

‘A Boy Heads South’

by Cian O’Farrell

Cassidy looked around the room that had been his family’s home for nigh on seventy years; it had been his grandfather’s, who had helped to build New Trinidad after the catastrophe. It had then been his father’s, who had been the town sheriff for years before he was shot dead by some bastard called Russel Morgan. Why Morgan had shot his father no one knew, but Cassidy’s mother had died not long after leaving young Cassidy Griffen alone in the world at the age of eight. The only one who had cared for Cassidy was his father’s former deputy Mack Harrison. Mack had taught Cassidy everything he knew how to act around people, how to keep cool and most importantly how to shoot. Cassidy was eternally grateful for this of course but as he grew older he saw something in Mack he hadn’t seen before, whenever Mack looked at Cassidy there was always a brief look of regret in his face. Almost like Mack thought he had done Cass some great disservice or other.

Cass looked around the room coming out of his musings. Oh sure, life had been tough but Mack always made sure Cass could eat decently and that Cass could at least read and write, a luxury to most. Even as a relatively learned man, (a rare breed in the town), Cass knew he couldn’t stay; not many would look him in the eyes. Cass didn’t know whether it was out of shame for not helping or trying to assist him when he was young and alone, or if it was because they thought of him as a stubborn burden. Didn’t matter much as Cass put on his father’s old jacket and hat, getting his pack up on his back and slinging his shotgun over his shoulder. They could all go to hell for all Cass cared. Mack was the only person Cass liked in this god-forsaken town that his family has help build. But now even Mack was distant. He told Cass he was a young idiot for wanting to go after Russel Morgan, quoting philosophy to Cass telling him: *“When embarking on a journey of revenge first dig two graves.”* And so, whether out of spite or some unknown feeling, Cass did just that he went out to the boneyard of New Trinidad and dug two new graves marking them for Russel Morgan and leaving the other unknown.

Picking his pistols up off the desk and holstering them, Cass walked out of the room, closing the door behind him with one last look and a sigh. He locked the door, possibly for the last time in his life. Cass felt his emotions well up, maybe Mack was right. He was turning his back on his family’s

legacy, all the work they had put in to build New Trinidad, but New Trinidad wasn't where Cass belonged. He knew it deep down within him and so with a heavy heart, Cass turned his back, adjusting his hat on his head and fixing his pouch and holster-laden belt. Cass proceeded out into the street to where Mack stood a disapproving look on his face. *"I gotta do it Mack. I gotta find that son of a bitch and put him down for what he's done,"* Cass said, emotion still evident in his usually cool voice.

Mack looked at the ground, for once not meeting Cassidy's eyes.

"Cass... I know you think this is your duty to avenge your father and all that but, I... I just think your being stupid about it!"

Mack lifted his head, emotion clear on his face making him look both angry and sad at the same time. But there was another emotion present that Cass couldn't identify on his mentor's face.

"You don't know where the bastard is, he could have frozen his ass to death in Canada for all you know! You don't know what the world's like out there! And all you have is your guns and your wits. Those ain't good odds Cassidy, and I couldn't live with myself if you died because I let you go chasing a ghost!" Mack finished, practically spitting the last words.

Cass wanted to scream, shout, rage and roar, tell Mack how he was wrong and how he didn't have a clue. But deep down, Cass knew he was right but he still had to try.

"I get what you're saying Mack, really I do but I have to at least try, If I don't Mack I won't be able to live with myself." Cass replied, his cool and cold expression naturally returning as he continued. *"There's a caravan leaving, heading south towards Santa Fae. They got horses and need guns. I already signed up so you're not stopping me."*

Cass once more stopped and then hugged him, embracing his mentor possibly for the last time. He embraced Cass silently, not saying anything. Cass broke the hug as Mack nodded at him in understanding. *"Good luck Cassidy."* He said as Cass turned and walked off towards the edge of town, off to face destiny head on.