

# Road to Forget

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An unfinished western short story I had to write for a class. A mysterious cowboy, a wannabe cowgirl from Dixie, and an old drunkard get thrown into a journey together in which they must tolerate and depend on each other in order to survive.



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The desert passed by the windows to the rhythm of the train clicking away. Noises of children and people conversing filled the train cart keeping Jonathan awake and quite alert on his bed. He laid on one of the upper beds of the train above most of the other people keeping himself quiet. Most kept their distance from him; he wore tattered clothes, a scarf wrapped around his mouth, and a black wide rimmed hat that covered his head down to his brow. People would stare at him before running away from his intimidating empty stare.

With each clink of the railroad track he would get pulled into sleep and quickly woken up again by the constant noise that filled the train. Soon he started hearing new noises though: footsteps across the top of the carts, they were beginning to break. The train would arrive in Tucson fairly soon, though not soon enough for him. His destination was Yuma, but he didn't have money for Yuma, and taking a horse from Tucson to Yuma would be longer, but much cheaper. He closed his eyes with the sounds of the train seeming to become much quieter.

â Hey!â

Jonathan suddenly awoke. He had fallen asleep for what seemed like only a few seconds, but it had been much longer. A girl of about twenty hung over him with her hair dangling just above his face. He silently stared at the girl tiredly, then suddenly leapt up; the train was almost at a complete stop. Dust swirled up in the air around the train as people ran by. He grabbed his bag lying next to him and slung the strap over his shoulders and slipped down from his bed.

â Are you a cowboy?â the new girl blurted out to him.

She acted like a child, asking questions as if the whole train wanted to know the answer. Jonathan stared at the girl for several moments and shook his head.

â Are yer sure?â

He nodded again.

â Can ya talk?â she asked puzzled.

He shook his head.

â Why not?â

He shook his head again.

â Thatâ s not an answer! Tell m- oh, yeah, you canâ t,â she chuckled a little at her own stupidity; Jonathan just gave her an irritated stare in response.

A slight jerk indicated the train had stopped and Jonathan quickly made his way out of the train cart. Pushing through a horde of people, Jonathan made it out of the train cart and into the dry, open desert. Rushing past the train station he was stopped once again by the girl.

â Hey, I never introduced myself,â she ran up to him. â Iâ m Elizabeth Davis, pleased to meet you.â

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Now that he actually listened to her, he noticed a twang in her voice, and not a very subtle one. Her clothes were odd for a woman; she dressed herself like a cowboy which drew many eyes to her in confusion, though she could pull off looking like a guy with her broad shoulders and relatively flat body. Looking at her face Jonathan could see she was smiling back at him anticipating some sort of response. He flipped the strap to his holster and began to pull out his gun. Elizabeth seemed worried as to why he was pulling out his gun at first, but he flipped the gun around in his hand and grabbed it by the barrel. Elizabeth looked over at the grip of the gun. Engraved on the grip in cursive was "Jonathan" in silver. He spun the gun back around and holstered it quickly moving into the town of Tucson, Elizabeth following quickly behind.

"Woah now, wait up!" Elizabeth exclaimed. "Don't ya wanna know why I'm all the way out here all by my lonesome self?"

Jonathan shot her a glare that said "no".

"Well, ya see, I grew up east of here in Alabama. A quaint little town wher my family had a whole lot of money. It was boring, way to boring for a gal like me! So I headed out west with all the money I could bring, and here I am. Interestin' huh?" Elizabeth finished with a grin.

Jonathan continued forward without looking at the girl.

"Yer no fun, but ya sure are a mysterious one!"

The town had a few people walking down the road, horses and carriages kicking up dust as they passed by, and several dogs running or limping about. Towards the far end of town was the town hall and across from it was the sheriff's office. Jonathan spotted a saloon just to the left of him and headed straight towards it. Though he wasn't a drinker much himself, he enjoyed something strong once in a while, maybe something stronger if this girl follows him around any longer. Walking in the bar the smell of nostalgia crept its way into his nose, a very odd feeling for him for he hadn't had good memories of the past for quite some time.

"Wow, it sure smells bad in here," Elizabeth unnecessarily commented. "Like something died, then something else came along and ate it and then it died."

He didn't need Elizabeth's opinion on the smell. He knew how it smelled, and he didn't need her telling him how it smelled. Continuing ahead of Elizabeth and past the empty tables he went up to the bar where the bartender stood and an older man sitting on a bar stool. The bartender was facing away from the bar cleaning something with a cloth. Jonathan pounded the counter to get his attention.

"Oh, hi there, almost forget the train had just pulled up," the bartender turned around to reveal a chubby man with a broad nose and rosy cheeks. Though he had an intimidating body his face looked like something that should be on an advertisement. He started setting down cups as Jonathan took a seat on a stool near to the older man and Elizabeth joined him. The bartender looked uncomfortably at the girl not quite sure what exactly she was, and then looked back at Jonathan trying to seek some familiarity. People began pouring through the saloon's door after finding their way from the train to here and the bartender suddenly had a rushed look on his face.

"So, what'll ya be havin'?" he asked Jonathan. Jonathan motioned his hand to a drink on the wall. The bartender puzzled, pointed to the drink as well, almost imitating Jonathan's muteness while confirming his drink. The bartender poured a glass sliding it to Jonathan and quickly began tending to the other customers, while almost seeming to ignore Elizabeth.

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“That jerk! Did ya see that? He just skipped right over me as if I weren’t even here,” she complained to Jonathan who was too busy focusing on staring into his own drink. “Hey! Ar ya listenin’ to me?” Jonathan turned away, lowering his scarf and taking a drink, then turned back. It was obvious Jonathan wasn’t going to pay any attention to her, so she slumped over and put her head on the bar counter disappointingly.

“You sure are making a racket over there!” the old man exclaimed hardily who was sitting just to the right of Jonathan.

“Excuse me?” the girl asked slightly offended.

The old man laughed again. “No need to get all worked up!”

“You’re drunk arnchya?” the girl asked.

He laughed a little before taking another drink of what smelled like whiskey. The man didn’t amuse Jonathan; he slightly annoyed him, although not to the extent of the girl. Jonathan took another swift sip of his drink and gave a slight sigh, shaking his head. After here he would be traveling west to Yuma he thought. He’d rent a horse out from here and have to ride it back; if he would be coming back. The ice in his drink shifted and disturbed his thinking, and in so he looked up at the man next to him staring at him with an inquisitive look. The old man stared blankly and confused at Jonathan.

“Name’s Robert, Robert Hayle, most people call me Bob though,” he answered as if he knew exactly what Jonathan was thinking.

Bob was dressed in fairly old clothes, with a leather jacket, tan shirt, jeans with chaps and a white cowboy hat that had dulled and become more of a dusty color. He had a white beard that went around his face but no visible hair under his hat. Holstered on his side was a revolver but judging from the strap around his shoulders he also carried a rifle.

It was obvious that the man was a cowboy, or at least used to be one. He had the money to drink at least. Jonathan rose up his drink to acknowledge his introduction and took a sip, and Bob drank a large portion of his.

“My name’s Elizabeth,” Elizabeth started, Jonathan tuned out whatever else she had to say while staring into his drink thoughtfully.

The bartender passed by and Jonathan knocked on the counter.

“Hm? Can I help ya with something?” the bartender asked, he nodded.

Jonathan tried to get across where he could rent some horses, and he was able to find out there was a stable just past the sheriff’s station. Yuma was also quite a ways away apparently the bartender explained, and recommended a store down the road for supplies. Jonathan thanked him with a nod, placed his money on the counter for the drink plus tip, and started out the door. Elizabeth quickly followed along with him, continuing to get on his nerves.

Looking around town a familiar face rode past him on a horse. Jonathan glared at him, he could feel all the negative emotions in him boil up into an uncontrollable anger, and soon the man on the horse realized who he was staring at.

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“You’re dead. We killed you!” the man exclaimed while he quickly rode down the road to make some distance between him and Jonathan.

Elizabeth looked at the strange man puzzled, then back at Jonathan.

“What’s goin’ on?” she asked.

Jonathan gave no reply for he was completely focused on the man. He remembered him, though he wasn’t of any significant importance himself but the people he was apart of were. Bob also made his way out of the saloon slinging his rifle over his shoulder, and then paused for a moment looking at the situation. Jonathan made his way out into the road to align himself with the man and the two glared at each other.

“This don’t look good,” Bob said still drunk.

“Iâd tell ya to say something, but I know ya canâ t,” the man yelled across the road trying to hide his nervousness. “We took your tongue. It was your payment, to make you suffer and die. Apparently only part of the job got done. The MacLennan family always gets a job done.”

Jonathan grabbed onto the grip of his gun, as did his assailant. Elizabeth looked at both of them with worry and excitement on her face while Bob drunkenly stared off at Jonathanâ s assailant already knowing what was going to happen. It happened so fast, but everything seemed to go into slow motion. Both men pulled out their guns and fired there first shot; both missed. The manâ s horse bucked as he ran across the road continuing to fire his gun and Jonathan did the same. Jonathan ended up behind a building across from the saloon with the man on the same side as him two buildings down. A rifle shot suddenly rang out and Jonathan looked over to see Bob kneeleing behind the edge of the building cocking his rifle with Elizabeth covering her ears just beside him. He would have yelled for him to stop, but of course he couldnâ t, so he would have to deal with some help. Looking around the corner he could see where the man was hidden. He suddenly popped out and fired off a few shots at Jonathan, causing him to retreat to cover once again. There were two shots left in his gun, one left in the assailants, or was he out? Jonathan quickly thought to himself and then looked over to Bob and gave a nod, who then nodded back. Bob started firing off more shots as Jonathan ran past the building he was taking cover behind and made it to the next building.

Jonathan was close now; he could hear the last bullet loaded into the manâ s gun. The air was stale now, even the wind was gone. He could feel the stillness restraining him, anytime now he felt like he would burst. Everything was quiet, nobody moved; Jonathan almost couldnâ t handle it anymore. He jumped from behind the building and ran down the side towards the man, who jumped out and began shooting. Bullets flew past him but Jonathan couldnâ t care, for he felt nothing but the anger consuming him as he rose his gun up and took a shot. The bullet tore its way through the manâ s chest and he stumbled backwards and onto the ground. Blood came up through his shirt and his mouth and Jonathan could see that he was still alive, but he might as well be dead. He knelt beside the man and looked at his face and the man looked back into his eyes. Clearly the man could see what Jonathan thought: Iâ m coming for all of you, and you will all suffer as I have.

With fear in his eyes the man became still, and then his limbs became limp as the last bit of life left him. Jonathan adjusted his hat, emptied the shells from his gun, and turned towards the saloon and started back. Bob cocked is gun once more and stood up calmly looking at Jonathan while Elizabeth seemed quite excited about what had just happened.

“Who was that man? Friend of yurs?” Bob asked sarcastically. “I just want to know, is there more of these guys?”

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Jonathan gave a nod in response.

“Well shit, ain’t that fun for you? Iâm a bit tired of sitting around this dustbowl all day, maybe I could tag along with you, haven’t had a good shootout in a while.”

Jonathan didn’t want to get other people involved, but Bob would be of valuable help. It was odd though that he would want to come along so willingly without even really knowing Jonathan. There was no way he could really communicate with them though. Elizabeth could obviously read so he could write while she read, and he presumed Bob probably couldn’t read. Before he could indicate any response, Elizabeth opened her mouth once again to his dismay.

“Woah! Did you see that guy? He just rode right on up and you two had one of those shootouts. Bullets were going everywhere and I couldn’t hear anything cause Bob’s gun was all *boom boom!* That was amazing!” she went on in an amazed voice like a child who had seen a steamboat for the first time.

Jonathan tuned out Elizabeth and returned his attention to Bob, nodding his head indicating he had accepted his offer. Bob nodded in response and strapped his rifle back onto his back.

“So, where’re we headed?” he asked.

Jonathan pointed westward and then flapped his hand to indicate a long distance.

“Straight west? All the way to the Colorado?”

Jonathan nodded.

“Yuma, Iâm guessin’?”

He nodded again.

After some time of getting introductions across Bob showed them to a stable where he kept his horse and where Jonathan could rent one. He refused to have Elizabeth ride with him; she was like a clingy, talkative child that would drive him insane if he were locked in a room with her for ten minutes. So, Elizabeth rode with Bob and they headed out west. It had been too long since he had seen the MacLennan family, last time they had cut off his tongue and thrown him into the desert drugged up on some hallucinogen. They had owned the ranch that he was working, but he couldn’t work it anymore, and for good reasons. Jonathan pulled his scarf as he thought about his past and rode westward with Elizabeth and Bob to Yuma.

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