

Seth Benson

Hunting

The horse's knees were weak after miles of walking. Edward Russell always pushed his horse until he could barely walk. He was just getting back into his hometown of Old Ford after capturing a couple of criminals that were wanted by the state. When Edward arrived, there were rumors about a new criminal around the area. The criminal being talked about was Wade Pangburn. He had killed 13 people, men and women both. Rumor also had it that Pangburn had been on a bank robbing spree, robbing a known 5 banks. As of late, Wyoming was becoming a hotbed for murders and robberies. With new settlements arising so were new banks with no defense making them a prime target. People were becoming greedy and hungry for new land in the area trying to get a new taste of wealth doing whatever it takes.

It was 1895 in the state of Wyoming and Wade Pangburn was traveling with a small group of men, four including himself. His small gang consisted of himself, Rafael Chitwood, Windy Fern, and a man by the name of Jacob Feather. These men were outlaws of the state and were wanted for everything except being a good citizen. These men are as bad as you can get in these parts, not afraid to rob somebody, not afraid to run from the law, and definitely not afraid to kill a man. These men were on the move from a small Wyoming town called Darkpeak and were on their way to Ed's hometown of Old Ford. On horseback this would take just over two days for them to arrive in Old Ford.

Edward Russell was on the right side of the law. He had been hunting criminals for years. He was a man that stood around six foot one and quite scrawny for his build but tough as nails. His long narrow face and cut jawline did not scream "bounty hunter," it more said, "bartender."

Edward mostly wore canvas pants for durability reasons and dark brown chaps over top when he was on the road. The boots he sported were worn, like he had walked over 50,000 miles in them and then grated them with fine sandpaper yet the spurs on the back reflected the sun like a mirror. The whole state could tell who he was just by looking at his polished spurs. Russell was a lone traveler; he did not always need a partner as he is known as the best bounty hunter West of the Dakotas. This time was different, Ed had recruited a partner to make the trek as Wade and his gang were a new kind of mean. The man whom he recruited was named Chayton, which was Cherokee for Falcon. He was an English-speaking Native American who had been bounty hunting himself for most of his adult life after being shunned from his tribe for stealing food from them when he was just 17 years of age. Chayton was known for being a peaceful reasonable man but when it came to battle, he became a true warrior. He was recruited by Russell for his calm collected demeanor as well as his aggression in combat and battle. These two on paper are a duo that should be unstoppable.

As the two started South from Old Ford towards the Darkpeak area there was only one real logical way to travel there. The other routes were full of steep mountains and cliffs not made for travel. Since they only had one way to travel between the two towns, they had to run into the gang of outlaws somewhere.

A full day of travel brought them just under halfway to Darkpeak. The two decided to make camp under one of the trees just off the main road. They tied up their horses to the tree and unsaddled them before setting up camp. Edward built a fire to keep warm as the nights in Wyoming were never too warm. Chayton pulled out a pan he had brought with and filled it with pan de campo, a bread popular on the trail. He also pulled out a small sack with a can of beans and dried meat for them to split.

As the two began eating Edward said, "I used to have a family."

"What you mean used to?" Chayton questioned.

"I was living a stable life working as a deputy in Snake City around 15 years years back. Everything seemed right, everything was right. My wife, my daughter, myself. Living in town making an honest living until a gang of outlaws began to ransack and raid the whole town."

"What happened?" Chayton asked.

"My wife and daughter were shot and killed trying to defend our home. When I got to the scene with the Snake City Sherrif I saw the man who did it. Black hat, long black hair."

"Pangburn?"

"It may have been. That's why I began bounty hunting. To stop criminals from ruining lives and destroying homes. I had not heard much from Pangburn in these parts since he took away my family, he has stuck around Utah and Colorado more so. This hunt could either give me closure or get me killed. You get some rest Chayton I will be up for a while. When I need sleep, I will wake you up for lookout."

As the sun came up Edward and Chayton needed to get a move on. The two did not want to miss Pangburn and the boys, and let them slide by to Old Ford. Edward knew that they would be close as they were just under halfway to Darkpeak. Just after a breakfast of dry biscuits and jerky with a cup of coffee they began to saddle up their horses. The two destroyed anything that resembled a camp so that the outlaw gang would not know of their presence and they were back on the road south towards Darkpeak.

After around 25 minutes down the trail Chayton asked, “Do you see that up there Edward?”

“Yeah it looks like someone has a camp set up.”

Just down the road from where the two were at they could see 4 horses, four dark figures that made out the shape of men, and a small group of pine trees that surrounded them. Chayton was set on it being Wade Pangburn and his crew, but Edward was not too sure because of the road being traveled so often

“Let’s go get us a closer look at who it is” Ed said in a yell-like whisper.

Chayton agreed and whispered back, “Okay but we cannot get too close too quick.”

The two came up with a small plan on how to sneak up on the group of people without making a disturbance. Edward and Chayton were lucky as on each side of the road were bluffs which could give them a higher vantage point and a better view of the group ahead. Ed decided that if they brought the horses up around 40 yards to a tree on the bluff to their right and then tied them up there that the group would not notice them. The two did just that. They got to the tree, slid out their rifles and ditched their horses. The two walked to the top of the bluff which was around another 70 yards or so and continued to inch towards the group. As they got closer the figures became clearer and more distinct. Right when they began to realize who it was, they hit the ground to hide.

“I see Pangburn, Fern, Chitwood, and Feather” Ed said with a stern yet excited voice.

He knew there was no way of just capturing them as it was almost high noon, and the sun was getting hot. With no hesitation Ed loaded his rifle and Chayton followed suit and did the

same. The two were around 50 yards away from the gang's camp at this point behind a boulder the size of a cow. They had a spot perfect for sniping the outlaws one by one.

Edward got aggressive and stated "I ain't gonna leave without Pangburn's body."

A concerning comment considering it was a capture, not kill mission. Chayton had not seen Edward fight before, but he was about to. Ed sighted in Fern and Chayton put Chitwood in the peep sight.

"One, two....."

The loud cracks of two rifles went off and the fight was on. Both of them hit their targets. Ed shot Windy Fern straight between the eyes and like a watermelon being smashed against concrete his head exploded. The impact splattered blood all over Rafael Chitwood's face as he was struck straight in the chest by Chayton's bullet. Both targets fell leaving Feather and Pangburn all alone, yet these two never backed down from a fight.

Ed and Chayton ran down the hill towards them and cocked their lever action rifles firing bullet after bullet. The two were missing as Pangburn and Feather were hiding behind their horses and the small group of trees they made camp by. These two outlaws did not know what was going on as they fired back cluelessly without aim. Both pairs of men were running low on ammo and you did not want to get into hand-to-hand combat with Edward Russell as he was ruthless. With the shooting coming to an end, all four men charged towards each other. Wade and Edward knew they were going to square up against one another knowing that they were the strongest of the four.

Chayton went straight for Jacob Feather with his empty rifle in his hands. Unsure about what Chayton was doing, Jacob went to hit him in the head with a left hook. As he missed,

Chayton adjusted his grip on his rifle and wrapped his hands right over left around the barrel. He immediately cocked it behind his head and swung it like an axe. The stock of the gun hit Jacob directly on the outside of the left knee cap. Dropping him to his knees where without hesitation, or fear in his eyes Chayton finished him off with strike to the head the same way he hit him in the knee.

The same time Chayton began fighting Feather, Ed ran towards Pangburn, and then came to a stop and yelled “I am going to kill you for what you’ve done Wade.”

Wade responded with a curious voice “Do I know you?”

“You killed my family in Snake City about 15 years back, do you not remember this?”

“Can’t say I do. Hell, I have killed many people, maybe you’ll join ‘em.”

The open lack of care from Wade made Ed noticeably upset and frustrated.

Wade asked “What’s your name anyway?”

“I’m Ed Russell and I have been sent here to kill you for what you’ve done to the people of these parts.”

“I am sure you are” Pangburn responded with a chuckle and a crack of his knuckles.

This comment drove Ed to sprint straight for Wade with blood on his mind.

Ed and Pangburn met each other with fist after fist. Slamming each other into the trees. Swearing at each other, bleeding all over the place. Until Pangburn grabbed a knife that was holstered on a horse saddle next to them and threatened Edward.

“If you don’t let me walk on, I am going to carve you with this knife Ed.”

Ed did not flinch at this comment and he grabbed the wrist of the knife hand of Wade and pulled him towards him. He quickly hit Wade in the eye with his right hand. When Edward hit Pangburn square to the right eye, he felt the eye socket shatter against his knuckles. The blood from Wade's right eyebrow sprayed Edward in the face as he hit the ground with slight signs of unconsciousness. Wade was lying face down as he was near dead. Blood coating the ground where his face was.

Edward flipped him over and shook him as if he was trying to wake him up and said "Listen here you son of a bitch, I found you. Now, I could bring you back to Old Ford alive and get money for you, but scumbags like you don't deserve to stay alive. Murderers and thieves get what they deserve in the end anyway, don't they?" there was a long pause as Wade did not answer. Ed began to raise his voice, "Don't they!"

Edwards voice got louder and more aggressive as he talked to the alive, but unresponsive Wade Pangburn.

"Pangburn you killed how many innocent people and how many deserving? If you answer me correctly, I won't kill ya."

At this point Chayton had already finished off Jacob Feather and was looking on as Edward screamed at the helpless man. Chayton saw Edward's eyes as he looked like a serial killer. As Edward's voice got tired he said one last thing that would stay with Chayton for the rest of his life,

"This is for my wife and daughter; you've fucked with the wrong man."

And in one motion he stepped on Wade Pangburn's forehead with one boot and drove the spur on his other boot straight into his throat and into the dirt below.