The coyote then goes back to eat, but before she can swallow another piece, a low rumble enters the sound spectrum. The pups look up in attentive. The rumbling gets louder and louder. The coyotes then flee the scene.

As they exit, a fleet of horses dash by pulling along an armored stagecoach. A little ways back, more horses give chase with howling bandits on their backs. Their revolvers fire off as fast as they can make them.

The armored coach shakes and rattles furiously as it's pulled with the strength of an avalanche. Bullets ricochet off the hull. One almost lands near the foot of the passenger, Bill Bushman. He flinches a bit, then looks down at where the bullet landed. The driver, Neville Thackery, chimes in.

NEVILLE

I think they're coming into range now!

BILL

(looking up at Neville)
I concur. Keep the speed up!

Bill reaches down and pulls out a 10-gauge double-barrel shotgun. He loads both barrels before turning back to face the attackers. He pulls back both hammers on the weapon. The horses close in.

The shots are starting to land more frequently. One horse accelerates up to the left side of the coach. Bill quickly dispatches him. The bandit flies off the horse. He tumbles on the ground in the path of the other riders.

Another bandit comes up on the right side, but Bill blows him away.

BILL

(turning around)
Reloading!

Neville looks back to see the remaining pursuers. As he turns, a bullet ricochets next to him. He jumps from the sudden impact and snaps the reins harder.

(CONTINUED)

NEVILLE

Dah! Hyah!

The carriage picks up speed and Bill closes the gun barrels. He returns fire at the riders behind. As one one gets close, Bill blasts the bandit. But rather than him falling off, his foot is caught in the stirrup and the man is dragged.

The coach bounces off the rough ground. Bill in turn bounces in his seat.

BILL

Whoa! The hell have you been feeding these things?

NEVILLE

Big Chief (spits tobacco). Puts ass hair on anything!

Bill reloads the shotgun and continues firing at the bandits. As he turns to reload again, Bill notices a small pass with some large rocks on the ground above it.

BILL

Neville! You see that pass?

Neville looks ahead, then gets a deep look of concern on his face.

NEVILLE

You're not serious?!

BILL

Sure am, boy! Take us through it!

NEVILLE

Agh damn. Hyah!

Bill reaches into his knapsack and pulls out a bundle of dynamite, ripping off half the fuse. The coach nears the pass. Another bandit gets close and fires. As he misses, Bill pulls out his six-shooter and lands a headshot on the man. He fires four shots at the attackers in an effort to make them slow down.

The coach enters the pass and rocks like a rolling stone. Bill then holds the dynamite fuse near the gun barrel. He fires, lighting the bomb with the muzzle flare. Away it goes at the pass entrance. As the horses come close, the dynamite explodes with enough force to make the boulders roll down and block the pass. The coach comes to a halt and Neville turns around fast.

(CONTINUED)

NEVILLE

Hot DAMN! Where did that come from?

BILL

Little gift from a friend in the mines. Let's go, we're almost late.

The two sit forward. Neville snaps the reins while Bill empties the shells in his shotgun. They ride onward.

EXT - TOWN, LATE NOON

A tumbleweed rolls past a sign which reads "Macklin Square, pop. 59". Bill and Neville's coach rides past it into the town center. Inside the town are fair amount of citizens walking the main stretch. There are stores, a saloon, jail house and a bank.

The coach pulls around the back of the bank. There, manager Herbert Westwood, comes out to greet as two tellers go toward the rear of the coach.

HERBERT

Ah Mr. Bushman. Good to see you.

BILL

(reaches for hand shake)

Same to you, Mr. Westwood.

Neville hops off the coach. He goes around the back of it, unlocks the door and assists in taking money bags into the bank vault.

HERBERT

Come on inside, I'll get you your pay.

Bill and Herbert proceed inside as Neville and the tellers drop off the money.

INT - BANK OFFICE, LATE NOON

Bill sits himself down in the manager's office. Herbert goes over to the safe at the back of the room.

HERBERT

I see them banditos gave you some trouble.

BILL

Ehh call it shit. Trouble implies it was hard to handle.

Herbert rotates the combination lock.

(CONTINUED)

HERBERT
And shit isn't?

BILL
Shit's shit, sir. Nothing more complicated. Trouble's got more layers, lot of factors in play that can destabilize one's integrity under great circumstances.

The safe unlocks and Herbert opens it up.

HERBERT
(chuckling)
What you get schooled on the way here, son?

BILL
(laughing)
Naw just taken to a belief, sir.

Herbert comes around, chuckling and counting money. He hands a small wad to Bill.

HERBERT
Ehh this is all I can give you guys. Don't cry, that's not all of it. Some people have yet to make some payments here. You lay over here for the night, come back in the morning, I should be able to get you the rest.

BILL
(flicking through money)
T'was my understanding that we'd be paid in full. You gotta understand that we're always on the move here-

HERBERT
Oh I know son, don't fret. I know who you guys are. I'm just asking for another day.

Bill sighs big and thinks real hard.

BILL
Alright fine.

Bill gets out of his chair and heads out.

BILL

Hope those patrons of yours pay in full.

HERBERT

Can count on it. They get charged otherwise.

Herbert laughs uproariously as Bill walks out, tipping his hat.

EXT - TOWN, LATE NOON

Bill goes up to Neville, whose chilling by the coach. Neville spits some tobacco before giving Bill his undivided attention.

BILL

Rest of the money's coming tomorrow. We gotta lay over here.

NEVILLE

Thought they had all it today.

BILL

'pparently not. Wanna hit up that saloon 'cross the way?

NEVILLE

Fine by me.

They proceed down the street. On the street, adults walk along in the hot sun and kids play with their primitive past time hobbies.

NEVILLE

Ya know if we're gonna do something like that again, we should do it on more smoother ground.

BILL

Or not build the wheels out of wood.

NEVILLE

(chuckles)

Now that's being ambitious.

The Postman comes running up to them.

POSTMAN

'Scuse me, sir?

They turn around to him.

(CONTINUED)

POSTMAN
William Bushman?

BILL
Yes?

POSTMAN
(handing envelope)
Telegram, sir.

Bill takes the envelope and opens it up. He unfolds a letter, reading over every line carefully. Bill then folds it up and pulls out a quarter for the Postman.

BILL
Thank you.

The Postman heads off and Bill and Neville continue walking.

NEVILLE
'Nother job?

BILL
You got it. We're to depart as soon as we get the money tomorrow. Coach good to go?

NEVILLE
Not a screw outta place.

INT - SALOON, LATE NOON

Bill and Neville walk through the swinging doors to the sounds of piano music and many people chatting at tables with drinks. The pair walk up to the bar, where Angie is cleaning glass cups.

ANGIE
Afternoon fellas. What can I do ya for?

BILL
Two rooms for a night.

ANGIE
Certainly.

BILL
And Bourbon, three fingers each.

Angie lays out two shot glasses and pops open the alcohol bottle. She pours the drinks with expert precision and timing. The men take their glasses.

(CONTINUED)

BILL
Thank ya kindly.

Bill lays down a few dollars.

ANGIE
(taking money)
Need anything, just holler.

Bill nods with understanding and gratitude. Angie walks to the other end of the bar. The pair lean on the bar and face each other.

NEVILLE
'Nother day, 'nother buck.

They clash glasses.

BILL
All the way.

They swallow down their bourbon like kings.

THE END