

BONANZA

by Win Blevins

Isaac Berlin raised his eyes hard and flat at Nolie. "You want to apprehend your own father?"

"I want him, sheriff."

"People are gonna say it's crazy."

"I guess the agency already decided."

He leaned over and flattened the telegram on Berlin's desktop. The narrow, yellow strips of paper said,

AGENCY RETAINED FOR BANK OF
CHEYENNE ROBBERY STOP \$6000 STOP ID
OF WHITE MAN FITS Ryan A O'NEILL STOP
START IMMEDIATE MANHUNT STOP
EXTRA PERSONNEL AUTHORIZED STOP
O'NEILL ALL YOURS STOP GOOD LUCK
STOP
BELL ENGLUND

Sheriff Berlin pointed at the afternoon newspaper on the desk, the *Cheyenne Leader*:

**BANK OF CHEYENNE ROBBED
Leprechaun out of Jail One Day,
Robs Same Bank the Next
Pinkertons on Trail
High-tailing for the Hole in Wall?**

Nolie scraped his boots impatiently against each other. He hated the colorful name people in the state had given his father, the Leprechaun. There was nothing charming about the man. Or, rather, there was—charm was one of his many sins.

Berlin chewed his wad. Forty-ish, retired from the army, he was a man in love with regulations, chain of command, and other ways of shifting responsibility. As a lawman, well, Nolie thought he was better at giving interviews to the *Cheyenne Leader* than catching criminals. Nolie's step-father, Bell Englund, who was also his boss at the agency, thought the same.

"So you intend to make yourself a man by bringing in your own dad." That didn't deserve a response, so Nolie kept his mouth shut.

"Well, don't consider what people will think if you don't want to. But lemme tell you, you foul this up and I'll be studying your every step, the newspapers will be studying them, the Governor will be studying them, and I'll make sure your employer studies them."

This last threat was idle, considering the hostility between Berlin and

the Pinkerton Agency.

"What do you have, Sheriff?"

"The Leprechaun went out of Cheyenne west with an Indian, a woman. Then somehow he slipped back into town in disguise and took the Burlington Northern toward Casper."

Berlin looked at Nolie like maybe that was funny. Nolie had stopped finding the Leprechaun's tricks funny a long time ago.

"We got a description of him to the station master and ticket clerk but the disguise was a good one. Man of the cloth, he made himself. Clerk even said he'd like to hear a sermon by such an impressive-looking man." Berlin permitted himself a tight smile.

What Nolie disliked as much as anything about the Leprechaun was the way he changed shape from one creature to another, each utterly seductive, each an illusion.

Berlin turned to the railroad's big map of Wyoming on the wall. "We picked up his trail up at Iron Mountain. He bought two horses at the livery. Livery man, Filbert, said he rode out of town west, over the mountain." He pointed. "Filbert can describe the horses for you, and one's track. Suggest that's where you get started." Berlin hesitated. "I'd go along, but a sheriff has to tend to business."

And run the public relations campaign. "What about the Indian?"

Sheriff Berlin rasped out his breath. "Nobody gives a damn about her, Englund. She's a squaw. Since the Johnson County War the Leprechaun is a goddam legend."

The Johnson County War, the Ring against the Rustlers. The Cheyenne Ring was a club of big ranchers, businessmen, and politicians who ran Wyoming. Some of these big cattlemen and their hired guns went against men operating little shirttail ranches. Way Nolie heard it, and believed it, the little ranchers started their herds with wide loops and running irons. Big or little didn't matter, not to Nolie's mind--mavericking was stealing. The Ring was just protecting the property of its members. The old man had been one of the rustlers, in fact his name was on the Ring's list of men to be sent to kingdom come. The Ring had gotten whipped in what they called the Johnson County War, though, their pistoleros lucky to get off with their lives. Some of the rustlers came out heroes, including Ryan O'Neill. Who then turned to stealing on a bigger scale--from the Ring's enterprise, the Bank of Cheyenne.

Sheriff Berlin was rattling on about what everybody knew. "We can't pin much on your father."

"Don't call him that in front of me," Nolie said..Berlin smiled. "No matter what we can prove or not, here's how it's

gonna play. The Ring against a rustler, the Ring against one of them Wild Bunch boys, the Ring against the rebel as robbed the Bank of Cheyenne twice before to thumb his nose at us, the Ring against the owlhooter that got out of Rawlins and instant done it again. Which is gonna tickle folks that don't like the Ring, which is everybody in the state."

"I don't care how it plays," said Nolie.

Berlin snorted. "You'd best. A lot of folks like your father, and a lot will help him, and a lot will look at you as a traitor. You won't have much help out there."

"All I care about is doing my job."

"Well, he's headed for the Hole-in-the-Wall." Berlin jabbed his finger at Nolie like a stick. "We can say the law-abiding people of this state won't stand for that."

Law-abiding people meaning the big cattle, land-holding, and banking interests--the Ring. To ordinary people, the Leprechaun, the giant named teasingly after an elf, was a folk hero. Nolie hated knowing they were wrong. He hated knowing leprechauns were charming, deceiving sons of bitches.

"I was you, I'd take the train to Casper and wait for him up at Hole-in-the-Wall."

"I'll stick to his trail."

"Look, it's his old stomping grounds. People will help him up there. If you let him disappear . . ."

Nolie interrupted. "I'll talk to the livery man." He got up and put his hand on the door.

"How many men you want?"

"I'll go it alone."

"What?"

"I'll do it alone."

Berlin got loud now. "You're crazy, Englund. O'Neill is a dangerous, hardened criminal. You can't bring him in by yourself."

"Don't intend to. But I can track better and faster alone."

"When you find him, you damn well better get help from local law-enforcement." Which needed the credit.

Nolie snapped up an ironic salute. He couldn't help it. "Aye-aye, Sir. I'll wire you from Casper, if I get there. Like to get some wires too."

"I'll take care my end," said the sheriff.. "Me too."

"You better, Englund. You damn well better."

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The tracks were clear, wide, and handsome. The Leprechaun had about a day's start, which was a lot. Nolie moved quick as he could. He couldn't keep his mind from circling around things, like a buzzard. He hit the Bank of Cheyenne? Again? Nolie made a lopsided smile, and the effort hurt his gut. Get out of jail on Tuesday, hit the same bank on Wednesday. It wasn't funny.

Six years since he did it and got caught. It was the only time he was ever apprehended, much less charged and jailed. Nolie was proud that it was the Pinkerton Agency, in fact Bell Englund, that caught the Leprechaun. He just wished he'd been in on it.

This time it's mine, and mine by myself. Nolie didn't care for a lot of company, especially not a lot of talk. Talk made him think of the Leprechaun's fancy stories that spun your mind around and sucked you into dreams and . . .

He looked back at his bedroll and at how the load was riding on the pack saddle behind.

Words, yes, words, the tools of a teller of tales like the Leprechaun. The devices of a spinner of illusions. The dewy shimmer of poetry that enticed you to . . . go adventuring. But adventure was a spider web, and the spider watched and watched and when it was hungry, it got you. To hell with stories.

That damn newspaper Berlin showed him, who cared about a newspaper? Over the next week or two it would say a lot more. Would hint that the Leprechaun hates the Pinkertons because they're the ones who sent him up. Would hint that he was telling the Cheyenne Ring, the Pinkerton Agency, and the entire state of Wyoming to go to hell in one very big way. Might hint he'd done it to thwart two men who wanted him bad, Bell Englund and Nolie Englund.

Finally, it would make a big deal out of one fact: This was a son hunting down his own father.

Nolie could have given the newspaper some more facts to chew on: Ryan Ardmore O'Neill was a deceiver, deserter, and destroyer of hope. &&&

"Why do you tell me so easy?" Nolie asked in a civil tone.

Even from the saddle the homesteader--Janeway, wasn't it?--looked big, nearly as big as the Leprechaun. He'd never blow away in the Wyoming wind, but his place probably would..Janeway just smiled at him, easy as a Sunday school teacher. "No reason not to." His patriarchal beard waggled against his huge chest when he talked. Though he must have been forty, he had youthful blue eyes and the skin of a kid. "Ryan wouldn't want me to get in trouble with the law."

"Why would he care?"

"We been friends a long time."

"Since up in Hole-in-the-Wall?"

Janeway grimaced, and a shadow flitted in the blue eyes. "I never rode the owlhoot trail."

You always had to ask. All friends of the Leprechaun were loyal, but his partners in crime might . . .

"Just don't make sense. He ought to have told you to say something to put me off the track."

"He didn't seem worried about that. In fact, Ryan told me not to aid and abet him, or whatever you call it."

"Why wouldn't he head for Hole in the Wall?"

This time Janeway shook his head. "Nothing and nobody there any more."

The Pinkertons had chased the Wild Bunch all over the West, finally broke the outfit up and made Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid run all the way to South America, folks said.

"I've got a question for you."

Nolie waited.

"How come you call yourself Englund instead O'Neill?"

Nolie answered with his usual sarcastic pun. "O'Neill's trash Irish. Englund sounds English."

Janeway snorted and shook his head.

Nolie turned his mount and clucked it to a trot. No need to look back.

Janeway would be watching, thinking whatever he thought. Nolie had stopped caring what people thought a long time ago.

Neither Janeway nor anybody else had any right to the truth: He abandoned me and my mother.

Nolie neck-reined the horse west toward the easy ford of the Platte.

West, Janeway had said, up the Sweetwater. But why?

Nolie knew enough to follow a trail, not try to outguess it..&&&

"Goddam you, old man." He breathed the words out half-audibly.

This trail was hell to follow. The Leprechaun was going lickety-split across the country now, you could see it in the signs. He'd ridden leisurely over Iron Mountain, up the Little Medicine Bow River, and down Deer Creek to Janeway's place--why was he suddenly blasting along like a tornado?

The high plains along the Sweetwater dipped and slid sideways and heaved themselves up. From a distance you thought they were flat, up close they were hills. Up, down, up, down, always in your face.

For Nolie it was also ghost country. Forty, fifty, sixty years ago this was the Oregon Trail. You could see the ruts made by the iron-rimmed wagon wheels--in some places, in fact, the old track was so deep a man couldn't see over. There were hills of rock with people's names carved laboriously into the very stone. There were headboards marking graves. And the signs of the passage of people and of time: Abandoned stove legs rusting in the dust. The brass lid of a pocket watch glittering like a gold coin. An India rubber ball, probably a kid's toy. And oddly affecting, somehow, the ivory cover of a single piano key.

He stopped and looked down. How the devil could there be a piano key here? Sure, people abandoned their heavy furniture coming across, so where was the piano? Still in the wagon, a dead weight keeping the family from getting to the promised land of California? Or out somewhere in this broken country, the hopes, the ideals, the cherished dreams of some wife, gone forever, sacrificed to husband, to children, to necessity?

He shook his head hard to clear the murk out. Nolie didn't believe in the past. All it ever did was tangle your feet and keep you from living. Dead weight.

Truly dead, Father dear.

Throw the past out, that was Nolie's way, leave it behind forever to dry out in the Wyoming wind, snow, rain, and blowing dust.

I put you away forever when I changed my name.

He pushed his mind back to his job. At least in this empty country, on a trail no one used any more, the tracks were easy to pick out. The horses' prints on the down slopes showed some sliding where they

needn't, so the Leprechaun was pushing the pace, not letting them pick out their footing. The up-slope prints were kicked out at the back by force. Sometimes the tracks of even the walks were labored.

So the old man's critters were tired. So were Nolie's. They were both switching mounts every couple of hours. Nolie was tired. Why wasn't an aging Leprechaun worn all the way out?

Nolie wondered how old his father was. Fifty-five or sixty, he guessed, he'd didn't know for sure. He'd never known much about the Leprechaun. The last seventeen years his father had chosen to be a legend instead of a reality. Now he was old and Nolie was young. The old man was damn well out of shape. Braiding hackamores—that's what people called doing jail time—it didn't hardly keep you fit. Nolie was strong. The Leprechaun had unfamiliar horses, which he traded from Janeway. O'Neill was heavy, Nolie light. He wondered if the old man knew this country well. According to the legend, Ryan O'Neill knew every lizard in Wyoming by its first name. Nolie believed legends about like he believed Sunday School stories.

So why hadn't Nolie gained a lot of ground on the old man since they started up the Sweetwater?

Nolie remembered well the Leprechaun teaching him how to be easy on a horse and make twice as good time as anybody else. He'd learned it from the Indians, he said. Even his size--chest, shoulders, and belly enough for two men--hadn't worked against him. That was one summer of the two they spent some time together, up in the Yellowstone country. It was the best summer of his life until, in the old man's own phrase, all his pudding turned to pus.

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Nolie saw something. Here the old man had stopped for a moment, probably to piss. Shortly after he saw, yes, a limp. The horse the old man was riding was coming up lame.

Nolie hurried on. Within a couple of hundred yards he saw where the old man had changed mounts. The lame horse still put its foot down gingerly, but now the track was shallow.

He'd always thought of his father as a man mountain, a giant, an ogre, a malignant god. But he hadn't seen the man in a decade. How big was he now? Had he begun to shrink and wizen, like ordinary men when they get old? Or had he gone from beefy to fatty? One thing about weighing two hundred fifty pounds, it was hard on horses.

Yes, Nolie could see from the track, traveling without a load hadn't relieved the soreness in the hoof. Not enough.

"When you find him, you damn well better get help from local law enforcement." Sheriff Berlin's growled words.

Nolie reined his horse to a halt. This was the end of the third day going west along the Sweetwater. They were between the Rattlesnake Hills on the north and the Antelope Hills to the Southwest. At this pace another day would take them to Lander, or maybe up onto South Pass, or maybe past the town onto the southwestern end of the Wind River

Reservation. The old man had always talked about having friends there. His confederate after the bank had been an Indian, a squaw. Wind River woman? Shoshone? Arapaho? Who knew? Would she be waiting at some shack on the reservation? Where a white man would stick out like a carnation among cactuses, and a law would never get close to his quarry? Who knew?

I can't take the chance. Nolie drew breath in deep, let it out. He imagined what he would tell Sheriff Berlin. How about, 'It was a command decision in the field'? Berlin loved that soldier talk.

Him and me alone, that's always been coming, him against me.

For a while Nolie had figured he was running half a day behind, now less than that. This limp changed things. The old man would have to stop soon. What would he do? If the hoof wasn't a lot better in the morning, probably shoot the horse, or turn it loose. It was costing him time.

Nolie checked the position of the sun. Three hours before dark, three or four hours behind, he would bet.

He nodded, waving his hat brim down and back up. I'll come up on the old man at first light.

An odd feeling came onto him, like a spider web floating against your cheek in the dark.

Best be wary about that. Ryan Ardmore O'Neill would be expecting pursuit, and would be ready. No good to let the boar stalk the hunter. This is my chance. He touched spur to flank. His horse jumped into a gallop and settled into a canter. He had ground to cover, fast. A perpetrator to apprehend.

I'll be Finn McCool, or one of the Leprechaun's other Irish warrior heroes.

Ho. He liked that.

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Nolie pointed his mount to the river. In the moonlight he saw a patch of thick grass. Thank God it's spring. He swung down, picketed the horses, took the saddle and pack saddle off, and let them graze. He used his binoculars to glass the country. On a night like this, with a moon like this, you could see near like day.

The way Nolie figured it, Ryan O'Neill would camp by the river or up that creek from the southwest. Yes, you could sleep in a gravel pit if you'd brought something to carry water in, which the old man must have, in this country. You could water the horses at the river and then picket them dry. But they needed grass and time to graze. Maybe they got hay at Janeway's place, but they need would grass now, plenty of it. He studied a low ridge that caught an edge of silver moonlight at the top and plunged into deep shadow below. It sat back from the confluence of the creek and the river about half a mile. Perfect. The old man would surely rest within a couple of miles of here. At least Nolie wouldn't push that lame horse any further on this hard ground, not the way the tracks looked. In first light Nolie would glass the river and the creek from the ridge.

Whatever the Leprechaun does, I'll spot it..He walked his horses slowly and quietly to the ridge. He staked them out and got into his sughan. Shivering, he drew his duster on top. One of many cold bivouacs in his life.

He rolled over and looked out across the high, empty plains. In the moonlight they were spotted with shadows, eerie, full of ghosts. A few hours to wait, then first light, an eagle's view . . .

Gotcha!

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"Bonanza." The word was whispered.

Fear jolted Nolie from his tail bone to his skull. He knew the whispering voice, and it jarred him full awake.

"Bonanza, Laddie!"

He made his hands keep still. Then, one at a time, he opened his eyes. An Indian stood ten feet past Nolie's boots holding a double-barreled shotgun on him. The Leprechaun hunkered down off to the right, hands empty. Yes, the two barrels are plenty.

His father was grinning. He just looked for a long time. Just looked. Nolie just looked back. The old man was smaller of bulk and slacker of skin. His hair had gone from auburn to a rusty gray. Above the thick beard, wrinkles webbed his cheeks. Only his eyes still looked young and alive. Alive enough to fight and win. Fight his own son and win.

Finally, Ryan Ardmore O'Neill said in a deep, echo-like voice, "Lass, we hit pay dirt." He kept his eyes on Nolie. "Laddie, best take a better look at that Indian."

"Elizabeth!" In trousers, and way older.

She grinned. "I'll shoot you if I need to, Nolie, but I'd rather feed you. Your choice."

"What choice?"

"Hey, the food's good."

The Leprechaun laughed. It started way down in his gut, rumbled up, and gushed out like a geyser. It echoed off every rock wall in the country and came clanging back into Nolie's ears.

I hate you.

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They kept his hands tied, and he kept his eyes off Elizabeth. I hate both of you. She fried up the antelope backstrap, baked the biscuits, and made the gravy. It was damned hard to keep his eyes off her. And a dirty trick to bring you. The old man just sat there looking at Nolie, smiling like a bartender waiting eagerly to tap a barrel of laughter and fun.

Finally, Nolie said, "You set me up."

"With your kind help, Laddie."

"Don't call me that!"

"All right. Nolie."

"You made yourself easy to follow. You didn't cover your tracks at all."

The old man just looked at Nolie contentedly.

"You even told Janeway to point me in the right direction."

"Janey is a good man."

He pointed at Elizabeth with his eyes. "Where was Elizabeth this whole time?"

"I've dropped that name, Nolie. Call me Bird."

He shrugged. He didn't give a damn what he called her.

"She came right here and waited."

"Didn't follow me?"

"Aye, Laddie, I know you watch your back trail."

"Don't call me that!" he said sharper. "Laddie" was part of the way his father made him feel like a kid. "You went fast to get to your help."

"First the hunter lures the bird into the snare, then springs it."

"You didn't have a lame horse."

"I did so. Jammed the pebble in the frog myself. Now it's out, the horse will be fine."

Nolie remembered the place he thought the old man had stopped to pee. Right after that the horse started limping. "You tricked me into rushing in."

"We didn't want you over-careful, Laddie."

The old man took a platter of food from Elizabeth and grinned broader. Nolie saw she was a lot more willing to meet his eyes than he was hers.

The old man started shoveling down the biscuit and gravy. Maybe that would keep him from gilding his talk so much.. "You weren't taking a chance of getting captured."

The old man shrugged easily. "You might have caught me. Then Bird would have got us both. I didn't figure you'd geld me right off."

"Don't say it that way!" Nolie flushed at his own irritation.

The old man spread his hands as though to say, Let there be peace between us. Bird stuck a platter toward Ryan. The old man reached across, fiddled with the knots at Nolie's wrists, and the rope fell loose to the ground.

They ate in silence for a while. Silence was blessed around the old man--Nolie had no tolerance for Irish blarney, hadn't since he was a kid. That was another reason he'd taken pleasure in changing his name to Englund.

Bird went at her food easy-like, not with the tension Nolie felt. Why didn't you send word? He'd never known. Heard from his dad she'd gone back to the rez. Why do you want to be an Injun?

It had been the summer he was fifteen, Elizabeth a couple of years older. His father said, "Your Ma's going East, but you don't have to. Come up South Pass City, help me run this place." Nolie jumped at the chance.

The place was a miner's hotel he'd gotten part interest in, somehow. Her mother, Sissy, a half-breed Shoshone, did the cooking, and Elizabeth made the beds and cleaned the rooms. Sometimes she and

Nolie made other use of the beds. It was Nolie's first experience, but not hers. She seemed something special. She carried herself beautifully. She spoke elegantly, better English than Nolie had heard anyone but his dad speak. Nolie fell in love with her, and she had a good time with him. But there always something about her he couldn't reach. Elizabeth kept saying white people didn't accept her. She started dressing like a squaw, throwing it in their faces. After a couple of months of romance, before Nolie's summer ended, she simply was gone one morning. "She didn't even leave a note," said the Leprechaun. Sissy confirmed it. All they knew was that she'd gone back to the reservation. She never wrote nor sent word through the Leprechaun or anything.

While he ate, Nolie turned it over and over in his mind, like a piece of meat spitted. Finally, he got so mad he couldn't hold it back. "Why'd you bring her?"

"She's like family to me."

Nolie cackled harshly. "Family to you, that's pretty funny."

The Leprechaun shrugged.

"Were you screwing her mother?"

"As far as I was able, I loved her mother." "While you were married to Ma?"

"Yes."

"You bastard."

The old man's eyes perked up genially, with recognition, like they'd both just arrived at some important information or agreement. He said mildly, "Lots of folks have said that."

"Bastard! You set me up!" Nolie jumped to his feet. "You humiliate your own son to . . ." --he spat the words out-- "amuse yourself!"

Nolie started to turn his back, but the rage grabbed him and rocked him. He whirled around. He looked close and hard into his father's despised face. With his right hand he slammed the platter into that countenance. With his left he went for the adam's apple.

"Ummphh!" Air exploded out of Nolie's lungs. He flew sideways. When he hit the ground, his back screamed. He grabbed for his assailant. He stopped his hands dead cold. Bird knelt on top of him, a knife pricking Nolie's neck.

The old man's voice roared, "Leave him be!"

Bird sat tight. His eyes glittered with . . . They both remembered when their legs had been tangled for a different purpose.

"I said, leave him be."

Bird eased off, rose, picked up the rope, and began knotting Nolie's hands together again.

"Sorry, but we'll have to do this for a while, Nolie," said the Leprechaun. "Can't trust you."

"But you did. You trusted me to be a fool."

The old man made a sound Nolie couldn't figure out. He turned his eyes from his trapped hands to his father. The Leprechaun was swiping gravy off his face. It didn't seem a bit funny.

Nolie lashed out, "A fool!"

"You'll just have to figure that however you can."

"Where you takin' me?"

"Bird's place on the rez."

"What we gonna do there?"

"Maybe talk," said the old man calmly. "We haven't done much of that in ten years." .&&&

Nolie thought. When he could think. Half of the time he was too furious for brain turnings. Furious with himself for walking blind into the trap. Furious with his father for wanting to trap him, setting the trap, baiting it, and snapping it closed with a big grin. Furious with his father for always making him feel juvenile.

Nolie got an idea. Guilt. I'll make the old man ashamed. Maybe that will make him careless. Sorry being too much to hope for.

Nolie also had a trick Bell Englund had showed him in case anyone ever tied your hands and put you back on your horse. In Cheyenne they had expert saddle makers. One inserted a sharpened, inch-long piece of scrap metal vertically into the front of Nolie's saddle horn, with the seam sewn tight around it so it stuck out inconspicuously but just enough. Right in front of the horn was where you draped your hands for balance. The metal edge would cut rope, at least if someone was fool enough to use one of those silky-soft catch ropes, like the one Bird used.

"Don't work it actively," Bell Englund had warned, "they'll see. Just let it lay there and rub. It'll make a nasty surprise."

Nolie dangled his hands just right and let the motion of the horse do the work.

They were nearly stirrup to stirrup, he and the Leprechaun. Bird rode maybe fifty yards ahead. Nolie thought Bird wanted to stay as far away from her former lover as she could. Nolie looked at his father surreptitiously. You, on the other hand, want to be buddy-close. Nolie felt disgust.

"Why were you always gone when I was a kid?" Time to start on shame.

"You knew. Bonanza. Visions of gold dancing like sugar plums in my head."

Nolie snorted. "Gold."

"If you catch a leprechaun, so they say, he'll lead you to a pot of gold."

"You never led me and Ma to any."

"No." Said quietly.

"You never found it or you splurged it away?"

The old man's eyes lifted in respect. "Never found more than fly specks. Threw the specks around like millions."

"Why'd you keep looking? Looking, looking, always looking. Always going, going, gone."

"Have mercy, Jesu. Soft! I did but dream." .Nolie always hated the fancy way the old man talked. "Dream and drink," he said disgustedly. "Ma always said she didn't know which was

worse."

"Bobbie Burns," intoned the old man. "Freedom and whisky gang thegither!"

"Poetry and charm," Nolie said disgustedly, "that's you. You roamed the wilderness with the Irish heroes of olden days. You left mom and me home. Home with the wind and dust and burned-up gardens and barnyard shit."

The old man regarded him somberly. "I did just that."

Nolie rode morosely, lost in thought. Thoughts of loneliness, confusion, longing. Bitter, miserable thoughts.

He didn't have a damn thing to say to this man, whose fault it was.

This man he hated for the death of his mother. Who he hated for . . . everything.

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At the noon break the old man went to his pack horse and got out his fiddle. "For the horses, rest and grass," he commented loudly. "For the body, food and drink. For the soul, music."

Typical, thought Nolie, on a manhunt you carry only what's essential, plus your fiddle.

Had Nolie paid attention, he might have identified a Virginia reel first, then a sentimental Irish ballad from years and years ago. He did look up when the Leprechaun started with the mouth harp. A jig it was, and the old man wheezed up big music and danced like his belly was a trifle.

When Bird brought food, the old man stopped to eat. The lunch was just left-over biscuits smeared with cold gravy, messy to eat with tied hands. Nolie said irritably, "You playing and dancing and fiddling, you oughta be drinking."

"Freedom and whisky gang thegither!" the old man repeated obligingly. Then his face turned serious. "I quit drinking," he said. "No more of that for this Irishman."

"When did you quit?" Nolie asked sarcastically.

"In prison."

"Couldn't get any?"

"Easy to get in prison as out."

"Then why?"

The old man regarded him for a long moment. He finally said, "I've had all the grief from it I can stand."

Nolie snorted. He hesitated, feeling like he was teetering on an edge, but edge of what? "How come you went off and left us that last time?"

The old man looked at him like a faro player who spots a dealer cheating. "I thought you knew."

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That summer of 1893 Ryan Ardmore O'Neill had turned up out of nowhere, as he did from time to time. His way was always to come in unannounced, clomp his boots on the kitchen floor, and hang his hat on the nail by the stove. Then he would grin at the woman he considered his wife, lift her up against his chest with his big hands under her little

bottom, give her a big smooch, and sing, "When's dinner ready?" Ella O'Neill gave him a place at the table and a place in her bed with equal . . . Nolie didn't know equal what. He'd never known. It made him sick to his stomach and crazy in his mind.

This time was different, though. Nolie was sixteen. Bell Englund's wife had died. The widower and Ella O'Neill had more or less taken up together. Nolie hung around Bell and the Pinkerton office all he could, asking questions, running errands, soaking up knowledge of the ways. He knew for a fact Bell Englund had asked his mom for marriage. She'd talked to Nolie about selling their place in Cheyenne and moving to the small Englund ranch. Nolie told her it was the best idea she'd ever had. But Ella O'Neill didn't act like this time was a bit different. She let her on-again-off-again husband pick her up, hands on her butt, and even looked to Nolie like she might be kissing him back. Nolie was disgusted. She acknowledged the betrayal of Bell Englund in nothing but a rabbitry look she flicked at her son. Then she turned her back, fast.

The Leprechaun asked nothing, assumed everything. He didn't deign to mention whether he'd left South Pass, where he might have been on his latest adventure, where he'd got grubstaked, what shaft he'd sunk it in and lost it. Later he'd probably tell stories, and from the stories they could glean the details. He's been at the South Pass diggings. He's been along Clark's Fork. He tried his hand in the Black Hills. One time they'd gotten their news of him from the newspapers, which reported he got caught up in the war in Johnson County.

That night the Leprechaun said in his sweep-all-before-you style, "Let's go to Yellowstone. Everybody want to go Yellowstone? They're gonna ruin it one day. They built a giant hotel right on the north shore of Yellowstone Lake. Talking about damming the outlet of Jackson Lake now. Some fool even wants to run an elevator down to Lower Falls. Let's go."

His mother said nothing. She didn't need to. Nolie knew she'd be packing when he woke up in the morning.

He stomped out of the house and all over town. He cursed. He threw rocks at outhouses first, then at dogs. He went to the saloon and drank whiskey for the first time. He took an hour to crawl the half mile home.

The next morning he woke up with vomit on his sheet and a head ringing like an anvil. That and his father's mocking laughter.

They went to Yellowstone.

The crazy part was that they had a good time. Wonderful time. They took the railroad up into the Big Horn Basin, Nolie's first train ride. They outfitted well at Cody and had lunch at the Irma Hotel, built by Buffalo Bill himself. They packed over Sylvan Pass and down along Yellowstone Lake, the grandest body of water Nolie had ever seen, where they rented a boat and caught cutthroat trout. They gawked at the new hotel for rich people. They rode on northwest of the lake and saw an area of steaming hot springs and gushing geysers, including one you could set your watch by.

Best of all, they made a family in the evenings. His father played the fiddle and mouth harp, and they all danced. The Leprechaun told stories, wondrous stories--some about his boyhood in Ireland, others about his own father, others about King Arthur and his court, others about the legendary Irish heroes Finn McCool and Oisín. The stories stretched further and further from reality as they went back in time, but Nolie loved them all--they all seemed to him to tell a kind of truth, however far they strayed from fact.

One night when they were camped at by Nez Perce Creek, so named because Chief Joseph and his Nez Perce band followed it on their hopeless flight for Canada, two strangers came into camp. One was a hail-fellow-well-met if you looked at his manner but not his eyes, introduced as "John." The other was one rough-looking character, nameless. After Nolie and his mother went to bed in their separate tents, Ryan and the newcomers talked late into the night.

The next morning Ryan Ardmore O'Neill and the rough-looking man were gone.

"John" said he'd see mother and son back to the train station.

"Honey, he . . ." began his mother.

"I won't hear it!"

"He can't help it . . ."

"I won't hear it!" Nolie yelled, and ran off into the trees.

That evening they stopped for a silent, sullen camp at what people called West Thumb Geyser Basin. His mother was distracted. She wandered around with strange expressions flitting across her face. Nolie wondered if she was maybe calling up haunting memories, maybe seeing ghosts. He snapped at her once—"Pay attention to where you're walking." Except for tensing her shoulders, she didn't even acknowledge his words. She moved like an automaton. Nolie felt disgusted. He supposed she was distracted by grief.

That man deserves no grieving..After supper she took the dishes to wash in a hot spring. Nolie

watched her from a distance, fascinated and repelled. Her limbs jerked like she was a doll creature on strings. Strings manipulated by my father. He was looking straight at her when the soft ground gave way. She could have thrown herself backward, he was sure she could have. Instead, helpless, succumbing, she pitched head first into the boiling spring.

He held her all night, but she was incoherent. She never even seemed to recognize him. Toward dawn he snapped awake and found her not breathing in his arms, forever not breathing.

On his knees there next to her body Nolie swore he'd never speak to his father again.

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Nolie jarred his mind back into the present. 'I thought you knew,' his father had said.

"I guess I did," said Nolie. "Knew you didn't give a damn about us."

No words. Horses snuffling, hoofs clopping, grass being torn off. You could almost hear the dust drifting down and settling.

"That's when things changed between us, isn't it?"

So you don't have the gumption to mention Ma's death.

"No, it changed probably six years before that, when you left the first time." Nolie looked at his father levelly now and threw the words like punches. "But when she died, that's when I took an oath never to have anything more to do with you."

The old man didn't flinch, didn't seem to react at all. More silence.

More snuffling and clopping. "That's what Bell Englund told me."

Nolie nodded. "I told him to."

"That's when you moved in with him. When you started using his name." The old man said it lightly, like it was a small matter.

"Yeah." You might think I needed a home.

"Now you broke your own rule. You came after me."

"I'm going to see you get what you deserve."

The old man nodded. Nodded again. Nodded one more time. Finally he said, "I think I already did that."

&&&

The old man was riding beside him again, still with a companionable manner, as though to say, 'Since we can't be family, let's be friends.'

Bird and the pack horses were almost out of shouting distance. It was like she felt what the old man was oblivious of, sensed the enmity sucking like a whirlpool, and wanted to stay clear of it.

Nolie didn't know why he wanted to ask. Maybe he wanted to get a conversation going so the old man wouldn't notice he was rubbing the rope against metal. Or maybe he wanted to drive the Leprechaun away. Or pull his ear close enough to bite it off.

"You said you thought I knew. Knew what?"

The old man sighed. "Why I pulled that disappearing act up in Yellowstone."

"Humph." You think you can explain something like that?

"Two men came in that night, you may recall. That was the only kind of contact I ever had with the Wild Bunch--some were friends. Those two were giving me a tip."

The old man sighed with a wheezing sound. "Yes, some boys up there in Johnson County were mavericking, some according to what chance brought them, some in a more deliberate way. Neither was a crime in Wyoming until the Cheyenne Ring decided it was. Then the hustler became a rustler. Lots of the boys kept at it anyway." The old man's eyes drifted away, and maybe his thoughts. "And some of them were just plain dishonest."

"Like you?"

The old man looked at Nolie without harshness. "Actually, I was hard-rocking up toward Powder River Pass. But I was bunking part time with Nate Champion, who was a mavericker. A rustler. Or else all his cows dropped two calves twice a year."

The old man took a moment, maybe to remember.

Nolie noticed he could see the town of Lander off to the left. Five miles, it looked like, or even less.

"By then the big outfits had joined into the Cheyenne Ring. The stockmen were mostly John Bulls who wanted to get rich on Wyoming grass and didn't care who they trampled. They owned the one big bank in the state. They owned the legislature and the governor. They thought they owned the grass and water. So they hired Texas killers to so-called clean up Johnson County.

"They had a list of a hundred men to kill." The old man looked at Nolie hard. "Here's all you need to know about the list. I was on it. And I didn't own a single cow or calf. I was just friends with a mavericker." Nolie wondered what words the old man was carefully picking his way around and not saying.

"So we ran their asses out of Johnson County. Would have run 'em straight to hell if the governor hadn't sent the militia.

"It never came to trial . . . Well, you know about that. Come summer, some stock detectives, which is just another word for hired killer, started in on the quiet, looking for the hundred men, meaning to run them out of the country or leave them where their bones wouldn't be seen soon. Dry-gulchers."

The old man studied Nolie's face. "Those fellows came telling me one of those dry-gulchers was on my trail. They'd seen him close as Sylvan Pass. I needed to put my carcass somewhere else, fast." The old man rode a few steps in silence. "So I did."

He wheezed again. "I told your ma in the middle of the night. She wailed about me being an outlaw on the run from the law, but I wasn't any such thing.

"Never knew until now she didn't tell you."

She way busy dying, you ass!

Nolie writhed in the saddle. He wouldn't say anything at all. I'll give you nothing! But his wrists were loosening. It won't be long.

He had it all planned. He had another little trick from a saddle maker. When he jerked on his belt buckle, it became the handle of a knife. The blade was short, but plenty sharp enough to cut a throat.

"So what's your excuse for all those other times?"

Nolie saw his father struggle with something, a weight from the past.

"You better hear the rest of the story. A few days later I asked myself what I was running from. Asked why I didn't turn on the son of a bitch who was hunting me and hunt him. Told myself I was trying not to involve you and your mother. After reflection, I didn't believe myself. More like, I was in love with the wandering life."

They rode in silence. Nolie's mind was on his knife, not his father's words.

"So I went on a bender. Whoo-e-e-e, did I get drunk. Couple weeks later, still drunk, I found out about your ma. Which made me feel sorry for myself. Hell, wasn't I a man who'd practically killed his wife?"

Now the old man glared. "Didn't sober up for about a month, only then 'cause I ran out of money. Was another month before I thought about you and how you must have felt. When I got to Cheyenne, you were with Englund, and . . .

He snorted in self-disgust. "What do you think about a father who would do that?"

Nolie said levelly, "Nothing new about it for you."

They jogged along. "What about Ma? Why'd she put up with you?"

The old man let moments pass. "She loved me in her way. No credit to me--some women just get . . . fixed on their man. You mistreat them, they stay with you. They come back for more, some women." He paused, shrugged. "I don't know why."

Nolie wished he dared look into his father's face. Revenge felt cold and delicious. "So what about those other times you ran off? Were you feeling sorry for yourself?"

The Leprechaun waited so long Nolie didn't think he was going to answer.

"Worse. I was dreaming of bonanza. The big strike. The prince of all paydays." He shook his head. "It was headier than whiskey. Though I had plenty of the liquid kind too. I was on a high and heading to go higher."

Damn close now.

"What is it about bonanzas?"

"You dream. You hope. You seduce yourself. You hate your life--hate yourself--you dream of the future. There's nothing as cruel as hope."

Silence. Then the Leprechaun chuckled. "Then, too, there's nothing finer than a big blast of dinah in a shaft. It sounds . . ." The old man got lost in something. "It booms like the voice of God on Judgment Day."

Nolie snorted. Come on, rope!

"You feel like God much any more?"

"I sobered up at Rawlins. When you're sober, you think clearer. In prison you have a lot of time to think."

"You don't think on 'bonanza'?"

The old man smiled. "I must admit I do. Even now. I'm headed for British Columbia. Not far from Prince George, three days' ride, is the tallest, greenest grass you ever saw. Looking out over it is like watching the ocean. It rises and flattens, swells and undulates, it moves like the body of a heated-up woman. You see it, you'll never forget it." The Leprechaun rode a few steps with his mind in Canada. "This bank money will buy a lot of grass. I can spend my old age on a horse counting my own cows. You ought to come with me."

"I don't ride with bandits."

The old man chuckled. "I've given in a lot to madness in my life. I never stole anything but the money of the Bank of the Cheyenne Ring. That I don't regret, not a smidgeon. I've robbed it three times. If I wasn't headed north for good, I'd rob the bastards again." "How come is that?"

"Nate Champion was my friend."

Nolie remembered. The Ring's pistoleros had killed just two of the hundred men, Nate Champion and Nick Ray.

"Simple as that?"

The old man grinned broad and slow. "That, and I was on the list."

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They rode in silence for a while. Dark was gathering. It felt lonely and comfortless, the dark. Nolie felt strange. It reminded him of listening to calves that were newly branded and cut, moaning for their mothers. Why isn't the damn rope breaking? Half-consciously, he began to rub it hard against the metal edge again.

I'd better distract him.

"Any other crimes to confess, while you're in the mood?"

Give me one more minute, you bastard.

"Yes. Those first years I was gone? From when you were what, nine to fifteen?" The old man hesitated. "Yes. I had a woman. Sissy, Bird's mom."

I knew it!

The old man just let the statement sit there. The feeling of seventeen years ago--cold, hurt, abandonment--flash-flooded through Nolie's blood.

"I called her Bonanza. I thought South Pass was where I'd finally get rich. That summer, well, Sissy and me agreed to keep it from you. Shouldn't have done that."

The old man shook his head, eyeballing his own past.

Nolie raged. In his mind's eye he saw his knife lop the head off. It rolled off through the dust, dribbling blood.

"She was fun. She was good. I was crazy about her. Bird was like a daughter to me."

You already had a kid! Me!

Silence.

Br-r-r-e-a-k! Nolie screamed in his mind.

"She's still up in South Pass, running the hotel. Run me off a long time ago." With one last scrape he popped the rope!

Nolie Englund roared "No-o-o-o!"

He lunged for Ryan Ardmore O'Neill. He knocked the bastard off his horse. Then he lost a couple of moments to blackness. When he came to, he was draped around his father's neck, the point of the little knife pricking the carotid artery. A wisp of blood wended its way down, soft and easy as a tear.

"If you say a word," whispered Nolie harshly, "I'll cut your goddam throat."

The old man didn't move, didn't breathe.

"Just sit still." They were on a knoll. Two hundred yards ahead Bird was about to walk the horses below the crest of a hill. Ryan O'Neill and Nolie watched her head, then the pack horses, drop out of sight.

Quickly, Nolie took his father's sidearm and put it in his own holster.

He bound the old man's hands with his own pigging strings. "S better if

you tie a man's hands behind him," Nolie said softly, "like this!" With that word he jerked the strings until they hurt. He liked the feeling of strength in his arms.

He led the Leprechaun and the horses back down the hill. "We're gonna make a run for Lander," he said. "Down this draw." The dry creek bed was flat and easy. "If she misses us in one minute, we may have a problem. If she doesn't for five minutes, she'll never catch us in the dark. If she does, I'll shoot you." Nolie glared at his father. "You get that? I swear it. I'll shoot you."

The Leprechaun nodded equably.

Always the man of style, Nolie thought.

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Nolie eased down the two steps in front of the jail. Damn, I feel good, he told himself. The sound of the cell door clanging shut on his father had been very, very sweet. The old man hadn't said a word to him, just kept his eyes cast down, like he was studying his own insides miserably. Nolie stepped into the street. It was dusty and the wind was blowing. Since this was spring, why wasn't there any rain?

What are you going to do now, Nolie Englund? he said to himself.

Now that you got what you want? You'll get a bonus. How you gonna spend it? Bet you don't buy no grass in Canada.

He stomped his feet a little, just to put sound into the empty street. He decided to go over to the hotel and have a steak and biscuits and fried potatoes and four eggs. Hell, six eggs.

The evening was cool. He thought he'd splurge on a room at the hotel, too. Pinkerton would pay for it.

Why did you put your father in jail, Nolie Englund?

He squirmed as he walked. He rotated his shoulders, trying to loosen them. He listened to the thumps of his own boots like they were oracles. Because he robbed the Bank of Cheyenne three times. Admitted it. Because the law wants him. Because the Pinkerton Agency asked me to bring him in. Paid me to do it.

Silence, except for the enigmatic plop of his own boots.

Now the voice inside him snarled a little. Because the son of a bitch set me up and humiliated me. And oh, Godamighty, I got him back.

It sounded like a small, spiteful voice.

&&&

After the steak and eggs, he had cherry cobbler. With the cobbler came Bird. She walked right in and sat down without a fare-thee-well. Nolie noticed she'd changed into a skirt. She didn't look much out of place in the hotel, that's how fair-skinned she was, for an Indian. She'd taken her hair out of braids and put it on top of her head. He looked at her skeptically, wondering if the waitress would throw her out of the restaurant.

"I'm three-quarters white," Bird said. "My father built this hotel. The world isn't always what you think it is."

"You come here to tell me about life?"

She smiled, but her face didn't look young and beautiful, not any more, not to Nolie.

"Maybe I did," she said. "What's going to happen to him?"

"You answer my questions first. What do you get out of this?"

"He's giving Ma and me the hotel. His half interest."

"I knew it wasn't love."

"You are a case."

Nolie eyed her hard. "I was crazy about you. Why'd you run off?"

"I wanted the life I grew up in. I wanted my mother's people."

"Try harder."

"OK. You weren't any fun. Your dad, he's full of life. But not you, then or now."

Nolie held her eyes and finally believed. So what? "What's going to happen to him?"

"Three offenses admitted, one prior conviction. I don't see him getting out in this lifetime. Especially since he told the county sheriff here that if they let him go, he'd hit the bank again."

She chuckled, and her eyes lit up. She liked that. Seemed she liked the Leprechaun.

"You don't know what's going on." She waited and then went on.

"I'm going to turn some cards up on the table. You can look at 'em or not."

Nolie said nothing.

"You think Ryan hit the bank for money, or revenge, or whatever. You also think he did it to make a fool out of you. You're exactly wrong."

Nolie tried to smile at her and felt it come out a grimace. "I know him," he said. "I hate him."

"You know nothing." She tapped a finger on the tablecloth, appraising him. Then she tapped some more. Finally she spoke with both her words and her eyes. "He did it 'cause he wants his son back."

She waited so long he thought that was the end. He signaled for coffee. He could outwait anybody.

"We knew Englund would send you after him, no mistake. You refused to talk to him for, what, ten years? You're all he's got in the world." Now she smiled big. "He won. He talked and you listened."

"He sure enough talked. Enough to hang himself."

Bird shook her head, disbelieving. "I oughta stick awls in your ears. You're like Custer," she said, "you don't listen." She took a big breath and let it out, eying Nolie hard. "He knew he'd go to jail the rest of his life if you didn't understand. He wanted you in his life. He gambled and lost."

She stood up, dragged her fingernails across the table, turned, cast one glance sidelong at Nolie, and walked out.

&&&

By the time the sun was all the way up, Nolie was sitting in the street below the window of his father's cell, propped against the wall of the jail,

coffee cup in hand. He felt oddly light and . . . he didn't know what. Music came through the bars. The old man had charmed the jailer out of his fiddle. The song was "Shenandoah":

Oh, Shennydore, I long to see you, Away, you rolling river.

Oh, Shennydore, I long to see you.

Away, we're bound away,

'Cross the Wide Missouri.

It floated on the air, haunting, lonely as if it was trying to fill the blackness between the stars.

When the music ended, the old man's voice came through the bars. "I take it this isn't an official visit?"

"The Pinkerton man's job is done," Nolie answered. His own voice felt odd to him. "What is it with you and dreams?"

"Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?"

Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate.

"William Morris, that is."

"Goddam poetry."

The Leprechaun chuckled.

"We are the music makers,

We are the dreamers of dreams,

Wandering by long sea-breakers,

And sitting by desolate streams.

"That's Arthur O'Shaughnessy. The Irish have the best poets."

"Quote me something against dreams."

The old man was quiet for a while, and when he spoke his voice was sober:

"But when the days of golden dreams had perished,
And even Despair was powerless to destroy,
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened, and fed without the aid of joy."

"Emily Bronte, a bloody Brit. But it's true." Nolie didn't know what to think about that. "I'm going to the hotel for breakfast. You want anything?"

"When you're done, company would be good. You gonna have steak and six eggs again?"

"You can find out what I eat from jail?"

"Sure."

"Yeah, steak and eggs again," said Nolie, smiling.

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When Nolie propped himself back against the jailhouse wall, the old man was playing the mouth harp. Before the day was over, he'd probably have the sheriff and deputy joining in, then the whole town would be dancing outside his window. Charmer, seducer.

The song was a sentimental one, "Barbara Allen." The old man played with emotion gushing.

When he finished, Nolie asked, "What's wrong with dreaming?"

"If you can dream--and not make dreams your master."

"That's Kipling," the Leprechaun explained. "The kicker line is, 'You'll be a man, my son.'"

Man. Yes, a man. "I thought Kipling was British."

"Oops. I forgot."

"What's wrong with hoping?"

"There's nothing crueller than hope."

"Wanting a better future?"

"What I say is, Look in the mirror at yourself now, look at the world around you, right now, and say, 'Bonanza!'"

Immediately the old man started a jig. Nolie could hear the soles of his worn Jefferson boots slapping the concrete floor of the cell.

Nolie listened to his father dance and play. He grinned.

A stranger stopped in the street, looked up at the jail window, down at Nolie, back up at the window. "That Ryan O'Neill in there?"

"It is."

"He's crazy."

Nolie imagined the body of his father whirling in the air, a spirit, a leprechaun, huge and comic and all penned up. "He is that." &&& Nolie made his purchases at the Mercantile right in Lander. They'd figure it all out easy, but he wasn't trying to trick anyone.

It was a long wait until dark. He couldn't bring himself to sit by the jail window and listen, or sit by the window and talk. He hung around in the hotel restaurant and lobby and drank coffee and stared out the window. He'd never felt so confused in his life. Scared, too. He heaved in a lungful of air and blew it out. At least his breath came easier now.

After midnight he tied the horses to the rail in front of the jail. Then he sat down outside his father's window and waited. He didn't sleep a wink. His father snored the whole time. Nolie imagined that he was having delightful, fantastical dreams.

About three a.m. by the Big Dipper, Nolie got out his supplies and laid them against the jail wall. He would work fast and take a chance that no one would notice quick enough. His father was in a corner cell. Nolie worked against the wall of the empty cell just beyond it.

If we get caught, his snoring will keep me awake for years.

It didn't take long to rig. Nolie was surprised at how simple it was. He just did as the clerk told him. Hard to build things, easy to destroy them.

According to the clerk it was a thirty-second-per-minute fuse, completely reliable. That was plenty of time. He lit it an inch from the dinah and strolled out of the alley and . . .

KAR-BO-O-O-OM!

The blast knocked him across the road. He fetched up against the boardwalk, his head aching from the knock.

Groggy, he looked at his handiwork. The whole alley wall of the jail was tumbled, right to the corner. You're right, Pa, it booms like the voice of God.

His bones froze. "Pa!" he screamed.

Ryan O'Neill staggered out of the dust. "Too much!" the old man said, "too much dinah!" He was wiping dust out of his hair and blood off his face. But on his feet, walking. Grinning, too.

"Let's get!" Nolie yelled, and started running for the horses. He heard the Leprechaun behind.

They walked the mounts down a side street with pretend dignity. He figured they were so ordinary no one would notice. When they hit the main road west, they ran the horses like hell.

Two miles toward the mountain they slowed to a ground-eating lope.

There wouldn't be any pursuit tonight.. "Where we going?" called Ryan over the hoof drums.

Nolie's blood was blaring like a marching band.

Do I feel like a man now? If that means feeling scared, yeah.

"Canada," said Nolie.

"Canada?"

"Yeah."

"You riding north too, Laddie?"

Nolie gave him an ironic look. "Until you call me Laddie again."

The Leprechaun chuckled. "I get that, Nolie."

Nolie stopped his horse, turned in the saddle, looked at his father.

"They'll be after both of us. We're on the lam together."

Ryan O'Neill held his eyes up toward the mountain for a long moment. It was a dark shadow below a bright, star-strewn sky. At last the Leprechaun said softly, "Bonanza!"