

B KURT BARKER'S **BLACKSHOT** *A HARD ACTION ADULT WESTERN!*



the Boot Hill Bride



Blackshot: Boot Hill Bride
by Kurt Barker

Blackshot: Boot Hill Bride
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Gunslinger. Mercenary. Killer. Lover.

They called him all this and much more, but like no other in the wild lawless West, the name Tom Blackshot struck fear in the black hearts of outlaws and renegades, and sparked desire in the bosoms of beautiful women. If you were lucky enough to hire the legendary mystery man, no danger was too great and no enemy so deadly that Blackshot could not overcome them. With a gun in his hand or a woman in his arms, Blackshot was without equal.

This is a tale of but one of his many harrowing adventures.

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Chapter 1

The sun was high in the sky and hot, but in the shade of the tall acacia tree where Tom Blackshot lay the air was pleasantly mild, and a cool breeze blew off the water of the pond in front of him and dried the sweat on his thick, muscular bare chest and broad shoulders. He reclined in the soft grass, his head resting on the base of the tree's trunk, black flat-brimmed hat pulled low across his brow, and watched as the sunlight flashed and glinted on the soft rippling surface of the pond and on the soft freckled shoulders of Miss Patience MacReady, proprietor of the general store and member of the Bartonbridge town council.

The mayor of Bartonbridge had hired Blackshot to provide security for a visiting dignitary who would be arriving the next day, and Miss MacReady was tasked with showing him around the town and surrounding environs to familiarize him with the lay of the land. The tour had digressed around noon into an impromptu picnic by the pond, and afterward had digressed into even more impromptu recreational pursuits.

Patience smiled at Blackshot, stroking the water idly with her fingers, her fiery bronze hair piled in a loose bun atop her head with wayward strands falling across her freckled back. Blackshot smiled back, and yawned.

"I think I'll get out now," Patience said.

"Might as well."

"Turn around."

Blackshot grinned. "How can I watch you if I turn around?"

A mischievous light sparkled in Patience's big green eyes. Then she arose and waded ashore, water streaming in sparkling rivulets down her plump, swaying breasts and across her taut, slender belly, and flew in white flashes from the generous curve of her hips and thighs as she mounted the bank and stood before Blackshot, letting his steely gray eyes take in her full naked beauty.

"Why don't you make yourself useful and dry me off?" she purred with an inviting smile.

"I like you better wet," Blackshot growled, and pulled her down beside him. He cupped the slippery, jiggling flesh of her breast in his palm and brought it to his lips. Patience moaned softly as he teased her nipple to a hard peak with his tongue, then enveloped it in his mouth. He held her wet body against his chest as he sucked hungrily on the succulent mound, releasing it from his lips only to replace it with its twin.

Blackshot's hand traveled down the hollow of Patience's stomach until his fingers reached the soaking hair at the apex of her thighs. Her lithe body moved against his, urging her swollen tit into his mouth, then convulsed suddenly as his strong fingers pressed between her wet lips and entered her. She let out an anguished gasp and writhed against his hand as it explored her sultry heat, her hair loose now and falling in tangled waves across her flushed, freckle-dusted cheeks.

Blackshot could feel the trembling of Patience's hands as they fumbled to open his jeans and relieve the pressure growing steadily inside them. She tore back the stiff fabric with a fevered grunt and his long, hard cock surged out into her hands.

"You certainly don't live up to your name, do you?" Blackshot chuckled.

"I been plenty patient," she panted, "but there ain't been a man like you in town for a dog's age!"

Patience dropped her head, letting her ruddy hair spill across Blackshot's chiseled midsection as she ran her tongue languorously along the length of his rigid shaft. Once she had reached the tip, she parted her full lips and took his head into her mouth; deeper she went, caressing his balls in her palm as she sucked in his thick girth.

Blackshot groaned as the heat of Patience's mouth sent fiery waves rushing through his body; her head bobbed as she drew him steadily deeper into her until he could feel the close warmth of her throat

surrounding his manhood. He ran his fingers through her unkempt mane and held her to him as her voracious mouth sought the base of his shaft with unrestrained desire.

Soon the working of her lips had tongue had driven Blackshot beyond the limits of control, and he clutched Patience's hair with whitened knuckles as his release erupted into her mouth in hot bursts.

Almost at that very moment, a voice called out from across the field. "Hey, Mister Blackshot! You there, Mister Blackshot, sir?"

Blackshot sat bolt upright, forgetting Patience for a second and almost choking her on his shaft. She pulled his cock from her mouth with a gasp, cum spilling from her lips down her chin, and scrambled behind a little sun-beaten bush near the tree as the sound of boots crushing the tall grass approached them. Blackshot had just time to close his jeans and cast Patience's clothes behind the bush before a little man with a round, sunburned nose and a bushy gray mustache appeared over the crest of the hill behind the tree.

"Hey there, Mister Blackshot, sir!" he wheezed, touching the brim of his hat. "Angus Terney, town council. Sorry for disturbing you, but the mayor got a message that the stage coach is already on the ferry 'cross the river and figures to be in town tonight instead of tomorrow."

"Fine. I'll be there," Blackshot replied.

"Good, good! It's a big day for Bartonbridge, yes sir! A big day for this town!" The old man paused for a moment, gazing at the rippling pond and ruminating about the big day for Bartonbridge, then became aware again that Blackshot was still there. "As I say, I wouldn't have disturbed you, only I was meant to give the message to Miss MacReady since she was showin' you around, but I couldn't find her nowhere. I guess she ain't here with you?"

"I would have seen her if she'd come out this way."

"Well, I reckon she's gone back to her store or some such."

"I'm sure she'll turn up soon."

The little man agreed and they exchanged pleasantries before he stumped off across the field and out of sight. Blackshot smiled as Patience stood up from behind the bush, gathering her clothes and brushing grass from her bare legs and stomach with annoyed swipes.

"Sometimes I'd like to punch that old stuffshirt right in his big red nose!" she glowered.

"You can hardly blame him," Blackshot chuckled as he got to his feet. "How was he to know your patience had run out?"

"It's not funny!" Patience pouted, poking a finger in his chest. "And another thing; you gagged me with your big fat cock!"

"Sorry about that."

"I don't want you to apologize," Patience retorted, sliding down to her knees before him, "I want you to do it again!"

Chapter 2

Blackshot leaned against the side of the stagecoach and pulled the brim of his hat lower to shield his eyes from the setting sun that was flaring from the ridge of the western hills. The mayor of Bartonbridge, a rotund man with muttonchop whiskers, was standing on a barrel in front of the saloon and orating a meandering and melodramatic speech to a modest crowd of locals about the honors being bestowed upon their fair town. The members of the town council stood behind him on the porch of the saloon, and when Blackshot's eye caught that of Patience MacReady, she gave him a subtle wink. Angus Terney stood beside her, consuming the mayor's pronouncements with rapt attention.

Blackshot turned his gaze to the object of the speech. The Contessa Santuzza Gandini was tall and long-legged and wore a tight riding dress that hugged her sinuous curves, and black high-heeled boots. A swath of raven hair was pinned in a braided bun at the base of her long porcelain neck, and her angular features were striking in their refined beauty. The young woman, who stood in the street beside the mayor, was making little secret of her disdain for his rambling peroration, and her stage sighs and the rolling of her large dark eyes brought a smile to Blackshot's lips.

Patience had informed him about their visiting "dignitary"; The Contessa was the daughter of some exiled European count who apparently possessed little other than his aristocratic name, and was living on the largess of New York socialites who prized him as an entertaining dinner guest. Santuzza was currently journeying West to the estate of a certain Count Frederick to whom she was engaged to marry, who some said was a wealthy Hapsburg prince who had fled Mexico when the government was overthrown, and who some others said was nearly as penniless as the Gandinis.

As far as Patience was concerned, they were a worthless lot who all together probably couldn't cover a stable hand's bet in a poker game, and the mayor was making a fool of himself and the town by fawning over them. Blackshot tended to agree, but the fact that he was getting paid handsomely by the mayor to do little more than ride in the Contessa's coach for a couple of hours made him view the proceedings in a more charitable light.

At last the mayor's spiel concluded to scattered applause by the wearied townsfolk, and he was helped from the barrel by two members of the town council. He proceeded to restate an earlier offer to the Contessa and her chaperon Edita, a short, middle-aged woman with a frog-like face, to be the guest of the town for the evening and resume their trip in the morning. The chaperon restated their firm refusal to stay any longer than necessary in such a dubious place, while he received nothing but a dismissive glance from the Contessa.

Undeterred, the mayor brought them to the coach and introduced them to Blackshot. Edita appraised him scornfully. "Who is this person?" she snapped. "He will not travel with us!"

"Mr. Blackshot is an expert bodyguard," the mayor explained deferentially, "It is my pleasure as the mayor of the fair town of Bartonbridge to provide for the security of—"

"Nonsense! We have our own retainer!" the little woman barked, indicating the elderly coach driver and a skinny boy no older than fourteen that sat beside him on the driver's bench with an old rifle across his lap. "What's more, Captain Merridew has offered to send a detachment from the fort to guide us to the Count's estate."

"The fort is a long way from Bartonbridge, ma'am and as the mayor of this fair town I want to assure—"

"Certainly not! It is out of the question!"

"He should come." The Contessa surprised them both by speaking. Her voice was smooth and low, and she flashed a silky smile at Blackshot as her eyes traveled up and down the tall, black-clad man's lean, powerful form. "I will feel safer if he is with us."

Reproach and suspicion showed in Edita's glaring eyes. "Santuzza, I do not think it is proper for a

man to be riding with you.”

“But how could anything improper happen while you're there, Miss Edita?” Santuzza replied, mirth dancing in her eyes.

“It looks like that's settled then,” Blackshot said with a grin. He offered his hand to Santuzza and helped her up into the coach.

Edita had no choice but to concede defeat, and sullenly followed the Contessa to the coach without a word. She refused to look at Blackshot as he helped her into her seat, and when she saw the barely suppressed laughter trembling on Santuzza's lips, she turned from her as well and stared dourly out the window. The driver shook the reins, and the coach creaked forward, carrying them away from the last sycophantic prostrations of the mayor, and into the approaching twilight.

Chapter 3

The path the coach followed was broad and even, and the black walls of the cliffs stood far off on either side, allowing for swift progress through the growing gloom even though the feeble glow of a lantern held by the boy was the only light to guide them beyond the last muted rays of the departed sun.

They rode in silence for a while; Santuzza stared out the coach window with bored eyes, and Edita busied herself with some needlework from her traveling bag. Blackshot took in the scenery outside as it passed the window in a dark blur, and alternated that with the scenery inside that jiggled and bounced from the low, square neckline of Santuzza's embroidered dress.

She turned her head and regarded him with amused eyes. "So, what are you anyway, some kind of cowboy?" she murmured.

"Close enough."

"I thought so. Since I left New York I have been inundated by cowboys; everywhere I go, cowboys from pillar to post. They're worse than rats. What are they good for, anyway?"

"Ask a cow."

Edita glanced up from her work and glared at him; Santuzza's eyes had fallen to the pair of black Colt revolvers slung low from his hips.

"What do you do with those?" she inquired, "Do you shoot a lot of other cowboys?"

"That depends on how many cowboys need shooting. I am at the mercy of the market in such matters."

Santuzza gave a haughty laugh and turned her gaze back to the window. "You're probably not even a real cowboy," she sniffed.

"Considering your opinion of cowboys, I'll take that as a compliment." Blackshot saw that Edita was still staring at him, and he gave her a broad smile, causing her to drop her eyes to her needlework. He tipped the brim of his hat back and turned his smile to Santuzza. "So what's your story? You're not a real cowboy either."

"I'd tell you but I doubt you'd be capable of understanding," she sneered without taking her eyes from the window. She had lost interest in persiflage now, as Blackshot had not been the easy target of ridicule that she had hoped.

"Seems simple enough from what I heard," Blackshot said. "The grand old clan's clean out of money so your old man has fixed you up to marry some ex-Mexican oligarch, and you're all crossing your fingers that he's as rich as he says he is."

"How dare you!" Edita burst out. "Someone should teach you some manners!"

"Many have tried, ma'am, but somehow it never really took."

Santuzza cut off Edita's spluttering with a voice that was icy and sharp. "You're only showing your low class ignorance," she scoffed, fixing Blackshot with a bitter glare. "Count Frederick is a great man who has distinguished himself in academics and athletics, and is renowned for his bravery and wise leadership on the battlefield. He wouldn't hire a saddle bum like you to polish his boots!"

Blackshot chuckled. "Why, you make him sound so good that if I were a woman I might marry him myself!"

Santuzza snorted indignantly and turned in her seat to face away from him. She stared sullenly out the window, her lips pressed firmly together, and her white cheeks now a rosy hue. After a moment she said quietly, "Besides, if I don't like him, I won't marry him."

Edita turned sharply to face her. "Santuzza! Your father made it clear--"

"I don't care what Father said!" Santuzza flared, "If I don't like him, I won't marry him!"

Edita opened her mouth to reply, but instead said nothing. After a moment of scowling impotently at the back of Santuzza's head, she turned back to her knitting and worked with an angry vigor. The carriage fell once again into silence as the stars outside began to show faintly in the purple sky.

The darkness of the cabin closed slowly around Blackshot as they rode and isolated him from the women sitting across from him. He could only make out the dim outline of Santuzza's face by the window now, but he could sense that she had fallen asleep. The light clicking of needles above the rhythmic clatter of the wheels and hooves told Blackshot that Edita was still awake; he perceived a sort of nervous energy in her that was vaguely unsettling but that he supposed was probably her normal state.

Suddenly Blackshot became aware of the beating of other horse's hooves approaching quickly. As he turned toward the window, the carriage lurched violently and came to a halt amid a confusion of shouting voices. Santuzza cried out as she was thrown against Edita, whose needles were wrenched from her hand by the sudden jolt.

"What's going on out-" Santuzza's voice was cut off abruptly but the sharp report of a pistol. A scream quickly followed, and Blackshot caught the quick blur of a white shirt as the boy ran past the window, blubbering senselessly. A moment later the old man stumbled after him and disappeared into the night. It looked like the carriage would be going no further.

Harsh laughter rang from the darkness at the sight of the fleeing pair, and Blackshot made out at least three voices. Santuzza looked to him with frightened eyes, but he motioned her to be still. Footsteps approached on either side of the carriage, and the silhouettes of two men holding revolvers loomed from the windows.

A raspy voice spoke: "Hey there, ladies. Nice night for a ride, huh?"

Chapter 4

The door was jerked open, and a grizzled man in a dusty slouch hat jabbed the barrel of a pistol at Santuzza's chest. "Come on out, princess!" he growled, "We're gonna have us some fun tonight!"

The first indication that he got that the women were not alone in the cabin was the bright flash of fire that bloomed from the Colt in Blackshot's hand. The man stumbled backwards, his brains spilling from the side of his head as he dropped to the dirt, stained hat fluttering down after him to rest on his motionless body.

In the brief instant that the gunshot illuminated the cabin, the man at the other side of the carriage saw Blackshot's free hand streaking to his other gun with almost inhuman speed, but by the time he reacted it was too late. His half raised gun flew from his hand as a slug tore through his chest, turning him sideways. Blackshot's second bullet ripped through his throat, pitching him backward into a ditch a few feet from the carriage with a trail of blood tracing his path.

Almost as soon as the man had hit the ground, Blackshot was out of the cabin and found himself face to face with a scar-faced Comanche in a buckskin jacket. The startled man lunged for cover behind the back of the carriage, but Blackshot caught him with a quick shot that punched through his kidney and sent him reeling to the dusty turf with blood pouring from his side. He rolled over, trying to level his pistol at the hulking silhouette that stood over him, but the Colt roared again and laid him flat with a pool of crimson forming quickly around his shattered skull.

The horses were wild eyed and pawing the ground skittishly, causing the coach to shake and creak. Blackshot spied the reins hanging across the driver's footboard and jumped up on the front wheel to retrieve them. As he reached for them, a rifle barked from in front of the team and a slug slammed into the driver's seat, sending a hail of splinters across Blackshot's cheek.

He dove down to the ground as the rifle sounded again, this time joined by the throaty rumble of a shotgun. Blackshot sprayed the front of the coach and the flank of one of the horses, causing it to rear up violently. Blackshot sprang to the door of the cabin and dragged Santuzza from the cabin, practically throwing her into the ditch beside the bandit's body. As the frightened horses broke into a run, he just managed to pull Edita free from the rapidly departing coach.

The stagecoach rattled wildly away into the night, and Blackshot saw a quick hint of movement through the billows of dust kicked up by the fleeing horses. He snapped off two quick shots in that direction, and heard a man cry out in pain. Return fire came swiftly, biting into the ground where Blackshot had stood and sending up plumes of soil, but he had already rolled away in anticipation and he sent another bullet winging in the direction of the muzzle flash.

Staying low, Blackshot scrambled into the ditch beside the women. One of the men on the other side of the road was swearing in pain, and the rifle cracked again, kicking up dust where Blackshot had been a moment before. Just a few yards beyond the ditch the dark outline of a few scattered rocky outcroppings rose from the patchy underbrush that dotted the plain. Blackshot took Santuzza by the arm and urged her toward them, motioning her to stay low and silent. With Edita in tow, still clutching her travel bag, he guided the women toward the nearest of the rocks as quickly as they could manage. The shooting had stopped from the opposite side of the trail, and Blackshot knew the bandits were moving, too.

Once he had ushered Santuzza and Edita to the relative safety of the nearest rock, he stole noiselessly to a jagged outcropping that jutted from the nettles about a dozen yards away. Thumbing fresh cartridges into the chambers of the Colts by feel in the darkness, he listened for any sound of the approaching bandits. When the dry underbrush crunched under the heel of a boot a few yards to his left, Blackshot leaned out and squeezed off a volley of shots in the direction of the sound. In the sudden illumination of the gunfire, he saw a man running, then stumbling and crashing into the brush, and the barrel of a rifle gleamed as it fell from his hand.

Blackshot's hands searched the stony turf at his feet and found a large sharp-edged rock that fit

well in the palm of one of his big hands. He could hear the thrashing of the wounded man in the brush, and when he surmounted the outcropping between them, the dim light of the crescent moon showed him that the bandit was struggling to reach the rifle that lay just beyond him. With a mighty lunge, Blackshot launched himself from the top of the rocks and landed heavily astride the other man, knocking all the wind out of him. Then the stone in his hand came knifing downward, crushing the man's skull in a powerful blow that sent blood spurting from his mouth and ears.

Blackshot crouched low atop the dead man's body, listening for the movement of the other gunman. Instead he heard the rumbling of approaching horses, and in a moment a band of horsemen thundered into view on the road ahead. Blackshot dove behind the rocks and readied his guns as the lead rider pulled to a halt at the sight of the bodies on the trail. The other horseman followed suit as the first man barked a quick command, and rifles were drawn from scabbards by their saddles.

A moment later the cover was taken from a lantern in the rider's hand and a fluttering orange light shown across the scene of the battle. In the lantern's glow, Blackshot could see that the horsemen wore the blue jackets and black hats of cavalry men, and the runaway stagecoach was being led along behind them. The women could apparently see this, too, for Edita's excited voice broke out behind him, "It's Captain Merridew! At last! Captain Merridew!"

At the sound of her voice, the first rider, a stocky man with a ruddy mustache, held up his hand. "Countess Gandini? Are you out there?" he bellowed.

"I'm here!" Santuzza cried, jumping up and waving her arms, "We're out here in the rocks! Oh, they were trying to kill us, but Mr. Blackshot saved us!"

Captain Merridew nudged his horse toward them. "Who? There's someone with you? Where is he?"

Blackshot stood up and motioned to him. "Here, Captain! I'm Tom Blackshot. We got waylaid by a gang of bandits; they ran off the driver and his boy and we were stuck here without the coach."

"I see. That's rather unfortunate for you, Mr. Blackshot." A strange tone in his voice caught Blackshot's attention. Just then, the wounded bandit emerged from the rocks on the other side of the road and limped toward the soldiers, one of his pants legs soaked a deep red below the knee. He said something to them and pointed at Blackshot. The riders began to fan out around Captain Merridew, forming a loose circle around Blackshot and the women.

"Things are starting to look more unfortunate all the time," Blackshot muttered, his hands poised above the butts of the revolvers on his hips. Suddenly Santuzza cried out, and he turned to see Edita, her travel bag open at her feet, with a small double-barreled pistol in her hand which was pressed to Santuzza's throat.

Captain Merridew chuckled. "You think so, do you? I think things are looking up!"

Chapter 5

"Now just who are you, Blackshot?" Merridew growled.

"He's some small town bum that the damn mayor of Bartonbridge forced us to take along!" Edita cut in. "Just kill him!"

"Hang on, Captain!" one of the horsemen called. He jerked his head toward the wounded man. "Corporal Tompkins says this fella ain't no dude; he killed all them boys by himself, like he's some kind of pro, maybe from back East."

"A pro from back East?" Captain Merridew eyed Blackshot coolly. "That could mean that the General's got wind of this. Might spell trouble for us...."

"You think maybe he's a spy? Maybe the General sent him to check up on us?" the horseman asked nervously.

"I aim to find out," Merridew scowled. "Take him along with the girl. He'll tell us who he's working for; oh, you can be sure of that!"

One of the soldiers took Santuzza by the arm and dragged her toward the waiting coach. The others surrounded Blackshot with their rifles trained on him and took away the Colts from his holsters. One of them jabbed a rifle barrel into his back and urged him on behind Santuzza.

"You won't get away with this!" Santuzza cried as the soldiers hustled them into the coach. "If you do anything to me, my father will have you hunted down! And Count Frederick is expecting us! He'll know something is wrong and-"

Captain Merridew's sharp laugh cut her off. "Why, you're right! We can't start Count Frederick to worrying, can we? Let's go pay him a visit and put his mind at rest!"

The fear in Santuzza's face had now transformed into rage. "So that stuffed-shirt bastard is in on your scheme too, is he?" she spat. "He can go to hell with the rest of you, and so can Edita! I can't believe that bitch would do this me! She's been with our family for years!!"

"That was the easiest part!" Captain Merridew replied merrily. "She hates your pretty little guts, my lady, and your worthless old man, too! We offered her a reward and she jumped at the chance to stab you in the back!"

Suddenly a rifle shot rang out from the darkness among the rocks where they had hidden. Merridew grinned savagely. "And now she's got her reward," he said.

Moonlight glinted from the roof tiles of the great black bulk of Count Frederick's house as the caravan approached. It was two stories, and surrounded by a tall wrought iron fence topped with long spikes alternating with iron flowers, all looking very out of place on the rough prairie. Lights flickered through the bars of the fence from the windows beyond, and when Captain Merridew signaled for the column to halt in front of the house, the front door was opened to them by an elderly servant, bathing the courtyard with brilliant light from an ornate chandelier within.

The figure of a man appeared silhouetted in the wide upstairs window; he was lean and broad-shouldered, and the candle light shone on his wavy golden hair. Captain Merridew tipped his hat to him as he swung down from the saddle, but the man turned and walked away without acknowledging the gesture.

Blackshot and Santuzza were brought out of the carriage and ushered inside by the soldiers. The room in which they found themselves was wide and opulent; tapestry hung from the walls and the polished oak floorboards were covered by a Persian rug. The golden-haired man had just descended the stairs and deposited himself in a large chair with a carved back that sat at the center of the room. His blasé face was youthful and handsome, and his compact athletic body was clad in a loose silk shirt and tight breeches. Despite his boyish demeanor, Blackshot guessed Count Frederick (for he was sure it could be

no one else) to be about thirty-five.

"Well?" the count inquired, looking up at Captain Merridew, "Did everything proceed as planned?"

"Mostly, yes," Merridew replied. He jerked a thumb toward Blackshot. "except for this fella sticking his nose into it. We think he's maybe a government spy, and I plan to find out for sure!"

Count Frederick's looked Blackshot over with uninterested eyes. "That's your problem, not mine," he said. "First I want to complete our task regarding the Gandini bitch."

"You're a nothing but a pathetic bastard," Santuzza sneered defiantly. "What do you hope to get out of this?"

"What else? Money," Blackshot said. "I'd guess that Count Freddie here is about as broke as a wino on Sunday morning."

This raised a hearty laugh from the cavalry men, and Count Frederick sat up in his chair, his face flushed with rage. "Shut up, you ignorant piss ants!" he shouted.

"Hey! I'll give my men orders if they need it, not you!" Captain Merridew barked.

Before Count Frederick could reply, Santuzza burst out, "You're the ignorant one, you little fool! If you expect my father to pay a ransom for me, you're in for a long wait!"

"I am aware of that." Count Frederick retorted icily, "He wouldn't resort to whoring out his daughter if he had two dollars of his own to rub together."

Santuzza spit in his face. This brought a fresh round of laughter from the soldiers, and when the Count sprang up from his chair toward Santuzza, Captain Merridew blocked his way. With a malicious grin, he offered Count Frederick his handkerchief. "No reason to get all excited," he said. "Sit down and wipe off your pretty face, why don't you?"

"You have delivered the Contessa to me as I required, Captain," Count Frederick replied through gritted teeth. "I have no further need of you at present. You may leave my house."

"Well, wouldn't that just be lovely," Merridew chortled. He crossed to the Count's chair and sat down in it, mimicking the Count's lounging pose. "I ain't going anywhere, son. We've still got business to conduct tonight, in case you forgot."

"Yes, the evening is young," Blackshot said. "You could still get in some cattle rustling or break into a few widows' houses before daybreak if you hurry. I'm sure your superiors would appreciate your initiative."

"My superiors, huh?" Merridew shot back. "I don't reckon I have to worry about them, now that I've snared you. They're gonna strike me a medal when this is all done."

"I can give you a suggestion of where to pin it."

"Go on, make your jokes; you're the one in a jam! I got the whole thing planned out nice and smooth."

"He's referring to *my* plan," Count Frederick interjected. "It starts with tonight, when the unfortunate Contessa Gandini was traveling to the home of her beloved husband-to-be when she was brutally attacked and kidnapped by a gang of ruthless bandits."

"They even killed her lady friend!" Captain Merridew crowed. "It's a terrible thing! Why, when the driver and his boy get back to town and spread the news around, it'll cause a frightful stir! It's a good think they can count on good ol' Captain Merridew to ride out and investigate the matter!"

"And that investigation will lead the Captain to the Circle K, a very large and very wealthy cattle outfit who just happens to be my neighbor," Count Frederick continued. "There he will discover the body of poor Contessa Gandini, raped and murdered by those bloodthirsty animals. As the Contessa's grieving betrothed, I will of course demand justice! Not only will the Circle K outfit pay for their crimes, but all of their land, cattle, and money will be seized by Captain Merridew."

Merridew smiled and drew a line in the air with his finger. "We'll split it all right down the middle; fifty-fifty."

"But enough chatter," Count Frederick said. He clapped his hands and two tough-looking men in white shirts and Mexican military breeches came into the room. Jabbing a finger toward Santuzza he told them, "Take the Contessa to my quarters."

Captain Merridew jumped to his feet as the men hustled Santuzza toward the staircase at the back of the room. "What d'ya think you're doing?" he scowled.

"Interrogate your spy, Captain," the Count replied, waving a hand toward Blackshot as he followed the men up the stairs. "Since this scheme is denying me the opportunity to marry the Contessa, I think it's only fair that I get a chance to sample what I'm giving up. Good night, gentlemen."

Chapter 6

The stables were large and neatly swept, and where Blackshot stood in the center of the room with his wrists tied to a thin post, the lone lantern that lit the room was almost directly overhead and its orange glow flickered across his broad bare shoulders and back. Captain Merridew paced to and fro in front of him, a confident sneer twisting his lips as he looked Blackshot up and down.

Two of the cavalry riders had accompanied them to the stables as well; one man, long and lean with a drooping mustache, stood with folded arms at the door, while the other man, a short, barrel-chested man with a shock of red hair, stood behind Blackshot. Like Blackshot, the red-headed soldier was stripped to the waist, and he carried a long braided horsewhip coiled loosely around one hand.

"Let's not play games with each other, boy," Captain Merridew said, running his hand across Blackshot's Colts, which lay on a bench beside him, "You know the spot you're in; these proceedings can be as easy or as painful as you make them."

"Then I'll make them painful," Blackshot hissed, his big hands gripping the post tight.

"You don't seem to get how important this is to me!" Merridew shot back. "I got one chance to get my hands on a fortune, and I ain't letting nobody spoil it for me; not you, and not Count Goldilocks! Y'know, that boy got clever and made himself up some insurance; got the dirt on me and set it up to go straight to the general if he dies sudden-like, so as I don't take his half of the loot. Damn fool hasn't thought about the fact that I don't need to kill him; I can just torture him 'til he hands it over!"

"Can you get a medal for that, too? I don't know how these army things work."

"Looks like you need something to help you see things my way." Merridew motioned to the red-headed soldier, who shook the whip loose and let the long tail crack against the floor, sending up a tuft of dirt and sawdust into the air.

"Wait! Wait!" Blackshot cried. "No need for that! I can tell you what I know!"

Merridew laughed. "That's more like it. Well, let's hear it, huh?"

"Okay, okay! Here's what I found out; this post here doesn't seem to be vital to the structure of the room." With a great lunge, Blackshot slammed his shoulder into the flimsy post, tearing it free from its moorings in a shower of splinters and dust. He drove forward and crashed into Captain Merridew, jamming the beam across his chest as they tumbled to the ground together.

The red-haired man ran toward them, brandishing the whip. As he raised the lash over his head to strike, Blackshot's boot shot out toward him and sunk the sharp spur on its heel into his groin. As he doubled over with a noiseless scream escaping his lips, Blackshot sprang up and speared his head into the soldier's jaw, knocking him off of his feet.

The other soldier was in the fray now, vaulting over his comrade as he tumbled to the ground. Blackshot swung the splintered beam around his body and caught the tall man just above his knees as he touched down. The wooden pole swept him off his feet and pitched him into the wall of a nearby stall, cracking the boards on impact. Blackshot jumped to his feet, straddling the still prone red-haired man and rammed the heel of his boot into the fallen man's throat with all his considerable might. The renegade soldier's hands pawed vainly at Blackshot's leg, but the pressure crushing his windpipe was unyielding, and soon the hands fell limp to the floor.

From the corner of his eye Blackshot saw that the tall soldier had scrambled out of the stall and was reaching for the whip that lay snarled at the dead man's feet, but before he could move to stop him Captain Merridew flung himself onto Blackshot's back and locked an arm around his neck.

"I'll kill you, you fucking bastard!" Merridew grunted as Blackshot tried to shake him free. "I told you I ain't letting you get in my way! I'll send you straight to hell!"

The other man had the horsewhip in hand now, and he lashed it across Blackshot's legs as he

struggled with Merridew, burning his thigh as the braided tail gashed his jeans. The whip darted forward for a second strike, but Blackshot spun away suddenly and the blow landed across Merridew's back, drawing a sprinkle of blood from his torn shirt.

Captain Merridew roared in pain, and Blackshot felt the grip on his neck slacken for an instant. Giving him no chance to recover, Blackshot knifed forward, catching Merridew under the arm with his shoulder, and slung him from his back onto the dirt with a heavy impact. Quickly he raised the beam in front of him to fend off another swipe of the whip, and as the rope tail bit into the wood and curled around it, Blackshot caught it and held it fast.

With a powerful jerk of the beam, Blackshot sent the tall man lurching toward him. When they were almost face to face, he brought the wooden beam swiftly forward to meet the man's momentum, crushing his nose flat to his face and sending teeth spewing from his lips. The rogue soldier reeled backward and dropped to his knees, blood soaking his mustache and running down his chin. Blackshot whipped the rope around the man's neck and pulled it tight against the shaft of the beam, dragging him up off of his knees and then off of his feet as he was lifted into the air by his throat. Clawing and thrashing his long legs, the soldier tried to free himself from the makeshift garrote, but to no avail.

Captain Merridew was just picking himself up from the ground when the falling corpse of his subordinate knocked him to the ground again. Shoving the lifeless body from him with a grunt, he staggered to his knees again and saw Blackshot standing before him, the sweat on his rippling muscles shining in the swaying lamplight, and his gray eyes as cold as ice, the splintered beam still gripped tightly in his strong hands.

"I told you I'd make it painful," Blackshot growled.

With a fierce thrust, he stabbed the jagged point of the beam into Merridew's gut, his sinewy arms forcing it deep into the badman's body. Captain Merridew could only manage a faint gasp as his blood coated the pitted wood that still plunged deeper into him with relentless force. Only when the broken point had burst red and glistening from Merridew's back did Blackshot release his grip and shake his hands free from the ropes. He put his boot to Merridew's jaw and pushed the dead man to the ground between the other bodies.

Blackshot retrieved his guns from the bench and slotted fresh cartridges from his belt into the chambers before returning them to their holsters. "It was a good plan to get the money," he said as he stepped over the bodies and made for the door. "Too bad you can't take it with you."

Chapter 7

At the door of the stable Blackshot stood and listened quietly for a moment but heard no sound that indicated that any of the other renegade cavalry men had heard Captain Merridew's demise. He stole silently out into the darkness and crept toward the house. The cool night air chilled the sweat on his bare torso, and when he thought of Santuzza in the hands of that piece of shit Count Frederick, the cold seemed to cut right through him. He knew he was outnumbered and caution was needed, but he also knew there wasn't a moment to spare, and he would take whatever risks he needed to rescue her as quickly as possible.

When Captain Merridew had taken him to the barn, they had used the back door of the house, and Blackshot guessed it would have remained unlocked. He made his way swiftly to the door and stopped again to listen. There was someone there. Blackshot recalled that the room beyond was a kitchen, and it was from there that he could hear sounds of movement. He eased the door open just enough to put one eye to the gap, and saw one of Frederick's guards standing with his back to him beside a long wooden table. A pouch of tobacco lay on the table beside a glass liquor bottle, and the man was busy rolling a cigarette.

Before the guard had a chance to put the freshly-fashioned cigarette to his lips, Blackshot had an arm clenched around his throat, and was dragging him to the ground. In his other hand was a knife taken from the counter by the door, and this he plunged into the man's back. Warm blood ran down Blackshot's arm as he twisted the blade deeper into his prey's struggling body; he could feel the man trying to cry out but his wind was cut off by the steely grip on his throat.

As the struggle began to abate, the guard's flailing foot caught the table leg, and sent the bottle crashing to the floor. Blackshot swore under his breath as he heard muffled laughter through the wall.

"What's the matter, boy? Can't hold your whiskey?" a man's voice called merrily. Boots sounded on the floorboards outside, approaching quickly.

Blackshot drew the knife from the guard's back and let the body roll limply to the floor. The door was thrown open and a tall cavalry man with a crooked nose walked in. He started violently at the sight of the man lying face down on the floor, his shirt stained crimson; too late he saw from the corner of his eye the bright red blade arcing toward him in Blackshot's bloody hand.

Blackshot ripped the blade through the soldier's jugular, sending a shower of blood cascading across his shirtfront, and with his other hand he grabbed a fistful of that bloody shirtfront and heaved the man through the back door into the night. In the faint moonlight the knife flashed again, and the man lay still.

"Hey, Nate! Bring some o' that whiskey if the dumb fuck ain't spilled it all!" The voice came through the kitchen door that was still swinging slightly to and fro.

Blackshot sprang stealthily back into the kitchen and stood poised behind the door, but there was no sound of footsteps.

"Hey, Nate! Bring some of the whiskey, okay?!" the voice called again.

Blackshot pushed the door open gently and looked out onto a short, dark hallway illuminated by the light of the great room beyond. He tiptoed to the end of the hall and peeked around the corner into the room. The remaining horsemen lounged in chairs pulled from around the room to form a loose circle. The last of the "bandits" sat among them with his wounded leg bandaged and propped on a stool, making five men in all.

"He's probably needlin' the shitbag a bit," the stocky soldier that sat closest to the hall said.

"Well, I need a pull of something!" the wounded soldier lamented, "This leg hurts like hell!"

Just then a thump rang out from the floor above, and the faint sound of cursing drifted through the floorboards. A short, dark-haired soldier that sat beside the wounded man laughed and sat back in his

chair. "She's got some fight in her, that one!" he said.

"Aw, that little prick ain't no kind of man," the stocky horseman retorted. "She should be glad it ain't me up there. I'd have knocked the fight out of that bitch right quick and fucked her ass real good by now."

The others laughed, but the wounded man wasn't interested. "Hey, Nate!" he shouted again. "Come back here!"

Blackshot stepped into the room, the two black Colts gripped in bloodstained hands. "Nate's not coming back," he snarled, "but I can send you where I sent him."

Chapter 8

Blackshot's first bullet sent the wounded soldier toppling backwards in his chair with his brains spilling from the back of his head. The time for stealth was over and Blackshot aimed to make quick work of these turncoats and find out for himself what kind of man Count Frederick was.

By the time the stocky soldier had gotten to his feet, Blackshot had already put two slugs in his chest, and he fell as quickly as he had risen. The dark-haired man had his rifle in his hand but a bullet tearing through his stomach sent it flying from his fingers as he stumbled backwards with blood spilling onto the floor in his wake.

As he collapsed to the ground, one of his fellows had managed to squeeze off a hasty shot in Blackshot's direction while diving behind a chair. The bullet dug into the rafter above his head, showering his bare shoulders with splinters and dust, but Blackshot paid it no mind. The Colts were still bucking in his hands and he saw the man's body jerk as red stains bloomed on his shirtfront.

The last man cut and ran for the door, but by the time he had reached it he was dead on his feet and stumbled out into the night, falling face down into the grass with the blood pumping from his half-severed neck pooling around his head.

As the echoes of the last shots dissipated in the hazy air, a faint sound of a board creaking under the weight of a boot just caught Blackshot's attention. He lunged forward an instant before a pistol cracked from the staircase, splintering the door post where he had stood a moment before. Rolling onto his back, he emptied both guns into the shadows at the top of the stairs. He heard a strangled cry, then the metallic clatter of a gun hitting the ground, and at last the man in the Mexican military breeches came tumbling down the stairs like a rag doll, his white shirt marred and bloody.

Blackshot did not even pause as he stepped over the body and sprinted up the stairs, thumbing shells into the hot chambers of his guns. A large oak door stood at the end of the hall which ran from the staircase, and he made straight for it and thrust it open with a heavy boot without breaking stride.

Count Frederick stood in the center of the large, lavishly appointed room; he was stripped to the waist and in one hand carried a riding crop. Blood ran from his cheek where Santuzza's nails had clawed his face. His other hand held a fistful of Santuzza's hair; she lay naked at his feet, her legs red from the bite of the riding crop and her lips split and bloodied, but her eyes blazing with defiance as she tried to shake free of Frederick's grip.

Count Frederick seemed transfixed at the sight of the savage creature that stood in the doorway, blood dripping from the hand that held the smoking Colt revolver, a savage gleam in the hard gray eyes. Then he shoved Santuzza toward Blackshot and stood back from her, holding up his hands.

"Look here, don't be hasty!" He pleaded. "We can all get very rich if we work together! She doesn't have to die; that was Merridew's idea! Listen, now that he's out of it we can handle this situation in a sensible way!"

"That's what I plan to do," Blackshot replied, as the Colt roared in his hand.

The bullet caught Count Frederick in the wrist, severing the hand that held the riding crop from his arm. He let out a shriek of pain and shock as blood spewed from the stump, but his voice was choked off as Blackshot's fingers closed around his throat.

"Time to say goodnight, sweet prince," Blackshot said as he dragged Count Frederick by his neck toward the wide bay window.

The count swung his remaining fist vainly at Blackshot's face, but the taller man's long arm prevented him. "Don't waste your time," Blackshot snarled, and struck a blow to the aristocrat's jaw that shattered it and sent blood and teeth spilling from his mouth.

Count Frederick's eyes rolled back in his head and his knees buckled beneath him; only the hand gripping his throat kept him upright. Blackshot's other hand took hold on the count's belt and hefted him up

off the ground; with every muscle in his powerful body straining, he heaved Count Frederick through the window and watched him plummet down onto the tall iron fence below. The sharp iron spikes punched through his gut and burst red and gleaming from his back as rivulets of blood streaked down the long bars. His body convulsed sharply then went limp and moved no more.

Blackshot turned from the window; Santuzza was still sitting on the floor, her large dark eyes staring at him from between jet black strands of unruly hair. Her full, ripe breasts rose and fell impressively atop her sweat-slicked ribs, and her bloodstained lips curved into a vicious smile.

"I knew you'd get him," she panted. "The whole time I knew you'd come and make him suffer, even though you had to fight them all."

"Are you okay?"

Santuzza tossed her hair dismissively. "Ha! I was not afraid of him! I can fight, too! Besides, I was waiting for you. You.... you were like a wild beast!"

Blackshot drew the sheet from the bed and wrapped it around her shoulders. "I was afraid he was hurting you," he said as he knelt beside her. "It got me pretty riled up."

"He was just a mouse, not a real beast," Santuzza sneered, shaking off the sheet, "not like you and I! You and I are wild animals!"

With a fire smoldering in her eyes, she wiped the blood from her lips and drew her fingers down her stomach, leaving crimson streaks across her tight belly. Slowly she leaned back and spread her long, firm legs wide on either side of Blackshot.

"Come on, let's be wild animals together," she purred.

Chapter 9

"You're a funny one," Blackshot said, running his hand across her cheek.

"I want you to fuck me. What's so funny about that?" Santuzza demanded. She swatted his hand away angrily. "Don't be gentle with me! I want you to be the wild beast again! Make me your next prey!"

Blackshot brought his hand up again, but this time he placed it on her chest and pushed her down onto her back. Then he stood over her and began to unbuckle his jeans, which were already growing too tight to bear. "It's a good thing for you I'm not a real cowboy," he said.

When his formidable girth sprang free, Santuzza moaned with anticipation. She dug her heels into the back of his legs insistently, desire burning in her eyes. Her hair was spread on the floor around her head like a lion's mane; her fingers ran feverishly through the patch of black hair between her thighs while her other hand tugged at Blackshot's pants leg.

He knelt down astride her and sunk his fingers into Santuzza's thick, creamy breasts, kneading them harshly as they bulged hard against his palms. He slid his thick shaft between the swollen mounds and pressed her flesh against his, feeling every undulation of her body as she strained against him.

Santuzza let out a gasp and craned her neck to reach his head with her tongue. She closed her lips around the tip of his cock and sucked hungrily as he fed his length into her mouth. Blackshot took a handful of Santuzza's hair and brought her head towards him, driving his hard shaft into her sultry throat as her lips urged him in deeper.

Blackshot could feel Santuzza's fingers digging into the flesh of his buttocks, demanding action, and he gladly acquiesced, thrusting his hips against her as he clenched her hair in both hands. A fire was kindling inside him, stoked hotter by each move of her searching tongue and lips. With a groan he jerked her head back and drew his pulsing shaft from her throat.

"I'm not finished with you yet," Blackshot hissed.

"Take me now!" Santuzza gasped. "Tear me in pieces!"

Blackshot lifted her up from the floor, sliding the head of his rigid cock slowly between her luscious breasts and down the hollow of her stomach until she stood on her feet and he was pressed against the soaking hair between her legs. Santuzza let out a yearning whimper as he ran his rod slowly along the lips of his pussy.

With a lusty grunt, Blackshot lifted her off the ground and carried her to the side of the room. Pinning her back to the wall, he entered her, driving his whole length deep into her hot core. Santuzza wailed in anguished passion as his girth stretched her, wrapping her taut legs around his hips to pull him in as hard and deep as she could.

Blackshot needed no encouragement in this regard, and thrust into her repeatedly with a ferocious vigor, his balls slapping into her supple ass as he pounded her like a jackhammer. Santuzza's ample tits jumped and bounced against his hard chest, and her hair flew in crisscross patterns across her sweaty face. He felt her body tighten against him before convulsing as a torrid orgasm tore through her.

Blackshot found his grip on Santuzza's hair again and pulled her down to the floor onto her hands and knees. Digging his fingers into her wet hips, he ground her body against his, plunging his shaft once more deep into the torrid heat of her loins. Again and again they collided in a merciless rhythm, her glistening ass wiggling and shaking with each impact.

Sweat dripped from Blackshot's nose onto Santuzza's arched back, and he could feel the fire building inside again, and this time it blazing too hot to quench. Santuzza's body contorted against his cock as she climaxed violently, driving him to the edge as well. Blackshot pulled his shaft from her reddened pussy and turned her by her hair until she faced him on her knees. His hips bucked uncontrollably and hot jets of cum exploded across Santuzza's face and breasts in long white streaks.

With a groan of pleasure, Santuzza slipped Blackshot's spent cock into her mouth and licked it clean. Then she drew it from her lips and smiled up at Blackshot.

“Okay, I'm ready to go back home now,” she said.

Chapter 10

The mayor of Bartonbridge was speechifying at full steam with all flags flying, and his ability to string meaningless flowery words together was enough to impress even Blackshot, only half listening as he was. Blackshot was, of course, the guest of honor, for having tirelessly defended the life and honor of the fair Contessa, who had cleverly asserted that she was too faint after last night's ordeal to attend the mayor's ceremony, and was spending the afternoon resting in the best room of the boarding house at the town's expense.

Blackshot was torn from his musings by the jab of an elbow in his ribs. Patience MacReady had sidled next to him, and leaned her head toward him to speak.

"Do you know what's just the worst?" she murmured softly.

"Do tell."

"Having an itch that you just can't scratch."

"That is the worst."

"I have one of those right now, and I just can't reach it. Would you be a dear and help me?"

"I am at your service," Blackshot replied. "Where is it exactly?"

Patience pressed a finger to her belly just below her navel. "It's right here, but on the inside," she purred, her big green eyes twinkling. "Do you think you can reach it?"

"I'd certainly be glad to try. Repeatedly, if necessary."

"My store is closed for the day, but if one were to come around after the old windbag runs out of steam and try the back door, one might find that it was unlocked."

"Then you may expect me there to scratch that itch and any others that you may develop between now and then."

With a mischievous smirk that wrinkled her freckled nose, Miss MacReady was gone from his side, and Blackshot returned to only partly ignoring the mayor's oration. It turned out to be good timing, as the speech was just concluding to the unenthusiastic applause of the small crowd. After the mayor was helped down from the barrel, the usual pleasantries and pufferies were showered on Blackshot as the townspeople dispersed.

Angus Terney, who had been pulling anxiously at his mustache while he waited for the mayor to finish speaking, now pulled him aside and the two of them exchanged a brief conversation in hushed tones. Once they had concluded, the mayor approached Blackshot again with Terney in tow.

"I do abhor the thought of taxing you further in the service of Bartonbridge," he said, "but it appears that a certain matter has come up in which we have no apparent recourse but—"

"Yes, what do you need?" Blackshot asked, having had his fill of rambling speeches for the day.

"It's the Contessa!" Angus Terney burst out excitedly. "I went to see how she was doing, and to tell her how the stagecoach would be here in the morning to take her back to the rail station, see? Well, she's doing just fine and all, but she says how she's frightened about staying here by herself when it gets dark, and no matter what I told her to make her feel better, she says she won't feel safe tonight unless Mister Blackshot were to stay right there in her room to stand guard over her!"

"We hate to impose, Mr. Blackshot," the mayor began.

"You may tell the Contessa that I will only too happy to protect her through the night," Blackshot replied.

The two men thanked him profusely and scurried off to carry the message to their VIP. Blackshot pushed the brim of his hat back on his head, and strolled casually down the alley beside the general store toward the back door. His job was complete, but it looked like he still had a busy day and night ahead of

him.

Thanks for reading another tale of Tom Blackshot! I hope you enjoyed it. Please visit KurtBarkerAuthor.com to see more!

Kurt