

"That's right, Doc."

"You sure it was this Jerry Shand, right here?"

The witness pointed at Shand. "It was him, all right."

"Did you see or hear anything this court should know?"

"Y'bet I did! Somebody this feller knew was waitin' fer him. 'Is he in there?' he says, I mean Shand, and the other feller says 'Yes,' and then he says, 'Whatcha gonna do to him, Jerry?' an' this feller here says, 'I dunno, kill him, mebbe.' I recall them exact words, Doc."

"Pretty incriminatin'," Adams commented sonorously. "Remember you're under oath, Charley."

"Ed Mabry'll back me up on it!" the witness retorted with spirit. "He was right there with me, heard every dang' word!"

Jerry Shand jumped to his feet. He was trembling. "I said it, all right—but I didn't mean it! I was mad enough to do 'most anything to him, but—"

Adams pounded the top of his desk. "You'll get your chance to talk later, young man. Sit down."

Ed Mabry was called. His testimony substantiated that of the first witness. Other witnesses told of the fight in the Long Branch, started by Shand; some of them had heard him say to Culley then, "I ought to kill you!" and so testified.

Then Jerry Shand took the chair. Adams looked at him sternly. "You've heard the testimony that you threatened to kill the victim. A barful of people saw you pick a fight with him. What you got to say?"

"I don't deny any of that," Shand said tensely, "except that when I said it, I said it in anger and I didn't actually intend to kill him. I shot him, all right, but I shot him in self-defense. He pulled a gun on me."

"Marshal Matt Dillon ain't here right now," Adams said, "but he's told me no gun was found—I mean no gun that Culley had, or is claimed to have had. That's that. The next point is—why would Andy Culley want to shoot you?"

"He wanted to shut me up. He didn't want me telling how he'd been a bushwhacker with Quantrill. You saw the tattoo on his arm!"

"Tattoo don't make a man a bushwhacker," snapped Adams.

"This one does!" Shand retorted. "I saw it on his arm, when they came for my father and mother. That was in Lawrence. That's why I'm sure. They—killed both of them . . . and then they went across the street to where my girl

lived, and they took her away. I never saw her again . . ." His voice trailed off, his face hard.

There was a commotion at the front door. Heads turned; Adams bent a fierce gaze at the two people there. Jerry Shand stared.

Belle Archer was a step in front of Matt Dillon. The marshal's right hand cupped her elbow. Belle wore a pretty, bright-colored gown, but her face was drawn and miserable.

Jerry Shand stood up, his mouth slightly open, his eyes wide. Belle Archer took a halting step forward.

"Hello—Jerry," she said huskily.

"Lord!" Jerry Shand breathed. Then: "Ellie . . . ?"

"Belle Archer, now . . ." She paused, fumbled for words. "Matt says either I—talk, or they take you away. If it wasn't for that, I wouldn't do this to you, Jerry. You've had it bad enough already. I—didn't want you to see me now . . . see what happened to Ellie Clark after that day in Lawrence."

"Just a minute, now!" Doc Adams interjected. "What's this all about, Matt?"

"I believe Miss Archer's got some testimony to give, Doc. What she has to say ought to be controlling in this case."

"All right, then!" Adams said with asperity. "Put her on the stand—no need to make a show out of these proceedings!"

Shand was excused from the stand and Belle was sworn in. Adams asked a couple of preliminary questions and then told her to go ahead with any pertinent information.

"I can tell you all about last night, Doc," she said simply. Her eyes swung to Jerry Shand, who was watching her unblinkingly, his face masking whatever emotion he was feeling. "I left the Long Branch early last night—left because I saw Jerry coming in. I didn't want him to see me. I went home—to my room, I mean. And I saw everything that happened from my window—between Jerry and Andy Culley. I saw Andy pull a gun out of his pocket and point it at Jerry. Then Jerry drew his gun and fired—but he *had* to do it, Doc, or he would've been killed!"

She stopped. Doc Adams took his eyes from her and looked at the accused man. Jerry Shand's eyes were brimming with tears.

"What Jerry told Matt was true, Doc," she ended. "I saw it all . . . And I saw that fool Busby kid pick up Andy's

gun and run away with it." Amid silence, she left the witness chair. Gently, Matt took her arm and led her to the door.

Marshal Matt Dillon stood in front of his office, patting the neck of Jerry Shand's saddled horse. Jerry toed the stirrup and swung aboard. He looked down at the lawman.

"I—I don't know how I . . ." he began.

"It's over and done with," Matt said quietly. "Forget it now."

"Yeah," Jerry said.

"Better get going, Jerry," Matt said gravely.

"I wish I could see Ellie first . . ."

"It's like I said before—she refuses to see you, Jerry."

"I don't figure why Ellie—it don't seem right she won't!"

"Listen. She said to tell you Ellie's gone . . ."

"Gone?" Jerry stared at him.

"Yes, gone. She means she isn't Ellie Clark any more—at least, the Ellie Clark you knew. Remember, she's been through a lot, Jerry—maybe more than you have, even. It's a rough life she leads—but she likes it, now. She couldn't share a different kind of one with you. She might pretend, but she couldn't fool you long, and she's smart enough to know it. And big enough to want to spare you.

"It's true, kid. Ellie's gone. There's only Belle Archer." Matt looked up at Jerry Shand for a long moment. Then he lifted a hand.

"So long, Jerry."

Jerry Shand raised his own hand and let it drop. "So long, Marshal." His voice was almost inaudible. He reined his horse around and touched spurs.

sistance. Pete Wynn came up. Matt handed Shand's gun to Pete and told him to keep Shand covered. Then he went over and knelt by the huddled body on the boardwalk. It was Andy Culley. He made a swift examination and rose. He glanced at Jerry Shand. The cowboy looked at him wordlessly, his face frozen.

"Somebody go get Doc Adams," Matt said. "It's a coroner case."

Several men went close enough to see that the dead man was Culley. They turned on Shand.

"Culley wasn't heeled!" one of them snarled. "Let's get this bird!"

"Yeh, string 'im up!" someone else said shrilly. The phrase was chorused by several others, over the crowd's angry muttering.

Shand was sweating and pale. "Now listen," he pleaded. "Wait a minute . . ."

"Shut up!" a redbearded man shouted at him. "Come on, boys!"

Matt drew his gun quickly. He held it waist-high. His eyes were cold. He did not raise his voice but his words lashed at them.

"That's enough of that! This is my party, boys. Nobody's going to get riled up without reason."

"Come on, Matt," a man objected huskily, "this skunk shot Culley down in cold blood!"

"If he did he'll hang for it," Matt said. "After he has a trial."

"Trial nothin'!" Redbeard shouted. "There's a limit, Matt!"

Angry yells backed him up. The crowd began to press in. Matt thumbed back the hammer of his gun. It made a startlingly loud click. Jerry Shand stood by, his face white, drawn up to his full height, his eyes on Matt.

"Stay back!" Matt whipped at them. "I mean it."

The ones in the van stopped, hesitated. Matt grasped the moment's opportunity. "Now scatter," he said quickly. "Go about your business." He paused; then: "*Fast!*"

There were a few muffled curses, but the crowd started to disperse. Matt watched them go. He let out a long breath and looked at Shand. His mouth twitching, the cowboy wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead.

After Doc Adams had come, examined Culley and pronounced him dead, and ordered the corpse carried to the tiny

county morgue, Matt made his way to his office. Shand was there, manacled and under guard, not yet in a cell. Matt sent Pete Wynn, who had brought Shand to the jail, away. He proceeded to question Shand.

"You don't have to talk if you don't want to," he said in preliminary, "but I hope you will. I'd like some answers."

"I'll talk," Shand said huskily.

"Why'd you shoot him?"

"He drew a gun on me and threatened to shoot me, that's why. I pulled my own gun and got in the first shot."

Matt looked at him. "He had a gun? We didn't find any gun on him, or around anywhere."

"He had a gun," Shand insisted. "It was a silver-mounted derringer. I got a good look at it."

"Where did it go to?"

"I don't know, darn it. Any one of that crowd could've picked it up and carried it away. All I know's he pulled it on me and I beat him to the shot."

"Well, why'd he draw on you? Why'd he want to kill you?"

"I told you, Marshal," Shand said. "It's personal."

"I think I know anyhow," Matt told him. "He was a Quantrill man—wasn't he?"

Shand looked at him for a long minute without speaking. Then he opened his mouth and the words came fast. "He was with Quantrill when they hit Lawrence in 'Sixty-three. His name isn't Culley—it's Bloody Bill Ashley—or that's what he was called then. I was just a kid but I remember it like it was yesterday. Ma made me get up and hide in the woodshed. I saw him kill my father in cold blood, and I saw that Quantrill tattoo on his arm. I—saw him drag off Ma. . . . When they rode away there wasn't anything left but smoking ruins of buildings, and dead bodies. Men and women and children. . . ."

Matt was silent as he looked at Shand. He knew the man was telling the truth. He felt a stab of compassion. But he had to go on questioning Shand, had to get the whole story if he could.

"What happened on the street?" he asked. "I thought Culley was trying to keep clear of you."

"After I left here, I got my horse," Shand said. "I was heading out of town, goin' west. Culley popped out from beside a building all of a sudden and flagged me down. I asked him what he wanted, and he said he wanted to talk to