

THE RENO KID

The Beginning



Allen Russell



During the late 1800s, Augustus Alcazar, a young man, is shot and experiences an unexplainable phenomenon. Surviving this ordeal, Augustus matures into a hardened mountain man, handy to have around, and handy with a gun. Sentenced to be hanged, Augustus (the Reno Kid) is transported to present day Nevada, embroiled in a modern day conflict involving murder, environmentalists, politicians and drugs.

The Reno Kid

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The Reno Kid

“The Beginning”

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A Reno Kid Book



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Chapter One: Riders of the Dires

"I'm sorry, Son," the doctor said as he emerged from the darkened room. "She hasn't much time...she wants to see you."

"Come closer, Augie," the woman whispered when the boy entered the room. Lying on the small bed with only an oil lamp for light, she looked pale and feeble. Her room was a small windowless space in the basement of the National House Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri.

Young Augustus Alcazar was doing his best to hide his pain as he walked to her side and took her hand, "How are you feeling, Ma?"

"I'm not long for this world."

"No Ma, no...you'll be all right, just wait and see."

"No, Augustus, my life is over and it's time for you to grow up. . . ." A racking cough interrupted her as she fought for another breath, "There isn't...much time." Pausing, she wiped her lip with a blood-stained rag, "you...you listen and listen close."

"I'm listening," he said, as a tear started down his cheek.

"I want you to get away from this place. Civilization killed your father, now it's killed me. The foul air of this city will be your death if you remain here."

"But, where can I go? How will I get there?"

"I know you don't remember much about your father, but he was born of a people who lived many miles to the southwest. His grandfather used to tell him stories of far away and long ago. Your people were kings before the Spanish came and enslaved them. Your father wanted to return to the land of his ancestors, but he died before we could find a way. The blood of kings flows within you, Augustus, always remember that, your destiny is in their land.

"But, I have no way of going anywhere."

"Over there," she said, pointing to the dresser in the corner. "The top drawer, I've been saving it for you." Opening the drawer, Augustus spied a small tin box. Inside, he found several bills and some coins.

"How much is in here?" he asked.

"Seventeen dollars and sixty-seven cents, I know...it isn't much, but. . . ."

“It’s a lot of money, but how. . . .”

“A few cents every month, for years...the medallion, is it there?”

“Is this it?” Augustus asked, holding up the rustic metal object. The ancient amulet appeared to be made of hammered gold and resembled a man with catlike features.

“A symbol of your ancestors,” his mother said, “Put it around your neck...keep it close to. . . .” Before she could finish, another racking cough shook her body. Then, as suddenly as it began, the spasms ceased and she fell silent.

Ma!...Ma!”

“She’s gone,” the doctor said, pulling the quilt up over the woman’s face. “I know you don’t understand, but she’s better off. The consumption was just too much for her. There was nothing more anyone could do.” The doctor removed a small notepad from his bag and scribbled: Marie Alcazar, time of death, 10:30 am, April 30, 1837. “Do you have any family in St. Louis?” he asked the boy when he was finished.

“I don’t have family anywhere,” Augustus replied.

“Well, don’t worry. I’ll have someone come for her body.”

“Will she go to the potter’s field?”

“No,” the doctor said, “I’ll make arrangements for her to be buried in a decent place.”

“I don’t have much money.”

“I’ll take care of the money,” Thomas Swain said, entering the room. Swain was the owner of the hotel. “I’m truly sorry for your loss,” he added, putting his arm around Augustus’ shoulders. “Boy, you can stay here and continue working if you want. I can’t pay you as much as I did your mother, but you’d have a roof over your head and something to eat.”

“Thank you sir, but her dying wish was for me to get away from this city.”

“How old are you, thirteen...fourteen?” Swain asked, “How far do you think you’ll get?”

“I don’t know, but I’m going to find out.”

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The next day, a cold rain pelted Augustus' head as he stood by and watched his mother's plain wooden casket being lowered into the ground. Aside from the grave-diggers, the only other person there was Thomas Swain. "Thank you again, sir," Augustus said when the grave was filled in. "This is a nice place."

"It was the least I could do for her," Swain said, "Won't you change your mind about leaving?"

Everything Augustus owned in the world was stuffed in a small rucksack hanging over his shoulder. "No sir, Ma wanted me to go, and I'm going."

Reaching in his pocket, Swain removed a gold coin and handed it to Augustus, "Here's twenty dollars," he said, "Good luck to you."

A twenty-dollar gold-piece was more money than Augustus had ever seen. "I don't...I can't. . . ."

"Take it," Swain said, folding the boy's wet fingers tightly over the coin. When you find fame and fortune, you can pay me back. So long, Augie, take care of yourself, and remember, you'll always have a home here if you want it." As Augustus watched his only friend in the world walk away, he almost went after Swain. Remembering his mother's last words, the boy reluctantly turned and walked into the gloom.

Darkness found Augustus aimlessly wandering the crowded streets of St. Louis. Never before had he felt so alone. He was near the docks at the confluence of the Mississippi and the Missouri Rivers. Since the return of Lewis and Clark in 1806, St. Louis had become the main gateway to the vast unclaimed land simply known to most as, "The West".

Hardly a month would go by without some adventure seeking expedition setting off, up the Missouri River. St. Louis was also the gathering place for hardy and sometimes foolhardy pioneers to head west with their long lines of covered wagons.

Unlike those well financed explorers, Augustus was hungry and tired but reluctant to spend any of his precious money. Passing the door to one of the local saloons, he noticed a crudely lettered handbill.

BOUND FOR CALIFORNIA
THE AMERICAN FUR COMPANY

Allen Russell

SEEKS ABLE-BODIED MEN OF SUBSTANCE
SOLDIERS, TRAPPERS, HUNTERS, EXPLORERS
APPLY INSIDE

Augustus went in the door and began surveying the room until he spotted three men sitting at a round table. In addition to the glowing oil lamp, there was a half-empty bottle of whiskey and several glasses. He noticed an opened ledger with several names written in it. Figuring they must be the men he was looking for, Augustus walked over to them.

“What can I do for you, Boy?” one of them asked. He was a smaller man who seemed to be in charge.

“I want to go to California.”

“You mean with us?” the man asked, as the other men at the table began to chuckle.

“With the fur company, yes sir.”

“This ain’t gonna be no church picnic, Sonny.”

“I’m not looking for a picnic, church or otherwise,” Augustus said, “and I’m bound for the west, alone or with the fur company, matters little to me.”

“Well, you got a mouth on you,” the man said. “You got a horse or a gun, or are you planning to walk to California? I would wager you don’t even own a knife.”

“The sign says you’re looking for men of substance,” Augustus said, “Is that true or not?”

“True enough,” the man said, “But, you best get on back to your mamma.”

“My mother’s dead, I put her in the ground this morning.”

“Well, I’m sorry about that, but we can’t use you.”

“Hold on there,” another man at the table said. Leaning forward, he put his elbows on the table and stared at Augustus for what seemed like a long time. He was a large dark-skinned man with wild bushy hair and a deep baritone voice, “How old are you, Kid?” he finally asked.

“Going on nineteen,” Augustus replied.

“I’d say nearer to fourteen. You got any qualities other than your inclination to lying?”

“I’m a pretty fair cook, my mother taught me.”

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“You ever packed a mule, rode a horse, trapped beaver, or fought Indians.”

“Yes sir,” Augustus replied.

“Which one?” the big man asked.

“All of that...and more.”

“Another lie, I suspect.”

“All right, Boy,” the small man said, “We’ve heard enough, you run along. . . .”

“Are you scared of the dark?” the big man asked.

“No, nor anything else,” Augustus replied.

“How ‘bout grizzlies and blood-thirsty Indians?”

“Least of all grizzlies and blood-thirsty Indians.”

“Sign him up,” the big man said, slapping the table, “This kid’s an epic liar, but he damn sure ain’t timid.”

“This boy will never make it to the mountains,” the smaller man said.

“I dare say, he’ll match you stride for stride,” the big man said.

“The company ain’t gonna like. . . .”

“Be here at daylight in the morning,” the big man said to Augustus. “I like you, Kid. You’re entertaining as hell and you got gumption. You remind me of...well...me!”

“I’ll be here...yes sir...thank you, Mr....”

“Beckwourth,” the big man said, sticking out his hand, “Jim Beckwourth.”

Weeks flew by as the fur traders moved steadily west. Under Beckwourth’s close watch, Augustus quickly became a skilled horseman. Beckwourth taught him to hit a mark with a Hawken and reload in a hurry. Augustus was eager to learn and the mountain man freely shared his knowledge of life in the wilderness.

Augustus never shirked his responsibilities or complained about anything. He cheerfully did his share and often a little more. The men of the expedition grew to respect him. They were well pleased with the boy’s prowess with stewpot and skillet. His mother had indeed taught him well. Buffalo, beaver, or porcupine; the boy could turn practically anything into a good meal.

“Well Kid, what do you think of ‘em?” Beckwourth asked his young companion one bright morning.

“Are those the Rockies?” Augustus asked.

They were a month out of St. Louis and sitting horseback, surveying the snow-covered mountain range still two days distant. “The very same,” Beckwourth said. “There’s no place on earth like ‘em, I reckon.”

“How long will it be till we get across and on to California?”

“A spell,” Beckwourth said. “The Rockies aren’t just one range of mountains. When we get across those in front of us, there’ll be another and still another. It’ll take a couple of months to get to the desert, and then we’ll still have the Sierra’s to cross before we reach California.”

“How is it you know so much about the wilderness?” Augustus asked, “How do you find your way out here?”

“Well, I’ll tell you, Kid, I been most everywhere and done most everything. I’m a child of the Crow Nation, husband to a dozen Indian wives, and the best mountain man I know. Aside from all that, I can outride, outshoot, and out lie any man living, with the possible exception of you.”

“Now Jim,” Augustus said, “I might’ve stretched the truth just a bit back there in St. Louis, but. . . .”

“Kid, you’re a ring-tailed wildcat and the biggest liar I ever had the misfortune of running into, and that’s the pure fact of the matter. Come on, we need to get back to the others, it’ll be dark. . . .”

“What is it, Jim?” Augustus asked when Beckwourth paused.

“Could be trouble, just stand easy and let me do the talking.”

Following Beckwourth’s gaze, Augustus spotted a half-dozen Indians approaching on horseback, “Do you know ‘em?” Augustus asked.

“Can’t say that I do,” Beckwourth said, “If it comes to a fight, don’t wait for me. If I say run, get the hell out of here.”

When the war party rode up, Beckwourth began making signs. Augustus didn’t understand, but the Indians did. “They’re Bannock,” Beckwourth said, “Looking for horses to steal, most likely.”

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The Indian who seemed to be in charge, indicated they wanted food, and powder and ball for their rifles. Beckwourth told them he was very poor and had no food or powder and ball to spare.

Having never seen a black man before, the Bannock were unsure as to what kind of creature Beckwourth was. Beckwourth was asking about the lead Indian's name. "Says he's called, Muddy Water or Muddy Hole, or some damn thing," Beckwourth said, "I can't really make it out. He's none too friendly, I can tell you that."

"Why don't you tell him you're a member of the Crow nation?" Augustus asked.

"Who do you think they were going to steal the horses from? These laggards are no friend of the Crow, I promise you."

"I was just thinking. . . ."

"Stop thinking," Beckwourth warned, "and smile."

"Smile?" Augustus repeated.

"Yes dammit, smile. You can smile can't you?"

"We ain't scared of some Indian named after a mud hole, are we?" Augustus asked with a big exaggerated smile on his face.

"Yes, we are," Beckwourth said without taking his eyes off the lead Indian, "Keep smiling, and get ready to run."

"Run?"

"Like the devil himself was grabbing at your coat tails."

Beckwourth made sign for another minute until Mud Hole ran out of patience. Seeing it was too late for any more words, Beckwourth let out a banshee-like scream and rode straight into the startled Mud Hole. The collision knocked Mud Hole's horse right off its feet. Plowing through the remaining Indians, Beckwourth spurred his horse down the ridgeline.

Yelling at the top of his lungs, Augustus spurred his horse into the suddenly disorganized war party and ran over the unhorsed Mud Hole. The Indian's horse was just getting to its feet when Augustus went by. In a moment of boldness, Augustus grabbed the horse's halter, wrapped the reins around his wrist, and followed the still whooping and hollering mountain man down the hill.

The men in camp heard Indians approaching and saw Beckwourth and Augustus riding for their lives. Grabbing up their guns, they ran out and met the Indians with a volley of shots. The Indians realizing they were far outnumbered and outgunned, turned away and fled.

“Boy,” Beckwourth exclaimed when he saw the stolen Indian pony, “You got more sand and less brains than any other man I know.”

“Yeah,” Augustus said, in his recently acquired mountain man vernacular, “I’ll bet old Mud Hole’s madder’n a gut shot grizzly right about now.”

“I suspect you’re right,” Beckwourth said, “Let that be a lesson to you, never let the Indians know you’re afraid. As soon as they think they got you buffaloed, you’re a goner.”

“I’ll remember,” Augustus said, “You scared the devil out of those Indians.”

“Yeah,” Beckwourth said with a grin, “Reckon they never seen anything like me before.”

True to Beckwourth’s prediction, it was early fall by the time they reached the western edge of the high desert. After cresting one of the hills surrounding the Black Desert, a large blue water lake appeared below them. The lake seemed strangely out of place, lying among the arid and steep sagebrush covered hills rolling away in every direction.

A few cottonwoods and juniper bushes grew along the lakeshore. There was a natural formation right on the edge of the lake that very much resembled a pyramid. The eroded dirt and rock cone was at least three-hundred feet high. In addition to the large barren island just offshore, they marveled at the mounds of huge pock-marked and sometimes hollow Tufa Rocks deposited in piles around the area.

John C. Fremont and Kit Carson would arrive at the lake some two years later. Fremont would write exaggerated claims about a six-hundred-foot pyramid and claim to be the first white men to ever see it, but he was hardly the first.

After arriving on the shore, the Fur Company party split into several groups and went off to scout around the lake. Beckwourth and Augustus were riding along the south shoreline when they came upon a small village of Paiute Indians.

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This group of Paiutes seemed healthy and happy but they had few possessions. They lived in huts made from reeds that grew around the lake. The weather in the high desert was dry and mild most of the time, eliminating the need for a more substantial lodge.

Beckwourth had been among the Southern Paiutes before and these northern cousins welcomed him into their lodges. After making the formal introductions and bestowing a few gifts on their hosts, Beckwourth and Augustus laid out their bedrolls in an empty hut.

“How is it you know these people?” Augustus asked.

“I’ve been told about these lake dwellers by other Indians,” Beckwourth said. “They’re known as Kuyuidokado, or Cui-ui, the fish eater’s. Most white men call them the Northern Paiutes.”

“Did you see the fur these Indians have?” Augustus asked.

“I did,” Beckwourth replied. “It’s mostly coyote and rabbit, and besides, these Indians won’t allow us to start trapping here. I can’t say as I blame ‘em, they don’t seem to have a hell of a lot. We’ll move on toward the mountains in a few days and try to find some virgin territory.”

“What are those little white skins?”

“Pelican chicks,” Beckwourth replied.

“What’s a pelican?”

“Boy, you ask a lot of questions.”

“Only way I’ll get to be as smart as you,” Augustus replied, playing to Beckwourth’s ego.

“I suppose, you got a point,” Beckwourth said. “Pelicans are big water birds. They come here every year from the Pacific Ocean by the hundreds. Build their nests and raise their young out on that island. The Indians go out there and take some of the chicks for food.”

“Why would the pelicans fly all the way over the mountains just to get here?”

“How in blazes would I know that? They’re pelicans, it’s what they do, that’s all I know.”

“I wish we could just fly over those mountains,” Augustus said, “I’m anxious to see the Pacific and California.”

“You flying over those mountains like a bird,” Beckwourth said with a chuckle, “You’ll never see that, can’t be done. Just remember,

Kid, we'll have to walk soft. California belongs to the Mexicans and they ain't real keen on us Americans coming into their land."

"Why don't these Paiutes have any horses?"

"No need, I suppose," Beckwourth replied, "There's no buffalo. This desert country won't support many grazing animals."

"You ever seen the country south of here?" Augustus asked.

"Not much of it," Beckwourth replied, "Why do you ask?"

"My ma told me I was descended from a race of people who lived in the southwest. She claimed they were kings until the Spanish came along and killed most of them."

"I wouldn't know about that, Kid."

"One day, I'm going down there and see for myself."

"I'm sure you will, Kid. I'm sure you will."

Beckwourth and his small party stayed several days with the Paiutes. It was a time for them to rest and restock their provisions. The night before they were to depart, Beckwourth said his goodbyes to the Indians and retired to his lodge.

"What's the matter, Kid?" he asked Augustus, "You look a little pale."

"I ain't feeling too good, Jim. Must've been something I ate."

"Get a good night's sleep. You'll feel better in the morning."

By dawn, Augustus was seriously ill. His fever was high and he was out of his head. The Indians did what they could for him, but it was obvious to Beckwourth the boy might not live through the day, much less travel over the mountains.

It was midmorning when Beckwourth entered the lodge and knelt beside Augustus. "Kid, can you hear me?" Augustus opened his eyes and tried to speak, but he was too weak. "I hate to leave you here," Beckwourth said, "but I got no choice. We got to meet the others and find a way across the Sierras before winter shuts us out."

Augustus tried to raise himself up, but fell back. "I know you want to go, but you're in a bad way," Beckwourth said. "It's a bad break, but every mountain man runs that risk. We'll be back through here next summer. If you ain't dead, maybe I'll see you then. So long, Kid. I was proud to know you."

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It was several days later when Augustus finally began to improve. The Indians were giving him a mixture of pinon nut meal, buck berries, desert parsley, and bitterroot. The concoction seemed to be working and his fever finally broke. He was still in and out of consciousness and too weak to even get up, but it appeared he would live.

Just before sundown that evening, he was awakened by excited voices and people running around outside. He was shocked to hear running horses, gunshots, and the shouts of men who were strangers with strange accents. The gunshots were followed with crying and occasional screams from the Paiute women and then all fell silent.

Being weak and lightheaded, Augustus wasn't sure if he was having a nightmare or if the sounds were real. He was struggling to get to his feet when a man with a rifle pulled back the covering of his lodge and looked in. "There's one more still alive in here," he shouted to his unseen companions.

"Shoot him," someone yelled, "He's just another stinking Indian."

Augustus threw up his hands as the man raised his rifle, "No. . . ." he tried to say just as the bullet ripped through his chest.

"Lacourse, how much do you think these furs are worth?" Pierre Barnabe asked. Barnabe was the man who shot Augustus and second in command of the group that had just slaughtered the Indians.

"There's not so much here," Lacourse said, "Just rabbit, coyote, and a few pronghorn." Etienne Lacourse was the leader of this brutal bunch of misfits. They wandered the frontier, taking whatever they wanted, wherever they found it. Indian people were little more than vermin to them.

"Why did we waste time in coming here?" Barnabe asked.

"I did not plan to find these particular Indians, but it is rumored the Paiutes around this lake may have access to riches, perhaps gold and silver," Lacourse said.

"I don't see any gold or silver," Barnabe said, "aside from the furs; all we found are a few of these small pouches."

"Pouches," Lacourse repeated, "what is in the pouches?"

“Pebbles,” Barnabe said, “Just these worthless small pebbles.” While he spoke, he dropped the stones on the ground and tossed the pouch into the fire. “Why would they keep something like that?”

“Who knows, these people are little more than primitive children,” Lacourse said, “We will camp here tonight and rest. Tomorrow we go south. The Indians down there may be richer than these poor dogs.”

Lacourse and his raiders were a small but brutal force of a dozen men. They took advantage of the scattered people on the frontier by attacking only small groups and never leaving anyone alive to tell of their deeds. In addition to their male victims, these raiders were responsible for the brutal murders of many innocent women and children from Saskatchewan to the Colorado River.

It was full dark and the moon was up as the raiders sat around the fire bragging about their conquests. The light from the full moon reflecting off the lake made the night bright. In spite of the dead bodies lined up just outside the firelight, they were laughing and doing their best to drink up the last of their whiskey.

None of them knew how far they would have to go or what they would be forced to do to get a new supply, nor did they care. These brutal men were used to living for the present and letting fate take care of the future. Had they known their future was growing short or unimaginable vengeance was headed their way, there would have been little reason for laughter.

Barnabe got up and stepped away from the group to relieve himself. Admiring the moonlight on the lake, he wished they had left some of the women alive a little longer. He smiled to himself as he touched the coin in his pocket. Earlier, he hadn't been completely honest with Lacourse, neglecting to mention the twenty-dollar gold-piece he found in the boy's pocket. In his excitement over the coin, Barnabe missed the golden amulet around Augustus' neck.

As he stood there, Barnabe was confused by the ominous silence. Earlier, the night had been filled with the sounds of waterfowl resting

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out on the lake and coyotes looking for company in the desert. Now it seemed even the insects were silent.

Just as Barnabe was buttoning up, a rush of wind engulfed him and a fleeting dark shadow resembling smoke rushed by him. "What de hell was that?" Lacourse asked from the campfire.

"I don't. . . ." Barnabe was cut short as another smoky shadow flashed through the camp, scattering sparks from the fire.

"Get to the horses!" Lacourse shouted as yet another larger and almost tangible shadow rushed through the camp. Before the drunken men around the fire could get to their feet, the fleeting wraith descended upon the picketed horses and they bolted away in terror.

The now suddenly sober raiders stood together, guns in hand, staring at the empty and once again silent landscape. Much to their regret, the silence did not last long. A low rumbling sound began to build in volume as three huge shadows appeared on the distant ridgeline and began to descend on their camp.

As the sound increased it began to resemble dozens of running horses. To add to the raider's growing fear, the billowing cloud forming in the wake of the shadows resembled smoke rather than dust. As the ominous shadows drew near, they took the shape of three massive beasts, the likes of which these men had never seen, "Dear God, what devils' spawn is that?" Barnabe asked. The coal black beasts were moving on four legs, but much larger than any horse. The ground underfoot trembled from their thundering gait as they came on like a dark whirlwind.

Lacourse and the raiders paled at the sight of the phantoms sitting astride the charging beasts. Dropping their guns, they began to flee from one another in terror. Lacourse lost his footing and fell just as one of the phantoms caught up with him. The dark figure was tall and dressed all in black when he came to stand over Lacourse. The ominous dark figure was wrapped in a black cape and carried a shining sword.

The figure was manlike, but not completely human. His eyes glowed yellow with narrow vertical pupils as he studied the Frenchman. Unable to move, Lacourse knew he was looking into the face of death. Screaming, he threw his hands over his eyes as the dark

warrior issued a thunderous roar, raised the sword over his head and struck Lacourse with the heavy blade.

The other warriors dismounted and took their terrible vengeance on all the scattered raiders. Lacourse's screams were mixed with the others as they reverberated across the lake. Rivulets of blood soaked into the sand along the lakeshore. Dismembered bodies were tossed back and forth as the merciless trio slashed their way through the raiders. The carnage went on until all the raiders were dead and the night was once again silent.

Augustus found himself suddenly awake, feeling a heavy hand on the hole in his chest and staring into the glowing yellow eyes of a dark and formidable stranger. Augustus was outside and lying among a group of dead Indians. Even though the weather was still warm, he seemed to be ice cold as he stared at the dark figure kneeling beside him. Augustus felt he should have been afraid, but for some reason, he wasn't.

The dark warrior pressing him down was dressed all in black and examining the amulet around Augustus' neck. Holding it with his free hand, the dark warrior studied the amulet intently. When the warrior finally spoke, his voice was thunderous, deep and hollow. "You have the blood of a king, the blood of Chimalpopoca, brother of the jaguar."

"I don't. . . ."

"You wear the amulet of Chimalpopoca," the stranger said.

"What do you want?" Augustus asked, attempting to get up.

As he spoke, the eyes of the warrior dimmed and became more human. His voice grew softer, but he continued to press Augustus to the ground. "We are here because of you," he said, "The evil ones are now among the dead, but you, little brother, have a choice."

"What choice?" Augustus asked.

"You can remain here with them," the warrior said, pointing to the dead lying all around, "or you can join us." Two more dark figures came and stood over them in the dark as Augustus pondered the meaning of the warrior's offer.

"All these people are dead," Augustus said.

"That is true."

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“I don’t want to stay here with them.”

“Then you must join us.”

“Who are you?”

“I am Perseus,” the dark warrior said, “This is Theseus and Orpheus,” he added, pointing to the others.

“But what are you?”

“Eternal warriors, known in many cultures,” Theseus said.

“In the legends of the Anasazi,” Orpheus said, “we are the Riders of the Dire, the sons of Chimalpopoca.”

“Who is Anasazi?”

“The Anasazi are the ancient ones,” Perseus said, “the people of your grandfathers.”

“And what of Chimalpopoca,” Augustus asked.

“Chimalpopoca was a king,” Theseus said, “a savage warrior, and a powerful shaman.

“As Chimalpopoca was being burned alive, he was forced to witness his family being impaled by the Spanish Iron Bellies,” Perseus said, “From the midst of the flames he used his anger and hatred to place an eternal curse upon the Iron Bellies, and all evil men who might follow them into this land. Along with the Dires, we were called from the smoke of that fire, eternal mystic warriors, charged to seek vengeance for Chimalpopoca and his land, but only against the very worst of mankind.”

“Know this little brother,” Orpheus said, “if you choose our path, your life will not be your own. You will become a man, but never grow old, time and space mean nothing astride the Dires. The weaknesses of mankind, love, pity, mercy, and forgiveness will be unknown to you.”

“I will join you,” Augustus said to the dark figures around him.

“Then on your feet, brother of the jaguar,” Perseus said.

Removing his hand from Augustus’ chest, the dark warrior got to his feet and helped the boy up. When Augustus was upright he noticed the ragged hole in his chest was replaced by a scar and warmth had returned to his body

“The powers of evil and darkness seek to devour the earth,” Theseus warned.

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“Live your life with courage, Son of Chimalpopoca,” Orpheus said, “for you are invincible. The evils of mankind will have no power over you.”

“One day, when you are ready, and when you are needed most,” Perseus said, his hand on the boy’s shoulder, “we will return for you.”



During the late 1800s, Augustus Alcazar, a young man, is shot and experiences an unexplainable phenomenon. Surviving this ordeal, Augustus matures into a hardened mountain man, handy to have around, and handy with a gun. Sentenced to be hanged, Augustus (the Reno Kid) is transported to present day Nevada, embroiled in a modern day conflict involving murder, environmentalists, politicians and drugs.

The Reno Kid

The Beginning

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