

The Hanging Tree

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Chapter One

Across the vast plain, a lone figure moved slowly on horseback through the heat of the day. He had just about forgotten how hot the days could get on the plains of Texas. He knew he should be reaching a town soon.

He thought, “Let’s see, the name of that damn town was what? “ The name wouldn’t come to him. “Oh well, it don’t matter what the name of it is, just as long as they have a saloon and a cold beer.”

His name was Kyle Barlow. He had just spent two years fighting in the war for the south. That was a crazy damned war; Americans fighting Americans and a hell of a lot of them didn't even know why they were fighting. Now it's over and thousands of men won't be going home to their families. Oh well, he thought, I don't know how I got through it alive but I did.

Now he was headed home to Barlow, a little town in south Texas where he had grown up.

His father, Wade Barlow had a good size ranch there called the Bar W; it was about three thousand acres. It was located in a valley and covered the whole south end of it. He had fought Indians to settle it when he was a young man. Then when he invited people into the valley to settle, they built the town and called it Barlow.

Kyle was now twenty-six years old. He was a fair looking man, about six feet two inches tall and weighed about two twenty. Or at least he did when he left home two years ago, but now it was more like one ninety. As he rode, thoughts of the past moved through his mind. When war broke out between the north and the south, all the young men in and around Barlow rushed to join the south. I was no exception.

My father tried to get me to stay out of it, but I would not hear of it. And now it was all over and he wondered how the hell he ever made it through it alive. He remembered one time so many young men fell ahead of him that he ran on bodies for at least a hundred yards without touching the ground. He grunted, "We still ran them damned yanks all the way back across the river though."

He wondered what his Father and Mother were doing now, and if they even knew he was alive. "Of course they didn't know, he hadn't had a chance to write to them in over a year, they probably figured he was dead." He would be home in two days; he sure was looking forward to some of his mother's good cooking. That was what he missed most of all.

Well, there were them pretty little twin girls, their father owned the ranch next to ours. His mind wondered back, one time he was out rounding up strays. He was getting near one of the water holes when he heard girls laughing and screaming. He got off of his horse and moved up behind a rock. It was the twins; they were swimming in the water hole.

They were sixteen years old and both naked as the day they were born. He had watched them for a while. Then he got on his horse and rode up to the water hole. The girls were screaming and telling him to go away. They were in about three feet of water, and squatting down so the water was up to their necks. He told them it would be funny to put their clothes in their buckboard and send it home. As he started to pick up their clothes, one of the girls said, "Kyle, it would be a lot more fun if you took off your clothes and came into the water with us."

I said, "You're kidding." They both stood up showing their breast, smiling and said, "No, we're not kidding." "I started pulling off my clothes and hit that water buck naked. We played around for a while, and then one of them asks me how good I could swim.

"I swim really good." I said. She pointed to a log about fifty yards away, "'Do you think you can swim all the way to that log?" I said, "Sure I can.", of course I wanted to show off.

When I got to the log I turned around to swim back to the girls. To my shock I saw them on the bank just as they slapped my horse on the rump; my clothes were tied to my saddle horn. Then they jumped into their buckboard and took off laughing as loud as they could.

I walked up out of the water; all they had left me was my boots, hat and my gun.

I put my boots and hat on. Then I hung my gun belt on my shoulder and started walking towards home. It was about five miles. So there I was, walking down the road in my birthday suit. About a mile from home two of the men that worked for us came by and stopped. One of them said as if nothing were wrong, "Hi Kyle, nice day for a walk".

I just took the gun belt off my shoulder, pulled my gun out of it and said, "If you say one word about this to anyone, I will shoot you."

They were both holding back their laughter. He said, "Tell me Kyle, just which gun you are going to shoot me with." They both slapped their horses and took off at a run, both laughing so hard they could hardly ride.

When I got home my father and all the men were waiting for me, laughing and making wise cracks.

I walked through the house with my hat in front of me.

I could hear my mother laughing in the kitchen. At supper that night I went to the table, everyone was as quiet as a mouse. I sat down at the table. My father tried to keep a straight face, but could no longer hold it back, he started to laugh, then my mother, then the rest of the men. I just sat there for a minute, and then I started laughing with them. After everyone stopped laughing it was never brought up again.

Just before dark Kyle rode into a little town called Cedar Bend. He rode up to the saloon and general store that were in the same building. He walked into the saloon and up to the bar.

The bartender walked over to him and said, "What will you have?" Kyle said, "Give me a beer." The bartender turned and got the beer and sat it on the bar in front of Kyle. Kyle picked it up and drank about half of it down, it was good and cold. He then sat it back down on the bar. "You been riding far?" the bartender asked. "Arkansas," said Kyle. "Been in the war?" asked the bartender. Kyle nodded his head yes and drank the rest of his beer.

He sat the mug down on the bar and pointed at it for the bartender to fill it up again. After the bartender refilled the mug Kyle went to a table and sat down in a chair. He had worked at a ranch in Arkansas for about a month braking horses. He got one dollar a head and when he finished he got one of the horses and a saddle. At the end of the month he had earned thirty dollars. He still had about twenty left.

After drinking his beer, he got up and walked through the door and into the general store. A woman of about forty years old came out of the back room. She smiled at him and said, "Can I help you find something." He said, "Yes mam, I need pants, a shirt, a hat, boots and a hot bath and a haircut. Now how much will all that cost me?" The woman's smile got even bigger as her wrote it all down. "That will all come to nine dollars and fifty cents." she said. Kyle gave her a ten dollar gold piece and said "Call me when the water is hot." "Yes Sir." she said.

Kyle returned to the saloon and got another beer. He asked the bartender, "How far to Barlow?" The bartender looked at him with a strange look and said, "About a day's

ride, but why would anyone want to go to Barlow, are you a hired gun?" "What do you mean?" "Man, you have been away for a while haven't you?" Kyle answered "About two years. "Why, what are you talking about?"

The bartender said, "About a year ago a man calling himself Judge Tyler moved in there with a hell of a lot of money. He bought out all of the ranchers that would sell. The one's that wouldn't sell he ran out with hired guns or killed them. He even changed the town's name to Tylorville." Kyle's expression changed to concern as he asked, "What about the Bar W." "The bartender said, "As far as I have heard the Judge has the whole valley." "Have you heard anything about Wade Barlow and his wife?" "No, I don't recollect hearing anything about him, but I don't get all the information, just what people tell me as they are passing through. Why, do you ask? Did you know them?" "They are my parents."

The bartender said, "Are you staying in town tonight?" "Yes, if I can get a room." "There's a room in the back, fifty cents a night, or one dollar will get you two meals with it, you can stable your horse in the barn out behind the store, there's food for him there, that will be fifty cents also." After Kyle took care of his horse and put him away for the night, he went in to take his bath, and then he went to the room he had rented and went to sleep.

The next morning he got up and went into the saloon to eat some breakfast. After breakfast Kyle went to the barn and got his horse, mounted him and rode out of town to continue his journey. He didn't know what to expect when he got to Barlow, but his first concern was for his father and mother.

Chapter Two

He had decided to leave his beard on, maybe no one there will recognize him and he can find out more about what is going on there. He pushed his horse to his limit to make as much time as he could. Before entering the valley he stopped and made camp for the night. He didn't want to go in there at night with no place to stay.

The next morning he entered Bar W land. It would be a little after noon by the time he got home. He had thought his homecoming would be a great experience for him. But under

the circumstances he would just have to wait and see what happens.

It was about two in the afternoon when Kyle came to the top of the hill that overlooked the ranch house. The sun was high in the sky and he could see men around the corral, someone was breaking a horse and all the other men were cheering him on. A sign over the gate said the Circle T. He rode down off of the hill toward the house. As he rode toward the corral he could feel the eyes of the other men on him. He looked them all over; they didn't look like cowboys, but more like hired guns. Kyle stopped his horse and got off.

There was a man walking toward him. He was about thirty years old, he wore his gun low on his hip, and he didn't look like a wrangler, that's for damn sure.

He stopped in front of Kyle and said, "What can I do for you, what's your bigness here?"

Kyle said, "Just passing through, want to water my horse."

The man pointed to a water trough and said, "Help yourself."

Kyle walked his horse over to the trough, as the other man walked along beside him.

Kyle looked around at the house and barn that his father had built about thirty years ago. "Nice place you got here." he said. "I don't own it; I'm just the ramrod here. The place belongs to the Judge."

"What Judge?" asked Kyle? The man said, "You're not from around here, are you." "Nope." answered Kyle. The man said, "Judge Tyler, he owns this whole damn valley, about five hundred thousand acres."

"That's a lot of land for just one man." said Kyle.

"You plan on staying around long?" asked the man.

"Don't know yet." said Kyle. "Where's the nearest town?"

The man said, "There's only one town in the valley." "I suppose the Judge owns that too." "You got it."

"Are you looking for work?" Kyle answered, "Not just yet." "Well, my name is Crow, come and see me if you decide to go to work. But if you don't go to work soon, I wouldn't stay in this valley too long if I were you."

"Thanks for the advice, I'll consider it." Then he mounted his horse, said, "See you around." Then turned his horse around and rode off.

As Kyle rode he thought of how it used to be in the valley. The 4th of July picnic they would barbecue a steer and have a dance and everyone in the valley would come to it. He stopped his horse and looked at the big oak tree that stood by the road. Its limbs seemed to reach to heaven. He always liked that tree; it was the biggest one in the valley. But to his surprise he saw that it was dying. It had no leaves and there was a big hole in the trunk and the trunk was hollow.

There was a short piece of rope hanging from one of the limbs.

He rode his horse into the edge of town and stopped. As he looked down the street, he saw, Tyler's livery, Tyler's newspaper, Tyler's saloon, and Tyler's general store. As a matter of fact there was nothing that didn't have the name Tyler on it. He pulled his horse up to the livery stable and got off.

A man came out and said, "Hello, can I help you." Kyle recognized the man; it was Tom Ketchum, an old friend of his fathers. Kyle said, "Yes Tom, you can tell me what the hell is going on here." The man was stunned for a second then he said in a low voice, "Kyle Barlow, damn I thought you were killed in the war." "Hi Tom, how have you been?" "Put your horse in the corral and come on in the livery so we can talk."

Once inside the livery, Tom turned to Kyle and said, “Kyle, I sure am glad to see that you are alive, but you mustn’t stay here. If they find out that you are Wade’s son, they will kill you for sure.” “Where are my Father and Mother? And how did all of this happen?”

Tom said, “You don’t know? Your mother left on the stage to Austin, Wade is dead, they thought you was dead too.” “How did my father die?” Tom replied, “He killed the sheriff the Judge had appointed. He was a killer with a fast gun; Wade had a rifle on him. He went for his gun and Wade shot him.”

Kyle said, “Why did my father want to shoot a law man? “ “He didn’t, he was going to shoot the Judge. The judge had taken over the town and most of the valley. He would have people hung for not paying their taxes to him, and then he would take over their property. The big tree about five miles out of town, it’s now called the Hanging Tree, eighteen men so far, Wade was one of them.” Kyle said, “You don’t hang a man for not paying his taxes.” “Well someone should tell the Judge that. “ “That’s just what I intend to do. “That’s the only way he could get your place.” exclaimed Tom. “Has anyone tried to get the real law in here?” “The Governor wouldn’t do anything against the Judge.”

Kyle said, “Well I’ll be staying in the valley for a while, can you get me some supplies, I don’t want to be seen by too many people.” “What are you going to do? And where will you be?” “I’m going to make the Judge pay for what he has done. Do you know the waterfalls at the end of the box canyon at the south end of the Bar W?” “Yes, Wade and I used to fish there.” said Tom. “There is a cave behind it, I don’t think anyone knows about it but me, and now you.”

Kyle told Tom all the things he would need. Tom said, “I’ll be there tonight with a pack horse loaded with all the things

you ask for, and you can let me know if you need anything else.” Kyle went out to the corral and retrieved his horse, mounted it, said, “Tom, be careful, see you tonight.” then rode out of town.

It was starting to get dark by the time Kyle got to the box canyon. The stream that runs out of it was sparkling clear. There was a trail beside it that led into the canyon. He had found the cave when he was about thirteen years old. He had never told anyone about it until today when he told Tom.

There was another box canyon about six miles to the north. It had a very narrow passage way and inside it had a sticky black substance covering the ground. Kyle thought, “I think it might be oil, but I’m not sure. Nothing would grow in there.” There was a small trail in and out. If you were not very careful, you could get stuck in the mud. Kyle moved into the canyon, when he got to the waterfalls he got off his horse and led him behind it and into the cave.

It was a very large room, about twenty feet wide and sixty feet long. There was still a lot of firewood that he had brought in the last time he was there, Must have been about four years ago, he thought.

Chapter Three

It was very hot outside but it was nice and cool in there. He built a small campfire for light and then decided he would take a nap while he was waiting for Tom. He spread out his blanket on the floor. He lay down resting his head on his saddle, and went to sleep.

Kyle was awakened by the sound of Tom's voice, "Kyle, are you in there?" Kyle got up and went to the entrance and said, "Over here Tom, come this way."

Tom brought his horses into the cave. He looked around, "Well I'll be damned, I would never even guess this cave was here, how did you ever find it?" Kyle said, "I was about thirteen, I came into the canyon to go swimming. I swam under the falls and there it was."

"Kyle, how the hell are you going to take on the Judge and his men?" "How many men does the Judge have?" Tom replied, "I'm not sure, about thirty I think." "To start with, I'm going to need some money, is there any money on the stage?" "You bet, once a month, it will be in tomorrow evening about five. The Judge gets in a payroll for his men, around ten thousand dollars I think."

Kyle said, "That's perfect, I'll let the Judge finance his own destruction." "What do you need that much money for? For men and guns?" "No," Replied Kyle, "That would take too long, I need some dynamite." "I have maybe a dozen sticks, if that will help."

"Hell yes it will help, can you get it here tomorrow?"

Tom said, "Sure." "OK, I'll see you tomorrow."

Before Tom left Kyle told him not to join any posses after the stage is robbed.

The next morning after Tom brought the dynamite and left, Kyle decided to get things ready for what he had to do. He mounted his horse and rode to the other canyon. Just above the entrance there was a very large bolder. He climbed up to it and placed the dynamite under it. Then he went down and rode his horse into the canyon as far as he could go.

He got off and put rawhide on the horse's hoofs, then got back on his horse and rode out of the valley again, being careful not to step on the tracks going in. When he got out of the canyon he looked back. It looked like someone had entered the canyon and not come out.

Now it was time to put his plan to work. He had to cross a stream about a mile away.

When he got to the other side, he looked back in the direction that he had come from. The only tracks were those that were made when he first went to the canyon.

He then went down stream, keeping his horse in the water for about half a mile. When he left the stream he went to the road where the stage would be coming.

He came to a cluster of rocks and got behind them and waited.

There he took the rawhide off of the horse's hoofs and put it in his bedroll. After a while he saw the stage coming. When it got real close to where he was, he took aim with his rifle and shot one of the lead horses.

The horse fell to the ground and the stage came to a stop.

There were two men on top of the stage. Kyle shouted, "Don't anyone make any dumb moves. Now throw down your guns." They both did as they were told to do. "Now throw down that strong box."

The driver said, "Are you crazy, do you know that money belongs to Judge Tyler." Kyle said, "Throw it down." The man did as he was told. Kyle told the driver to get down and cut the dead horse away from the rest. Then he told them to get the hell out of there.

As they went out of sight, Kyle shot the lock off the strong box and put the money in his saddlebags. Then he took off and went to the stream where the horse tracks were on the other side. He went into the water and looked at both sides of the

stream. It looked like someone had gone straight through. He then turned his horse and went down stream again.

Leaving the water he went back to the canyon with all the oil in it. He did not go into the canyon, he found a good place to hide his horse, and then he positioned himself where he could see the canyon entrance and the dynamite he had placed at the big rock. Then he settled back to wait for the posse that he knew would be coming soon.

His wait was only about two hours. He saw them coming down the trail, following the tracks he had left for them. They came up to the entrance of the canyon and stopped. There were about fifteen men all together.

One of them said, "I've been in there before, this man sure isn't very smart, there's no way out." The man in charge pointed at two men and said, "You two stay here in case he gets by us and comes out, try to take him alive if you can, the Judge wants to hang him real bad."

The rest of the men went into the canyon. Kyle waited for about ten minutes, and then he took aim at the dynamite and fired his rifle. The dynamite went off, the big rock and half of the wall came down right into the entrance of that canyon. He shot the two men before they knew what was going on. Kyle made his way up to the edge of the canyon.

He could see the men below, there was no way out for them. He gathered some dry brush, tied it in a big bundle and set fire to it. Then he threw it over the edge into the canyon. When it hit the ground it ignited the oil, within a half hour the whole canyon was burning.

He could hear the screams of the men and horses, as they were burnt alive. He thought, maybe no one would think anything

about the smoke. That damn canyon catches on fire all the time. It will burn until we get a good hard rain.

He went to his horse and mounted him and turned him north. He thought, well that takes care of about half of the Judge's men. That was a hell of a way to have to kill someone, but he had just been through a war and he had seen worse. I guess it doesn't matter how you die, you're just as dead. Now he had to go to Cedar Bend To get some more dynamite.

He came to an Old Spanish church that had long been abandoned and was half fallen down. There was an alter in front. He dug a hole under the edge of it and placed the saddlebags with the money in it, except for one thousand dollars that he kept. He filled in the hole and left.

Meanwhile back in Tyler Ville, the Judge had ordered Crow to come to his office. "Who the hell would have the nerve to steel from me?" the Judge said. "Beats the hell out of me." "But when I find him I will hang him. Have there been any strangers in the valley lately?" "Yes, there was a man stopped at the Circle T yesterday, he just wanted to water his horse." Crow replied.

"Who was he?" asked the judge. "Just a drifter, I didn't get his name." "A stranger comes to this valley and you don't even get his name. What the hell am I paying you good money for? I want to know where this man is and who he is and what he is doing here.

Now you get the hell out of here and you find him and you bring him to me. Now get out of here and do your job." "Yes sir." Said Crow, as he got up and hurried out the door.

Chapter Four

Crow walked over to the saloon and went inside.

Four of his men were sitting at a table playing poker. He walked up to the bar and told the bartender to give him a whisky. When the bartender brought the whisky Crow asked, "Have there been any strangers in here lately? I'm looking for a man in his mid to late twenties, he has a beard. " "I haven't seen anyone like that" said the bartender.

Crow walked over to the table and said, "You men go out and round up all the men that you can find. I want this valley searched; I want to find that drifter or whoever he is. Now get out of here and when you find him bring him to me. The men got up and left the saloon to do as they were told. Crow left the saloon and walked to the hotel.

He went up to the desk and asks the clerk, "Have you had a man in his twenties, with a beard to check in? " "No sir. " the clerk answered. "If you see anyone like that you let me know right away. " "I sure will." Then Crow left the hotel and walked to the livery stable. Tom was making a shoe for a horse that he was shoeing. Crow said, "I'm looking for a stranger in town, he has a beard, have you seen anyone like that? " "Nope," said Tom, "Haven't seen any strangers what so ever, what do you want with him?" "He may be the one who robbed the stage this morning. "Tom said, "I haven't seen anyone like that, so get the hell out of here and let me do my job. " Crow was angered and said, "You had better watch your mouth old man or I may put a bullet between your eyes. " "Tyler has taken everything I have, what can you do to me? Besides, Tyler would have your hide if you killed his only blacksmith. " Crow said, "Just don't push me old man, if I find out that you know anything about this man, I will hang you. " Then he walked out the door. When Crow got out of range to hear him, Tom laughed and said, "You S.O.B., you may not like it when you do find him, or when he finds you, I should say."

Kyle tied his horse in front of the saloon and went inside. The bartender saw him and said, "Well, welcome back, how are things in Tyler Ville?" "A mite confused I think." "Did you find your parents?" "Yes, my father is dead and my mother is in Austin." "Sorry to hear that."

Kyle asked, "Do you have any dynamite to sell?" "I make my own, how much do you need?" "I want forty sticks and a hundred feet of fuse." "Forty sticks, what the hell are you going to blow up?" Kyle said, "you don't want to know." The bartender told him it would take a couple of days, and it would be two hundred dollars. Kyle told him to go ahead and get it ready as soon as he could. And then he sat down at a table next to a window.

Just as he did he saw a young lady pass the window and go into the general store. I know that lady, he thought. He got up and went to the door that led to the store and looked inside. She was very beautiful and she was talking to the lady that ran the store. Kyle walked into the store and up to the young lady and said, "Pardon me mam but don't I know you." The girl turned and looked at him. When she did, Kyle looked her straight in the eyes. "Yes, you are one of the twins. I'm Kyle Barlow."

She smiled and said, "Hello Kyle, I would not have recognized you with that beard." She laughed a little and said, "You look a lot different than you did the last time I saw you." "Yes, and you also, that was a long walk home. Do you live here now?" "Yes, about five miles out of town, my sister and I." "Where is your father?" "He died about eight months ago, my sister and I live alone," Kyle was just starting to say by to her when she cut in and said, "Why don't you come out for dinner tonight?" "That would be great, what time do you

want me there? “ “About six will be fine, follow the road west till you come to a fork in the road, take the left road, we are the first farmhouse on the left. “ “I’ll be there, “ Kyle said..

Kyle spent the rest of the afternoon just sitting around and drinking beer, and reminiscing about the few minutes he had spent in the water hole with the twins.

Later that day, after Kyle had finished eating, he leaned back in his chair and said. “That was about the best dinner I ever had,“ as he patted his stomach. The girls smiled and said thanks as one of them poured him another cup of coffee. They all sat and talked for at least two hours. The girls told Kyle all that happened to them and the rest of the people in the valley. Kyle stood up to say goodnight to them.

As he did one of the girls took his hand, the other one blew out the lamp. And then the other one took his other hand. Both leading him, they took him into the bedroom. Kyle had never been through a night like this before. As enjoyable as it was, he wasn’t sure that he wanted to do it again. Just before he was allowed to go to sleep he heard a rooster crow.

Kyle awoke to the smell of bacon frying. The sun was shining in through the window. He got out of bed and put his clothes and boots on, He looked at his pocket watch, and it was ten thirty. He went into the kitchen where the girls were. They all said good morning. He sat down and ate breakfast.

After breakfast he said, “Well girls, as much as I hate to leave, I have to be going.” “Will you be back?” one of them asked. “I sure hope so.” “Where will you go now? “ asked one. “When will you come back?” asked the other. “I don’t know, I have some unfinished business in Barlow to take care of. “

As he was getting on his horse both girls told him to be careful and take care of himself, and come and see them again. With a promise to do so, Kyle rode away in the direction of town. Kyle went into the saloon and asked the bartender if the dynamite was ready yet.

“It sure is, “ said the bartender with a grin. “Come on out back and you can test it.” Kyle said ok and walked out the back door with the bartender.

The bartender brought a box out of the barn and sat it down. He took one of the sticks and put a fuse in it and handed it to Kyle. “Light this and throw it as hard as you can that way.” pointing at the field behind the barn.

Kyle rolled a cigarette and lit it, and then he held the fuse to the cigarette. When it lit Kyle threw it as hard as he could then they both dropped to the ground. The dynamite went off. Kyle got up and said, “That will be just fine. “ Kyle paid the bartender and loaded the dynamite into a bedroll and tied it on his horse behind him. He then got on his horse and started back to the valley to finish what he had started.

When he arrived at the cave it was late afternoon. He thought, “It will be a lot safer to do what I have to do at night.” He waited until about two a. m., put some dynamite in a bag and hung it on his saddle horn, then mounted his horse and rode into the night.

Chapter Five

The Circle T had about three thousand head of cattle rounded up and ready for a drive to market. He found his way to the top of a hill overlooking the herd. It was very quiet and

he could see a campfire off to his left, it looked like there were two men in the camp asleep.

There were only two men riding night watch. He made his way around to the right of the herd. When he got to the position that he wanted, he took two sticks of dynamite out of the bag. He was only a few yards from the herd, he struck a match and lit the fuses and threw the dynamite at the edge of the herd. When it went off all hell broke loose.

The cattle started to stampede. The men in the camp didn't have a chance. He saw one of the men on horseback go down, then the other.

He thought, "Well there are four more men not to worry about, let's see, that makes nineteen, only about eleven or twelve to go." The herd was heading right for the ranch house. They tore the hell out of that place; it looked like a tornado had gone through there. The only things left standing was the house, the barn, and the bunkhouse.

The entire fence, the outhouse and the smokehouse was gone, there wasn't even a fence post left standing. Two men were caught in the open and died, one poor bastard was in the outhouse, and we won't even say what happened to him. Kyle then headed back to the cave for a good night's sleep. Later that morning after coffee and breakfast Kyle found a spot on the rim of the canyon where he could see a long way off. Every once in a while he could see riders. He thought, "Well from the looks of things they want to find me awful bad. "He stayed at the canyon all day long. He waited until almost midnight then saddled his horse and left the cave. There was no moon, only the stars were out to light the night.

But it was still well dark. This time he was headed for town. As he rode he saw the big oak tree as its limbs reached toward the night sky. Before long, he could see far off the flickering

lanterns that lit up parts of the street in town. When he got closer, he decided that the saloon was the only thing that was still open. He could hear music playing and people laughing and talking very loud.

At the end of the street there were two buildings. One was a general store; the other was a sawmill. Kyle moved up behind the store. He had fifteen sticks of dynamite with him. He put five of them under the store and put five in the sawmill. He put enough fuse on them for five minutes, then he moved around behind the saloon. He got down and crawled under the floor. He placed the other five sticks of dynamite up against the floor and added a very long fuse to it, "There, that should last about fifteen minutes, I hope." He crawled back to the edge of the building and looked all around, he saw nobody around so he lit the fuse, then he ran to the store and lit the fuse there, then to the sawmill and did the same there. He got on his horse and took off to watch from a distance.

Kyle brought his horse to a stop, got off and held on to the reins. He got out his tobacco and rolled himself a cigarette and lit it. As he blew out the first puff of smoke, he heard the first explosion and saw the general store go up in flame. He thought, "Damn. "

Then he saw people coming out of the saloon and heading for the general store with buckets of water. Just then, another explosion and the sawmill went up in flame.

All the people were throwing water on the two buildings, after a few minutes the third explosion and the saloon was on fire. Kyle thought, "Well that should keep them busy for a while. " Then he mounted his horse and left for the cave.

Chapter Six

Meanwhile, back in town, what was left of it that is. Tom was in the livery watching the whole thing, and holding his sides with laughter. After fighting the fire for about an hour, the Judge said, "All right let it go, we are not doing any good anyway." Then he turned to Crow and said, "Crow, who the hell is doing this to me anyway?" "Judge if I knew the answer to that question I would kill him." The judge said, "Well you had better find out who it is, and find him, and kill him, and it had better be soon." "Judge, where could a man get that much dynamite?" The Judge smiled and said, "Now you're thinking, there's a man in Cedar Bend that makes dynamite, he owns the saloon there." "I'll get my horse and I'll be back tomorrow night."

Crow tied his horse to the hitching rail and walked into the saloon. He looked all around the place, then walked up to the bar and said, "Bring me a beer and make it cold." Then the bartender brought his beer and sat it down in front of him. Crow turned it up and took a big drink and sat it back on the bar. He wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his shirt. Then he looked up at the bartender and said, "I hear you make dynamite."

The bartender smiled and said, “Yes sir, how much do you want? “ Crow said, “I don’t want any, I just want you to tell me who you made some for lately. “

The bartender said, “I’m sorry but I don’t give out that information, you understand that don’t you? “

” Sure I understand that. “

Then he reaches across the bar, grabbed the bartender by the shirt, pulled out his gun and put it between the bartender’s eyes. Then he said, “Now I need to know whom you have been making dynamite for, I need to know real bad, now you understand that don’t you? “

The bartender said, “Yes sir I understand perfectly, His name is Kyle Barlow. “

Crow was surprised and said, “I heard he was dead.“

“He has been in the war for two years, “said the bartender.

“What’s he look like? “ The bartender said, “Tall man, about six two I would say, has a beard, about two hundred pounds.

“Crow turned the bartender loose, pounded his fist on the bar and said, “Damn I had him and let him go.”

Crow finished his beer then walked out of the saloon, got on his horse and headed back for Tyler Ville.

Kyle had gotten a good night’s sleep and decided to let things cool off for a few days. He would go to Cedar Bend and see the twins for a day or to. Their bed is a hell of a lot softer than that cave floor. He saddled his horse and headed for Cedar Bend. Before leaving, he took two sticks of dynamite and put a fuse in them and put them in his shirt. You never know when you may need it, he thought.

Off in the distance he could see the black smoke from the other canyon that would burn until it rained enough to put it out. He remembered one time when he was a kid that it was

started by lightning and burned for over a month. As Kyle rode his mind was on the twins.

He didn't notice the rider coming towards him until he was a few yards away. When he did see him, he saw that it was Crow. He stopped and pulled the tobacco out of his pocket and rolled a cigarette. Crow stopped about fifteen feet from him. Kyle said, "Hello Crow, what brings you out here in the middle of nowhere. "I was looking for you, Kyle Barlow. " Kyle looked at him and said, "You know who I am. "

He took a match from his pocket and lit his cigarette. Crow said, "You know I came to kill you. " "I figured that," said Kyle. "Well, are you going to draw on me? " Kyle said, "Why bother, I'm no gunfighter. So why do you want to kill me?" "Hell man, you killed half of my men and caused a lot of damage. You and that damn dynamite have made a lot of trouble for me."

Kyle said, "Tyler and you killed my father, ran my mother out of town and stole our ranch. Now what would you expect me to do? Crow said, "I guess I would have done the same thing if it had been me. But I still have to kill you, either here, or take you back and hang you." Kyle put his hand into his shirt and pulled out a stick of dynamite and said, "You know I just love this stuff. " Then he put the cigarette to the fuse and it lit.

Crow said, "Are you crazy? That will blow you to pieces. " "You know, you could be right, here, you take it. " Then he pitched the dynamite at Crow. Crow yelled and turned his horse and kicked him in the side. Just as he did Kyle drew his gun and shot Crow in the back and he fell from his horse. The dynamite went off throwing some sand at Kyle.

Kyle got off his horse and walked over to where Crow lay. He turned him over, he was still barely alive. Crow said, "You

shot me in the back. “ “I had to Crow, I’m no gun fighter. “
Crow closed his eyes and died.

Kyle retrieved Crow’s horse and put his body on it and tied it down. He took a pencil and a piece of paper from his pocket and wrote on it, Tyler, you’re next, then he signed it Kyle Barlow. He put the paper in Crow’s back pocket and left some sticking out so it could be seen. And turned his horse loose.

A little later he came to the old mission where he had hid the money under the alter. He got off of his horse and dug up the saddlebags and put them on his horse.

Then he went on to Cedar Bend. He rode right through town without stopping and headed for the twins house.

Crow’s horse trotted into Tyler Ville and stopped at the livery stable. Tom saw it as it walked up to the water trough. He walked out and took Crow by the hair and razed his head to look at him.

Tom laughed a little and said, “I told you, you S.O.B., you wouldn’t like it when you found him. Then he took the horse and walked him down the street to Tyler’s office. He walked into the office and said, “Mister Tyler, I have something for you outside. “

Tyler said,” What is it? “

“Crow. “ said Tom. Tyler said, “What. “ Then he walked to the door and went outside. He walked over and looked at Crow then said. “He was shot in the back.”

He saw the paper in Crow’s pocket and took it out and read it. “I thought Kyle Barlow was killed in the war. “ “That’s what I heard.” Tom could see the fear in Tyler’s eyes and it pleased him to see him that way. The Judge told tom to do something with the body. Tom got a shovel and took Crow’s body out into the range and dug a hole. He then stripped Crow down to his birthday suit, put him in the whole face down with

his knees under him and his ass pointing to the sky. And then he covered it up. Then he took off his hat and looked up at the sky. He said, “Lord, I think everyone should have a few words said for them at this time. He has always had his ass turned to you, so that’s the way I buried him.

Maybe I should be talking to the other fellow downstairs for Crow. Any way here lays Crow as they called him, a good for nothing murdering scoundrel who was never worth two bits to himself or anyone else.”

He put his hat back on and turned to walk away, then he turned back and took off his hat again and said, “Oh yes Lord, I may be sending you another one real soon. “ Then he took Crow’s horse and all his belongings back to the livery stable and put the belongings in a box and put them away, and turned the horse loose in the corral.

Chapter Seven

Kyle spent two nights with the twins, and then he thought he had better get out of there while he still had the strength to mount his horse. He gave them a good by kiss then mounted his horse and rode into town. He stopped at the saloon and went inside. When the bartender saw him he said, “Well Kyle, I never thought I would see you again. “ “Why would you think that?”

“That one they call Crow came in here and put a gun to my head and made me tell him who I had made dynamite for lately. “ “So that’s how he found out who I was. “Then he smiled and said, “Well he won’t be back to see you anymore. “ “Did you kill him?” “Yes.”

“Well we’ll call that your good deed for today” said the bartender.

Kyle said “Now I’m going to kill the Judge for murdering my father.” “What about the rest of his men? They have been

in here a few times and they are a bad bunch.” Kyle said “Well there are only about ten of them left.” “Hell” said the bartender “there must have been thirty or forty of them working for the Judge”.

“Yes I know” said Kyle, “But that dynamite sure does a good job.” They both laughed, then the bartender gave Kyle another beer and said, “This one is on the house. “

Kyle finished his beer, said so long to the bartender and left the saloon. It was about three in the afternoon.

He mounted his horse and headed back to the valley to finish the job he had to do. It was about midnight when he rode into the valley entrance. The moon was full and the sky was clear, he could see for miles.

He thought, if I can see that far then someone else can also, so he headed for the shelter of the cave. He had to have a plan; there was still about ten men working for the Judge.

He awoke the next morning when he heard Tom Ketchum calling out his name. “Come on in and bring your horse” Shortly Tom entered the cave leading his horse through the falls. “What’s the matter?” Kyle asked. “I came to tell you that the Judge has put a ten thousand dollar reward on your head, dead or alive”.

“How many men does he have left?” “I have only seen six besides the Judge.” “Well that’s good news. Do you have a rifle?” “Yes, I took it from Crow.” Kyle told Tom to go back to town and keep the rifle handy.

Then he told Tom his plan and his part in it.

Tom then left the cave and made his way back to town.

That evening just after dark Kyle rode his horse up close to town. He hid his horse in some trees and walked to the livery stable where Tom was waiting.

Kyle asked “Now Tom, do you remember what you have to do?” “I sure do.” “OK, let’s get to it.”

Tom saddled his horse and rode out of town about a mile. At about eleven p.m. he rode out to the ranch where the Judge and his men were.

When Tom left town, Kyle went back to his horse and made his way to the hill overlooking the ranch house. He found shelter in the trees to hide his horse.

Then he got behind a large rock and waited for Tom to arrive. His wait wasn’t very long. He saw Tom ride up at a fast pace, get off of his horse and run to the door and knock. He saw the door open and Tom went inside.

One of the Judge’s men opened the door and took Tom to the Judge’s office.

“What do you want, Tom?” said The Judge. “I can tell you where Kyle Barlow is hiding.” “Why would you turn him in? I thought you were a friend of the Barlow’s.” “I was a friend to Old man Barlow but I don’t owe Kyle a thing. Besides I can use that ten thousand dollars.” The Judge said, “Where is He?”

“Do I get the money?” “If we get Barlow you will get the money.” “Take the north trail about four miles.

Till you come to the stream. Look to your left you will see water falls.” “I know where that is” said one of the Judge’s men. “Well there is a cave behind the falls, which is where he is hiding.” The Judge said, “If you are not telling me the truth I will hang you.” “That’s where he is hiding.” The Judge told the man with him to get the rest of the men together and go out there and bring him back alive if they can. The man said “what about him?”

“He will stay right here till you return.”

Kyle saw the men come out of the house and run to the barn and saddle the horses mount and then ride away, he counted

six men. When they were well out of sight he made his way down to the back door of the house. He silently entered the back door and moved down the hallway. He could hear The Judge and Tom talking. He opened the office door and stepped inside pointing his gun at the Judge. The Judge was shocked to see him.

Kyle said, “Well Judge, at last we meet, I am Kyle Barlow.” The Judge looked at Tom and then at Kyle and said “If my men don’t kill you when they get back I will hang you.” “Well Judge I hate to disappoint you but I don’t think your men will be coming back. “

The Judge said “And why not?” “When your men search that cave all they will find is a saddlebag with six thousand dollars and a note that reads. You men can take this money and leave the valley and not come back. But if you come back you will die, signed Kyle Barlow.”

The judge turned white as snow then he said,” What are you going to do run me out of the valley too?” “No Judge, I’m going to hang you by the neck until you are dead.” “You can’t do that, it would be murder.” “If you live by the sword you die by the sword.” “You can’t take the law into your own hands.” “This is my valley and I am the law here.” Kyle told the Judge to stand up and told Tom to tie his hands behind his back. They took the judge out and put him on a horse

After Kyle retrieved his horse they started toward what was left of town. Tom said “Kyle, are we really going to hang him?” “He killed my Father and a lot of other people according to his law, what would you have me do Tom?” “This is your party Kyle.”

As they rounded the bend they could see the big oak tree standing alone in the moonlight. The piece of broken rope was still hanging from a limb. As they moved under the limb and stopped the horses the Judge was sobbing.

Kyle took the rope from his saddle and looped it around the Judge's neck and threw the other end over the limb. He tightened the rope and tied the other end to the trunk of the tree. "Any last words, Judge?" The Judge shook his head from side to side. "You got anything to say, Tom?" Tom looked at the Judge and then at Kyle and shook his head no. At that time Kyle slapped the Judge's horse on the rump and he took off at a dead run. Kyle said, "Tom, go to the stable and get a wagon." Then he walked over to a stump, sat down and rolled himself a cigarette.

When Tom returned with the wagon the Judge was still hanging. He pulled the wagon under him. Kyle let him down in the wagon and told Tom to bury him.

"What are you going to do Kyle?" "

Kyle said, "I'm going to go home and open all of the doors and windows and let the stink out.

Then I will get an ax and cut this tree down and burn it.

then I am going to get in touch with my Mother and the rest of the people that live here and tell them to come home.

And I promise you that no one like this man will ever take over this valley again.""

THE END

From the Author

I hope you enjoyed reading this book. If you did enjoy it you can go to my website to let me know. I would like to know how you feel about my book and any other books I have written.

Thank you kindly.

God bless you

and God Bless America.