

LANCER EPISODE TRIVIA TEST



COMPILED BY JANET BRAYDEN

Think you know Lancer? Here is one question for each aired episode of our favorite western!

1. According to the episode Angel Day and Her Sunshine Girls , did Murdoch ever formally adopt Teresa?
2. In Dark Angel Johnny says Jelly's cologne will make what animal cry?
3. What song is Johnny singing when he rides up to the line shack in Blind Man's Bluff?
4. By how much does Willie's fish win in Blue Skies and what does he win?
5. Who is "back East, minding his own business" while Scott and Johnny dynamite Camp Juniper?
6. What are the names of the two feuding families in Chad?
7. In Child of Rock and Sunlight Scott has an order for how many head of cattle?
8. In Cut the Wolf Loose how much does the hand named Pinky get paid?
9. Who chases Dewdrop with an axe at the end of Death Bait ?
10. In Devil's Blessing where does the holdup take place?
11. When Murdoch tells Chad about his reaction to the first steam engine he ever saw in Dreams of Falcons, what does Johnny want to know about Murdoch's story?
12. In Foley why Gant Foley want Polly back so desperately?
13. Where is the grand house Glory describes in Glory ?
14. In Goodbye, Lizzie, in which town near Lancer does Murdoch first run into Lizzie?
15. In Jelly, how many boys is Jelly taking care of?
16. In Jelly Hoskin's Amerian Dream what disease has the other ranchers ready to destroy Jelly's new friend?

17. What Lancer 'character' goes missing from about halfway through the episode Julie?
18. What disaster befalls the schoolhouse in Lamp Unto the Wilderness?
19. Where does Mrs. Dane live in The Prodigal?
20. In Last Train For Charlie Poe, how does Johnny find out that Poe had been in prison?
21. Who was the sheriff in the episode Splinter Group?
22. In The Lorelie, who had Gus inherited the mine from and what problem does the mine pose to Lancer?
23. Who 'won' \$5.00 at the beginning of The Great Humbug?
24. Where are Scott and Johnny when they are contacted by the Pinkerton agents in High Riders?
25. Who is Arabella in The Gifts?
26. What exactly is the experiment in The Experiment?
27. What is the name of the buggy horse Johnny is trying to match in Heart of Pony Alice?
28. What is the main course of the McGloin dinner with Scott in The Black McGloins?
29. Why is the kid disgusted with what he finds in Johnny's saddlebags in The Kid?
30. What natural disaster occurs in Rivals?
31. What are the boys carrying out of the barn at the start of Shadow of a Dead Man?
32. How do we know what year the episode The Fix-It Man takes place?
33. What is the shepherd's name in Lion and the Lamb?
34. What statement does Murdoch say that Johnny echoes in The Buscaderos?
35. What is the name of the ex-boyfriend of the bride in The Wedding?
36. Who first utters the statement "Pride in my trade" in Warburton's Edge?
37. What uncomplimentary name does Val call the mayor of Spanish Wells in Man Without A Gun?
38. In Chase A Wild Horse, Johnny gives money to Teresa to pay for two things. What are they?

39. How does Murdoch introduce Johnny to his friend in The Lawman?
40. What gift does Morgan Price steal to give to his son in Blood Rock?
41. In what episode does Jed Lewis confront Scott?
42. How is Jelly injured in the start of Welcome to Genesis?
43. What is the name of the “Little Darling of the Sierras”?
44. Who leaves home at 2:15 AM in Yesterday’s Vengeance and is mistaken for a prowler by Jelly?
45. What Indian tribe are Scott and Teresa enroute to help in The Knot?
46. What does Zee do in order to convince Scott that she is sick in the episode bearing her name?
47. How does Jelly describe the way Julie should ride a horse in Legacy?
48. What is the ranch hand’s name who betrays the Lancers in Lifeline?
49. What does Turk’s father do for a living in Measure of a Man?
50. What does the mother in Person’s Unknown want as ransom from Murdoch for Johnny?
51. How did Hackett’s wife die in Scarecrow at Hacketts?

Think you got 'em all?

Check your answers and get your Knowledge Rating on page 203!



ALL CHOKED UP



BY WENDY PARSONS

The bewhiskered old man was in such a hurry to get to the hacienda that he didn't notice the white form crossing the door of the barn. He was going as fast as his elderly legs would take him when all of a sudden he found himself sprawled on the ground - listening to a very indignant honking. He looked up from his prone position to see his beloved goose Dewdrop bellowing his displeasure at being tripped over.

"Ya darn fool bird," Jellifer B. Hoskins roared at the unfortunate creature, "ya'd think I kicked ya on purpose."

As he picked himself up, dusted his clothes down and continued on towards the hacienda, he once again wondered how he was going to tell the boy that the young palomino was ailing.

When he had gone to feed the trio of horses in the barn that evening he had noticed that Barranca was off his feed. Normally when feeding time approached the stabled horses showed their anticipation by a chorus of nickers and whinnies, Barranca always more vocal in his delight at the approach of feed than Scott and Murdoch's chestnuts. But tonight he hung back in the stall showing no interest in the approaching feed - not even to take the carrots that Jelly always had in his pocket. The carrots were an evening ritual, for not only was the youngest Lancer Jelly's favourite, his horse shared the same honour in the eyes of the old man.



Murdoch Lancer was relaxing in his armchair in front of the fire with a glass of brandy in his hand. His tired body soaking up the warmth from the fire after a long hard day branding calves whilst he reflected on how his life had turned around in the last couple of years or so. His sons were home, and both had settled into ranching life. Scott was now over the upset Harlan Garrett (how he hated even thinking of that man) had caused with his visit to Lancer and his attempt to get Scott to return to Boston.

And Johnny... Murdoch had to admit that his relationship with his youngest son was not all that he would like. But although they still argued, the disagreements were now not as loud and both were learning some give and take. Murdoch smiled when he thought back to Johnny's declaration that he 'never was much good at takin' orders' when Murdoch had questioned him about finding Day Pardee.

But they were making progress. He, Murdoch, was making a conscious effort to understand that Johnny would take time to get used to being a part of a family and having to live his life with deadlines. And his hot-headed son was becoming more relaxed with each passing day, relishing the life as Johnny Lancer, rancher. There had been times when his past had come to haunt him but they had all survived these trying times.

Once again Murdoch flinched when he thought of the life that his happy-go-lucky dark-haired toddler had had to endure. Not for the first time did he thank the Lord that Johnny had survived and was now back home at his birthplace, although he had 'lived' a life way beyond his tender years.



As he neared the house Jelly had still not solved his dilemma so he just burst in. "Johnny, Johnny!" he yelled, "Johnny, where are ya? Johnny!"

Murdoch's reverie was broken by Jelly's noisy entrance. "What is all the noise about?" inquired Murdoch.

"Where's Johnny?" demanded Jelly.

"Up in his room, cleaning up before dinner." Murdoch replied. "What do you want him for? What's wrong?" But these last questions were asked to the retreating back of Jelly Hoskins as he hurried from the room and up the stairs.

Within minutes Johnny came down the stairs two at a time and ran out the front door, followed more slowly by Jelly. Murdoch made no attempt to stop either man but got out of his chair with a sigh at having his quiet evening so rudely interrupted, and made his way after his son and Jelly. They were obviously heading for the barn. With this revelation Murdoch suddenly became worried. He could think of only two reasons for Jelly's haste - one was fire (*but then why would Jelly have singled out Johnny rather than raising the alarm?*) and the other a problem with the animals housed there. Murdoch came to a conclusion he did not like - it had to be Barranca, for the same reason that Jelly had gone straight to Johnny.

As he entered the barn he found that unfortunately his reasoning was correct. Johnny was in Barranca's stall closely inspecting his horse. The gelding was standing quietly but Murdoch noticed that the horse had a dull and lethargic look about him.

"...He wouldn't touch the carrots and that ain't never happened before." Jelly was unaware that he had let out his secret about spoiling the horse, but then again neither Johnny nor Murdoch even noticed.

"It looks like he's got a cold." Johnny said. "Look at his nostrils, and he's shivering." he observed, giving the golden neck a rub. "His skin feels cold too. But he ain't got a cough though. He seemed fine when I rode him to Morro Coyo yesterday."

"What about today, Johnny? Did you notice anything different about him?" Murdoch questioned. He knew that when a man spends hours a day with his horse and knows it so well he is able to spot the subtlest differences in his animal's behaviour.

A look of regret passed over Johnny's face. "I don't know," he said softly, "I didn't spend time with him today, I was so busy mendin' corral fences."

"Well, he's obviously off colour and I'm not sure it's just a cold, so I think we'd better get Sam to look at him."

"Sam!" Johnny said incredulously. "But he's a doctor!"

Murdoch gave Johnny a withering look, "I do realise that Johnny. But since Doc Hildenbrand left we have no vet within hundreds of miles. It won't be the first time Sam has tended to animals." So saying, he went to send one of the men to town to get Sam Jenkins, the town doctor.

Johnny and Jelly stayed in the barn, neither man saying a word. Johnny just stood stroking the horse's neck whilst Jelly alternated looks between man and beast. He had a nagging feeling inside about the appearance of the horse.

The sound of horses and a vehicle approaching at a brisk pace disturbed Jelly's thoughts. Johnny, hearing the sounds, looked out the doors hopefully, then realised it could not be possibly be Sam. The rider would not yet have even reached town.

Teresa rushed into the barn and up to Johnny and Barranca. "Oh what's wrong with him, Johnny?"

Scott had stayed to help Murdoch unhitch the traces on the buggy. He led the horses away from the pole, leaving them tied up to the fence for Murdoch to finish unharnessing.

"We met Frank on the way back and he told us what was happening." explained Scott when he reached the group around Barranca. Scott had driven Teresa into Morro Coyo to visit a friend that afternoon.

Murdoch appeared carrying the breast collars, traces which had been taken from the harness horses. Looking at the dejected and worried group standing around Barranca he declared that they could do no good until Sam arrived, and that they had better eat now or they may not have the time later on. He felt that they would need all their reserves of strength over the next few hours. Some swift talking had to be done to get Johnny to leave his horse but he eventually agreed to have a quick meal.

It was so quick that Scott, watching Johnny hurriedly devour his food, commented, "You'll get indigestion if you eat that quickly."

"Gotta get back to Barranca," mumbled

Johnny with his mouth full. And so saying he left the table and the house. The remaining family looked at each other without passing comment.

Scott quietly followed Johnny back out to the barn. He was alarmed when he saw his brother who was leaning against the neck of his horse, head buried in the mane. "What's happened, Johnny?" he asked worriedly. And as his brother raised his head Scott saw the tears welled in his eyes. He then took a good look at the horse. He was shocked to notice that Barranca was showing a difficulty in swallowing and his nose protruded as if he was trying to ease a sore throat. His coat was dry, and the hair appeared to stand on end.

As Jelly entered the now darkening barn Johnny's worried voice greeted him. "Look Jelly, there's lumps under his throat." For once the old man was at a loss as to what to say or do. Jelly prided himself on the herbal concoctions that he foisted upon the family in times of need, but even he had to admit that he was at a loss here, so he just quietly stood by the young man and his golden horse, watching with pity in his eyes and a hollow feeling inside. How would the boy take it if there were something seriously wrong with the horse?

For the second time that evening the sound of horses and a vehicle were heard and all three looked up. This time however, it was the doctor arriving. "Sorry I took so long," he said as he approached the men, "but I took the liberty of wiring the horse's symptoms to a vet in Sacramento," he explained. Upon hearing the symptoms from Frank, the doctor had realised that this was beyond his meagre knowledge of equine ailments.

Murdoch and Teresa, having heard the vehicle's approach arrived bearing lanterns to lighten the ever-darkening barn.

"Hello, Sam," Murdoch greeted the doctor.
"Thanks for coming."

The doctor made no comment, as he was intent on examining the horse. Everyone remained quiet until he at last straightened up. "The list of symptoms you gave was very helpful," he began. "The vet in Sacramento said that it sounds like a highly infectious disease called Strangles. These swellings will develop over the next few days." He then continued to explain what they could expect and how to treat the horse.

With that he took his leave and the family set about following his directions.

First Teresa went to the kitchen to start the gruels. She had decided to make both the linseed and oatmeal gruels so that both could be offered to Barranca. Then the horse could decide for himself which one he preferred. She would also mix a bran mash. The news from the vet in Sacramento via Sam Jenkins, was that the horse should be offered nourishment in any form he may fancy. He had also said that scalded hay, sliced carrots, fresh-cut grass, and oats made soft by scalding were all good.

As she worked, she thought about the object of all their attentions. Right from the day that she had sat on the corral fence watching Johnny 'break' Barranca she had had a soft spot for the palomino, much as anyone had who had seen the amazing scene. Within minutes of Johnny gentling the animal Scott had mounted and put the newly broken, uneducated horse at the railed fences and a wagon. To everyone's amazement the horse cleared the obstacles, although admittedly he had jumped greenly, hollow backed with his head in the air. But the fact that a horse who had only minutes before been bucking his hardest to rid himself of the unwanted weight on his back would even attempt such a thing

showed the trusting and remarkable nature of the animal. Teresa decided that nothing would be too much trouble to get Barranca well again.

As the gruels were cooking Teresa rummaged through the linen room and found two old blankets, one to be cut into strips to serve as bandages for Barranca's legs, the other to be used as a rug to keep the horse warm. She checked on the gruels, and then took the blankets out to the barn. Barranca was standing quietly in his stall with Johnny sitting on a nearby barrel studying his horse closely. So intent was he in his study of Barranca that he started when Teresa spoke.

"How is he, Johnny?"

"Teresa, I really don't know. He's got to get better. He will won't he?"

Teresa's heart plummeted to the soles of her feet as she heard the misery and pleading in Johnny's voice.

"Of course he will, Johnny," she said brightly, although this was not how she really felt. She hoped and prayed that the horse would recover fully but apparently complications could sometimes occur with strangles. Sam had said that if abscesses were formed internally then the case would in all likelihood prove fatal. "You know what the vet told Sam. He said that a great amount of swelling occurs and the animal is very depressed, but usually the owner is as depressed as the patient." Teresa smiled gently at Johnny as she said this, hoping to lighten his mood a little. "The owner has probably never seen a case like this before, and is very confused and alarmed."

She was pleased to see the hint of a smile on Johnny's face, as he replied, "Ain't that the truth."

"Oh, the gruels!" Teresa suddenly remembered the boiling concoctions on the hotplates in the kitchen. "I'll be back with Barranca's food in a few minutes," she called as she hurried from the barn.

Whilst she was away Johnny carefully wrapped the bandages around the horse's cannon bones, starting just below the knees and hocks and passing the bandage round the leg in even turns until reaching the coronet and then continuing back up the leg to his starting point where he secured them. He made sure that he did what Sam had said, taking care not to make them too tight. Having bandaged all four limbs he then put the blanket over the horse, making sure that his loins and quarters were well covered. He then secured the blanket with a rope around the horse's middle, just behind the withers. His mind was in turmoil while he tended to his horse, thinking over the short time they had had together and hoping that they would have a long life together. "You ain't even five yet, boy, that's too young to die," he muttered more to himself than the horse.

Johnny heard voices approaching the barn and his father, brother, Teresa and Jelly came into view. They were each carrying a bucket containing the various foodstuffs Teresa had prepared for Barranca. "I hope he likes some of these," Teresa was saying as they entered. She was, however, greatly disappointed to see that Barranca was only vaguely interested in the linseed gruel, picking around in the bucket, taking small mouthfuls. But at least he was eating something.

Eventually, deciding that no more could be done for the horse Scott suggested they get some sleep, as it was already past midnight. There was nothing they could do to get Johnny to leave his horse so they reluctantly agreed that he should sleep in the barn where he could keep an eye on Barranca. Murdoch

brought blankets, a pillow and some coffee and biscuits out to Johnny. He was worried not only about the horse's condition but that of his son. Johnny lived for that horse. What the consequences would be should anything dire happen, he shuddered to think.

Having delivered his load he left, giving his son's shoulders a squeeze, and tried to encourage him by saying, "Don't worry Johnny, Barranca'll be fine."

Johnny spent a fitful night, sleep would not come and he only dozed for short periods. At every stirring of Barranca he was immediately awake. The horse spent some of the time on his feet dozing and part of the night lying flat out on the straw of the stall. Morning eventually came and it was time for the poultices to be reapplied to the swellings under Barranca's throat, and to steam his nostrils to allay the irritation in his throat. Johnny hoped that the poultices were doing their job of encouraging the abscesses to mature and burst. As he turned to get the poultices he took in the two empty stalls. "S'pose it's a good thing they didn't get sick too." he told himself, referring to Scott and Murdoch's chestnuts, which had been relocated out to pasture as soon as Barranca's illness was diagnosed as highly contagious.

Sam had left the telegram he had received from the vet along with the instructions for Barranca's care. Johnny had reread the words several times. "This is a highly infectious disease which most frequently attacks young horses. When one young horse on a ranch takes it all the others will also probably catch it, and so may some of the older animals if brought into contact with those affected, or if they are allowed to drink from the same trough, eat from the same manger, or enter the same stable.' The wire finished with 'It can spread like wildfire.' As a result of this last sentence Barranca had been isolated and all

items used in his care were being carefully cleaned so no contamination could occur. Johnny hated the fact that his horse was separated from his friends but there was no other choice. So far no other animals had shown any sign of infection.

"The Doc musta been right when he said only young horses usually get strangles. But why did it have to be you, Barranca?" he said beseechingly to the face looking at him, a face with the kindest eyes he'd ever seen on a horse.

After reapplying the poultices and steaming Barranca's nostrils, Johnny felt under the blanket, and the bandages on his horse's legs. He was pleased to note that the horse felt warm and had lost the chilly feel he had had the night before. "Must be a good sign." he said to the horse. He never felt embarrassed about his need to talk to his horse, when a man was on his own for much of his life his horse was his best friend, and as such was spoken to as a friend. He smiled as he remembered telling Lucrece about how he used to talk to his pinto a long time ago, and how he didn't have to much any more because he wasn't alone, he had a family and he had a brother. And then he grimaced as he thought how close he had then come to death yet again.

There wasn't much work done on Lancer that day, other than the essential tasks for the wellbeing of the animals. A continual stream of visitors came to the barn asking after the young gelding, offering help that was declined. The men appreciated good horseflesh and there was none better than Barranca. Most of them had seen the progression from wild youngster to reliable mount. But the horse already had five nurses who often found themselves with nothing to do except observe the animal.

At various times during the day they had

managed to convince Johnny to go to the house to eat something and to try to rest, but he was never away for long. He spent long hours studying his horse.



The next day passed much the same as the previous one without any change evident in Barranca's condition.

After lunch on the third day Scott went to relieve Johnny. As his brother left the barn Scott looked at the horse. Was it his imagination or did he notice some changes in his demeanour and appearance?

Another restless night passed and Johnny was awake at break of day to check on his horse. As he approached Barranca he could notice a change in the swellings under the throat. They appeared softer, and although he knew this was a good sign it was also what he was dreading. For the next step was to lance them. The thought of taking a knife to his horse's throat appalled Johnny and he knew he couldn't do it. He was thankful that Sam had said he would tend to the horse when the time arrived.

He sought out his family in the kitchen and told them about the changes in Barranca. Scott immediately left the table to ride to get Sam. "I'll get some breakfast in town after I see Sam." were his parting words. Once again Johnny marvelled at how lucky he was to have a brother like Boston.



Sam Jenkins, like the sheriff of Green River, Val Crawford, had a liking for the dark haired Lancer son. Both agreed that although he had had a hard life he was nothing remotely like

the hard-hearted vicious killer that the legend of Johnny Madrid purported him to be. Sam knew him quite well, in fact he had brought him into the world, and he had tended to him in his capacity as a doctor often enough since Johnny's return to Lancer - the boy did seem to attract injuries more than any other patient. As he entered the barn he had to smile, if it wasn't his favourite patient he was visiting at Lancer it was his horse! He had no qualms about tending an animal; vets were not in abundance in the more remote areas of the west, so many doctors also ministered to four legged patients as well as two legged ones. However this was the first case of strangles he had encountered and he was intrigued with the information he had received about the disease from the vet in Sacramento when he had wired him.

"How's my favourite patient's patient?" was his greeting to Johnny.

Johnny's reply was "Take a look, Sam."

Sam went into the stall and palpated the swellings under Barranca's throat. "You're right, Johnny, they're ready."

He proceeded to prepare for the lancing. "Not much different to lancing human abscesses, just done from a different angle," he explained to his audience, for an audience he had - Murdoch, Scott, Teresa and Jelly had all contributed to Barranca's care and they were not about to abandon him now. He took a clean knife and passed the blade of it through a cork until about half an inch of the blade appeared on the other side. He took a firm hold of the handle with his right hand, seizing the cork with his first finger and thumb to prevent slipping. With his left hand holding the horse's head in such a position as to make the swelling bulge to its utmost degree he pushed the projecting blade point into the most prominent part of the swelling and

instantly withdrew it, the matter flowing out. After the matter had poured out he passed a clean finger through the wound and cleared out the cavity of the abscess, removing any clots of matter that had adhered inside. He then injected a little of a mixture of carbolic acid and water into the cavity. This process was then repeated with the remaining swellings.

The whole while this operation had been going on Johnny had stood holding Barranca's head, whispering to the horse quietly in Spanish, keeping him calm throughout. Johnny was mesmerized by Sam's actions and thought again that he could never have done that to his horse.

"There, done," was all that Sam said at the completion of the operation. After he had cleaned up he gave instructions for aftercare. The injections of the mixture, 1 ounce carbolic acid to 2 pints of water, were to be repeated twice a day for a few days, and if there were no complications the wounds would be beautifully clean and heal shortly. He further added that with the abscesses cleaned out Barranca should show a desire to eat if no internal abscesses had formed. The horse could now be allowed to go out in the sun as well. Johnny, however, was not happy to learn that Barranca was to have a long period of convalescence, two months at least. This would be followed by a further long period of conditioning before normal work could be resumed.

But the outlook was bright and if it meant that he would again be able to ride his beloved horse he figured he could be patient that long. It might give him a chance to work on some other young horses that could be sold.

"Time for coffee, Murdoch," stated Sam, and with a sly look at Teresa, "and some of your cake perhaps, Teresa?" With the exception of

Johnny they all trooped over to the hacienda. On the way over Scott questioned Sam as to how Barranca could have contracted the disease.

"Well, Cal Smythe at the livery also had some sick horses. I've been treating them, too. Seems as though they might have all caught it from a contagious horse that may have been kept at livery there. That would explain it if Johnny had left Barranca at Cal's whilst he was in town."

"You're probably right, Sam," agreed Scott. "If Johnny's in town for long he does leave Barranca at Cal's."

Meanwhile Johnny went to get some gruel and carrots with which to tempt Barranca. To his delight there was a small nicker as he approached with the bucket. Johnny sat back and contemplated his horse, which was showing the most interest in feed that he had in days. Johnny closed his eyes, realising how

tired he was. All the emotional strain of caring for Barranca over the last few days coupled with a lack of restful sleep had really taken it out of him. His last thought before nodding off was that of riding Barranca at full gallop across the rolling hills of the ranch, the big beautiful ranch called Lancer.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wendy Parsons lives in Longwood East, Victoria, Australia. She is a Primary School (Grade School???) teacher, and teaches in order to keep her animals in the luxury to which they have become accustomed. Living on 40 acres she breeds and shows Welsh Mountain Ponies and rides a 16 hand quarter-Percheron mare. Wendy is Deputy Master of the Riverina Hunt Club. 'Barakee' is also the home of two very spoilt cats and two lovable little dogs.

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WHAT DREAMS MAY COME



BY JENNIFER KRINKE

For the third night in a row, Murdoch Lancer heard the bedroom door down the hall open quietly, followed by the soft sound of bare feet treading lightly on creaking floorboards. It was late, two hours past midnight, he guessed, and he didn't really know why he happened to wake in time to hear his son rise from an uneasy sleep to vanish into the darkness outside. It made Murdoch wonder and worry about how many nights before these he *hadn't* woken up to hear Johnny cat-foot his way down the hall . . .

Maybe it was because Murdoch had finally noticed what Teresa had been trying to tell him for the past few days. Two mornings ago at breakfast after giving the usual run-down of the day's jobs, he had paused and looked, really looked, at Johnny. The boy hadn't said a word after Murdoch finished speaking, not one. He just nodded as he rose from the table, and then he slipped away before Murdoch could stop him. The usual good-natured sass was absent; the grin was nowhere to be seen. Lord knew Murdoch did not relish fighting with his youngest son, but even an argument would have been more welcome than this . . . this strangely quiet and restrained behavior.

He thought at first it was only because with Scott gone, they were both working harder, putting in longer hours. Of course Johnny was bound to be tired; Murdoch was feeling it himself. But yesterday he had observed Johnny's appearance with a careful eye, and what he saw had him worried. How could he not have seen it earlier? Haggard, pale, eyes

shadowed with exhaustion . . . and something else. While Johnny protested—of course—that he was “just fine” when asked, Murdoch knew damn well something had the boy tied up in knots. And while maybe Murdoch hadn't been a father to Johnny beyond those first two years, he still knew, as a father, how to wake up in the middle of the night when his son was hurting. Now if only he could get that eternally stubborn son to talk to him . . . Murdoch breathed out a sigh as he lay there, looking up at the ceiling.

Talking to Johnny was not one of his better skills. Arguing, yes; yelling, shouting, chastising, ordering . . . but just talking, sometimes, could be a little . . . thorny. And awkward. He had found himself wishing yesterday that Scott were not in Stockton on business. And so he had ridden to town to wire his older son, in the hopes that Scott was almost done with Lancer business dealings and could come home soon. Scott knew how to talk to Johnny . . .

Murdoch sighed again. But he couldn't wait to hear from Scott. He had to try himself. If the boy had it in his head to leave Lancer—Murdoch's greatest fear—well, he'd rather find out sooner than later. On the other hand, it could be something else entirely; but whatever it was, he hated not knowing. Did he dare try to follow Johnny tonight? Or go wait in his room? Murdoch grimaced at the image of a suddenly confronted Johnny Madrid in the middle of the night and quickly discarded that idea. He'd take off like a spooked horse if Murdoch didn't handle this

right. Come morning, then, he decided, he'd figure out a way to talk to the boy and discover just what was going on behind those veiled blue eyes.

He rolled over and thumped the pillow a couple of times, knowing he wouldn't sleep again until he heard Johnny return. He snorted. If this kept up much longer, he was going to wind up looking almost as bad as his son.



Another night of restless wandering, followed by maybe an hour or two of fitful sleep, left Johnny with a feeling of sand under his eyelids and barely enough energy to lift a mug of coffee to his mouth. He sat slumped at the kitchen table, cheek leaning into one propped hand, all too aware of the concerned glances Teresa kept throwing his way when she thought he wasn't looking.

Maria was not quite so subtle. She banged down a plate of eggs, bacon, and biscuits slathered in honey in front of him, and pointed at it.

"Eat, chico," she said sternly.

He tilted his head up and forced a smile. "Sí, Maria." It was all he could do to pick up a fork and choke down a mouthful of eggs. She watched him, then nodded before turning away to her next task.

Murdoch chose that moment to walk in, and Johnny knew by the expression on the old man's face that he wouldn't take "just fine" as an answer this morning.

"Johnny," Murdoch nodded. "Good morning, Teresa. Maria."

The two women murmured replies, and Maria set a plate for him and poured coffee.

Johnny managed another bite of eggs. He'd maintained some degree of normalcy for the first few days, but he knew he couldn't keep it up. He was all too aware of how awful he looked—he'd stared into his face this morning while shaving, and didn't know how to explain away the shadowed, sunken eyes or the growing prominence of his cheekbones. At least, not without telling Murdoch a whole lot more about his past that he didn't want Murdoch to know . . . He wished Scott were here . . . He could talk to Scott. Maybe not about everything—well, maybe not about *anything* that had to do with why he wasn't sleeping or eating . . . but at least enough to keep Murdoch from asking too many questions.

On the other hand, Scott wouldn't settle for "just fine"—oh, no, Scott would badger him for as long as it took, using all of his considerable persuasive skills and patience to get Johnny to talk.

And it was definitely a good thing that Jelly was still gone and would be for a few days yet. Jelly had never been shy about telling Johnny what he thought the younger man needed to hear.

He concentrated on his coffee, as the eggs had become impossible, and not even the biscuits could tempt him this morning. It took all his gunfighter's nerves just to sit there under Murdoch's scrutiny rather than bolt for the barn and ride out somewhere, anywhere, he just needed some open sky . . .

"Johnny," Murdoch began, his voice hesitant. "I was . . ." He cleared his throat. "That is, why don't you take the day off, son?" he finished in a rush. "You've been putting in some long days, what with Scott gone, and I

think we can manage without you today. There's really nothing all that vital that needs to get done. What do you say? Go for a ride," he cleared his throat again, "or take a nap. Whatever you want."

"Ya mean that?" Johnny looked up to meet the ill-concealed worry in his father's gaze. That Murdoch had obviously meant to say something else had hardly escaped his attention, but if the old man wasn't going to push, he'd better take advantage of it.

"Sure." Murdoch gave him a sharp look, only slightly eased by the forced smile that followed it. "Everybody needs to play hooky now and then."

"Well, maybe I'll just take ya up on that, Murdoch." Johnny finished his coffee, cursing silently as his hand trembled in putting down the mug. He got to his feet, snagged his hat and was quickly out the door and across the yard before Murdoch could change his mind.

He lifted his face to the morning sun and breathed deep, trying to clear his head. Johnny knew that the sleeplessness would pass, that the dreams would diminish, and the darkness that sometimes came close to suffocating him would slowly lift. It always had in the past. He just had to get through it, one way or another. Tequila, and lots of it, was one way, but all that did was blur things for a while, and then he'd have to contend with a hangover on top of it before everything came roaring back.

No tequila, he decided—at least in the matter of drinking himself unconscious as a means of escape . . . He headed for the barn to saddle Barranca and take that ride somewhere, anywhere, across Lancer, until he found a place to sit and not think about anything. Maybe he could even catch an hour or two of

sleep.

He wished Scott would come home.



Murdoch fought back the anger at himself for his sudden display of cowardice. Johnny was his son! He was afraid to talk to his own son! He had thought it all out, upstairs while getting dressed—just what to say and how to say it. Then to come down to breakfast and see the boy, worn out, listless, the usually vivid blue eyes dark with some hidden pain, and well, all those fine words just fled and the only thing he could come up with was to tell the boy to take the day off.

He snorted in disgust and finished his coffee, noticing something odd in the wake of Johnny's departure. The kitchen was far too quiet. Looking up from his breakfast, he saw Teresa and Maria, standing side by side, arms crossed, identical expressions of disgust on their faces as they stared pointedly back at him.

"That went well, I thought. Didn't it, Maria?" Teresa's voice could have cut glass.

Maria sniffed. She didn't say a word, just kept looking at him with more than a hint of displeasure.

Faced with such formidable female wrath, Murdoch could only throw his hands in the air and confess. "All right, all right! I should've said something! But you both know he's too stubborn to admit it when anything's wrong! It's not as if I can tie him to a chair and order him to answer my questions!"

"We just might have to," Teresa said. Her foot tapped on the floor as her eyes narrowed in thought.

“Now, honey, don’t you be getting any ideas like that . . .”

“Well, *someone* around here has to, since certain other people who think they’re in charge can’t seem to take care of the problem.” The foot continued to tap and those big brown eyes flashed at him.

First Johnny, now Teresa. Couldn’t he stand up to anyone this morning? He sighed. “Here’s what I think. We leave him alone for the day, and with any luck, Scott will be home as soon as he can. I wired him yesterday, told him about Johnny, and you know Johnny will talk to Scott before he’ll talk to me.”

Teresa winced at that, and her eyes lost their steely glare. “Oh, Murdoch, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean . . . that is, you’re right, Johnny isn’t one to admit to anyone if he’s in trouble or hurt . . . I’ve just never seen him look quite so . . . lost . . . before. But it’s a good idea to get Scott back home.” She paused, and Murdoch could suddenly see the fear she had so valiantly hidden until now. “Do you think . . . do you think he’s going to leave?” she asked in a suddenly small voice.

He pushed back his chair and rose to his feet, gathering her in his arms. “I don’t know, honey, but if that’s what’s on his mind, we’ll just have to talk him out of it.” He glanced at Maria, and she nodded back, apparently finding him worthwhile again. “Each and every one of us.”



The sun balanced on the edge of the world as Johnny rode slowly down the long road to Lancer. The shadow he and Barranca made flowed endlessly over the grass, long and thin and disappearing into the dusk. The sky, shot through with high lingering wisps of cloud,

was rose and gold and shading to blue velvet in the east. Then the sun dropped behind the hills and his shadow slid with it.

He usually loved this time of day, the cusp of twilight verging on night, the falling stillness and the dying of the wind, but tonight he could neither see it nor feel it. All it meant now was another day gone with a long night ahead, and he didn’t know how much more he could take.

He and Barranca had raced out of the corral that morning, and with nothing but the speed and power of his horse beneath him, the wind in his face and a far horizon ahead of him, he had forgotten his ghosts for a brief hour or two. After a hard run he had pulled Barranca back to a walk, and coming upon one of the streams that meandered through Lancer, they rambled easily beside it for a good distance. He made certain to avoid any of the crews of men out working at various places around the ranch. There were a few hands repairing fence line up on the north ridge, and more checking the line shacks, not to mention the fellas moving some of the herd down from the upper pastures, but that still left plenty of Lancer for him to roam.

Then he had found a peaceful little spot by the stream and decided to settle down for a spell. With a cove of trees to laze under and plenty of good grass for Barranca to graze on, he just stretched out and put his hat over his eyes. Between the heat of the sun and the hypnotic drone of insects, he managed to fall asleep, his exhaustion overriding all else.

When he awoke it was to hear a voice shouting, almost screaming, hoarsely in Spanish. *His* voice. He struggled to push himself upright; as ever, the vivid, horrific images left him shaking, gulping for air, and covered in a cold, clammy sweat. A quick glance up through the trees confirmed his

guess that he'd been asleep for at least a couple of hours. He ran an unsteady hand over his face. Sleep. Hardly that. A restless catnap could hardly make up for far too many nights of tossing and turning and wandering about the ranch in the darkest hours of the morning.

Though it hardly seemed worth the effort, he hauled himself to his feet and stumbled over to Barranca. He leaned into the horse's neck and closed his eyes. Barranca turned his head to nudge Johnny in the shoulder, and Johnny just let himself sag against the comforting warmth and strength of the animal before rousing to dig in his saddlebags for the lunch Teresa had packed him yesterday—or was it the day before?

The biscuits were a little hard by now, but not bad, and he ate one, slowly, with half a canteen of water. One was enough, he thought, enough to quiet the faint ache of hunger and to keep him going for a while. He'd gotten by on less once upon a time.

He spent the rest of the day riding, sometimes at a flat-out gallop, other times just giving Barranca his head and letting the horse choose their path. And that was how they wound up heading home at dusk. Barranca, at least, knew where to find dinner and a good place to sleep, Johnny thought wryly, amused in spite of his weariness.

As the sound of crickets filled the night air and fireflies danced in the dark, Johnny dismounted in front of the barn and led Barranca inside. The familiar routine of unsaddling and tending to his horse eased his mind a bit. He let his hands take over and worked slowly, reluctant to leave Barranca and the hay-scented comfort of the barn. But eventually he had done everything he could, and short of sleeping out here—*and why not*, part of him argued—it was time to go in, no

doubt to face Murdoch once more and try to fend off the old man's worry.

With a final pat on the palomino's golden neck, he quietly stole out of the barn and made his way up to the house only to come to a sudden halt as a figure straightened up from beside the front archway. A very recognizable figure. Johnny breathed out a sigh and moved his hand away from his gun as the tall shadow emerged more fully from the edge of the arch and came down the path to meet him.

Scott.

"Hey, boy, you missed dinner," his brother said.

Johnny felt like a dying man in the desert who had just been given a drink of cool water. Scott was back. Scott was *home*. Some of the darkness at the edge of his soul receded a bit as he poked an elbow into Scott's stomach even as Scott threw a companionable arm over Johnny's shoulder.

"You're home early," Johnny said, hoping Scott did not hear the obvious relief in his voice.

"Yes, I am, and it certainly feels nice. I managed to wrap up things quicker than I first expected, and so I decided to come right on home. I missed Teresa's cooking. I missed Lancer and my horse." Scott lifted his hand up to ruffle Johnny's hair. "I even missed you, little brother."

They walked into the house, together, into the light, into the warmth.



By one of those lucky coincidences that every so often cropped up out of nowhere,

Scott had very neatly closed on his business dealings in Stockton the same day the wire from Murdoch arrived. When the telegram was delivered to his hotel, he had merely assumed that it concerned the reason for his Stockton trip, more advice, more names of people he should see, and questions on how everything was going so far. But then he opened it, and flicked his eyes over the words. His heart racing nearly as fast as his thoughts, he wondered just what it was that Murdoch *wasn't* saying.

Business concluded or not, Murdoch would know that he'd come home if Johnny was in trouble.

So he had arrived at the hacienda the very next day, to be met by Murdoch and Teresa at the front door. Their very evident worry fueled his own fears that something even worse had happened during the hours he had spent getting from Stockton to Lancer. He had barely shaken the dust of travel from his clothes before he was hauled into the kitchen, where, at least, Maria made him sit down and take time for a cup of coffee.

Teresa joined him at the table, her hands twisting together in front of her. Murdoch paced restlessly across the room several times before sitting down himself.

Leaning back in his chair, Scott rubbed a weary hand over his face then parked his elbows on the table and stared at his family. "Well?" he said. "What is it? Your telegram was not very explicit, Murdoch. What's wrong with Johnny?"

"We don't exactly know, Scott," Murdoch began.

"He won't eat," Teresa blurted. "He looks just awful."

"He's not sleeping, either, and I'm not sure how long that's been going on," his father added. "I've heard him get up in the middle of the night three times now. I'd drag the boy into town to see Sam if I thought I could get away with it."

"I don't suppose you've asked Johnny what's wrong?" At the look he got from all three of them, he simply answered his own question. "Of course, and he said he was just fine, and that was the end of it."

"But he'll talk to you, Scott," Teresa said, earnestly, her eyes pleading with him to agree with her. "You've got to find out what's bothering him. He's going to make himself ill if he keeps this up much longer."

He reached over and stilled her hands beneath his own. "Don't worry, honey, we'll figure it out. Johnny won't stand a chance against all of us."



Once inside, Scott got his first good look at Johnny in the light of the great room. What he saw nearly halted him in his tracks. But he thought he recovered quickly enough—maybe Johnny hadn't noticed the sudden tightening of his arm that was, just a moment ago, draped so casually over his brother's shoulders.

He'd seen Johnny ill before. He'd seen him wounded and feverish. He'd seen him drunk and, inevitably, hungover. But he'd never seen him look so . . . thin, and grey, and hollow-cheeked with exhaustion, and . . . what had Teresa said? Lost. Haunted—that was Murdoch's word.

So what had happened in the last ten days to turn Johnny into what appeared to be a walking dead man?

An all-too familiar—and horrifying—image rose unbidden in his mind.

Emaciated men in rags that had once been uniforms, men with no life in their eyes, men who stared out at the world with nothing but hopeless misery, men just waiting to die—and his brother sighing quietly, sagging in Scott's arms, and joining the numberless ranks of the dead.

Scott shivered. He shut his eyes briefly and shoved the vision away. *No.* Johnny was *here*, right now.

And here he was going to stay. Scott would do whatever it took to find out what was going on in his stubborn brother's head and bring him back. He wasn't about to let Johnny fall into some dark abyss of his own making. Not that he expected it to be easy—the enigmatic man who was Johnny Madrid Lancer avoided nearly every question asked about his past, hated showing any kind of weakness, was old beyond his years, and didn't have the faintest idea how to ask for help.

It could be a long night.



Johnny slumped into the couch cushions with a sigh and stretched his legs out in front of him. Scott's warm arm was gone, but his brother was adding more wood to the fire to take away some of the evening's chill, and he soon had the flames leaping high again. He watched as Scott sat back on his heels, still staring into the fire. Johnny knew how to wait for an opponent to make the first move, be it a chess game or a gunfight. Or questions from a brother no doubt called home early by a desperate father.

"Do you want some supper?" Scott asked,

barely turning his head. "I think Teresa kept a plate warm for you."

"No, that's all right. Not really hungry."

"Then I probably shouldn't offer you a drink."

"Nope. Can't say that would be a good idea."

More silence, broken only by the crackling of the fire. Scott finally eased himself to his feet, and Johnny figured his wait was just about over. Joining him on the couch and matching his boneless sprawl, Scott let the silence stretch out a little longer. Johnny didn't so much as twitch. Another minute, he thought, and Scott would surely crack . . .

"Well, Johnny my lad," Scott said, his voice quiet, "I leave for a few days, and look what happens. Teresa tells me you're not eating—which I can very clearly see for myself—and Murdoch said something about not sleeping—again, the evidence is there to see—and on top of all that, I hear you took the day off."

"Ain't you just the smart Harvard boy," Johnny drawled, his voice slurring slightly.

He got an elbow in the ribcage in response. Just a nudge. It wasn't enough to invite retaliation; it was merely a reminder that Scott was still there and not letting him get by with anything. A slight smile edged its way up one side of his mouth.

Despite himself, he found his eyes wanting to slide shut. Between the heat of the fire and the comfort of Scott's shoulder almost leaning into his, he felt nearly relaxed enough to fall asleep. Which was quite a surprise, he thought, weary, but fighting it.

"As the smart Harvard *man* that I am, don't try to insult my intelligence by pretending there's nothing wrong with you. Come on, Johnny. You look like hell. I've seen

healthier corpses.”

Johnny debated several responses to that, and wondered at the sudden odd note in Scott’s voice at those last few words.

“I’m all right,” he said at last, softly, gazing into the fire. At Scott’s sharp intake of breath, knowing his brother was about to argue that point, he added, “Well, maybe not. But I will be. Trust me. I ain’t stupid either. I don’t plan on starvin’ ta death.”

“Then what are you doing, Johnny? Please . . . we’re just worried about you, that’s all.”

“I know. An’ I thank ya for comin’ all the way back from Stockton just ‘cause Murdoch asked ya to.”

He heard a quiet sigh, and saw Scott run a hand over his face.

“Yes, Murdoch wired me. But I really did finish up business early—I didn’t lie to you about that.”

“An’ did Murdoch an’ Teresa agree to git outta here just so we could talk?” Johnny glanced up at Scott, and saw the blond eyebrows lift in what was no doubt exasperation. Somehow, Johnny found himself sliding lower on the couch, and Scott loomed over him, taller than ever.

“Yes, you have discovered all of our nefarious plotting. Now that we have that out of the way, are you going to tell me what’s wrong?”

Scott was looking down at him, worry written all over his face. Not only taller, Johnny realized, but definitely a little blurry as well. By now Johnny was leaning almost completely sideways, and since it just seemed like the easiest way out, he decided to fall asleep on Scott.

“Nothin’s wrong,” he murmured. And when the darkness gathered him in, it held a little less terror than it had for too many nights before, because Scott was there and calling his name.



Murdoch finally lost out to his overwhelming anxiety and did his best to creep silently downstairs to the great room. He had been more than a little afraid that Johnny would lose his temper and storm out, even if it were Scott, and not Murdoch, putting him on the spot. But he hadn’t heard any shouting or slamming of doors—but now that he thought about it, perhaps it was a little *too* quiet . . .

Well, that explained it. He had to smile at the sight that greeted him as he eased his way into the room. Both of his sons lay in a loose-limbed sprawl on the couch, asleep. Scott was sitting up, mostly, and his head was tipped back, his mouth slightly open. Johnny was lying awkwardly, half on, half off the couch, his feet on the floor. His head was on Scott’s leg, and one of Scott’s hands rested on Johnny’s shoulder. Murdoch gave a silent prayer of thanks that Scott had managed to come home so quickly, and that Johnny had found some measure of peace tonight.

He propped himself against the fireplace and studied his youngest son, his smile slipping away. Usually when Johnny was asleep, unguarded, he looked boyish and astonishingly vulnerable. Tonight, all Murdoch could see in his face, a face that had grown far too thin, was a frown and tight lines of pain and exhaustion. Johnny moaned. Quietly. His head turned, and Murdoch took a step forward, only to freeze. He had promised Scott. He had promised to leave him alone with Johnny, no matter what. *Damn!* Murdoch ground his

teeth in frustration. He only wanted to go to the boy . . . Then Johnny's head tossed again, eyes still shut, and another soft moan broke the silence.

He had to leave, now, before Johnny woke up. Neither of his sons would thank him for being here to witness this. *Nightmares*, he thought. *Oh, John. Is that what this has all been about?* He watched as the frown deepened on his son's face, and the quiet moan grew louder. He knew Johnny had nightmares, and had woken him out of them more than once. But nightmares had never left Johnny sick and pale for a week . . . Helpless, heart aching, Murdoch cast a last glance at Johnny, shifting restlessly, then Scott, and pushed regretfully away from the wall to go back to his bedroom, to keep his promise.



Scott stirred and tried to move, but the weight across his legs kept him pinned. A low cry jolted him fully awake and he remembered just what—who—it was that lay across his legs. Not long after Johnny pitched sideways on top of him, he had found himself drifting off to sleep as well; and since getting them both up and moving off to their respective beds looked far too daunting a task at that point, he decided to stay put. As a means of avoiding conversation, Scott had to admit that Johnny's tactic worked pretty well. But now his hand tightened its grip on Johnny's shoulder as the man began to toss and turn, in danger of rolling right off the couch. The low cry turned into speech, a few muttered words in Spanish, and Scott grew cold as he recognized one of them quite clearly.

"Muerte," Johnny said again, struggling against Scott's grasp. *Death*.

He stared down into his brother's face, ashen

and bathed in a cold sweat, and put his other hand on Johnny's forehead.

"Johnny," he said, "time to wake up." Louder. "Come on, boy, I need you to wake up for me now. Johnny!"

The body under his hands convulsed, then with a gasping indrawn breath, Johnny's eyes snapped open and looked wildly up at Scott.

"It's all right," Scott said, trying to keep his voice calm. "You're safe, you're home."

"Scott?" The word came out as a cracked whisper. Johnny reached up to not quite touch Scott's hand where it still gripped Johnny's shoulder. "You really here?"

"I am indeed," he smiled reassuringly.

"Oh," Johnny sighed. "That's good." He slowly levered himself up, accepting Scott's help, and sat back with another sigh as his breathing gradually evened out.

Scott got up, too, both to stretch his legs and to give Johnny a moment to recover. He spent a few minutes poking at the fire, adding more wood and fussing with it longer than he really needed to.

"Thanks," Johnny finally said, his voice quiet and strained.

Scott turned, alarmed at the way Johnny had sagged limply into the couch, head lolling, with his eyes shut again, and that disturbing flash of memory—dream—hit him once more as he looked at his brother.

"You're welcome. Can I get you a drink? Of water," he added, as Johnny, thankfully, roused enough to open his eyes and look at him.

“Sure.”

A moment later he was back, and he ran a critical gaze over his brother as he handed him a glass of water.

“Thanks,” Johnny said, again, sounding a little less hoarse after draining the glass. “Are ya gonna say anything or are ya gonna just stand there an’ stare at me all night?”

Refusing to allow Johnny to put him on the defensive, Scott came right back. “I rather think you’re the one who needs to say something. Talk to me, brother. And don’t tell me you’re all right, either. We both know you aren’t.”

Johnny pushed himself to his feet, and Scott could tell it was an effort; he was used to his brother moving with grace, with ease, and it hurt to see him struggling—just like it did every other time Johnny was hurt and trying not to show it.

“Just leave it alone, Scott,” he said, turning away. “It’ll pass. Always does.”

“What will pass? Johnny—” He reached out and seized his brother by the arm, swung him around and stared into the pale, drawn face. Growing angrier by the second, he was gripping both of Johnny’s arms now, and he gave him a slight shake. “You are not walking away from me. I care too much about you to let you do that. Let me help. Murdoch’s beyond worried, Teresa’s scared to death, and Maria has started lighting candles for you in the church. *Please*. Don’t shut us out.”

The dark head drooped. He kept hold of Johnny, but when his brother didn’t fight back, he had to quash the thought that an unresisting Johnny was a very bad sign. His heart sank as he looked down on the bowed

head, and his anger fled as quickly as it had flared.

“Johnny, come on, boy. Look at me.” Scott spoke quietly, but firmly, not quite sure how to deal with this strange, passive behavior in his brother, but knowing he had to do something, and do it *now*.

“Can’t,” Johnny mumbled.

“Can’t what? Can’t talk? Can’t look at me?” Scott let go with one hand and used it to raise Johnny’s chin, forcing him to look up, and met those exhausted blue eyes with his own. *Murdoch was right*, Scott thought, trying to keep the shock from his face. *Haunted. Something else, though . . . shame? Fear? God, Johnny, what’s doing this to you?*

The blue eyes slid away, and Scott released his hold only to reach up and tap his brother on the cheek. “Hey.”

“I’m just so tired, Scott,” Johnny said, softly, as though admitting to some horrible weakness. He swayed slightly, and Scott went back to hanging onto him with both hands.

“Time for bed, then. Come on. Let’s talk upstairs.”

This time Johnny did resist.

“No. Not here,” he said, shaking his head. “Not Lancer. Outside.”

“Well, you’re not making a whole lot of sense, but at least you’re talking.”

“All right,” Scott agreed. “Whatever you say. Where do you want to go?”

And if you can make it past the front door, little brother, I’ll eat my hat. And my boots. Maybe even your hat.

But he had underestimated Johnny's determination, somehow forgotten his stubbornness, and wryly chastised himself for not knowing better by now—Johnny had broken free of Scott's grasp and started to take off. Scott managed to persuade his brother to wait for him, giving him just enough time to leave a hurriedly scrawled note for Murdoch to find on the great room desk. After another short detour, he hastened back to where he'd left Johnny propped against the inside of the front door.



Johnny leaned into the door, eyes closed and cheek pressed against the solid wood. Another nightmare had hit him, dammit, and Scott was there to see it all. Well, you wanted him to come home, he told himself sourly, and then you fell asleep—what the hell did ya think was gonna happen, huh? His minor diversionary tactic had only postponed the inevitable. If he hadn't promised a very stern Scott to stay put, he'd be through this door and somewhere else in no time flat.

He just needed some sleep, that's all. He'd be fine in a day or two. The ghosts would be back where they belonged. Life could go on again without everybody looking sideways at him, fussing over him, and generally caring way too much . . .

The sound of footsteps roused him from his drifting lethargy. A familiar presence and an arm flung over his shoulder got him to open his eyes.

"Hey, Scott," he said, the dragging fatigue in his voice painfully obvious even to his own ears.

"Hey, Johnny," Scott said, softly. "Are you sure you want to do this? And just what,

exactly, is it that we're doing, by the way?" Johnny fumbled for the latch, his other hand reaching without thought for his gunbelt hanging on the wall, and stepped through the door into the cool darkness. Scott was right beside him, not letting go.

"Johnny?" Scott said again, questioning.

"If ya want to talk, we ain't doin' it here," Johnny said, refusing to be drawn as he led the way to the barn.

Scott kept silent as they saddled up. Scrounging blankets and other gear from the tack room, they left the darkened house behind them. They rode out under a nearly full moon and a scattering of bright stars, accompanied by a background chorus of crickets.

Johnny tipped his head back and breathed deep, wondering just what the hell he thought he was doing out here. He could talk to Scott; he could trust him. He desperately wanted Scott's help, but he had never spoken of this to another soul, knowing it was a weakness he had to hide. But how much longer could he keep going like this? Scott wasn't about to let him get by with anything—his brother had made that clear. Brother. What a word. It was word that barely described everything that Scott had come to mean to him in the last year, and yet it meant more to him than anything he'd ever had in his life.

Trust him. He can help.

He wanted to sleep and not wake up with a scream in his throat. *Dios*, he just wanted some peace, once and for all . . .

He rode easily in the dark, choosing his way with unerring accuracy and letting Barranca do the rest. Though still on Lancer land after an hour or more, and despite his reluctance to

stop, he was weary to the bone and knew Scott wouldn't keep quiet much longer. His brother had remained remarkably patient with him so far, and a sudden surge of affection and gratitude found him swiping at his stinging eyes.

The breeze that had started as comfortably cooling earlier that evening had since become chilly, and Johnny shivered. The memories and the dreams crowded close in the darkness. Fire, he thought, fire and light and warmth. And Scott . . .

He reined in Barranca after a few moments, and Scott stopped a heartbeat later, turning to look at him.

"Here?"

"Yeah, this'll do."

Johnny swung off his horse, surveying his chosen campsite. Not great, but at least the rocks would cut the wind, and there was plenty of deadwood to burn. They saw to the horses before setting up camp, and Johnny was all too conscious of Scott taking note of how slowly he was moving. But Scott kept quiet, and they were soon sitting in front of a blazing fire. Johnny wrapped his arms around his upraised knees, painfully aware of his brother's unspoken concern and curiosity.

His head ached with a dull throb behind his eyes, his body cried out for sleep, and he could feel the fine tremble in his hand as he reached up to push hair out of his eyes. *Now or never, Madrid. Just get it over with.*

"Johnny?"

"Yeah, Boston, I'm here." He swallowed, his throat suddenly dry, and stared into the fire. "Scott . . . hell, I don't know where to start. This ain't easy, ya know."

"I know," Scott replied. "Take your time. We've got all night." He turned away to rummage in his saddlebags. "Here," he said, turning back to hand Johnny the bottle he pulled out. "Maybe this will help. Medicinal purposes only, you understand—just a swallow or two. It is not my intention to get you drunk."

Johnny took the bottle, squinting at the label. "Murdoch know you been raidin' his whiskey?"

"He won't even notice."

"Medicinal purposes, huh?" Johnny helped himself to a healthy swallow, feeling it burn all the way down his throat and into his empty stomach. "Oh, yeah, that helps," he rasped. He handed the bottle back and watched as Scott took a swig himself.

With the whiskey hitting him like a freight train, he had to put a hand on the ground to keep from falling over. He flicked a glance over at Scott. In the past, he had always handled this himself, without anyone there to pick up the pieces of his shattered soul or even give a damn. What would Scott think of him after tonight? Would he recoil in disgust? Pity?

Trust him.

Well, his instincts rarely failed him; maybe he should pay attention and listen. He pulled his jacket a little closer around him and wondered where to start.

"Start at the beginning," Scott said quietly.

"*Dios*, don't do that!"

"What?"

"You know what! You're the one readin' my

mind!”

“Oh.” Scott threw him a smile. “Sorry. But you must admit, it is good advice.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Johnny muttered, rubbing a hand across his eyes. The teasing was as natural as breathing, and that, more than anything, eased away some of the dark pain and despair he had felt these past days.

“So?” Scott prompted, obviously unwilling to put up with Johnny’s silence any longer.

Johnny felt that silence stretch out as he stared sightlessly into the fire. The beginning? He didn’t think so. Not tonight.

“Ain’t been sleepin’ real well,” he said, finally, after holding out his hand for the bottle again.

“I believe we’ve managed to ascertain that, brother. Tell me something I don’t know.”

“Thought you knew everything,” Johnny tossed back, an admittedly weak attempt at a distraction.

Scott just gave him a roll of his eyes that said he wasn’t buying any of it, and that Johnny had better start talking.

“Yeah, all right,” he sighed. *Whiskey wouldn’t hurt, would it?* He managed another swallow before Scott took the bottle from him. “Just been havin’ a few . . . bad dreams, is all,” he said at last.

“Johnny, I know you’ve had nightmares before, and they haven’t affected you like this.”

A shudder that had nothing to do with the chill breeze went through him. “These are different.”

“Why?”

“Just are, is all.”

“Different how? Talk to me—isn’t that why you dragged me all the way out here?”

“I dragged ya out here ‘cause I didn’t want to talk about . . . this . . . at Lancer. Didn’t want . . . the house . . . or Murdoch or Teresa or anybody ta hear any of this. Wouldn’t be right. An’ it ain’t goin’ no further, Scott.”

“You have my word.”

“I . . . just don’t want ‘em all worryin’.”

“They already are, Johnny, and they will continue to do so until you get over this. Teresa’s right—you’re just making yourself ill. How long since you really slept? Or ate?”

He lifted a shoulder in an uneasy shrug. “Few days, maybe,” he said, reluctant to go any further down that road.

“Johnny.”

Uh oh. That was Scott’s ‘no nonsense’ tone of voice, the stern big brother voice.

Madre de Dios, but he was tired. Beyond tired. Maybe he shouldn’t have had any of that whiskey—Scott was starting to blur. Both of him . . .

The friendly circle of firelight suddenly felt far too small, and the shadows crowded too close upon his back. He thought he would shatter into a thousand pieces, mind, memory, body, everything gone, and he was just so tired, and all he wanted was to fall into the dark and not wake up . . .

But Scott’s voice was there, still there, and it was calling him back from edge of the

beckoning abyss, and he would always answer if Scott called.

"I'm all right," he said, or thought he did, opening his eyes. Scott crouched beside him, tense, worried, with one hand on Johnny's shoulder. Johnny was surprised to find himself lying down, his head and shoulders propped against his saddle and a blanket tossed over him. He licked dry lips. "What happened?" he croaked.

Scott didn't answer, just held up a canteen, and Johnny reached for it gratefully. The water was tepid, but it soothed his throat, and felt mighty fine going down. Several swallows later, he handed the canteen back, and said again, "What happened?"

"You keeled over, boy. Luckily for you, I caught you before your hard head hit the ground."

He struggled to sit up straight despite the fact that his head still spun; Scott shot him a disapproving look, but gave him a helping hand anyway.

"I fell asleep, huh?"

"If I were feeling charitable, I might say that. No, little brother, what you did was pass out."

"Did not."

"Yes, I'm afraid you did. When did you eat last?"

"I'm—"

"Don't you dare say 'I'm all right' one more time to me."

"Wasn't gonna say that."

"Don't lie to me, either. Here, eat this." Scott had reached into his saddlebag again and now

unwrapped a hunk of bread and some jerked beef, handing it to him with a glare. "Eat."

Johnny looked at the offering warily, but took a bite of bread, too bemused to do anything else. It was fresh, and for the first time in days, surprisingly, food did not taste like ashes in his mouth. He chewed slowly, and the bread disappeared, then the jerky, and a few more swallows of water followed.

Passed out. He gave himself a sardonic inward smile. It wasn't as if he'd never gone hungry before, never gone days without much more than what he could scavenge or beg or steal. *Too much easy livin', Madrid. Faintin' like a girl just 'cause ya missed a few meals.*

"Thanks," he said, quiet, embarrassed at this show of weakness, even in front of his brother. He looked up at Scott, who hadn't moved from his side.

"You're welcome. Feel better?"

"Yeah, I do." Scott was not doing very well at hiding his worry, so Johnny tried a smile, and it was a weak one at best. "Wouldn't have any of Teresa's chocolate cake in there, would ya?"

Scott grinned back. "You'll have to ask for that when we get home. I'm sure she'd be happy to bake you one." The grin faded. "Johnny, we're not through yet. In fact, we've hardly started."

"Look, I done told ya about the nightmares, that's why I ain't been sleepin' so good. Ain't been hungry much, but I ain't gonna starve. What else do ya need ta hear?"

"Oh, only a few little facts," Scott shot back. "When did these nightmares start? Why now? What will it take to stop you from having them? And what makes them different from

the others you've had before?"

Surrendering to that persistent inner voice after a long moment, he began, "They . . . they just come an' go, sometimes." He studied his hands, now fiddling with the edge of the blanket that lay across him. "Get a bad spell of 'em for a few days, an' then they stop. Don't have any for a good long while, then they hit again. Thought I'd be spared 'em, here. At Lancer, I mean, 'cause my life's so different than before . . ." He drew a deep breath to steady himself before Scott could hear the tremor in his voice. "But they came back, dammit." He pushed the heels of his hands against his eyes, trying to shove away the pain pounding in his head.

"Easy. Easy, now," Scott soothed. "It's all right."

Throwing off the blanket, he ignored Scott's protest and wobbled to his feet, stance only slightly shaky, and walked a few paces away to stare into the dark beyond the fire.

"You ever dream of the dead, Scott?" Johnny spoke at last, his voice barely above a whisper, as he searched for a way to put his own private hell into words. "Do ya see ghosts of people ya knew? Some kind of restless spirits . . ." His voice trailed off, and he could feel the hard hammering of his heart. He forced himself to go on. "The kind that come to a man in the night, that call to him of blood an' death, of no hope or forgiveness, only death an' darkness forever an' ever . . ." He shivered again and wondered if speaking of them would give them more power.

He remembered those rare occasions as a child when his mother had taken him to church. Usually, he recalled with bitterness, because she'd sobered up and was feeling guilty and remorseful about one sin or another, and felt a need for some sort of forgiveness. Cynical of

the rituals of the Catholic faith even at that young age, he had instead found it easier to believe in and understand the superstitious fears of the simple folk and poor peasants he had grown up amongst. It had become all too easy over the years to believe in the dead, in ghosts . . .

"Dream of the dead?" Scott echoed the question, his reply slow and thoughtful. "Sometimes I dream about . . . the past, and I . . . see . . . men from the war. Sometimes those dreams of the past turn into nightmares that wake me up in the middle of the night, and I don't know where I am, or what year it is . . ." It was Scott's turn to fade off into silence, and Johnny could feel his brother studying him.

Johnny forced himself to turn and meet Scott's eyes, seeing nothing in those blue depths but empathy and compassion. "It's the dead," he whispered, and now that the first words were out, he couldn't seem to stop. "Some are men I've killed, others are ones I couldn't save. My mother's there, sometimes. She's always angry with me, shoutin' . . . The others, they cry and plead, they beg me for help, or they curse me for lettin' 'em die. I ain't no saint, Scott, I've killed plenty of men in gunfights, fair. Ain't a backshooter, though, don't hold with killin' a man in cold blood. Always tried to do the right thing, I guess, but it don't matter, 'cause I got the dead cursin' me, an' I got too much blood on my hands."

"You're a good man, Johnny Lancer," Scott said, firmly, not flinching away from Johnny's anguish. "If you weren't, I doubt you'd be troubled by nightmares . . . or the dead . . . in the first place."

Head bowed and arms crossed tight, Johnny slowly paced around the fire, visions from his dreams leaping in his mind's eye.

"It's always the same ones, Scott . . . always

the dead, angry an' cryin' out, an' they want ta take me with 'em . . ." He couldn't stop the shudder that coursed through him. Then Scott was beside him, his hand on Johnny's shoulder again, warm and strong.

"Well, they aren't going to get you," his brother said softly, "not if I have anything to say about it."

"Just gonna tell 'em to shove off, huh?" Johnny gave a humorless laugh. "Tried that already."

"Then we'll just have to do it together."

"Why bother?" he asked wearily. "Too late. I'm crazy, ain't I? Or damned. Hell, I'm probably both." He looked at Scott, almost pleadingly. "What about you? How'd you get rid of your ghosts?"

Scott stilled, absolutely. For a moment Johnny thought he stopped breathing. Then his brother shook his head and moved away to poke up the fire, his back to Johnny.

"Scott? Sorry, I didn't . . ."

"No, no, it's all right. We are on the subject, after all."

After a few more minutes of tending the fire, Scott sat back, and Johnny saw the whiskey bottle in his possession once more. He took a drink before speaking, and his voice was almost as low as Johnny's. "After the war . . . after I got home, I mean . . . I dreamt about it for quite a while. Not every single night, but often enough. Mostly the dreams, nightmares, really, were about men I had served with . . . men who had died, in battle. . . or the prison camp." He paused to take another swallow of whiskey. Still not looking directly at Johnny, he went on.

"The first time I was home and there was a thunderstorm, I woke up on the floor. I thought it was cannon fire, and I was trying to find a ditch to crawl into. That usually guaranteed bad dreams for a night or two. You may have noticed that I still don't care much for thunderstorms.

"Anyway, the dreams, the nightmares, gradually disappeared, for the most part. But every so often, I still have one . . . and it's always the same. It's one I seemed to have the most, back in Boston, the one that woke me up feeling sick . . . the one that almost made me scream. However, one part of it has since changed, and that scares me even more."

Johnny just waited, echoes of his own pain resounding in Scott's quiet recitation. Maybe Scott needed to face his demons just as much as Johnny did . . .

He picked up the threads of his story again after another pull at the whiskey bottle. "And do you know what that part is, Johnny? Since coming to Lancer and meeting you, since having a brother who means more to me than anything, my nightmare has changed into something far worse. Instead of my sergeant dying in my arms in that God awful, stinking hellhole of a prison, it's you." His voice growing more ragged, he went on, as though determined to have it all purged from his mind and heart. "Three, four times now, it's you. The first time it happened, I was so scared, I actually got up in the middle of the night to sneak into your room to make sure you were all right. That must make me at least as crazy as you." He wiped a hand across his eyes, and added shakily, "So, you see, I haven't gotten rid of my ghosts, either."

"I'm sorry, Scott. I'm sorry to do that to ya . . ." He dropped his eyes.

"It's hardly your fault, Johnny. I'm just glad

you weren't in that place with me. My sergeant was a good man, and I'm sorry he died there, but he wasn't my brother."

"Yeah, well, six years ago, I was raisin' hell all over Sonora, an' I'm glad you weren't there, either. Hand that whiskey over. Since ya ain't got any chocolate cake in them saddlebags, I might as well have another drink."

"Only when you tell me when all this started."

"Scott . . ."

"Johnny."

"Bossy bastard," Johnny muttered. "All right," he began, wearily, "I guess I owe ya that, seein' as how we're puttin' our cards on the table tonight." He turned back to face the darkness again before he went on. "Remember a couple days before you left for Stockton, we were in Spanish Wells pickin' up a few supplies?"

"I remember."

"An' that kid called me out. Claimed I'd killed his brother in Tombstone some years back, an' he was gonna see to it that he got a bit of justice. 'Eye for an eye,' he said. I'd killed his brother, an' he was gonna kill mine after takin' care of me."

For a moment there was only the sound of wood snapping in the fire and the sigh of the wind in the trees.

"I didn't hear that part," Scott said, the shock evident in his quiet voice. "All I heard was that you'd killed his brother in Tombstone. Why didn't you say anything?"

"Why? What difference would it have made? He drew on me, he's dead, an' he ain't gonna

be killin' anybody now." Johnny laughed, short, sharp, and bitter. "An' ya know what? I ain't ever been to Tombstone. I had to shoot some stupid, fool kid for no reason. How's that for a day's work?"

"Oh, Johnny," Scott breathed, "I'm sorry. But don't blame yourself. You had no choice."

He heard Scott get up to come stand behind him, and then his brother was gently maneuvering him back to the fire.

"Come on. You're freezing. I think another round of medicinal whiskey is called for."

His teeth *were* chattering, dammit. He sat as close as he could to the fire without singeing his boots and gratefully took the bottle of whiskey from Scott. "Thanks." Then he added, his voice dropping lower, "I sure seem to be sayin' that a lot to you lately."

"My pleasure. You're very welcome." Scott hunkered down beside him. "So why would that man think you'd killed his brother?"

"Ah, hell, who knows? Maybe it was somebody usin' my name an' reputation, or the kid got told some story, or maybe he'd just read too many dime novels an' decided to be part of one. I don't know, Scott, an' I'm way too tired to wonder anymore. I'm sorry he's dead, but I can't change what happened." He paused to let some whiskey burn its way down his throat. "I had a . . . dream . . . that night, an' hell, guess who showed up. So now I got me a new dead man to go along with all the old ones."

"So . . . the nightmares started after that?" Scott grabbed the whiskey back after Johnny's third or fourth swallow and had one himself. "Johnny, that was a good ten days ago!"

"Nothin' good about 'em," Johnny muttered,

thinking back with a grimace.

“How much sleep have you had in the last week and a half?” Scott demanded.

He shrugged. “Couple hours a night, maybe. Couldn’t get back to sleep after wakin’ up, about midnight or thereabouts, so I’d go for a walk around the ranch a bit. Sometimes managed another hour or two after. Kept tryin’ to wear myself out workin’, but that never really helped, either.” He looked over at Scott. “Fell asleep on you with no problem, though,” he added dryly.

“I noticed,” came the equally dry response. “Well, no wonder you look the way you do, boy. Johnny . . . what did you do about the nightmares before? How many times have you gone through this?”

Johnny sighed. His brother was nothing if not relentless. “First time, I got drunk an’ stayed that way for a week. Found a place to hole up with plenty of tequila, made sure nobody could sneak up on me, an’ woke up with a killer hangover a few days later. That didn’t work the next time . . . Then I tried stayin’ around lots of people. Spent three, four nights in a cantina, playin’ poker. Stayed with a girl . . .”

“What happened to bring them on those times?”

Honestly, the man was like a dog with a goddamn bone.

“Hell, Scott, I don’t know!” Johnny knew Scott was only trying to help, but he was getting mighty tired of all this talking. How much more of his soul did he have to drag kicking and screaming out into the open tonight? He scrubbed a hand over his face and reached for calm. A couple of deep breaths later, and he opened his eyes to find Scott

waiting patiently for an answer. “I don’t know,” he said again, gesturing with one hand. “Anything. Nothin’. Sounds? Time of year? Somethin’, a feelin’ in the air . . .” He shook his head, knowing just how insane all of that sounded.

“I am but mad north-northwest,” Scott murmured, after a moment, more to himself than Johnny, and then upended the bottle again.

“I ain’t crazy all the time, Scott,” Johnny said, with a slight but very real smile coming to his face. “When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.” As he finished the quote, he had the pleasure of watching his brother’s mouth fall open in complete and utter astonishment, and the smile grew to a grin. “What?” he went on, all wide-eyed and innocent. “Ya think I wouldn’t know a line from ‘Hamlet’ when I heard it?”

“What? How? But . . .” Scott sputtered. “Since when?”

Johnny thought back, enjoying his brother’s confusion. Well, maybe it was worth hauling both their sorry hides out here if he got that kind of reaction from Scott just because Johnny threw some Shakespeare back at him.

“Oh, a few years ago I wound up sharin’ a jail cell with a drunk for about a week, an’ it turned out he was an actor, or had been. Well, when he was awake he spent most of his time yellin’ out all sorts of speeches and lines from one play or another. Of course, I didn’t know that then. When he sobered up, he introduced himself an’ he told me stories an’ plays, then acted out all the parts. I think he was happy to have an audience. Anyway, ‘Hamlet’ was his favorite. I must’ve heard that at least ten times.” Then he added, wistfully, “Always wanted to see it someday, for real, with actors an’ costumes—especially that swordfight at

the end.”

“How old were you?”

Scott yet appeared to be in a state of shock, and Johnny felt that silly grin get even wider. Maybe he’d had too much whiskey; maybe they both had . . .

“Uh, maybe . . . fourteen? Fifteen?” He tipped his head sideways, recalling the incident; some messy little fracas in some dusty little town had left him with a black eye and a couple of cracked ribs, and landed him in jail. And he hadn’t even started it.

“You still remember those lines from that many years ago?”

“Well, yeah. Like I said, he probably ran through it ten times. Besides, I liked it. I may not have understood it all, even when he explained it to me, but I understood that it was about revenge, an’ a ghost, an’ a . . . father.” He ducked away then, unwilling to show that particular pain to Scott tonight.

“Actually, it’s always been rather a favorite of mine, too,” Scott said. He went on, loftily. “I’ll have you know that I played the part of Laertes in a production when I was at Harvard.”

“Is that so?” Johnny arched an eyebrow.

“Yes, and I was quite brilliant, if I may say so myself.”

“Uh huh. I bet you were.” He knew full well that Scott had seen right through him, but was pretending otherwise. How had he gotten so lucky to have this man for his brother? Not only his brother, but his friend, as well . . .

Scott was still eyeing him with faint surprise, either from his sudden literary revelation, or

because he was looking for sarcasm in Johnny’s last remark. Johnny just let him wonder.

“It’s very late,” Scott said, quietly, at last. “Do you think you could get some sleep?”

Johnny shifted, uneasy again, and longed to do nothing but that. He glanced at his brother. “*Am I crazy, Scott?*”

“If you’re crazy, Johnny, then so am I.”

“That ain’t exactly the reassurin’ answer I was hopin’ to hear.”

Scott smacked him on the arm, and he felt another smile growing on his face. *Oh, I have missed you, brother. I’m right glad to have you home again.*

“You are not crazy,” Scott said, firmly. “But maybe . . . maybe you need to let go of those memories of the dead, let those ghosts go back where they belong.”

Johnny cocked his head at his brother and pointed out, “Maybe we both do, brother.” Then he added, “But I ain’t a ghost, Scott. I ain’t goin’ nowhere.”

This time the hand came up to ruffle his hair. “I know you’re not, thank God, and you had better stay that way.”

Johnny had lost track of the whiskey bottle, but Scott appeared to have his hand on it again. He raised it, and said, “To Sergeant Matthew Martin Connelly. May his soul find peace.” After taking a swallow, he passed the bottle to Johnny.

Oh, what the hell. Couldn’t hurt. ““And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest,”” Johnny quoted softly. He drank off the last of the whiskey, and looked at Scott. “I hope they all

find peace, and leave me to mine. I'm tired of not sleepin'." He thought about that briefly, and added, "Does that make sense?"

"It does, and I don't even think I'm drunk. Much." Scott stood up and extended a hand to Johnny. "Come on, brother, time for bed."

He let Scott haul him up, and with a steadying hand on his arm, led him the few steps back to his bedroll.

"Off with the boots. Gunbelt, too."

Before Johnny knew it, he was tucked under a couple of blankets with his gun comfortably close at hand. He let loose a long sigh. Between the whiskey and the exhaustion dragging at his mind and body, he figured he was in no shape to resist Scott's big brothering. With heavy lidded eyes, he watched as Scott added more wood to the fire and made a last check on the horses before turning in as well.

"I'll be right here," Scott said, propped on an elbow, only a couple of feet away. "You go to sleep, Johnny. It'll be all right. I'll see you in the morning. Go to sleep."

He met his brother's intense gaze, and so dearly wanted him to be telling the truth. "Promise?" he said. Sleep tugged insistently at him, but he fought it long enough to hear Scott's reply. Not that he needed to, he thought, as he finally drifted off. Scott meant what he said, didn't he, and always kept his word . . .



Scott watched as Johnny at last gave in. *About time, little brother.* Satisfied after several minutes that the slow, even breathing meant that Johnny really was asleep, he

nevertheless continued to study the familiar features in the dancing firelight. Some of the tight lines and the frown had smoothed out in sleep, but the sharp jutting of cheekbone and jaw line in his too thin face was very evident. Not to mention that he still looked grey beneath his tan, and his closed eyes appeared bruised. *Well, Johnny, you just sleep. I'm here, boy, and I'm not letting any of your dead take you away from me. Not tonight. Not ever. So you rest easy. I'm here.*

He slept himself, eventually, though not deeply. He was always aware of Johnny off to his side, and once when he woke, he saw that his hand had reached out in Johnny's direction, nearly touching him. But it was not until almost dawn that he heard a sound from his brother. Johnny had scarcely moved all night, but now he began to thrash restlessly, and as Scott became more fully awake, he heard the low moan and some muttered words.

"Not this time," Scott whispered. He moved closer and reached out to grip Johnny by the shoulder. His other hand grabbed a flailing arm, and he leaned in to put his head next to Johnny's. "Can you hear me, Johnny? It's Scott. I'm right here, I've got you." He could see Johnny's eyes moving rapidly beneath the closed lids, and his breathing had quickened. A few more words in Spanish fell from his lips, but Scott just kept talking, his voice low and calm. "That's it, it's all right," he crooned, as Johnny's thrashing slowly eased and his head slid to one side. His words trailed off as he saw Johnny's eyes blink open, and he looked into those eyes, large and almost black in the pale, grey light of a new morning, and hardly dared to breathe.

"Scott?" It was barely a sigh.

"I'm here, Johnny." He tightened his hold on Johnny's arm, not knowing what to make of that look in his brother's eyes.

“Knew you were.” A faint smile came to his face, then, and with another quiet sigh, he said, “Big brother . . .”

“Always,” Scott said. But he wasn’t even certain if Johnny heard him, because the eyes had closed again, and though the smile remained, his brother seemed to be asleep once more. He carefully unclasped first the hand he had wrapped around Johnny’s forearm, and then the one that was fisted in his jacket. He smoothed out the blanket, tucking it in a bit, and finished up with flipping back one stray lock of Johnny’s hair. “I’m still here, Johnny, and I will be as long as you need me.”

EPILOGUE TWO WEEKS LATER

Murdoch watched in silent delight from the windows of the great room as his boys came tumbling in after a hard day’s work. From the barn, Johnny was half running, half skipping—backwards—and Scott was chasing after him, tossing clumps of hay at his head. Johnny dodged adroitly out of the way, and Murdoch could only marvel at the change in him.

Neither of the boys would say anything, and Johnny only remarked, of course, that he was “fine”—so Murdoch left it at that. He knew that Scott had spent a few nights in Johnny’s room, and he had been aware of Johnny slipping into Scott’s once or twice, but whatever had happened that first night when Scott came home seemed to have turned the tide. He could certainly see for himself that Johnny had regained his appetite and boundless energy. Murdoch realized how very much he had missed the sparkle in Johnny’s blue eyes, and he fervently hoped to never see it disappear again.

A shout of victorious laughter told him that

Scott had scored a hit while he had been musing, and he looked up again to see Johnny disgustedly wiping dirty hay off of his favorite shirt. Then he threw up his hands in defeat, unbuttoned the shirt and pulled it off, holding the offending garment at arm’s length.

Scott just stood with his hands braced on his knees and laughed. Then he grabbed Johnny around the neck and dragged him into the house. Murdoch smiled and shook his head, and went to meet his boys at the door.

“Murdoch! Look what he did to my shirt!”

“Ah, yes, I see, John. Or rather, more to the point, I can smell what he did to your shirt.”

“Scott!” Johnny yelled. “You owe me a new shirt!”

Scott was still grinning. “I’ll buy you *two* new shirts. But I have something even better I want to give you, and I think now is the perfect time.”

Johnny stopped waving his shirt in Scott’s face. “What?” he asked, suspiciously. “Don’t know if I want anything else from you today.”

Scott, obviously enjoying his win, let his brother squirm for a moment. “Well, little brother, last week in the *San Francisco Chronicle* there was a story about a Shakespearean acting company on tour from London, and they’ll be performing in San Francisco for several days.” He paused, just long enough to get Johnny squirming again. “How would you like to go see ‘Hamlet’?”

Murdoch felt his jaw drop at such an outrageous suggestion, and he later said that the shout Johnny let loose stampeded the cattle in the north pasture and had the hens laying their eggs early.

“I guess that means ‘yes’?”

“Oh, yes, it does at that, Boston, it surely does.”



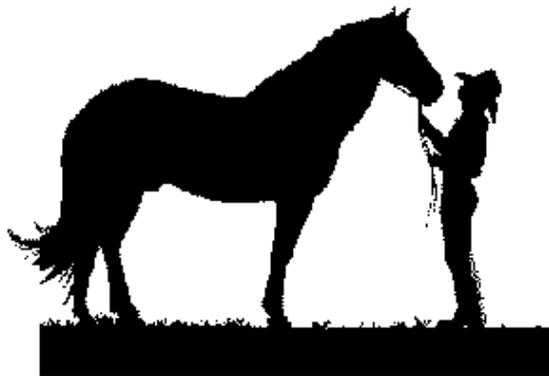
AUTHOR'S NOTES

Thanks to AJ, for the wonderful opportunity to do this! And for her advice, encouragement, and moral support. And to Master Moe, for her painstaking beta job, not to mention whacks and thumps and the occasional threat of rice paper! I couldn't have done it without you guys—and it sure wouldn't have been nearly as much fun.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A child prodigy on the violin since age 7, Jennifer has toured the US extensively giving concert performances—what? (AJ is shaking her head.) Um, how about mentioning her advanced degrees in astrophysics from MIT and English Renaissance Literature from Harvard? No? Not that either? Okay, here's the real deal. Having discovered fanfic on the internet while bored at her last job, Jen finally succumbed to technology (despite being technophobic) and bought a computer, and, sadly, it has all gone rather downhill ever since: reading fanfic, and now writing fanfic, because it looked like all those other people were having so much fun. In her spare time, Jen is somewhat employed as a textbook buyer at a university bookstore somewhere in Minneapolis, and having bought thousands of pounds of said textbooks in the last couple of years, she has to admit that she's glad she's not in law school, or an accountant.

Send any feedback for Jennifer to jenkrinke@comcast.net



THE ANNIVERSARY GIFTS



BY AJ BURFIELD

It's been a silly ritual that started the day Johnny finally woke after Pardee's bullet. I don't know what I was thinking; well, yes I do. I'd just known my brother for a week and a lot of that time he was unconscious. I was trying to figure him out. He made it hard, too, but I'm not sure he did it on purpose. I know now that my brother just didn't know how to respond because he was just learning to trust. His sense of humor, though, came through crystal clear.

I'd given him a book. Since he was pretty restless lying there in bed, I figured he'd enjoy the diversion. It was a book on military battle theory which studied classic military engagements.

Johnny used the book as a coaster.

In fact, it still sits there on his nightstand, several orbits of drinking glass sweat rings staining the cover with two years worth of bedside beverages. I don't think the cover has ever been cracked open.

As soon as he was up and around, Johnny reciprocated with his own gift. A door knocker shaped like a horseshoe for my bedroom door. Deciding to give his gift the same due, it immediately went into service as a paperweight on my dresser. It's still there. It works great.

When the first anniversary of our surprise introduction came around, without any prior agreement, we exchanged gifts again. I gave

him a nightshirt with matching cap because he said "I always sleep well." He gave me a picture frame. That's what it claimed to be, anyway. I've seen better looking wagon wrecks.

The nightshirt and cap ended up on the scarecrow in Teresa's garden. The crows won't go anywhere near it.

Johnny found the picture frame hanging in the barn with the current stage schedule on display. The barn dust enhanced the beauty of it. I told Johnny that at least now he knew what times he could pick up the stage in the middle of nowhere.

This year, he's not going to be able to top what I have for him. I can't think of any way he could possibly find some other purpose for it; it's meant to just sit there. Now all I have to do is figure out a way to get into town to pick it up. I got a message that it's at Baldemoro's. Perfect timing - tomorrow marks the end of our second year as partners in Lancer - but Murdoch's been working us like there's no tomorrow.

As I splash some water on my face in the kitchen, Teresa whacks me with a towel.

"Scott!" She tries to sound menacing, but doesn't quite accomplish it. "Quit splashing all over the floor!"

"Okay, okay." I grab a towel and dry my face. She whacks me again.

"That's a dish towel!"

"Oh, sorry!" I hastily put it down and back away toward the exit to the great room. All I want is some lunch and some way to sneak out of here without running into . . .

"Scott, I'm glad to see you're home."

"Murdoch!" I'm surprised by my father entering the kitchen from my escape venue. "You're home early." Didn't he ever leave the house today?

"Listen, you have to go into town for me."

I'm momentarily stunned. "Really?" I say, trying not to sound too eager. What timing!

"There's a package you need to pick up for me and a wire to send. Get some lunch and head on out." He hands me a scribbled note and I stuff it in my pocket.

Perfect! "Is Johnny still working on the fence?" I don't want my brother to see me going into town.

"Yes. He said it would take most of the afternoon. I don't expect to see him until dinner."

What luck! I see Murdoch frown at me and realize I'm smiling. I immediately look thoughtful. "Maybe I should help Johnny with the fence line on my way back." I can't believe that just left my mouth . . .

"No, I want you to bring the package right home. Then you can help him if he's not done by then."

"Yes, sir. I'll be off as soon as I have some lunch." Murdoch returns to the great room, and I turn back to the kitchen, thrilled at my turn of luck. It's almost one o'clock. I'll even

have time for a beer when I get in town.

My grin immediately falls away as I end up face to face with a glaring Teresa, just rising from drying the floor I'd splashed. Her arms cross her chest and her toe is tapping dangerously. She's managing to look quite menacing now.

"Now I suppose you want food," she snaps.

Uh . . . maybe not . . .



I can't believe the timing on this. Everything is working out just great! I convinced Murdoch this fence job would take all afternoon and I'm just about done. I'll have plenty of time to get into town and get my surprise for Scott.

The sweat on my palms is making the shovel slick, so I pause to wipe the wetness from my hands on my pants and get a drink. Good thing I took off my shirt early on; at least it'll be clean when I get to town.

I can't help but laugh out loud when I think of Scott's gift this year. He'll never top it. It's taken a year to arrange. Clara's been a big help, but I'll be very happy not having to sneak into her dress shop anymore. Good idea to have the package sent to Baldemoro's; I sure didn't want to have to explain why I needed to pick up a delivery at Clara's Fashion Shoppe.

This is a far better present than that God-awful picture frame, but even Scott admitted it was a good reminder that he'd said he 'photographed well'. Hard to believe he's the same man I almost sat on when I got on the stage; he's a far cry from that pretty dude now, and has an evil wicked sense of humor. I have to admit,

framing the stage schedule one-upped me good. That ain't happenin' this year.

The water feels cool and welcome going down, but a beer would really hit the spot. One more string of wire and I can call it done. I'll eat what Teresa packed for me as I ride and have more time in town. Maybe I'll drop in on Val - haven't seen him in weeks. Murdoch's had some kinda burr under his saddle, drivin' us all loco with chores. He gets that way when his back's been botherin' him.

Two years. It's been two years since we came together. Hard to believe Johnny Madrid has stayed in one place for two years. I even have a watch now. Pulling the timepiece carefully from my waist, I sober at the memory it brings as I finger the crystal.

Damn! It's almost one o'clock! Quickly, I shove the watch away, twist that last wire on the fence and make my way to Barranca. Snatching my shirt from the saddle horn causes Barranca to turn to me, both ears pricked with obvious curiosity. "Yeah, yeah, I'll finish it tomorrow. Are you Murdoch's watchdog now?"

All I get in response is a lazy tail swish and I immediately grin. "I won't tell if you don't," I whisper while I refasten the canteen. Barranca's ears relax and he shifts his weight with a sigh of apparent agreement. I swear that animal knows exactly what I'm thinkin' sometimes.

It's no time at all before we're on the trail to town. Murdoch's never gonna know and Scott's gonna have the britches shocked off him. I can feel that I'm grinnin' like a fool. Tomorrow's gonna be a good day. For now, Barranca's steady, smooth lope feels perfect.

I pull up just before we enter town so my horse can catch his wind. We made great time,

so I can have a beer first. Maybe I can get Val to join me! I stop in front of his office, dismount, and let Barranca get a drink in the trough. Town looks quiet, but then again, it is the middle of the day on a Thursday. Looking around, the only thing that seems odd is the old buggy tied up in front of the saloon. Wonder who that belongs to?

My dang horse dribbles on my leg to signal that he's had his fill. "Thanks a lot, compadre," I gripe. After hitching up Barranca, I brush off the dust and water from my pants with my hat and push open Val's door. It's no surprise to see him relaxed in his chair, boots on desk and head thrown back, napping hard. The open mouth is just too temptin'. I wad up a sheet of paper from his desk and give it a toss . . .

The snort of surprise is just perfect as the paper bounces off his nose and I start to laugh. His arms start wheelin' as the town's top lawman loses his balance.

"Johnny, you're a dead man!" Val sputters after he saves himself from fallin' backward.

"Hey, Val, if you ever lose your job as Sheriff, you can hire out as a windmill with that there arm action!"

Val pushes to his feet and tugs up his gun belt with a grunt, still not quite awake. "Someday you're gonna accidentally get shot with your games," he grouses, running his fingers through his hair. "Where you been, anyway? Haven't seen ya for awhile."

"Well, here I am now and ready for a beer. How 'bout you?" I settle on the corner of his desk and finger through the wanted posters stacked in a pile that's leaning dangerously to one side. Just one little tap . . .

Val whacks my hand away. I look up with a grin and find him scowling at me. "Was just

there. Gun salesman already bought me one, so I'd best stop with that."

"Gun salesman?" Must belong to that wagon out front.

"Yeah, he's got a few nice things. Says he's passin' through. Too bad. If he'd stay another day he could do some business tomorrow, bein' payday Friday for the Bar R and all."

I stand and stretch. "Well, I offered. I'll be over there a little while if ya change your mind." I point at the leaning pile. "I see ya got some paperwork to do." In a flash, I tap the pile and it starts to slide to the floor like a waterfall.

"Johnny, get outta my office!" Val barks as he leaps to try and stem the flow of paper. His hands fly, but the papers are on a run.

I laugh and make my way to the door. "See ya later, Val!" I quickly close the door, still chuckling, and untie Barranca. We walk to the saloon, where I tie him next to the salesman's buggy.

I adjust my gun belt before pushing the doors aside. Scott doesn't think I even know I'm doing that - adjusting my rig - but I am fully conscious of it. It's more than a habit, as is skimming the room with my eyes as I enter. In the dim light I find four people: the bartender, Ellie the saloon girl who's lookin' mighty bored at the moment, and two men leaning on the bar. The smaller one is Silas from the livery who will be in big trouble if Gene - his boss - knew he was here. I know that feeling. And finally, a skinny, tall man in dapper clothes that are a bit threadbare. Must be the salesman.

The salesman turns to me as the batwings clatter shut. His hair is full and combed straight back with a shot of grey at each

temple. He's not a young man, but still limber. His grin is practiced and his eyes sharp.

He puts me on edge. I pause just inside the door and give him an obvious look over. He takes it well. One thing I do notice - and I don't know why I noticed it - is that his boots are well worn with stirrup marks. This man has spent a lot of time in the saddle but he has a buggy outside. That tells me he may not be what he seems, but for now, his loose-limbed posture tells me he's not an immediate threat. He's not even wearing a gun.

"Hello, sir. Would you like to see some very fine guns? I see that you are a connoisseur yourself." He acknowledges my rig with a slight nod of his head and is careful not to move his hands. Smart man.

"I always like lookin' at guns," I say pleasantly. "Howdy, Silas. Becker." The liveryman and the bartender nod in greeting. I glance at Ellie. "Hey, Ellie. You look nice today."

"Thanks, Johnny," she says, finally breaking a grin. "Staying long?"

"Nah," I say, dragging off my hat as I slowly approach the bar. The salesman has a pair of display cases laying flat with a very nice selection of guns packed neatly in dark blue velvet that has seen better days.

"Name's Mika. Glenn Mika. See anything you like?"

I do see that Mr. Mika's eyes are very busy. Although they don't move much, I can see the dark circles of his eyes change constantly in width. He's sizing me up, and not nearly as relaxed as his posture wants to make me believe. I smile brazenly and look away for a moment to ask for a beer. When the mug is in my hand I look at the display.

"Very pretty," I say, taking a sip.

"This one's the latest in single action and very smooth." He touches a shiny Colt. "I was telling Silas here that he may do better with a smaller piece, like this Derringer."

I don't say much and Silas isn't buying, so Mr. Mika lets the conversation dwindle away. I finish my beer, thanking Becker. "I'll see ya later, Silas. Ellie, maybe this weekend."

"You takin' off, Johnny?" Her lower lip does a temptin' pout.

"Yeah, 'fraid so. Back to work." I turn to Mika and see something akin to satisfaction in his eyes. The man's glad I'm leavin and I wonder why. "Mr. Mika." With a nod, I'm out the door.

I give Mika's carriage one last glance. One leather satchel sits on the floor; it's pretty bare for a salesman on the road. "Comon', Johnny," I chide myself. "You're seein' ghosts again." I sigh, set my hat on my head, and stroll to Baldemoro's store to get my gift.

I can't help but grin at the thought of the gift. Scott's never gonna top this one.



I don't believe it. That's Barranca tied in front of the saloon! I knew he had to be up to something. My brother rarely volunteers to work with barbed wire. Johnny's going to recognize Charlie, so I'll tie him up behind Baldemoro's store and keep out of sight until the coast is clear.

In fact, maybe I can get this done and get out of here before Johnny even knows I'm in town. Tying off Charlie, I make my way down the back alley and up to the side of the saloon.

There's one window on that side; it's dirty, but I can make out my brother taking a beer from Becker. Perfect; I can get my gift and get out of town before he's even done.

I make it to the back door of Baldemoro's in no time and slip inside. Mr. Baldemoro's stocking shelves, his back to me, and jumps when I clear my throat to get his attention. "Oh! Señor Lancer!" he sputters, momentarily juggling a pair of jars.

I grab one jar that's refusing to get under control. "I apologize, sir. I came in the back door."

He smiles, embarrassed, and gives me a dismissive wave. "It's all right. The bell on the front door usually gives me a warning!" He puts the jars down. "Now, what can I do for you?"

"I'm here to pick up a package?"

"Oh, yes! It's in the back. Uno momento." Mr. Baldemoro hustles to the back storage room as I look out the front window to make sure Johnny is staying put. I'm about to turn away when I see the batwing doors open. Johnny! And he's coming in this direction!

When I turn I see Mr. Baldemoro coming out from the back room with a frown on his face and looking at brown paper wrapped items in his hands. "I found these two packages . . ." he starts.

Packages? I hesitate at the counter. Oh, right! I was supposed to pick up a package for Murdoch. And a wire – I'm supposed to send a wire, too! I chew my lip, trying to plan a way to stay out of Johnny's sight and get to Travis' telegraph office. Having a brother who doesn't miss a thing can be a real problem sometimes.

“That’ll be . . .” Mr. Baldemoro starts.

“Put it on the account!” I cut him off as I quickly grab the items and tuck them to my chest. “And if Johnny comes in here, you didn’t see me today, okay?” Mr. Baldemoro looks very puzzled. “It’s a surprise,” I explain, holding up the smaller of the two packages.

“Oh,” he replies, still looking a bit confused.

I dart out the back door and make my way to the corner of the store where I take a quick peek and see the heel of my brother as he steps up onto the boardwalk in front of Baldemoro’s. Suddenly, it’s clear: he’s got something to pick up, too, I bet. I grin to myself. Maybe I’ll quiz Mr. Baldemoro after I send the wire. No way is Johnny going to outdo me in this silly gift contest.

I settle back into the shadows to wait out Johnny and decide to open the smaller package which has to be mine and see if my gift is in one piece.

“Oh no!” Inside the opened box in my hand is not what was supposed to be in there. Instead of the custom made figurine I’d ordered for Johnny, there in the pile of tissue are two leather wallets with the Lancer brand carved on the outside.

If this isn’t what I ordered, then what’s in this other, larger package? I put the smaller box down and start to peel back the brown wrapping paper on the bigger package. One little part of the wrapped item is finally exposed and I feel my jaw drop. Then I can’t help but smile hugely.

“Why that little rat!” I mumble. “Where on Earth did Johnny find this?”



“Buenos dias, Senor Baldemoro.” The old man is behind the counter with a strange look on his face. He stares at me for a second with his mouth hanging open before he replies.

“Buenos dias, Johnny. Er, cómo está?”

He sounds fine, but the man seems kinda nervous as I saunter up to the counter. “Just fine, thanks. You have a package for me?” I casually look around, but he’s all alone.

“Package?”

“Yeah. Señora Baldemoro said she’d put it aside for me.”

“Oh.” That funny look crosses his face again. “I’ll check in the back.”

He slinks off to the back room like he’s got some big secret. What did I miss? I look around again and through the front window I happen to see Val walkin’ down the other side of the street. Maybe he’s changed his mind about that beer . . .

“Here you go. I did not see it when . . . er, I mean, I found it.”

I turn back to Baldemoro and he looks positively frazzled. Now he’s makin’ me nervous. I look down at the package and frown as I reach for it. “That don’t look right,” I say. “It’s smaller than I was expectin’.”

He coughs nervously. “Really?”

Somethin’s not right here. “Well, let me check it real quick.” I carefully slip off the string and paper that’s on the small box and then slip off the lid. Inside is a bundle of tissue. “This is way too small,” I say as I remove the tissue-wrapped item and start to unroll the paper.

The storekeeper is fidgeting. “Well, maybe,

um. . .”

I uncover a small figure. It’s a little statue of a jumping horse. A palomino horse; and the rider . . . I hold the item closer to confirm what I think I’m seeing and start to laugh. “Scott was supposed to get this, wasn’t he?”

Mr. Baldemoro blushes immediately as his fingers start to fiddle with his apron. “Sí. I think he may have your package,” he says, clearly embarrassed.

“Scott was here?” I laugh again. “Boy, is he gonna be surprised!”

Just then, I hear shouting and the sound of gunfire outside. Without thinking, I head to the front door, my gun instantly in my hand.

Once I clear the door I see Val rolling in the dirt and taking a position behind a water trough. He’s aiming down the street. I follow his line of sight and see three cowboys in front of the bank shootin’ in Val’s direction.

I let fly with a couple of rounds and one is down. One of the remaining pair is just about mounted up as the other stands fast and keeps Val pinned. Two more men spill from the bank door and one wastes no time gettin’ a bead on me.

Instantly, I drop to one knee and take him out as his shot sails past my shoulder. His partner has a fat bag and runs down the side of the bank, headin’ to the back alley. I start to the corner of Baldemoro’s to get to the back and cut him off when the mounted man starts shootin’ at me. I pump a few rounds in his direction, the spookin’ horse makin’ the target hard to hit. I see Val reloadin’ from the corner of my eye.

“Johnny!” Val hollers. “They robbed the bank!” He snaps the gun cylinder back in

place and ducks from a close one.

“I’ll get ‘em!” I holler as I take better aim and finally take out the mounted man. As the man hits the dirt, the one left in the street pulls a second gun from his waist and starts shootin’ at me, too. I get off one more shot. “I’m empty!” I yell at Val as I duck into the side alley.

“I got this one!” Val yells, meaning the man in the street. I nod and move toward the back alley knowing I have to reload. That’s when I notice I’m still holding the jumping horse figurine, and have been fanning the hammer of my gun with the heel of my hand. I’m just about to drop it when I hear a shot and a yell from around the corner in the back alley. I freeze, and then slowly peek around the corner.



A shout and immediate gunfire jerk my attention away from Johnny’s obvious gift to me and I drop it on the ground to pull my gun. Keeping to the wall, I make my way up the back alley, realizing the gunfire is coming from the front of the bank, two buildings up. I’m just about to the bank’s side when a cowboy holding a bag runs into the back alley. His other hand holds a gun.

The cowboy turns in my direction to find that he’s looking down the barrel of my Colt.

“Stop right there,” I snap. He does so, but in a flash I see that I’m in trouble. The bank robber is looking behind me and a smug smile grows on his face. All I can do is dodge aside and shoot.



I hear Scott's voice, low and stern, the same time I peek around the corner. To my right, I see my brother's back – he's holdin' off the robber I saw run back here.

But wait . . . I drop lower because something about the posture of the robber alerts my gut. He sees someone farther down the alley - I turn, and there's Mika, the gun salesman, leather tote from the wagon in one hand and a bright, shiny handgun in the other. The muzzle is leveling on Scott's back.

I never had time to reload.

I hear a shot but it's not Mika - his gun's not even fully up yet. Reacting without thinking, I fling the horse figurine with all I've got. It flies true and wings hard off the gun salesman's temple making him stagger and throwing off his shot before he can take it.

I charge forward. Mika regains his balance and crouches as he starts to bring up his gun at me. Before he can aim I crash into him.

I hear a loud bang and feel a kick in my thigh. I think he got me, but I'm not lettin' him get away.



I just have time to drop to one knee and fire at the robber. He flies back, the gun flipping through the air along with the bank bag.

Another shot sounds behind me so I launch myself sideways again, this time into the dirt. A glance back reveals Johnny dropping hard on another man – the robber's partner, waiting for him in the alley.

I refocus on the young cowboy moaning on the ground. He's curled up, holding his stomach. Pounding feet from the direction of

the street startle me and I swing up my gun.

“Scott!”

Thank God it's Val. I point at the bleeding robber and I sprint to Johnny rolling on the ground with the other man. I grab the collar of my brother's adversary and pull him off. The man is bleeding from the temple. He starts to struggle in my hand.

“Hold still!” I yell, pressing my gun into the small of his back. He obeys, breathing hard. Glancing around, I see his gun on the ground. It looks shiny new.

Johnny's moving much too slowly. I yell, “Val! Johnny's hurt!”

By now, other men from town are showing up and Val puts one of them in charge of the robber I shot. Our sheriff then runs over and takes control of the man I have. He's not happy.

“Check Johnny,” Val snaps unnecessarily because I'm already by my brother's side.

“Johnny! You all right?” I sit him up and see that he's clutching his leg.

“I will be as soon as I stop hurtin’,” Johnny groans. There's blood all over his thigh.

“I've got to stop the bleeding,” I say, pressing my hand on the bullet hole just above the knee. “It looks like you'll live, but I need some bandages.” And I know exactly where to get some.

Looking up, I see Mr. Baldemoro standing outside his back door. “Hey!” I yell, getting his attention. When he looks my way I nod at a pile on the ground near him. “Bring that over here!”

The storekeeper looks down, sees the packages I dropped, and brings them over. I pull the paper from the bigger bundle and discover that the item inside is actually a shirt. I tear off a sleeve and begin to use it as a tourniquet on Johnny's thigh.

Johnny's holding his injured thigh with both hands as he sits on the ground. He was concentrating on his wound, but when he sees the sleeve, his eyebrows raise and then he starts to laugh and moan in pain at the same time.

I can't help it. I start to laugh, too, as I tie off the tourniquet. Then I rip the other sleeve off to tie around the bullet hole. By the time I'm done, we're both trying hard to control ourselves - unsuccessfully.

"What in blazes is going on over there?" Val's handcuffing the man that shot Johnny and directing two other men to drag the injured robber to the jail. "This ain't funny as far as I can see!"

Neither one of us can reply.

Val hands off his prisoner and comes over, yelling for someone to get Sam. "Now tell me . . ." Our scruffy sheriff friend stops in mid sentence and points at the remains of the shirt. "What the heck was that supposed to be?"

"That was Boston's present," Johnny manages to gasp, getting his laughter under control for a moment. "It exactly matches a certain pair of riding pants. . ."

"Stop right there, Johnny!" I warn. I swear, I'm never going to live those particular pair of plaid pants down. Ever. I feel Johnny trying to get up. "You stay put a minute, will you please?" When I push him back down, a glint in the dirt next to Johnny catches my eye. It's his gun. And next to it is . . .

I pick up the round object and discover it's the head of the rider from the figurine I'd ordered. I hold it up between my thumb and finger then redirect my eyes to my brother, who suddenly is working hard to look innocent. Then he glances around, and nods to something on the ground behind me. I turn to see the rest of the figurine in the dirt, the palomino's body amazingly intact, frozen in flight over a brushy jump. I retrieve the bigger part and hold the rider's head where it should be. Then I triumphantly hold it aloft for my brother to appreciate.

"I see the rider's got yellow hair," Johnny quips with a grin.

"Yup," I reply smartly. "Just a reminder to you about who actually taught that nag of yours to jump."

"I see," Johnny says slowly, his grin turning into a wince of pain. "It's also a reminder that I saved your sorry hide. Sure packs a nice wollop."

"What?"

"My gun was empty. I had to use somethin' to keep him from shootin' ya and I sure as heck wasn't gonna throw my gun." Johnny sounds indignant.

"Do you know how long it took me to find that statue?"

"Do you know how long it took me to get that shirt made?"

We try to scowl at each other, Johnny still holding his thigh and me waving the broken statue in front of his face. Then we both freeze and crack huge grins. Laughing again, I let the headless horseman drop to the dirt and point at his thigh.

“Well, it looks like I saved your life again, too,” I say, checking the firmly wrapped bullet wound.

“What?” Johnny snorts, pushing my hand away. “This is just a scratch. *I* saved *your* life this time, brother.”

I pick up the headless figurine. I’m grateful, but I’ll be darned if I’m going to let him think that he’s topped me this year. “I can’t believe your gun was empty. What kind of novice are you, anyway?” I say with a difficult to hold straight face as I try to stare him down. Johnny’s eyes sparkle happily even though I know he’s in a bit of pain.

Before he can respond, Mr. Baldemoro hands me the other box. “Here’s the package I guess your father ordered. Looks like I got them all mixed up.”

“That’s all right,” Johnny smirks. “They got where they were supposed to go.”

The store owner backs off as Sam appears around the corner, black bag in hand. Johnny scowls at his arrival.

“Hey,” I say, nudging Johnny’s uninjured leg to get his attention. “Want to see what Murdoch got us?”

Happy for distraction, my little brother focuses on me as Sam clucks and makes those sounds that indicated he’s annoyed. The doctor fingers the colorful plaid bandage for a moment then shakes his head as he unties it.

“What did he get us?” Johnny says with gritted teeth, refocusing my attention.

I pull out the matching wallets and he eyes them closely.

“Nice,” he says with a gasp; Sam’s begun to probe the wound. “But it wouldn’t pack near the same wollop.”

We both dissolve into laughter again as the doctor harrumphs and goes to work.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AJ lives in San Diego County, California, with three children and a very patient and wonderful husband! Writing has always been a part of her life, and she tries to squeeze it in as part of her day wherever she can. Her daughter Tori contributed some graphics to the zine. This is AJ's first attempt at putting together a zine. She's learned a lot, and hopes to do better in the future.

Send any feed back for AJ Burfield to burfield@cox.net



TWO DOWNUNDER LANCERETTES IN LANCERLAND

THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF ROS AND FAY IN THE U.S. OF A.



AS TOLD BY FAY MITCHELL

NOTE: A 'Yank / Yankee' is any American to us. It doesn't differentiate between north or south. It is used here purely with affection.

In mid 2003, my life changed and took a surprising turn. The car had broken down and I was waiting for a tow-truck, when I suddenly realized I had the house to myself for the first time in several years. Did I do housework, schoolwork or gardening to while away the time? No! For some unexplained reason, I chose to play on the Internet. And what did I discover? The James Stacy site. This almost instantaneously put me in contact with Brenda (Virginia), Ros (Queensland) and Julia (Melbourne). They informed me about the Lancer sites and my world had opened up! This gal started travelling and it wasn't just down Lancer memory lane ... although that's a mighty fine place to start!

With Ros and Brenda's encouragement and Brenda's downright generosity, this Aussie was USA and Lancer Homecoming bound!

San Francisco

These two Lancerettes were descending on America from diagonally opposite sides of Australia (equate Perth with the location of LA and Brisbane with coastal Virginia). First stop was San Francisco. Not an auspicious start, despite the brilliance of arranging arrival

times merely thirty minutes apart. Fay was the first arrival (so she thought). The ONE and ONLY monitor in the whole gal darn monstrous airport said that Ros's flight from Brisbane was 'in customs', so obviously, I headed to that waiting area where I waited... and waited ... and waited for one and a half hours before finally deciding I would go to our emergency meeting place. There was Ros, patiently twiddling her thumbs and gently nursing all the Lancer mugs which she had lovingly painted, baked in her oven and carefully bubble-wrapped before packing them into her cabin luggage. No doubt she was feeling deserted and was thinking that I had got cold feet, had ditched our travel plans and left her to a solo effort. Her plane, of course, had come in early and the passengers had been allowed through a different gate nowhere near the officially posted arrivals area. It wasn't even in the correct wing of the terminal! Good one, airport officials!

We lost no time after that catching a shuttle to the hotel. I was immediately at home as the shuttle was a Chrysler Voyager – the same as my car from home. It was disconcerting, however, to see the steering wheel on the incorrect side of the car! And no amount of preparation takes away the stark terror of driving off on the right (or wrong) side of the road. I was waiting for a head-on collision the whole way into town!

Our first initiation into American technology was the shower. Ros nabbed the bathroom first, but after about ten minutes she appeared, frustrated that she couldn't turn the shower on. Could I help? Sheesh, it's only a shower for crying out loud! But no matter how hard we pushed, pulled, twisted and turned various levers, the shower remained as dry as the Navajo Desert. I rang the desk, which sent an 'engineer' up to our room. The engineer thought all his Christmases had come at once with Ros swanning around in her short red satin bathrobe. I'm surprised he could concentrate on the task at hand with this distraction nearby, but he came through for us. So simple, really. It was exactly what we had been doing, only we didn't know there was a time delay. Duh! We felt like the classic country bumpkins but were relieved that we weren't actually as thick as the impression we gave.

Two and a half days in San Francisco, plus an extra day to go to Yosemite National Park, meant that we were on the hop! First stop, nevertheless, was shopping for my four teenaged sons. We had arranged such a tight itinerary, I didn't know when we would next get time to do so! So I bought some eminently suitable T shirts from a skate shop on Market Street while Ros again waited so patiently. I had strict orders that I wasn't to buy anything touristy. Fifteen year old's exact words were, "Don't buy anything gay with slogans like *I did the Big Apple!*"

San Francisco proved to be a vibrant place to start our adventure. We only narrowly escaped having our derrières ripped off by cable cars crossing paths with the one we riding on. We gripped on to the rail grimly, hanging off the sides and sucking in our breaths to make the smallest possible target. Bustling Fisherman's Wharf, quaint SF architecture, morbid Alcatraz, the stately redwoods of Muir Woods and picturesque Sausalito totally wowed us ...

as did the preponderance of fire hydrants. There were fire hydrants on the side of the road, on the side of buildings, lining fire escapes, vertical rows, horizontal rows, functional and artistic ones. No doubt this is a direct reaction to the disastrous fires of a century ago. In an effort to beat any future fire disasters, there are even underground reservoirs from which steam rises through road grates and manholes in the afternoon.

We saw our one and only mugging as we waited on a tram to head back to our hotel from Fisherman's Wharf. Actually, we were locked in the tram and couldn't get out. The driver wanted to take a restroom break, informed us to stay put, told one young man on crutches that she would put him off the tram if he gave her any more sass about her answering Nature's call, then calmly proceeded to lock us in! Meanwhile, the 'entertainment' started as a man ripped a woman's handbag from her grasp. He didn't reckon on her friends, however. The two men gave chase, grabbed him and got stuck into him. Not pleasant at all, even if he deserved it. The mugger escaped, jumping into his accomplice's four-wheel drive vehicle. The lady's friends received a standing ovation from the captive tram audience. "Right on, man!" yelled the young bloke, waving his crutches wildly in jubilation.

The Golden Gate Bridge finally shed its fog mantle and displayed itself in all its glory. Did you know that it was built to sag ten feet in peak hour traffic and it can sway up to twenty seven feet in an earthquake? Yikes! I don't ever want to test it. Delighted at seeing this incredible architectural sight, we all crowded back on the bus and headed off to new pastures – all except solo traveller 'Las Vegas' who was left behind in the ladies restroom and NEVER seen again (true story).

For those who have seen James in 'The Streets

of San Francisco' episode entitled 'Whose Little Boy Are You?' you may be interested in knowing that we even saw the bunkers featured near the end of the episode! They were not far from the Botanic Gardens.

Yosemite National Park was our next destination. With true Aussie spirit and little time, this return trip was achieved in one LONG day. But more to the point and little did our fellow road users know, this was our first day driving on the dreaded wrong side of the road! Gulp! NEVER do this unless you have a navigator, as you just can't suppress a lifetime's reflex habits or pulling to the left in an emergency. We nearly wrote ourselves off at Sonora as we went to turn in front of oncoming traffic, forgetting that the cars coming were in the near lane and NOT on the other side of the road as they would have been back home. Scary stuff, I kid you not. The joys of seeing Jamestown and Columbia, genuine gold rush towns, soon righted our equilibrium. Columbia, dating from 1850, was a real cowboy ghost town. It boasted a livery stable, saloon, hotel, jail, school house, courtroom and Wells Fargo office.

The first building Ros saw had her paralytic with joy. It was the town Gazette! Read 'The Warner Gazette' by Ros if you fail to see the relevance of this! We could just picture the Lancer brothers walking down the boardwalk, with spurs jingling and resounding on the wood and gun-belts swaying unbelievably low on those alluringly narrow hips. Or maybe crossing the street after a few tequilas in the saloon to go and fetch their trusty steeds from the livery stable. This was an unexpected detour, which gave us such a thrill. It was just magic to be in a dinkum cowboy western town. We were as happy as pigs in mud.

Yosemite was like a little touch of paradise way up in a hidden valley. Totally awesome and well worth the long and winding road up

to the required altitude. Bridal Veil Falls and Yosemite Falls simply plummeted vertically off the cliff faces down to the valley floor. I remember seeing Yosemite on Disneyland as a little kid, but never thought I would ever get here. If you go, just make sure you don't leave any food in your cars. Bears cause half a million dollars worth of damage to cars each year. A video at the Visitor's Centre showed the bears ripping off car doors and windscreens searching for a snack! As we walked back to our car, I kept wondering just how much would bears be attracted to crackers and trail mix? Apparently not, bless their little cotton socks!

The Real Lancer Hacienda **Used in the Pilot**

Our next stop absolutely blew us away. We called in to see René Belling at Santa Cruz, where we were made welcome by both her and her Mum, Denise. After refreshments, René set off with us to show us the ridgy didge hacienda from the pilot. We thought it was about five minutes away, and were embarrassed to find that it was actually about thirty minutes from René's in the Santa Lucia Mountains. Gosh! There it was in front of us! If you can get over the fact that it is now pink, it is exactly as it was in the pilot, but much bigger than I had realized. Amazingly, even the post and rail fence that Johnny's horse jumps over towards the end of the pilot is still there.

What was really surprising is that the waterhole / river is to the rear of the hacienda, about two hundred yards away. I really thought that the river where they fought was filmed elsewhere and edited in. James did comment at the Convention that the whole pilot was shot up here and that they never came back. The tower and balcony from which they fired on Pardee is there to the rear

of the building, as is the vine-covered courtyard. To the right of us, or the side of the building was the hill from which Teresa stopped to show them 'Lancer as far as the eye can see'. What could pass as buggy tracks were still visible.

Scott and Johnny must have been out at the north line shack or on a cattle drive to Stockton, as neither came to check us out or invite us in. Darn!

We were engrossed and spent what can only be called an inordinate amount of time standing there with cameras and binoculars, so much so that the ranger / security guard drove past excruciatingly slowly and said a friendly hello. He checked us out again later when we drove René back to her car. He double-parked and asked if we had found what we wanted. "Oh, yes," I assured him, "We have had the *best* time!" He was somewhat taken aback by my fervour, visibly shrinking backwards in fright as I leaned into his open window grinning wickedly at him. However, after giving us the once over he must have decided that we looked harmless enough and were not likely to be thieves casing the joint. Thank you, René! What a terrific interlude. And thank you for saving me from the Poison Oak which I was standing right next to, ankles about to be attacked mercilessly by this vicious plant. We don't get these sorts of plants in Oz, so movies where people break out from contact with Poison Ivy are just funny fiction to me! I'm glad I didn't get to experience reality!

So we headed down the coast. Sadly, much of it was fog bound, which just surprised us so much in summer. Knowing that California has nearly twice the population of the WHOLE of Australia (35,484,453 in CA in 2003 as opposed to just 20,000,000 in Oz – and don't forget that Australia is about the size of the USA!!!!), we presumed that the coast would

be built up all the way down to LA. We were dumbfounded to see that there was nothing at all after Carmel on the way to San Simeon, except for the tiny service station at Lucia. It just didn't occur to us that there would not be townships or petrol stations everywhere, so thank goodness we were not low on fuel.

The Californian coast was so rugged – much more than I expected. This had been noticeable from the air, too. Otherwise, however, California was so like Australia it wasn't funny. In so many areas I would have thought I was back home if I could have removed the oak trees: San Francisco right through to Yosemite Junction (southern San Joaquin Valley), Malibu Canyon etc. Incredible. The gum trees in some areas also lent credence to this.

Morro Bay was almost a highlight, but when we saw that the second word on the sign didn't say 'Corro', our interest waned considerably!

Our first night out of SF was spent at San Simeon so we could rise early and visit Hearst Castle. Yes, the obscene wealth was fascinating. He did have the common touch with the plebs, however, and insisted that tomato sauce (ketchup) and mustard be presented along his enormous banquet table in the bottles they were purchased in! All in all, it was worth seeing this monument to opulence and staying in San Simeon, which was merely a strip of highway with motels on either side (a cultural gutter and the absolute dichotomy to the statues from antiquity up the hill). We purchased the most expensive and foul pizza of our lives here. For \$12 we ordered a ham and cheese pizza and then had to pay \$16, as it was \$2 extra per topping. So the ham and the cheese were considered as extras on the ham and cheese pizza? I don't get it. Sorry!

Los Angeles and the Lancer Convention Bound

Next day was LA bound, through the delightful Danish town of Solvang. Once again, we were staggered that petrol stations were not easy to find. They did not seem to be regularly placed at the exits in logical locations, as they would be at home. Worried that we would end up caught on a highway in LA low on petrol, we left the highway to find some. What a mission that was! I even considered breaking into the Highway Patrol Depot, but Ros (the ex-cop) cringed at my audacious thoughts. When in the end we found a petrol station, life was made interesting when Ros had troubles with her credit card which wouldn't work in the automatic bowsers. And then we set about getting back on the highway. Yet another brainteaser!

We remarked on the amount of place names ending in Cyn. I suggested that maybe it was Spanish for river, stream, gully or something. As we passed the Malibu Canyon sign, it suddenly dawned on the brilliant Ros. "Canyon!" she shrieked. Did I say earlier that we were not as thick as we appeared? Poetic licence, perhaps?

The highway provided a welcome break from monotony for us as we drove behind a plumber's van for many miles. Even the most brash and egotistical Aussie plumber would hardly have the cheek to emblazon the slogan of "Super Rooter" across his van. We smirked, chortled, sniggered as rude thoughts inundated our minds the whole way. An interesting diversion, which took our minds off the incredible bottleneck at Santa Barbara. How do the locals stand it and why isn't the highway widened there?

With Ros's superb navigation, I entered the

LA freeway system and we had a faultless entry to LAX where we dropped off the car. Next stop the Quality Hotel.

Now Brenda had sent us each an American Tee-shirt (lots of stars and stripes), so we could put them on and recognize each other (thinking we would be flying in to LAX). We donned our tops and entered the hotel. In the foyer, we could see a group of women sitting on settees, chatting. I was sure that I had recognized Darla from a photo she had posted of James and herself taken at the Hollywood Collector's Show. I ambled over and loitered, but no one looked up and greeted me. Perhaps they were studiously avoiding me thinking I was a patriotic call girl or something? I took the hint and slunk back to Ros.

Taking the lift, we arrived on the fifth floor and whom do we meet but Brenda? Yay, we had finally arrived! She really did exist and wasn't just a piece of internet fiction. Excitement, noise and babbling settled down as we descended to meet the other ladies. You guessed it, we had been right. What a pleasure to meet everyone and put faces to Internet nicknames.

After a nourishing meal at McDonald's (absolutely the same the world over – I could have been at the local Joondalup branch where son Scott works!), we spent time getting to know each other before the weekend events.

Friday saw us being chauffeured by the ever-competent Brenda to the Getty Museum for some culture and hazy views of LA. Amazing collections on display, which we almost didn't get to see. So high was the mini van and so low were the beams in the underground car park, we nearly ended up jammed for eternity in the bowels of the earth, many storeys below ground level. We had literally one inch to spare. Thank goodness this was not to be, though, or it would have been a shocking

waste of all our determined efforts to meet in LA for the convention! And James and Tigger would have had such a lonely brunch!

Now, while I was not that put off driving into LA in rush hour traffic as I expected there to be traffic jams, I just couldn't warm to getting around in this city. To be quite frank, by the time we finally got to the Getty Museum, it was time to turn around and head back to the hotel to make the start of the convention at 6.00 pm. We spent well over three hours in traffic there and back to go a relatively short distance. I really don't know how people live here. Maybe they just adapt, like the guy who was in the lane next to us. As he drove along the freeway, he had his laptop firmly on his lap and proceeded to pay more attention to it than the traffic ahead and around him!

Friday evening was fabulous fun. We introduced ourselves, swapped gifts (we had all brought a gift from home to swap – I received a lovely print of Wortley in England from Lou) and did some ice breaker games. Kat was surprisingly sneaky for a quiet girl. She asked us for eight words. Like lambs to the slaughter, we provided them, coming up with: creosote, cactus, kimono, paperclip, stinky, condor, saddle and apache. She then asked for 4 teams of two. OK, muggins me puts my hand up to work with Catherine, the other teams being Carrie and Amberlyn, AJ and KC along with Em and Linda (Kona). Kat then expected us to write a Lancer story, in roughly ten minutes, based on those 8 words. Give us a break! Next, Kat's true mettle made an appearance. She expected us to act them out – in front of everybody. Nice one, Kat! But, I must admit, those skits provided a lot of hilarity from this meek and mild – and clever - group of women.

Next I tried my Lancer miming game, adapted from a pirate game I used to organize for my sons' birthday parties. Watching these gentle

women turn into Johnny Madrid gunfighters, showing their Lever Action rifle prowess as Scott, flapping Dewdrop's wings while squatting on the floor, neighing as Barranca or growing twelve inches to attain Murdoch's height as they rushed from Spanish Wells, Green River and Morro Coyo was just too much. Sooooo funny to watch. What a free for all, with elbows providing a distinct advantage in getting ahead of the opposition! Yet if I remember rightly, it was the reserved and gentle Mari who won one of the cherished Caramello Koala prizes.

Then some videos, starting with the pilot, of course. Silence descended, broken by a cheer as the boys stood up to old Grumpy Guts at their poignant family reunion, as the ladies' eyes were glued to the two main protagonists and their minds were lost in the world of Lancer.

The Brunch with James **Stacy**

When I woke up that morning, I really just couldn't comprehend that we would be meeting James and that he would have brunch with us. 'Nah, it wasn't really going happen', I thought as I attempted to dry my hair with my hairdryer, which went through the motions of merely sighing some warm air on my hair. The adapter struggled to work with 110 volts instead of 240 volts and generally lost the battle!

I descended to the brunch room, still in a state of denial. Most people had already claimed seats and were waiting anxiously. Twenty minutes late (dratted LA traffic again!), James did arrive and so started a magical three hours. He breezed in with Tigger and just overwhelmed us with his sense of humour and graciousness. He was everything we secretly hoped he would be, but didn't dare think he

would be.

Wearing a crisp white shirt with some white embroidery on the edge of the short sleeves and sporting a silver brooch in the shape of an Indian feather, James looked fit and much younger than in the two photos posted over the past year. He sported a neat hairstyle, much as he wore in Lancer. His hair is greying, but it suits him. I was surprised at how handsome he continues to be. He was so relaxed and as each person introduced herself, he showed interest in everyone by having a bit of a chat with them. He answered heaps of questions very willingly, telling us amusing anecdotes along the way. He is very funny and is quick with repartee.

He told us so many interesting facts, some of which we could not catch because there was so much laughter in the room and also because he is so softly spoken.

We laughed so hard when he told us that he had been trying to get the psychological edge over Wayne Maunder when they first met. His hopes were dashed when Wayne lied that he had gone to college and obtained a Masters in Psychology before going into acting! Wayne did not confess the truth until several weeks later. James got his revenge by leaving his stinking hat on Wayne's face in a scene where Wayne was prone on the ground.

He worked hard at developing the character of Johnny Lancer and had a back-story whereby Johnny's mother drank too much and had lots of men. She was a sad figure. Johnny was not a drinker - he just saw his mother do it. He felt that Johnny hid behind his fears with his gun, smile and soft talk. He thinks that Johnny started along this path after seeing a gunfight at one time. The gun was a way of protecting himself. James started looking at holsters and filing the gun etc. He was told that if the barrel was cut down it would probably blow up! He

used to practise his draw so he could be as fast as possible and stated that they did not keep re-shooting his draw to make him look faster. I must admit, he's mighty quick in 'Warburton's Edge' in the saloon! The producers wanted him to have two guns, but he said it was too much and too hard to handle.

The debate about the flapping holster was solved. His holster had a stud or elastic and he could stud it to his pants, so he didn't need the ties.

Who can forget him talking about finding Anthony Franciosa's concho pants, that he had used in "that western", and phoning him up to ask if he could borrow them? Or that fact that they were lined with silk and that he had three pairs of them? Or that he preferred the 'red' shirt - this being greeted with hoots of derision from the ladies. "He's calling it red! It's pink!"

Over time, he got rid of the hat strap, his bracelet and he lost his St Christopher's medal.

He liked the sound of the spurs and would leave them on deliberately if he felt a scene would have more impact if the jingling of his spurs could be heard.

He said, "I looked SO stupid" with reference to the sombrero he had to wear in the pilot. He didn't want to wear it as he didn't think he could get away with it, but he was told he'd need it for the heat anyway. That little bag he wore around his neck when he was dressed in peasant clothes about to be shot was for tobacco, he thought. He did not practise a special walk for Johnny. His own would do, he decided! The ladies greeted this summation with unanimous murmurs of agreement!

We discovered that James and Wayne deliberately swapped horses at the end of the

series when they knew the series was going to be cancelled (see 'Black Angel').

Blind Man's Bluff is a favourite of his out of the Lancer tapes (he said he was proud of his acting in that). We fell about in fits of laughter when spoke of chasing after Mattie in his night-shirt and being and painfully taken by surprise at all the stickers his feet suddenly encountered. To non-Americans, this is a new word for me and possibly to you. Substitute 'thorns'. "Nobody told me there were little burrs out there - thousands of burrs". He had to get a stunt man to come in and lift him up out of the thorns. After this incident, they decided to glue the Dr. Scholls soles to his feet to protect him. He went to the effort of having special contact lenses made so he couldn't see properly for this episode. However, when the girl dragged him out of the water (with the help of the 'troll' down there, LOL!), she dragged his face in the sand and the contacts were a write-off after one day. He liked this episode and really enjoyed working with this actress.

He bought Barranca from John Wayne and the horse was already named, so he started the series using his own horse . "We fell in love", he commented. He said he could do anything with Barranca - walk under and around him. He taught him tricks and even used to sing in the saddle ("Give me land, lots of land..."). He gave him the beer in The Rivals, even though the producers didn't think it would be a good idea. The horse in 'Flare-Up' was NOT Barranca.

He was extremely bemused and stunned with hilarity when he was told the girls liked to see the cute little hop he did when mounting Barranca and also the way he would jiggle the buckle when putting on his gun-belt. He was informed that this was the clean version! The girls commented that they use the Pause and Rewind buttons a heck of a lot so as not to

miss anything important and he joked about them being no doubt grateful that they owned VCR's. He took our attention to detail in great spirit. I really think he wondered just what had struck him, though! Indeed, he struck his own forehead in disbelief at one stage!

When asked how old Johnny and Scott were supposed to be, he said that Scott was four years older (27) than Johnny (23). When asked how long did the two years take in real time, he just laughed and replied with a bemused, "Two years". He was quite happy to go along with time matching the two years Lancer was in production.

His brother Louie was his stunt man, but he couldn't remember Wayne's. It wasn't Hal Needham, who was too busy doing movies.

We found out that he didn't like the lot where they shot. There were only two sets - the other was for Daniel Boone. It was hot, the food was awful (only sandwiches were available) and it was too far to go to get something else as they only had an hour for lunch. Dreadful traffic and the seedy part of town made it an unattractive working environment.

Once Kim Darby brought their baby Heather to the set when he was filming 'Pony Alice'. When the baby heard his voice, she started babbling. This sound strip was saved and given to him.

Pony Alice used to like to bounce on the furniture in the Lancer Great Room. Her mother would tell her off for ruining her clothes. They all tended to hang out in the Lancer Great Room.

The whole pilot was filmed in the Santa Lucia Mountains and in the hacienda there. The rooms in the pilot are actually from the real hacienda. When the crew returned to LA, then a mock set was created where the hacienda

was duplicated, but made smaller. The furniture had to be copied as well, as all the furniture in the pilot belonged to the home. James thought that the set decorators did a very good job of duplicating the original. The view through the window was all backdrop, though.

James was asked which guest star he most liked working with and he immediately replied Joe Don Baker (Day Pardee, plus he appeared in two other Lancer episodes). James said that he did enjoy working with Warren Oates (Val and the guy in 'Buscaderos'), as well.

When someone commented that Tom Selleck's first role was in Lancer, we discovered that his sister did Tom's hair when Tom acted in 'Magnum PI'.

His favourite piece of his own acting was the two-part 'Gunsmoke' episode, called 'Vengeance', where he met his second wife, Kim Darby.

He never did get the 'Gunsmoke' belt buckle back. It meant a lot to him and he is deeply upset by this. It was presented to him by 'Gunsmoke' producer, John Mantley, at the concert organized to help raise money for him after his accident. It was number one off the press.

James talked about taking Francis Nuyen for a horse ride while making South Pacific. She took a tumble, but was unhurt. He begged her not to say anything. Unfortunately she mentioned it to make-up - five days later it reached the producer and James was fired off the set for jeopardising her.

James was obviously a bit of a devil in the past and still has that cheeky grin. We were entertained with tales of his tackling an unsuspecting Michael Landon in a game of

one-upmanship regarding athletic prowess and of giving an irate James Garner a 'hot foot' one time. This was another new expression to me, but then again, maybe sticking lighted matches in the shoes of sleeping people is not something that Aussie males tend to do?

He has not read any fan fic, but Tigger does and she has told him that they get really involved. She commented, "You get hurt a lot!"

Buttercup and Stinky (mother and daughter Carrie and Amberlyn) acted out their little playlet devised the previous night, to which James teased "No wonder you were embarrassed!" The rest of us were too chicken, so these two ladies went ahead with great aplomb and had us in stitches.

He was taken aback by our gift and really seemed to appreciate the sentiment behind it, as well as the choice of photos, colours and fabric.

I still am blown away at how kind James was to everyone - except those he teased mercilessly!! :(Just joking! But I still can't understand it. How hard is the word 'fence'? The French understand my French, which is not my native language, so why can't James understand my English, which is, after all, the native language of both of us? He accused me of screwing up two perfectly good words (left and right handed), but how could he screw up understanding them! LOL

He mesmerized us with his sense of fun and willingness to accommodate us. On a more sombre note, he forthrightly told us about his accident and why he chooses not to wear prosthetics.

The room was alive with an electric buzz. James has not lost any of his charisma and he made sure that we all had a good time. What is

heartening to us is that we think he had a good time, too. We certainly hope so.

After the Brunch

I think that we were all in a bit of a state of shock after he left. We really couldn't believe that we had met him and that he was so much nicer than we had hoped he might be. The whole brunch just far exceeded my expectations and wildest dreams. Thank you so much to the committee of Brenda, Ros, Jan and Kat for everything you did, as well as to Geraldine and Carol for your input into the quilt.

After the brunch, the groups divided into two. Some went horse-riding and others went to the Autry Museum of the West where there was a saloon, a mannequin wearing Mexican pants with conchos down the side, a One of One Thousand Winchester Lever Action (see 'The Gifts'), a stage coach, a Gatling Gun (see 'The Buscaderoes') etc.

That night it was the quiz prepared by Janet Brayden. Her questions had us realizing that we all needed to watch the tapes AGAIN! Drat! Kat was the exception. She seemed to have just about memorized them. Who could forget Scott's painful experience of being shot in 'The Knot'? If we had known that Ros was going to ask about this, we may have reworded the syntax to avoid ambiguous connotations from ladies whose minds were clearly below their belts (or Scott's, at least). Ros, it looks like our Yankee friends had trouble with your accent as well!!

The compilation tape of favourite moments went down a treat. Thanks so much for Sylvie de Rayne for helping us out at short notice. As I could only tape excerpts from my NTSC tapes, Sylvie saw to the episodes I had in PAL and which I could therefore not use.

Carrie and Amberlyn's multiple choice quizzes also kept us busy spotting the details in the episodes. And what a gem when they pointed out the button popping off and bouncing on the floor when Johnny plops down in the chair in Murdoch's hotel room in 'Cut the Wolf Loose'! That was replayed many times to the merriment of all concerned.

The next day, some of the group went for a hike to Malibu Canyon (where 'Lancer was filmed'), braving intense heat in the ardent search for identifiable scene locations such as the pool in 'Blind Man's Bluff'. Some of the rest went to Rodeo Drive to have a peek at how the rich and famous live. Five thousand dollars for a pair of ankle boots? I don't think so! I looked in from the outside and decided that a career change was going to be necessary if I were to ever afford to purchase anything from this part of LA!

The companionship of all the ladies was a delight. I wish the weekend had not gone so fast, that I was not so severely exhausted from the past semester and that jet lag had not set in with a thud.

Reading all the fan fic is going to be so much more fun now that we can picture the creative ladies behind the pens (or keyboards). The key to the weekend was the terrific organisation from the committee and the ladies who were dedicated to plain and simply having fun. There were some real quick quips being bandied around. We all feel as though we have made firm friends. It was extraordinary that we all got on so well, especially when there were so many ladies from so many varied backgrounds. There was a real buzz in Brenda's suite the last night as we all gathered to chat and farewell each other ... although Lou tells me she is coming to Perth next year in March, so I will see her soon. I think she is angling for a spot on the sofa! I hope her tattoo has worn off by then! She and AJ had a

great time getting artificial tattoos of barbed wire stencilled onto their arms at Venice Beach. A real feminine touch, girls!

The Tour Continues

The Lancer weekend was over, and it hit us hard. With true grit, we soldiered on, though. Brenda, Ros and I were joined by Catherine in a tour of LA in the morning, visiting the Hollywood Bowl (where the only seating was deck chairs), La Brea Tar Pits, a distant Hollywood sign, Graumann's Chinese Theatre and other landmarks. The truly tacky tour started in the afternoon, our tour guide being a surfer type who would be more at home taking in a few waves than navigating the tour bus around Bel Air and Beverley Hills. He really sounded like he was high on something. We were treated to a variety of gates, hedges, walls and driveways, occasionally catching a glimpse of the famous stars' homes beyond the barriers erected to keep out those inquisitive and pesky tourists. "If y'all look up ahead somewhere up there on the side of the hill you'll see Madonna's home. Well, it was her home, but she sold it 18 months ago and shifted out. Someone else lives there now." Such exquisite gems of information were constantly fed our way. Brenda did not hide her disgruntlement for long. Soon after the commencement of our tour, she could be heard muttering such pithy comments as, "Oh, come on! How do we know that's Sean Connery's house? It could be anyone's and we wouldn't be any the wiser!"

Virginia

On the Tuesday, Ros, Brenda and I headed to Virginia, or more precisely to Brenda's farm near Louisa. Virginia was stunning. So incredibly lush and green. Green in summer? An oxymoron, if ever there was one, for a West Australian. This state is still so heavily

wooded. Just gorgeous.

We met Brenda's delightful family, friends and neighbours and revelled in staying in her home doing what a family does. Mexican chip dip and Monkey Bread were new tastes offered to us by Brenda. Kat and her husband Kerry made us welcome twice for dinner and spoilt us rotten. Kerry's Smores went down a treat with this chocaholic! We visited the awesome Blue Ridge Mountains with its stupendous Natural Bridge and caverns. Wildlife in the form of three wild deer and two groundhogs made the trip a special for us. A shame that the second groundhog was squashed flat on the road and appeared to be deceased. I could not believe that there really is a National Groundhog Day, just like in the movie. Unbelievably bizarre!

Brenda taught us to ride, but sadly Murdoch wouldn't give Johnny and Scott time off from their chores to join us. Ros came to grief when her placid mount suddenly decided it didn't want to tag along at the rear any more. It took off at a gallop, with Ros clinging on desperately. Brenda, ever quick to sum up a situation and showing all the nurturing instincts of motherhood, screeched, "Audrey! Stop that horse!" This is exactly what her courageous just turned thirteen-year-old daughter did. Flinging aside concerns for her own safety, she flung herself in front of the steed, slowing it down and grabbing the reins, allowing Ros to hit the dirt a little less hard than would otherwise have been the case. This brave act nevertheless did not prevent poor Ros from being covered in enormous dark bruises for weeks to come, but it sure minimised the damage that could have occurred. Atta girl, Audrey!

New York Bound

Washington was the next stop, providing us with the wonders of the Smithsonian Institute and all those famous monuments. One

exhibition puzzled us at the Museum of American History. The section on American Pop Culture featured the Beatles! A whole roomful of the Beatles in America. No mention of Elvis, the Beach Boys, Buddy Holly or anyone else with a slightly stronger claim than the four Liverpoolians. An incredibly strange choice for this exhibit.

This was our only rainy day away, but a thorough soaking did not deter us from enjoying the fascinating experience of visiting the Lincoln Memorial, Arlington Cemetery, the White House etc. Being the week of the financial institutions security alert, we nearly had kittens when we realized we were walking alongside the Treasury and got out of there ...FAST! There were sirens everywhere and a feeling of unease descended as dusk arrived.

Taking the Amtrak to New York, we were pleasantly surprised by Manhattan. I was scared of going to NYC and thought that I would feel uneasy here. We just loved it. Terrific atmosphere. The magnitude of Central Park staggered me. How many times have I seen it on movies and yet I had never expected the extent of it. And it was so very pretty. I swallowed my nervousness about heights and ascended to the very summit of the Empire State Building where we were afforded amazing, if hazy, views. We packed a lot into a day and a half. The Staten Island Ferry to see the Statue of Liberty was a must and I found some bargains at Macy's sale for the boys. By the way, just how many Trump Towers are there? Good grief! And who could go to NYC and not see a Broadway show? It was 'The Boy From Oz' that got our vote. Unfortunately, the several occasions when Hugh Jackman removed his shirt saw me at a distinct disadvantage. Ros had her binoculars clutched in a vice-like grip, supa-glued to her eye sockets, and wasn't giving them up for anyone! Especially not her travelling companion!

The sombre aspect of Ground Zero was thought-provoking, but little St Paul's church, where so many of the police officers and firemen rested from their grim task, was inspiring as an unofficial shrine to those who did what they could to help.

Talking to the locals was an education. Who could forget the street vendor selling iced water. His sales pitch was centred on him selling us water in order for him to save for his lifelong dream of leaving NYC and living in the *country* five hundred miles away to the *east* in Pittsburgh! We didn't know whether to give him a donation or buy him an atlas.

Boston and Surrounds

Scott's hometown showed no evidence of the elder Lancer brother. He had obviously decided to give Harlan the flick and was back at the ranch. Darn it! Our paths must have crossed half way across the continent!

The history of this city absorbed us: Bunker Hill, Paul Revere's home, Copp's Hill Cemetery, the USS Constitution. Turn around and there was something immensely historical staring you in the face, like the fact that the Declaration of Independence was read from that balcony over there. The Old Granary Cemetery contains Paul Revere's grave along with victims of the Boston massacre and Benjamin Franklin's parents. Headstones go back to the 1600's. We discovered that Paul Revere was a real jack-of-all-trades. He was a goldsmith, silversmith, coppersmith, dentist and was a man of quite some good standing in the community. He had sixteen children, his first wife dying just after the birth of his eighth child. Bereft, he threw himself into the grieving process and married his second wife five months later! She also bore him another

eight children. Aaarrggghh!
Plimoth Plantation gave as good a representation of life for the Pilgrim Fathers as you could get. We also saw Plymouth Rock and the replica of the Mayflower, hammering home the knowledge that European settlement came to the USA much before Australia. Western Australia wasn't even settled by Europeans until December, 1826!

The Amish Area and Gettysburg

Swallowing our nerves, we hired a car again and left Boston for Gettysburg, travelling through the Amish area. I bought the biggest cherries I had seen in my life from two Amish girls at a roadside stall. They were as big as plums (the cherries, not the girls)! Surely the Amish don't use artificial growth stimulants on their crops?

Yes, the Amish dress exactly as they do in the movies, but I noticed that younger people did wear bright colours like green and purple. We passed at least four sulkies along the way. It was like turning the clock back a few centuries.

Very pretty scenery and we were going great guns until the highway designers and our map let us down. We had no problems with highways being called by numbers. But why do the states call the road a different number from the federal government? Why did the map have the 222 in blue to start with, before then changing to a thin black line labelled the 272 South (which we found out later was actually a continuation of the 222)? Why didn't our map tell us that where the 222 blue line continued, this was actually the 30? Was this all to be perverse so that tourists would get lost and spend more money in stores asking for directions? We thought the 222 led to York, but we were none the wiser because there were no road signs in Pennsylvania

indicating nearby towns and mileages to them. The 'Welcome to Maryland' sign was a dead giveaway that we had made a navigational blue of gigantic proportions! Now we had an answer to Ros's increasingly frequently mumbled question, "Why isn't there a sign for York yet?!"

One charming redneck gent suggested we go back to 'The Buck'. "The what?" queried Ros. It turned out to be an intersection with a shortcut across country. Uh uh! If we missed a major town and highway in daylight, we weren't about to go exploring on a nebulous dirt track in the sticks in the dark!

Gettysburg was reached LATE at night, but thank goodness we made it. It enthralled us. Such a beautiful and picturesque town with such a grim past. That God's idyllic green earth could have seen such carnage is beyond belief. The gun emplacements, stone walls and cross picket fences were still there, as were the bullet holes around the doorway of the Jennie Wade house, a poignant reminder of the death of the only civilian killed in the battle. She died while kneading dough to make bread for the soldiers. The museum drew our attention for hours, with storyboards, equipment, firearms, uniforms, a mock camp, photos and other paraphernalia. The doctor's kit, with its selection of saws was appallingly gruesome. We were staggered to know that Gettysburg had a population of 2,500 at that time, yet during the battle troops swelled that number to 166,000.

One interesting find was that Ros noticed a photo of a Union soldier on the wall. A Lieutenant Morton Tower, of Company B, 13th Massachusetts Infantry, was captured at Gettysburg and escaped from Libby Prison in February, 1864. Fact obviously can be stranger than fiction!

On a more cheerful note, we could not forget

Larry, the ageing Confederate soldier, who was most concerned that we made it to Washington without getting lost. He explained the highways and ring roads, and wouldn't let us leave until he was satisfied that we knew which ones to take and that we would be all right.

The End Approaches

Larry did fine by us, and we got to Dulles airport ready for the Greyhound to Charlottesville without incident. The rudest man in America works at the coach counter at Dulles. What a facetious, pompous and unhelpful bloke. Ugh!

Brenda and her wonderful friend Marguerite picked us up from Charlottesville and we made our way back to the farm...and hard labour! It was time for Brenda to exact some payment for our board and lodging, and a barn-raising was deemed fit. We measured, lugged timber, dug trenches and did what we could. We were really quite ineffectual, but we liked to think we pulled our weight. Speaking of which, it didn't help my delicate ego when David (Brenda's husband) wrested the spade from me, complaining, "Here, give me that. This spade just about weighs more than you!" Nothing, however, compared to the work put in by Brenda's fourteen year old son. Seth and his friend Forrest climbed the scaffolding and measured, chiselled, hammered and secured trusses. They LOVED that rivet gun. Talk about work horses! Meanwhile, it nearly all came to a crashing end as one of the uprights moved, very nearly toppling and causing a domino effect on the rest of the structure. Brenda, Ros, Seth, Jensen and I held on desperately, shrieking to David for help. Being a typical man, he was unable to do two things at once. Calmly finishing his mobile phone conversation, he then ambled over asking what the fuss was about. Nothing really. We all just narrowly escaped being

crushed to death under tons on timber! Admittedly, he probably would have been useless in this life or death situation with his newly broken hand, fractured after a sojourn under a horse, but we liked to think that he could have lent a helpful hand. (No pun intended)

The final day came. We couldn't believe it. It was so hard to say goodbye to our true friend Brenda, who encouraged our visit and welcomed us to her home. Sadly, Ros and I separated at the Atlanta airport as Ros was flying out through San Francisco while I was departing from LA. A marvellous month had ended. What was unbelievable was that we had got on so well, had not squabbled and had the same ideas about what we wanted to visit.

My last day in the USA was made special by the kindness of Linda (Earthie). Hearing that I had 12 hours to wait at LAX, Linda emailed to say that she would pick me up at the airport and keep me company. What a lifesaver! Having been severely jetlagged I had not gone to the Autry Western Museum and Malibu Canyon with the others earlier on, so Earthie rectified this for me and indulged me. We had a ball, talking non-stop and finished our day by going past Malibu Beach on the way to the airport. I was stunned. THIS was the famous Malibu Beach? I couldn't see the attraction of living there, but then again I couldn't afford to, so it was a moot point!

So, my epic journey was at an end. Earthie dropped me at the airport and I bade her a sad farewell. She had ensured that I left on a high, and for that I am eternally grateful.

I did, however, nearly miss my flight. I was at the wrong terminal! The official at the Qantas queue said that only Brisbane flights went from that counter and I was to move on to the next. After nearly an hour lined up with some exuberantly jovial Mexicans heading back

south of the border, with no-one being able to assist me, I began to be quite worried. Plus, I felt extremely out of place as the only blonde with a fair complexion within cooee! I finally discovered that Sydney flights went from the next terminal. Oops! Racing along the footpath, I made it on time ... only to find that the flight had been cancelled! The problem was solved with two flights being combined and at last I was homeward bound after a month of incredible adventures.

Thumbs Up:

- James, Tigger and the ladies from the Convention.
- The Convention itself.
- Brenda, her friends and family.
- Hygiene – laser operated taps (faucets) and toilet seat covers.
- Amazing and varied scenery.
- Absorbing history.
- The courteous American people.
- Similar cost of living and cheaper petrol.
- Larry, the Confederate soldier.
- We had no hitches in our plans.

- We didn't get mugged.
- We didn't have an accident.
- We had a ball!!

Thumbs Down:

- The rudest man in America at the coach counter at Dulles Airport.
- Public / airport toilets that flushed in unison, whether you had actually finished communing with Nature or not. The first time this occurred I shot to my feet as a roar equal to that of Niagara Falls in reverse threatened to suck me into oblivion.
- No kettles / jugs in hotel rooms. Not everyone is a coffee drinker. Using the coffee maker to heat water sure gave the tea a bizarre flavour!
- With the exception of two rooms, we had no fridges in our hotel rooms.
- No toaster in hotel rooms.
- No microwave in hotel rooms.
- Lack of road signs in Pennsylvania and our misleading map! ☹
- LA traffic

*Any comments or requests for travel advice
can be sent to Fay faymitch@hotmail.com or Ros at rozzahh21@hotmail.com*



FILL IN SOLUTION



BY JANET

From the puzzle on page 56

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COWBOY BY TORI BURFIELD

LANCER EPISODE TRIVIA ANSWERS



COMPILED BY JANET BRAYDEN
EDITORIAL COMMENTS BY AJ BURFIELD

From the test on page 144

1. No, Murdoch never did adopt Teresa after Paul died. Why should he? She was already an indentured servant.
2. In Dark Angel Johnny said Jelly's cologne would "make a skunk sit down and cry."
3. Johnny enthusiastically singing "The Old Chisholm Trail" when he approaches the line shack. Did you notice Barranca's ears are back?
4. Willie's fish measures three vertebrae longer to win the hat money. We also learn that Johnny fishes with his handgun, but that was too easy of a question!
5. The writer Emerson is "back East, minding his own business" while Scott and Johnny play with dynamite. He's probably listening to Mendelssohn's Wedding March, too. Or maybe wrestling pigs . . .
6. The Bufords and Lancres have been feuding for
7. In Child of Rock and Sunlight Scott has an order for 3,000 head of cattle.
8. In Cut the Wolf Loose Pinky gets paid \$37.50 and wants it all to play with. He's obviously a teenager.
9. Scott chases Dewdrop with an axe at the end of Death Bait while Johnny does barnyard gymnastics. I give him a 10!
10. In Devil's Blessing the holdup takes place on the Old Sonora Trail.
11. When Murdoch tells Chad about his reaction to the first steam engine he ever saw in Dreams of Falcons, Johnny wants to know if it's a "helpful" lie.
12. In Foley, Polly is pregnant with Gant Foley's grandson and he wants to raise the child because his no good son is dead.

13. The grand house Glory describes in Glory is along the Mississippi River near New Orleans and more than likely teeming with mosquitoes.
14. In Goodbye, Lizzie Murdoch first runs into Lizzie as she steps off the stage in Green River.
15. Jelly is taking care of eight boys in his introductory episode. Stifle any Michael Jackson comments, folks! Jelly's cool.
16. In Jelly Hoskin's Amerian Dream Tick Fever scares the other ranchers.
17. Poor old Barranca gets left behind along a trail in Julie! But he's a Homing Palomino and gets back to Lancer anyway despite the humans he has to deal with.
18. The Indian's schoolhouse burns down.
19. Mrs. Dane hails from Sacramento, California and her smarmy son hails from the stockade!
20. Johnny sees leg shackle scars on Poe's leg and realizes that the old man has been in prison before. Or maybe just had a botched wax job.
21. Sam Jayson is the sheriff in the episode Splinter Group. Are there too many Sams in this show? The Julies alone had me confused for awhile!
22. In The Lorelie, Gus inherited the mine from her brother. It's located in a geologically unstable hillside that could slide and block off Lancer's water supply. Typical California.
23. The con man's daughter 'won' \$5.00 at the beginning of The Great Humbug as part of a con set-up. The 'hook' part of 'hook, line and sinker.'
24. The Pinks find Scott outside a young Bostonian woman's home hoping to avoid woman's father and henchmen, and Johnny is in front of a Mexican firing squad and hoping to avoid being Swiss cheesed.
25. Arabella is Jelly's gift to Murdoch – a prize Duroc sow meal. She was quite a ham :) .
26. The Experiment is a job training program for first time offenders who are sentenced to prison. The point is to teach them a trade while they serve time. They had license plates then?
27. Zanzibar is the name of the buggy horse Johnny is trying to match in Heart of Pony Alice.
28. The McGloin dinner with Scott is centered on potatoes.
29. The Kid is hungry and generally peeved and disgusted that there's no food in Johnny's saddlebags.
30. An earthquake rattles the Rivals.

31. Scott and Johnny are carrying a repaired water trough out of the barn at the start of Shadow of a Dead Man. I always wondered why Jelly had to repair it in the barn .
32. The Fix-It Man himself attaches a plaque with his name and the year (1871) to the outside the new jail he built. His monument.
33. The shepherd's name in Lion and the Lamb is Gabe. Yeah, he is much more desirable than Johnny, wouldn't you say? Is she sniffing too much fleece??
34. Murdoch declares that "Lancer takes care of its own". Johnny wants to know, "Its own what?" in The Buscaderos. Definitely Madrid speaking.
35. The bride's ex-boyfriend is MaCall in The Wedding.
36. Gunslinger Ishem utters "Pride in my trade" in Warburton's Edge as he dies in Johnny's arms.
37. Val refers to the mayor of Spanish Wells as "a jackass being the king of the jungle, but no less a jackass." I want Val as mayor of my town.
38. Johnny gives Teresa money to pay for a dress and a halter. There's word play there, somewhere. . .
39. Murdoch introduces Johnny as "Maria's boy" to the lawman.
40. Morgan Price shoplifts a pocket knife to give to his son in Blood Rock.
41. Jed Lewis goes nose to nose with Scott in The Escape.
42. Jelly is mauled by a mountain lion in the start of Welcome to Genesis as he checks on nervous horses.
43. Does anyone really care what the "Little Darling of the Sierras" name is? For those dying to know, it's Penny Rose Evans. Now can we just forget this one all together??
44. Murdoch leaves home at 2:15 AM in Yesterday's Vengeance and is mistaken for a prowler by Jelly.
45. Teresa has talked Scott into taking supplies to the Paiutes with her.
46. Zee eats soap so she can foam at the mouth and successfully convinces Scott she's sick. Ew.
47. Jelly says that Julie should ride with "one leg east one leg west, like everybody else." What if the horse is facing west? Or southwest, for that matter?

48. Charlie is the ranch hand who betrays the Lancers in Lifeline. Scum.
49. Turk's father is a mustanger.
50. Ma wants one of Murdoch's sons to marry her daughter in order for Murdoch to get Johnny back in Persons Unknown.
51. Hackett's wife died in childbirth.

What's your knowledge rating?

- 0 - 7 correct: **Eastern Dandy**
- 8 - 16 correct: **Sugarfoot**
- 17 - 25 correct: **Tenderfoot**
- 26 - 33 correct: **Ranch Hand**
- 34 - 41 correct: **Foreman**
- 42 - 51 correct: **Rancher**



ABOUT THE PUZZLEMAKER AND TRIVIA HISTORIAN

Janet Brayden was born September 13, 1957 just eight days after her mother's twenty-seventh birthday. Her place of birth is Concord, MA home to such literary figures as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Louisa May Alcott.

She had three siblings; Donald, Jr. born in 1947 died of cancer in 1995. Rodger, now 55, is a retired Air Force major living in Gurnee, Illinois with his wife Christine. He has one son, Stephen a student in Chicago. His daughter, Diana, is married and lives in Lawrenceville, IL. She and her husband Michael are expecting their first child in April.

Her sister, Judy, 46, lives in Amesbury with her husband, two sons and six cats. Janet and her Mom live together in a small apartment on top of one of the steepest hills in town.

Janet was in 4-H for six years while Mom was a leader for ten years. She was in a rabbit club first, followed by crafts and knitting, crafts, two years in photography and another year in crafts. She spent a week at Camp Middlesex in Ashby for four of those six years.

After graduating from Maynard High School in 1975 and several years of trying to find work, Janet went to work for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – then located in Waltham, MA at the old Murphy Army Hospital compound – in June of 1986. She is employed as a Supply Technician and has held this position for most of her 19 years in the Corps.

Janet's hobbies include history and visiting historical sites, knitting, reading, photography, writing Lancer fan fiction (though she started with Early Edition) and collecting unusual dolls. These include four Scottish dolls, a pair of Irish twins, four 4-H dolls and a few Indian dolls. She has two Mexican dolls named Maria and another one named Bonita, and an African doll. A lot of the dolls were given to her as gifts.

A member of Mission Evangelical Congregational Church in Maynard (right down the hill from her apartment) Janet is a thirty-year member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary. She's the clerk, Librarian and Historian (by default) for the church and Patriotic Instructor, Trustee, Americanism, Youth Activities and POW/MIA chairman for the Auxiliary.

You can find her in the Maynard Public Library most Saturdays doing ongoing projects for the Assistant Director. These projects are things that need to be done that the staff doesn't have time to do.

Comments regarding Janet's puzzling ability should be sent to yankee01754@yahoo.com





JOHNNY'S GUN BY JEANNIE MCCLURE



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jeannie started in the zine business over 10 years ago. Starting with artwork then dragged - kicking and screaming - into writing, then into proofing, editing, publishing. She was part of a prize winning Equalizer series, one of KFTLC, has done artwork and a bit of writing for Stargate SG-1, Lancer and Tales of the Ponderosa. She is now trying her hand at Medical Investigation.

Any feedback for Jeannie can be sent to lewiethecat@yahoo.com



HOME COMING 2005 CONVENTION

WHAT: Lancer Convention

WHEN: July 29, 30 and 31 (Fri. Sat. and Sun.) 2005 in Los Angeles, California.

WHERE: The Hacienda Hotel
525 N. Sepulveda Blvd.
El Segundo, California 90245
Ph: 1 -800 - 421 - 5900 for reservations

COST: \$200 includes snacks on Friday, Saturday and Sunday night, brunch on Saturday, and lots of discussion, contests, a gift pack and Lancer episode viewing among friends! **COST DOES NOT INCLUDE ROOM, lunches, or meals outside what is stated above.**

HOUSING: The Hacienda is holding a group of rooms for the Lancer Group at a lower price. Mention the Lancer Group when booking your room to get the discount.

DINING: There are lots of places to eat both in and around the Hotel. A grocery store is across the street.

PAYMENT: You can either mail payments to Carol Lawson or use PayPal. July 1st will be the last date we will refund any money for cancellations and is also the last day to have money paid in full. If you register by Jan 31, 2005 it will cost you 25 dollars for registration, but from Feb 1st on 50 dollars will save your spot.

You can make payments each month to Carol Lawson at:

**Carol Lawson
5082 Tatra Dr.
San Jose, Ca. 95136**

Make your checks out to Carol with 'Lancer Convention 05' on the memo line.

Or, you can register for the Homecoming Convention 05 through PayPal at <https://www.paypal.com/>

Click on the 'Send Money' tab, enter this account: burfield@cox.net . You need to have your own account set up at PayPal to do this, and they will deduct from either a credit card or a bank account.

Either way, you can make monthly payments or pay in full.

Upon registration, you become a member of the LancerConvention05 Group at Yahoo.com. Join in on the messages and chats in this room to see what daytime activities are available to you in Los Angeles and how to arrange or join in on them. L.A. has a lot to offer!

HOMEcomings 2005 CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM

Complete and return this form to Carol Lawson
(address on previous page) along with your payment information.

NAME: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

ESTIMATED ARRIVAL DATE: _____

ESTIMATED DEPARTURE DATE: _____

HAVE YOU LINED UP A BUNKIE? (circle one) Yes No

IF SO, WHO IS IT? _____

IF NOT, DO YOU WANT US TO FIND YOU ONE? (circle one) Yes No

FAVORITE LANCER EPISODES:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

CIRCLE WHAT APPLIES:

I PLAN ON USING PAYPAL and: PAY IN FULL MAKE PAYMENTS

CHECK IS ENCLOSED - PAID IN FULL or I WILL BE MAKING PAYMENTS



**Please remember to send the authors feedback
about their work. It is always appreciated!
Thank you!**



HOPE YOU ENJOYED VOLUME I OF THE GREAT ROOM BOOKSHELF