

The background of the book cover is a collage of Western-themed images. At the top, a clear blue sky is visible. Below it, a brown leather cowboy hat with a wide brim and decorative stitching is shown. In the foreground, a wooden handle of a knife or tool is visible, resting on a piece of weathered, greyish-brown wood. To the right, a portion of a dark blue, intricately patterned leather saddle is visible. The overall composition suggests a classic Western setting.

THE CAN'T MISS KID

A WESTERN NOVEL

BOB O'BRIEN



A Western novel set in 1892 concerning an aging cowboy/ex-lawman and the people around him in the town of Brown Bear Montana and how they interact. It's a new approach to an old subject in novel form. A well researched and informative work of western fiction. The novel mixes Old West action and romance with strong inter-personal relationships and humor, portraying people of the time true to life.

The Can't Miss Kid

by Bob O'Brien

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First Edition

Chapter 1

Trip To Brown Bear

"Blue Montana Skies, I don't think so?," Tom thought to himself this Monday morning in early April. Rain was coming down in sheets now and it appeared to him that it was going to last all day. Not a good day, all in all, to take a long ride into town just to pick up a registered letter, but he shrugged, it had to be done. The letter had to be something urgent or why else would it have been sent as Registered mail.

Tom had already been to the cookhouse for breakfast and coffee and as the clock neared 07:00 AM it was time to get on all the rain gear, as well as the blanket lined denim jacket, his oldest chaps, and of course the two custom made Colt 45's with the walnut hand grips that was his trademark. He decided on the largest yellow slicker and rain cape that he had in his gear. Tom had considered wearing his range hat, but it was too good and too broken in to get soaked, so he took down a yellow skimmer with the brim turned up in front and turned down over his neck in the back. He was ready to ride.

Tom hurried across the open lot from the bunkhouse to the horse barn, trying to dodge the raindrops, unsuccessfully. His horse was munching some hay in his stall, as if to say, disinterested, "Do we really have to do this?"

Tom slipped into the stall with the familiar bridle in his hand. "Well, ole Lunkhead, are you ready to roll this morning?"

The horse, a strangely beautiful Indian paint horse of many shades of white, brown and tan that Tom had tamed in the wilds of Arizona years before nodded his head and snorted. In short order, Tom had

saddled and mounted the stallion. He slid back the barn door and horse and rider went out into rain, and after closing the barn door behind them, were off to town, but not at a fast gait.

The road was mostly pure mud, so Tom stayed on the side of the road in the grass and patches of melting snow. If he could make the way station at the crossroads in a couple of hours, there would be hot coffee and maybe a hot cinnamon biscuit to be had, he thought.

Horse and rider rode steadily through the rain. The rain alternating between a downpour and a much finer mist, much the way Tom remembered what folks in County Clare Ireland called it when he was growing up there as a young boy. "A bit o' weather today." they would say.

Tom smiled at this memory and pressed on, 09:15AM or so, Tom could smell the smoke from the way station, and he smiled. "Soon, ole Lunkhead, we'll take a breather. Eh?" he told the horse, as he gave him a slight spur.

The way station horses were all in the barn, and the corral was empty. Thick smoke was coming from the cabin chimney. The station-keeper's dog started to bark as horse and rider approached. The station keeper came out onto the porch and recognizing the rider, waved him in.

"Hey Tom! Where you headed on a day like this?" Cy Enfield, the station keeper called out as Tom rode up.

"Business in Brown Bear to look after, kind of urgent I guess." Tom replied as he reined in. "Got any coffee made, Cy?"

"Just perked a fresh pot, Tom." came the reply. Tom smiled a sigh of relief as he climbed down from the saddle.

"Can I put the lunkhead in the barn whilst I have a cup?"

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"Sure thing Tom. Glad to have the company."

"Did you make a pan of those cinnamon biscuits that I like this morning with the raisins in 'em?" Tom asked as they walked to the barn leading his horse by the reins.

"No. Sorry Tom, but I'm just about out of everything here, right now." Cy replied almost apologetically. Cy Enfield was a wiry man in his 50's that had been with Wells-Fargo for many years as a horse wrangler of one sort or another. He was also was a recent widower, whose wife died over the winter from pneumonia and he wasn't a good Cook. "I've got soda biscuits and butter, no jam either, but the biscuits turned out pretty good, for a change."

Tom smiled. "I'll try 'em, I suppose, but it's the coffee I need. I'm about froze up. Any luck, by the way, in hiring a cook?"

"No, but the main office in San Francisco is looking, for what that's worth. No ranch cook or Mexican will do here. We need somebody who knows how to cook for passengers? Now my Jenny could do that." Cy replied as he poured out a large china mug of black coffee.

Tom blew on it, tasted it and smiled, "Goes down real good, Cy."

"Would you like a dram of Irish in that coffee?" Cy asked as he sat a soda biscuit and the butter before Tom on a long table.

"Irish! Out here?" Tom laughed, "Why I never knew an old limey like you would even know about Irish, let alone have some here, and as much as I really would like to, I'll have to pass for now."

"It must be really important business in Brown Bear to keep the famous "Can't Miss Kid" from the broth of the Emerald Isle." Cy mused.

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"You never can tell, old friend, you never can tell," Tom replied as he finished his biscuit and coffee, "maybe on the way back."

The rain had let up to a heavy mist as Tom slipped a two-bit piece onto the table, bid farewell to his friend and in a short minute or two was spurring his horse down the trail to the east and the town of Brown Bear, with Cy waving from the porch.

The town of Brown Bear hadn't been a town for very long. After the range wars that raged in this part of Montana in 1887-88, which by the way, took the U.S. Cavalry, the U.S. Marshal Service, the Canadian Mounties, various Indian entities and many "regulators", with and without portfolios to put down, it was decided by the people who had money that a town was needed close at hand to facilitate local commerce.

A Catholic Mission School was already built on the edge of treaty land, situated on the high eastern banks of the Little Powder River. Many Indian children and local whites as well went to school there.

In short order, a bridge was built across the Little Powder from the west to the east, near the mission school at what would be the north end of town. The town was one long "T" shaped enclave. Two long blocks ran along the river, and split in the middle by a street that ran east to a saw-mill and then formed a trail on eastward and then on southward to Moorcroft Wyoming.

Brown Bear got its name mainly because years before an Indian had seen a brown bear slapping fish out of the water and probably had not seen such an event there before or since. In any case, feelings still ran high in some quarters and it would have been impossible to name the town after anybody living or dead following the range war, without somebody going for their gun.

One of the "regulators", a former Texas Ranger, U.S. Marshal and West Point graduate, who had fallen on hard times was named town

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marshal. His name was Chester Lee Horseman from Uvalde Texas, and he was Tom Feeney's best friend and had been for twenty-five years. Tom and Chester Lee had rode up together from Arizona when they heard about the range war and found work as "regulators", sort of semi-legal lawmen that may have been a little too quick on the draw and a little too quick with a rope, but they got the job done.

Soon Brown Bear had a full line of stores and emporia with a nice cafe and bar with rooms to rent, a tailor shop, boot and leather repair shop, a feed and grain store and corral with barn for livery services. Wells-Fargo had a full service office, stage and freight depot, bank, post office and a telegraph all under one roof. The center of town featured a brick building which housed the marshal's office and jail and the town hall on the first floor and Marshal Horseman's quarters and a room for the circuit judge's use when he was in town. Other stores included a general store, grocery, hardware and gunsmith/barber where baths and shaves could be had as well as gun work. At the far eastern edge of town was a steam powered, state of the art, saw-mill ran by the Petrauskas brothers, Johann and Franz from near Dresden Germany. They spoke little English, but they knew their business, which was flourishing, since many barns and ranch houses and other buildings needed to be replaced. The Cattlemen's Association was the last building at the far south end of town. It was full of bullet holes, with broken windows shot out and a lot of anger still among some members towards some others.

It was 1892 and the town had running water pumped from above the north end of town to a large reservoir with a covered roof by a gasoline powered pump. The water was clean and pure from the Little Powder. Pipes were laid as the town was planned out. Sewer lines were also put in at the same time and emptied back into the Little Powder River at about half a mile south of town. Hopes for electric lights and telephones, not to mention brick paved streets were on a wish list for the not too distant future as well. Brown Bear was up and coming as a frontier town, quiet and uncorrupt, which was saying something for 1892 Montana.

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Tom Feeney was coming near to town and as he rode towards the bridge leading into Brown Bear, he heard the Angelus bell at the Mission School and knew he had made good time, rain or not. He also smelled something good cooking somewhere in town and he was immediately hungry.

Chapter 2

Hot Soup And Hot Lead

Turning off the bridge and down the muddy main street, Tom spurred his horse to a trot and went by the café which he noticed was crowded with lunch seekers. He turned up the mid-town cross street and went straight to the Wells-Fargo building. The mist was still very heavy and the clouds were low and dark.

A look of consternation came across his face as he read the sign on the front door window. CLOSED FOR LUNCH, it said. "Oh, well." he sighed as he turned the horse away and spurred him towards the opposite side of the street where the livery stable was located.

"Anybody in there?" he called out, "Hello."

Almost immediately, a young man, very thin and with blond hair, opened the door a little and looked out. "Who are you?" he asked.

"It's Tom Feeney. Can you look after the lunkhead? He's miserable as I am."

The young man, wearing bib overalls and a plaid flannel shirt over red flannel underwear, opened the door just far enough to allow the horse and rider into the barn.

"I don't believe I know you, young man." Tom stated as he climbed down from the saddle, himself soaking wet.

"I'm P.A. Dean from down Iowa way. My uncle Harold sent for me to come up and help him with things around here. Oh! But I've heard

and read about you.", with a laugh in his voice, "Aren't you the Can't Miss Kid from the dime novels?"

"Aye, that I would be." came the acknowledgement.

"What, can I do for you sir?"

"Well this ole lunkhead, that's his name, Lunkhead, has had a long ride this morning as you can see. He has to be cleaned up and curried and dried off,"

"We can do that." was the eager reply.

"After he's dried and all, cover him with a good blanket", Tom continued, "and feed him some oats and hay and water him easy. I hadn't planned on staying overnight but I probably will. In that case I'll want to ride out early. Can you do anything about drying out the saddle and saddle blanket and bridle?"

"I'm sure if I put them next to the stove in the office, they will do fine." P.A. assured him with a smile and a twinkle in his eye.

"Good lad." Tom said as he pressed a five dollar gold piece into the boys' hand. "I'll be back.", and with that walked out of the barn and down the street to the marshal's office under the shelter of the common porch front.

Tom swung back the door of the marshal's office and stepped inside. Chester Lee looked up from his paper work and peered at Tom over his reading glasses with a bemused smile crossing his face and calmly stated the obvious, "Well, it's the Can't Miss Kid or is it Captain Ahab? The Pacific Ocean is back that-a-way if 'n your hunting whales, Cap'n.", pointing to the west with an overly broad gesture. "What brings you to town on not only a Monday, but a bloody day such as this? This is a nice surprise."

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Chester Lee Horseman always looked the same. He was older now, 52 to be precise, and a little thinning and graying in the hair department, but he always wore a sort of uniform, for him. White silk shirt with the cuffs rolled up, exposing thick wrists and hammy fists, a black veal skin vest with his badge pinned to the flap of the breast pocket where he used to keep cigars but now only a pencil and pad. His pants were black gabardine, which was held up by a hand tooled black belt, which Tom had made for him with a silver buckle he had owned for years, somewhat beat up, with one large lone star squarely in the center. His boots were custom made by a Mexican boot maker across from Corpus Christi, Texas whose father had made them for Chester Lee as well early on. His gun belt was a leather thing of beauty, which Tom had also made for him with silver inlays and C L H across the back in 2 inch letters in abalone shell. The gun was a Colt 44 "Peacemaker" with bone handles, well blued and ready for action. The holster was always tied down, never loose.

"I have to pick up a registered letter", Tom explained, "but the Wells-Fargo post office closes for lunch. I have no idea what it's about, just that it's registered and I had to come to town to sign for it."

"Ah, that would be Herr Erzinger.", Chester Lee said, "He's Swiss and as precise as the wind-up gold Swiss watch in his pocket. When the mission bell rings, his door is locked for one hour. He's probably in the cafe."

"Good to know. Now speaking of lunch, compadre, I'm ready for mine right now." Tom stated.

"Hang all that rain gear and jacket on that peg by the stove, then and let's head over to the cafe right next door. We should be able to find a table now." Chester Lee replied.

Tom went into a cell, ran some tap water and washed his hands and wiped away the water from his face and hands as best he could.

"O K I ready" he said.

Chester Lee looked him over for a minute and said "When? Just when are you going to buy some clothes? Those jeans and chambray bib shirt are getting pretty worn out. When did you buy that rig, 1880 or so?"

"Yeah, or so, I guess. Let me take off the chaps too." Tom replied and slipped out of the chaps and hung them on another peg. "Let's go" he said.

The Cafe was full of people as Tom and Chester Lee entered. The bar was pretty well full as well. An older woman ran the place. "Ola", Chester Lee called out, "Where's my table?"

The woman came out of the kitchen wiping her hands on her apron. "It's the one back there with the wooden box full of empty bottles on it.", she replied, pointing.

It was a small table for two. The two men walked over to the table. Tom sat the box of bottles on the floor next to the wall, and they sat down. Chester Lee had caught the eye of Franz Petrauskas as they came in. Franz waved his hand and called out as they sat down "Prosit, Marshal", and raised his mug of beer for a long pull, and smiled a wide smile and wiped foam from his beard with a linen towel as he stood at the bar.

The waiter came over to the table and bowed slightly. "Drinks, gentlemen?" he inquired with warmth and a smile.

"Aye.", replied Tom, "A glass of Irish whiskey and a cup of black coffee."

Chester Lee begged off the whiskey seeing as how he was "on duty", but would take coffee and water.

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"What's on the menu, today?" Tom asked, "I'm very hungry."

"Thick potato soup with shaved ham and onions in it with Cat head biscuits with butter." was the waiter's reply.

"Sounds good, I'll have that too." said Chester Lee.

"Any pies today," Tom inquired, as I have a craving for pie?"

"We have fresh apple with lots of cinnamon and raisins baked in."

"Say no more, my man. I'll have that. Bring on the drinks." Tom said with a laugh.

The lunch hour was winding down and people were heading back to work. The Marshal stopped Herr Erzinger and introduced him to Tom and informed him that right after lunch, they would be over for the registered letter. Erzinger nodded and left and the drinks were at hand.

It was at that time, Tom noticed three men at a table across the room. One was in his mid-thirties, dressed rather nicely in hop-sack pants and white shirt, vest and cutaway coat with large black buttons, bareheaded. The second man, somewhat younger, dressed in newer jeans and a red mole-skin shirt and a brown derby hat. The third man was rather young, maybe 21 or so, he was wearing faded jeans, a blue and white checkered flannel shirt under a fringeless buckskin jacket and a black Stetson rested on his head. All were wearing guns, holsters tied down. "This can't be good." Tom thought to himself, as he shot a look at Chester Lee. Both men had their hands on their gun butts under the table instinctively.

The two older men came over to the table. The eldest man wore his holster just to the left of his front belt buckle, ready for a quick draw. The other had his hand near his gun, but Tom noticed that he had a slight tremble in his gun hand.

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"A green horn." Tom observed. The third man was now by the door as if to be covering the whole scene. He was nervous. His gun was holstered, but he had his hand on it, ready to draw.

"Another green horn" Tom surmised.

The two men were at the table. "Are you Tom Feeney?" the older man asked.

"I would be he." Tom replied, easing his 45 slightly from its holster.

"The one that's also known as The Can't Miss Kid?", he pressed.

"Yes, one and the same. What can I do for you?" Tom said, slightly agitated by now.

"Nothing, my good man, I have a message for you."

"Oh." said Tom.

By now, Chester Lee had also sensed something was afoot and had his pistol in his hand, still under the table.

"Just this!" the man growled as he drew his gun and fired point blank down at Tom.

Chapter 19

Meeting New People

Tom awoke around 6:30 AM on his own and got up and got washed up and put on the clean clothes from the previous evening. Looking out the hotel window, he could see Joe Yule standing on the porch puffing on his pipe.

Tom hurriedly made his way to the porch across the way and greeted the older man, "Good Morning Joe! When do you think Mass will start?"

"Father Don likes to get everything set up and then he likes to read his office before he begins Mass and he doesn't like to be disturbed while he reads it. It's a chore but he has to do it every day sometime." Yule explained. "We can peek in about 7:30 and he'll more than likely be done."

"That sounds good to me. Boy! I sure could drink some coffee just about now," Tom stated, "but I can't break this fast."

"That's why I smoke, boy-o. It fools my stomach", Joe replied with a hearty laugh.

At 7:30, Tom and Joe walked down to the little chapel and opened the door slightly and peered in. The door squeaked. Father Don was sitting in the front pew in his matching black chasuble and stole with the silver trim, ready to say Mass, but hadn't finished the office yet. He said nothing. He raised his right hand in the air, and without looking up, motioned the two men back outside.

They did so immediately.

The chapel was just south of the main building and it was small, maybe 30 feet long and 20 feet wide on the inside. It was made from split pine logs with the split side facing inward to form the walls and the log side showing on the exterior. The floor was thick pine boards and polished and waxed to a shiny gloss. Two crank out windows measuring about 12 inches wide and 18 inches long had stained glass in a sort of Tiffany Glass pattern with a light brown scroll across the middle which read "INRI" in black letters. Four made-to-order pews ran down the center of the floor with wooden kneelers, with black leather, bound missals and a few songbooks in the slots in the backs of the pews.

The alter was wood that had been painted to look like white marble with streaks of grey running through it. The alter was set up for Mass. No statues were in the room, but a bust of Jesus showing his Sacred Heart, in full color was on the right wall halfway between the altar and the door.

Father Don opened the chapel door and propped it open for ventilation and said to Joe and Tom. "It's time. I'm ready." and then he turned and walked to the altar. Tom was enthused the night before and this morning as well, but as Father Don started in Latin "Introibo ad altare Dei. Requiem t'ernam dona eis, Domine; et lux perp'etua eis (Translation; I go to the altar of God. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and may the perpetual light shine upon them.), and then right straight through the post communion prayers, Tom was detached as if shut out. He was not emotionally involved. He read along in the missal and took communion and followed Joe Yule's lead in going through the motions, but he felt nothing, as if an icy hand had come down and placed itself on his shoulder, if not his heart. He was glad when it was over.

At around 8:45A.M., or so, Tom and Father Don met for breakfast in the cafe. Both were smiling at each other. "How was Mass, Tom?" Father Don asked.

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"Very good, Father. I enjoyed it", he lied, and then added, "It's been a while for me I have to admit."

"I could see that, Tom. It makes no matter. Shall we eat?"

"Sounds good to me, What's good today?" Tom replied.

"Tuesdays are always hot cakes and syrup at Yule's Post. The bill of fare rarely changes here." Father Don said with a laugh.

Joe Yule came around then with a large coffee pot and two large mugs and filled the mugs and left again with Tom calling after him, "Didn't you forget something?"

"Oh, and what would that be, boy-o?" Yule replied with a coy smile.

"A bloody dram of Irish whiskey if you don't mind."

"I don't mind. Father, what's your drink?"

"I'll just stick to coffee." Father Don said, "That altar wine always gives me a slight buzz on an empty stomach." he laughed.

Tom had gone to the hotel and strapped on his guns after Mass and checked his saddle bags and his carpet bag. He hadn't checked out yet, but told the girl on the desk that he would do so shortly. He was anxious to be on the trail.

Father Don handed Tom a letter addressed to Harriet, "I hope this is a comfort to her, Tom." He said.

"Hearing from you.....I know it will be, Father Don." Tom replied

Breakfast came and the two men ate their fill of pancakes and then sat back with a second cup of coffee.

"I'm curious about one thing, Father Don, if you don't mind my asking." Tom started off.

"Ask me anything. I'm an open book."

"How did you get out here, if you were doing so well in New York? The Pope made you a monsignor for some reason, some reward for something. " Tom said.

"Well now, it wasn't quite that way. Archbishop Corrigan liked me well enough, but the Jesuits themselves, as an order, were never too thrilled with me. They did make the commitment to ole Joe to send a missionary for his chapel, but they couldn't get any takers. Not much missionary zeal when you're eating on Fifth Avenue, if you know what I mean." Father Don explained, "So finally they came to me, asked if I'd like to go to Wyoming to a small chapel at a trading post and minister to the flock and try and convert the Indians. I'd have a free hand and to sweeten the deal they would get me a promotion to monsignor straight away. I talked it over with the archbishop and he said if he was my age he'd grab it and go. He would be sorry to lose me but he knew it was for the best. I kissed his ring and he gave me his blessing and six months later I checked in here. I've been here for four years now. This is where I belong."

"I'm glad for you, Father." Tom replied, sipping on his hot fresh coffee.

Jack Hudson came in the cafe about then and from his scowl, it was obvious that he was in a bad mood. It was his day off, Tom surmised as Jack ordered coffee and whiskey and some biscuits. He didn't nod to anybody. He drank the whiskey and chased it with coffee and then more whiskey and he ate the biscuits in silence.

At about that time, there was a clamor outside. A white rider with an Indian girl and three Indian braves along with five horses loaded with furs and a string of Indian ponies stopped at the front porch. Joe Yule

saw them coming and was expecting them. He went out and directed the pack horses to the closest corral and the ponies into another further away.

This was Annie McGuigan, her adopted daughter Kimama, Kimama's older brother Soaring Hawk and two other braves named Matoskah (or White Bear) and another named, probably incorrectly at birth, "Snow Hare Has Long Ears." (No Shoshone translation known, but the name means that.)

Yule bade Annie and Kimama inside while he got out his accounts ledger pertaining to her. Annie McGuigan was a sight to see. She was wearing a cream colored Aran Isle knit cap which was black and gray from dirt and smoke and was well worn and pulled down across her forehead. Her face was dirty and pink across the bridge of her nose from cheek to cheek. Her eyes were brown and her eyebrows were auburn. She was not smiling. She wore a blue-black Navy style pea coat, which also was well worn and about two sizes too big for her small frame.

Annie might have been five foot one, maybe, but no taller. Under the pea coat she was wearing an Irish Aran knit sweater that had also seen much better days. She was wearing Indian moccasins and leggings, laced to the knees with thin strips of rawhide over well worn, faded and tattered jeans that were ready to be cut up for rags.

Kimama was also wearing the same type of moccasins and leggings as well as a buckskin skirt with splits up each side so she could straddle her pony. She was wearing a very old and very dirty blue U.S. Cavalry jacket over a paisley printed wine colored blouse. Kimama also was wearing a multi-colored beaded head band with a large eagle feather in the back in the bun of her hair and two long shafts of braided black hair on either side. Her eyes were black pools and she was obviously young, but didn't smile.

Jack Hudson observed the two newcomers to the room for a long moment, saying nothing and then bellowed out at the white person and mistaking Annie for a boy, shouted, "What we got here, a little squaw man and his squaw here to do a heap big trade with old Joe?", and he poured more whiskey. "What if I just take your goods and horses for myself and run you and the squaw there and the other Indians off to where you come from anyway? What would you do about it, boy?" Jack bellowed on.

Annie was getting a little steamed up. Her face was getting pinker and she quickly snapped the cap off and a very thick scalp of unkempt auburn hair fell out. Annie drew a revolver in a flash from her shoulder holster under the pea coat and said, gruffly, "Touch me goods and I'll kill you where you stand!", Annie had the drop on him and Jack more than embarrassed by this, was furious.

Studying the pistol in her hand, for a long moment, said slowly and with a note of caution in his voice, "Ain't that one of those Webley's that the Mounties carry up in Canada?"

"No it isn't.", Tom injected as he got up from the table, gun in hand. "It's O.K. miss, I got this." He smiled, turning to Annie. Tom looked at the gun for a moment. He hadn't seen one like it before either. "What kind of pistol is this, anyway?" he asked her, not taking his eyes off of Jack.

"Tis a Webley to be sure, mister, but it's one the Royal Irish Constabulary uses in Ireland. It's 44.2 Caliber, but it'll take a 44 shell just as easy." Annie explained.

Jack and Tom listened to this intently. Gunmen are always interested in guns. Father Don was a mere spectator. "Just where did this come from, then?" Tom asked, taking the pistol from Annie's hand.

"Ireland.", was the reply, "I brought it with me."

"And just where did you get this from?" Tom asked further.

"I took it from the cold, dead hand of a constable after I shot him. Need I say more?" was the cold, almost defiant reply.

Tom handed her back the pistol and she holstered it. Yule came back with the ledger and said, "Something wrong here?"

"No Joe, just a minor understanding between the lady here and your man, Jack. No harm, no foul as I see it." Tom replied, and released the hammer and holstered his own pistol.

"Good.", replied Joe, "Let's get to counting and grading, Annie." extending his hand towards the door.

"Come Kimama." Annie motioned to Kimama and they left the room. Jack Hudson was livid, but he kept his tongue until Yule and Annie and Kimama had exited the building and then he exploded at Tom. "Why did you have to step in? I know, you're some heap big gunfighter, I could have taken her with either gun in a heartbeat!"

"Jack, you're a dumb ass! She had the drop on you and if you'd have even flinched, that little girl would have put one right between your eyes. I stepped in and probably saved your life", Tom allowed. "This is the thanks I get, boy-o?"

"Who asked you? I'm a gunfighter! I also have a reputation. I'm not the famous 'Can't Miss Kid', but I can get her done when it's on the line! If word would get out that a girl beat me to the draw, I might as well go back to pitching hay, you son-of-a-bitch!" Jack went on.

"Pitching hay may be your calling, Jack." Tom laughed and gave Father Don a knowing glance.

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"I can settle this, right now!" Jack shouted and went quickly out the front door with Tom and Father Don left with puzzled looks on their faces.

In the distance, they heard Jack call out to Annie, "Fill your hand, bitch! I wanna know what you got! So draw!"

Immediately they heard three shots ring out. One loud crack and two more serious bangs at the same time, Tom and Father Don leaped up and ran for the door and burst out on a deadly scene.



A Western novel set in 1892 concerning an aging cowboy/ex-lawman and the people around him in the town of Brown Bear Montana and how they interact. It's a new approach to an old subject in novel form. A well researched and informative work of western fiction. The novel mixes Old West action and romance with strong inter-personal relationships and humor, portraying people of the time true to life.

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