

WESTERN TRUE CRIME

JOAQUIN MURIETA...

THE FABLED KILLER - CABALLERO OF CALIFORNIA



CALIFORNIA IN 1849 WAS A HODGEPODGE OF PEOPLE ALL BROUGHT HERE BY THE LURE OF GOLD. THERE WAS LITTLE LAW AND NO ORDER. TREMENDOUS JEALOUSIES AND RIVALRIES DEVELOPED. CALIFORNIA HAD BEEN NEWLY-ACQUIRED FROM MEXICO, AND THE MEXICAN MINERS MISTREATED THE MEXICANS, DROVE THEM OFF THEIR CLAIMS AND LOOTED THEIR PROPERTY.

AMONG THE ILL-TREATED WAS YOUNG JOAQUIN MURIETA, 27, WHO HAD COME UP FROM OLD MEXICO WITH HIS SWEETHEART, ROSITA FELIX. AT FIRST FOR VENGEANCE, AND THEN FOR THE SHEER LUST OF KILLING, HE GATHERED ABOUT HIM A BAND OF EIGHTY RIDERS, AS BLOOD THIRSTY AS ANY THE OLD WEST HAD EVER SEEN, WHO LOOTED AND MURDERED THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF CALIFORNIA, SOON THE NAME OF MURIETA STRUCK FEAR IN THE HEARTS OF EVERYONE.

AT LAST, I AM FINISHED, AND MY WORK NOT YET DONE. ALAS, IT MAKES ME SAD. BUT VENGEANCE HAS BEEN MINE.

NOW THAT JOAQUIN MURIETA IS FINISHED, PERHAPS THERE WILL BE LAW AND ORDER IN CALIFORNIA.

WHEN WE GET BACK TO LOS-ANGELES, I'LL COLLECT MY SHARE OF THE REWARD-MONEY AND BLOW IT IN. WHAT A PARTY THAT WILL BE!



AND THIS KNIFE I GIVE YOU FOR A SOUVENIR, SENIOR, WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF JACK THREE-FINGERS, WHO IS AN ARTIST WITH THE KNIFE.

IF WE ONLY HAD THE REST OF THE BAND HERE, WE WOULD MOW YOU GRINGO RATS DOWN WITHOUT PITY.

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AT THE AGE OF 27, JOAQUIN SET OUT TO SEEK HIS FORTUNE...



AND FORTUNE DID SMILE ON HIM...



BUT THERE WERE MINERS IN THE CAMP WHO HAD OTHER IDEAS

AIN'T IT JUST LIKE A MEXICAN TO FIND A CLAIM LIKE THAT WHILE WE WORK OUR HEADS OFF AND GET NOTHING TO SHOW FOR IT. I SAY HE HAS NO RIGHT TO THAT CLAIM WE OUGHT TO RUN HIM OUT OF THE CAMP. HOW DO YOU FELLERS FEEL ABOUT IT?



AND AFTER THE LIQUOR HAD DONE ITS WORK...

BURN DOWN THE SHACK, I SAY AND RUN HIM OUT OF THE CAMP. WE DON'T WANT HIS KIND AROUND HERE.

PLEASE DO NOT DESTROY OUR HOME. WE ARE HONEST PEOPLE, WE HAVE DONE NOTHING WRONG



HA, YOU WON'T LOOK SO PRETTY NOW, DARN YOU. I TOLD YOU TO LEAVE THE MEN ALONE, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO INTERFERE. WELL JUST GIVE YOU A LITTLE LESSON, WON'T WE, BOYS? WE'RE RUNNING THIS CAMP.



WHEN JOAQUIN RETURNED...



A WEEK LATER WHEN JOAQUIN CAME IN TO TOWN FOR SUPPLIES

HEY, YOU! WE WARNED YOU TO GET OUT OF TOWN, DIDN'T WE? AND WHERE DID YOU GET THAT HORSE? HUH? I THINK THIS NEEDS LOOKING INTO.



LOOKS TO ME LIKE THE HORSE THAT WAS STOLEN FROM JIM LAST WEEK.



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AT HIS BROTHER'S RANCH...

SURE, IT IS MY HORSE. WHEN YOU BURN THE HOUSE OF MY BROTHER, JOAQUIN HE COMES HERE TO LIVE WITH ME.



SO, FIRST YOU STEAL A HORSE, AND NOW YOU THREATEN US. THE NERVE OF YOU MEXICANS. HOW ABOUT WE TEACH THEM A REAL LESSON, FELLERS, ONE THEY WON'T FORGET IT'S ABOUT TIME WE HAD A LITTLE NECKTIE PARTY JOAQUIN CAN WATCH, IT'LL DO HIM GOOD.



AND IF YOU DON'T TAKE OUR ADVICE THIS TIME, YOUNG FELLER, AND CLEAR OUT OF THE COUNTRY, WE'LL SEE THAT YOU GET A DOSE OF THE SAME. BETTER LISTEN TO THE BOYS AND GO ON HOME.



THESE TWENTY LASHES ARE TO REMIND YOU THAT WE MEAN WHAT WE SAY

WE DON'T WANT ANY MEXICANS TO HORN IN ON ANY OF THIS CALIFORNIA GOLD. THIS WILL BE A LESSON NOT ONLY TO YOU BUT TO ALL THE REST OF YOUR KIND



AND WHEN THEY LEFT...

I SWEAR BY MY DEAD BROTHER THAT I WILL AVENGE HIM BY KILLING EVERYONE OF THOSE WHO TOOK PART IN HIS HANGING. I SWEAR I WILL KILL A GRINGO FOR EVERYONE OF THE TWENTY LASHES ON MY BACK



MURIETA KEPT HIS WORD. HE SOUGHT OUT EVERY MAN WHO TOOK PART IN THE LYNCHING AND IT COST THAT MAN HIS LIFE. HE WAS BRILLIANT IN HIS DISGUISES AND SHOWED UP HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE, STRIKING TERROR INTO THE HEARTS OF HIS ENEMIES, UNTIL HIS NAME BECAME A HOUSEHOLD WORD



AT THE MINING CAMP OF MOKELUME HILLS...

THIS IS YOUR LAST HAND. YOU ARE ONE OF THOSE WHO HELPED TO HANG MY BROTHER, AND ONE OF THOSE I PROMISED TO KILL, NOW YOUR TIME HAS COME.



THAT MAKES TWO O MY BROTHER. I AM INDEED AVENGING YOU. AND I SHALL NOT STOP UNTIL EVERYONE OF THOSE WHO MURDERED YOU LIES IN HIS GRAVE



ANOTHER TIME, IN MARIPOSA...

BRING ME A DRINK, SOMEONE. HEY YOU, BARTENDER, WHY DO YOU KEEP DON IGNACIO WAITING? I HAVE TRAVELLED FAR AND AM THIRSTY



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I KNOW YOU. AND I HAVE KNOWN THAT YOU CAME HERE TO ESCAPE ME BUT NO ONE CAN HIDE FROM MY VENGEANCE. YOU MUST PAY WITH YOUR LIFE FOR WHAT YOU DID TO ME AND MY BROTHER



HELP ME, SOMEBODY! IT'S JOAQUIN, THE BANDIT. HE WANTS TO KILL ME.

SHOOT, YOU FOOLS. I LEAD A CHARMED LIFE, AND YOU CANNOT HARM ME NOR CAN YOU STOP ME IN PURSUIT OF MY VENGEANCE. NOW I AM ON MY WAY AND NO MAN CAN STOP ME



ONE DAY, AT A FIESTA IN SAN JOSE... WHY DO YOU MEN QUARREL, WHEN THIS IS AN OCCASION FOR REJOICING? PUT THOSE KNIVES AWAY. HELP SOMEBODY! HE WILL KILL HIM



NOBODY CAN CALL RAMON A LIAR AND GET AWAY WITH IT. MY HONOR IS AT STAKE

I'LL SOON FIND OUT WHO STARTED THIS DISTURBANCE. IN THE MEANTIME I'M GOING TO CART EVERY ONE OF YOU OFF TO JAIL. WHO STARTED ALL THIS COMMOTION?



AND IN COURT THE NEXT DAY..

I FINE YOU EACH THE SUM OF TWELVE DOLLARS FOR BREAKING THE PEACE



YOUR HONOR, I DID NOTHING, HOWEVER, I WILL PAY THE FINE BUT I HAVE NO MONEY WITH ME. IF YOU WILL PERMIT THIS DEPUTY SHERIFF TO ACCOMPANY ME TO MY HOUSE, I WILL GLADLY PAY HIM THE MONEY.



ALL RIGHT, BUT HURRY BACK WITH THE MONEY

SAY, YOUR FACE LOOKS SORT OF FAMILIAR TO ME HAVE I SEEN YOU BEFORE?



YES. YOU ARE NOW DEPUTY-SHERIFF CLARK, A MAN WHO CARRIES OUT LAW. BUT ONCE YOU WERE A MINER WHO HELPED HANG MY BROTHER WHO DID NOTHING BUT DISPLEASE YOU. THEREFORE YOU MUST DIE

TAKE THAT, YOU MURDERER! I PROMISED I WOULD PAY EVERY ONE OF YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID THAT DAY AND YOU ARE ONE OF THE LAST TO PAY THE PENALTY WITH YOUR LIFE



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THIS TIME JOAQUIN MURIETA HAD GONE TOO FAR. THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE COMMISSIONED HARRY LOVE OF SAN FRANCISCO, AN OLD FRONTIERSMAN, SCOUT AND FIGHTER, TO ORGANIZE THE CALIFORNIA RANGERS AND CAPTURE MURIETA. HE HAD TWENTY PICKED MEN WITH HIM WHEN HE SET OUT.



WE'LL TURN EAST HERE TO THE FOOTHILLS AND COVER EVERY INCH OF THE TRAILS. THEY MUST BE SOMEWHERE IN THIS WILD UNCHARTED COUNTRY, AND ALL WE NEED IS A SINGLE CLUE.



ON JULY THE 22 ND ONE OF THE SCOUTING RANGERS RODE HASTILY INTO CAMP.

BOSS, WE WERE RIDING ALONG THE HIGH WALL OVER ONE OF THOSE UNCHARTED CANYON TO THE SOUTH WHEN WE SAW THE SMOKE OF A NUMBER OF CAMP FIRES. I RODE BACK TO GIVE YOU THE NEWS THE OTHERS ARE RECONNOITERING



AND ON THE FOLLOWING DAY...

THERE ARE FIFTEEN MEN IN THAT CAMP. WE HAVE TWENTY. BUT I INTEND TO TAKE MURIETA ALIVE IF I CAN. YOU MEN REMAIN HERE IN AMBUSH, UNTIL THE SHOOTING STARTS. I'M GOING IN THERE ALONE.



AND TO THE AMAZEMENT OF THE BANDITS...

WHICH ONE OF YOU IS THE LEADER? I WANT TO TALK WITH HIM.

YOU MAY SPEAK WITH ME. I AM CHIEF HERE. TELL ME WHAT YOUR BUSINESS IS.



GET AWAY FROM THAT SADDLE. YOU'RE ALL COVERED, EVERY MAN OF YOU. I HAVE BUT TO GIVE THE WORD AND THEY'LL DROP YOU IN YOUR TRACKS, NO NONSENSE, NOW I HAVE COME FOR YOU, MURIETA. YOUR BANDIT DAYS ARE OVER.



YOU MEN THERE, COME UP ON THE OTHER SIDE. LIEUTENANT, GO AFTER THAT JACK THREE-FINGERS, HE'S A SLIPPERY ONE. I'M TAKING ON MURIETA MYSELF.



HE WON'T GO VERY FAR. I'VE GOT MY MEN STATIONED ON THE OTHER END OF THE TRAIL. IT'S HIS END EITHER WAY.



I'M FINISHED. THIS IS THE END OF MURIETA AND ALL HIS PLANS FOR THE CALIFORNIA EMPIRE. COULD HAVE DONE IT IF THESE GRINGOS HAD NOT COME FOR ME. WELL, I WILL DIE LIKE I HAVE LIVED. NO MAN WILL TAKE ME ALIVE. AND I HAVE HAD MY VENGEANCE ON THOSE WHO WOULD DESTROY ME. ADIOS MY FRIENDS...



SO DIED JOAQUIN MURIETA, THE FABLED BANDIT OF CALIFORNIA



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WERE JOAQUIN'S MEN, HAND OVER THE GOLD AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT. YOU KNOW WE MEAN BUSINESS. CUT OUT THE BAGS OF GOLD DUST AND THROW THEM OVER HERE OR WE'LL FILL YOU FULL OF HOLES.



I WON'T GIVE UP MY HARD-EARNED GOLD WITHOUT A FIGHT. NO, SIR. IF YOU RATS WANT THE GOLD DUST, COME AND GET IT. AND GET SOME OF THE LEAD FROM OUR SIXES TOO. LEAD ISN'T AS VALUABLE AS GOLD, WE CAN AFFORD TO GIVE IT AWAY.



ONE OF THEM GOT AWAY HURRY, JOE. YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO DO. AND THE REST OF YOU GET BUSY AND COLLECT THE GOLD. WE'VE GOT TO HIT THE TRAIL. I'M TAKING NO CHANCES. WE'LL FOLLOW JOAQUIN'S PLAN. HE'S SHREWD AS A COYOTE.



AND WHEN THE MINOR WHO ESCAPED INFORMED THE MINING CAMP.

GET YOUR HORSES AND RIDE OUT QUICK. IT'S JOAQUIN'S GANG, AND THEY'VE KILLED ALL THE OTHER MINERS ON THE TRAIL. LET'S GO. THIS IS ONE CHANCE TO ROUND THEM UP ONCE AND FOR ALL, BEFORE THEY SLAUGHTER US ALL.



THERE GO OUR HORSES! THE BANDITS GOT HERE FIRST AND RAN OUR HORSES OFF THAT'S ADDING INSULT TO INJURY IT MUST BE SOME MORE OF JOAQUIN'S DIRTY WORK. HE'S A SMART ONE ALL RIGHT.



JOAQUIN MURIETA NOW FELT THAT HE WAS READY FOR HIS GRANDIOSE SCHEME.

"NOTICE TO ALL GRINGOS. I, JOAQUIN MURIETA, GIVE NOTICE THAT I WILL DRIVE ALL GRINGOS OUT OF CALIFORNIA. I WANT YOU TO PACK UP AND GO. TAKE HEED.



IN MARCH OF 1853...

TOMORROW WE CLEAN OUT RICH GULCH IN THE SAN JOAQUIN FOOTHILLS. THERE ARE TWENTY-FIVE MINERS THERE AND MUCH GOLD. I WILL PROVE TO THE GRINGOS THAT I MEAN WHAT I SAY.



IT'S JOAQUIN AND HIS MURDERERS! HE'S BEEN WIPING OUT OUR CAMPS. GET YOUR GUNS AND MAKE A STAND. THEY WILL KILL YOU ANYHOW AND IT IS BETTER TO DIE FIGHTING WITH A GUN IN YOUR HAND.



THE ORDERS ARE TO KILL EVERY ONE OF THESE MISERABLE MINERS. WE'LL WIPE OUT THEIR CAMP AND BURN DOWN WHAT IS LEFT. JOAQUIN MURIETA WILL YET BE MASTER OF ALL CALIFORNIA.



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AND WHEN GENERAL BEANS GUARD HAD BEEN ORGANIZED

WE'LL RIDE OUT NORTH, AND THE OTHER COMPANY WILL HEAD SOUTH. WE'LL COVER EVERY FOOT OF TERRITORY IN THESE PARTS, AND THERE WON'T BE MUCH CHANCE OF JOAQUIN MURIETA SLIPPING THROUGH OUR LINES



BUT JOAQUIN AND HIS COMPANIONS WERE INTERESTED IN THE PROCEEDINGS..

WHY DON'T WE ATTACK THEM NOW, ONE COMPANY AT A TIME?

NO, I'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA. ALWAYS YOU TALK OF ATTACK. SOMETIMES IF YOU USE YOUR HEAD YOU MAKE A BRILLIANT STROKE WITHOUT ATTACK. YOU MEN FOLLOW ME. WE WILL KEEP IN THEIR SHADOW AND WAIT FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO EMPTY THIS BAG OF WIND



THE COUNTRY FLATTENS OUT AROUND HERE. WE'LL SCATTER AND COVER THE GROUND MORE THOROUGHLY. GIVE THE SIGNAL IF YOU FIND ANY SIGN OF THE BANDITS AND WE'LL CLOSE IN.



THROW HIM FROM HIS HORSE AND THEN JACK WILL KNOW HOW TO KEEP HIM QUIET



YES, THE KNIFE MAKES NO NOISE. AND THEN WHEN WE ARE READY TO LEAVE, YOU GIVE HIM THE BULLETS THROUGH THE HEAD. THIS IS ONE GENERAL WHO WILL NOT SEE MUCH ACTION ANYMORE

AND WHEN THE GUARDS REACHED THE END OF THE TRAIL..

WHERE'S GENERAL BEAN?

I DON'T KNOW. I THOUGHT HE WAS BACK THERE WITH YOU. WE'LL HAVE TO RIDE BACK AND SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM. HE MAY HAVE MET WITH AN ACCIDENT



A RIATA AROUND HIS THROAT, A KNIFE IN HIS HEART AND THREE BULLETS IN HIS HEAD. BOYS, I'LL GIVE YOU THREE GUESSES AS TO WHO MIGHT HAVE DONE THE JOB. FOR ME, I'M THROUGH WARRING WITH MURIETA. I'VE GOT TOO MUCH ATTACHMENT TO MY SKIN



DETACHMENTS UNDER JOAQUIN'S LIEUTENANTS COVERED THE STATE NORTH TO SOUTH, FROM THE GOLD HILLS TO SAN DIEGO AND EVEN ON TO SONORA IN OLD MEXICO. HIS MEN WERE MOUNTED ON THE SWIFTEST HORSES THEY COULD STEAL. THEY KNEW ALL THE UN-TRAVELLED BYWAYS AND HAD SPIES EVERYWHERE. JOAQUIN WAS EXTREMELY CLEVER IN HIS OPERATIONS



WHEN A GROUP OF MINERS RETURNED WITH GOLD DUST FROM THEIR CLAIMS

BOY, AM I GOING TO WHOOP IT UP WHEN I GET INTO TOWN. I'VE BEEN OUT HERE IN THE HILLS FOR FOUR MONTHS NOW, AND I'M BRINGING OUT ENOUGH GOLD DUST TO KEEP ME FOR A WHILE



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WHILE BACK IN THE MINERS' CAMP.

HE'S NO MAN, THAT JOAQUIN. HE MUST BE THE DEVIL IN DISGUISE. I SHOT AT HIM, BUT THE BULLET WENT RIGHT ON THROUGH HIM, I SWEAR IT. IT AIN'T NATURAL. NEXT TIME I MEET HIM I'LL USE A SILVER BULLET.



MANY A SHERIFF SOUGHT HIM OUT FOR THE REWARD MONEY. AMONG THEM WAS A DEPUTY-SHERIFF WILSON OF SANTA BARBARA.

HEY, WILSON! I JUST HEARD THAT MURIETA IS RANGING JUST SOUTH OF LOS ANGELES. ONE OF OUR BOYS SAW HIM.



I'LL SCARE UP A POSSE IN LOS ANGELES AND GO AFTER JOAQUIN. WHAT I COULDN'T DO WITH THAT TEN GRAND REWARD MONEY. I HOPE I DON'T HAVE TO SPLIT IT TOO MANY WAYS.



IN THE OLD PLAZA OF LOS ANGELES

BOYS, I NEED A POSSE TO GO AFTER MURIETA. THIS TIME WE'VE GOT A GOOD CHANCE TO CAPTURE HIM. ANY OF YOU MEN INTERESTED?



I DON'T WANT ANY PART OF THAT BANDIT. THEY SAY HE'S POISON. I'M KIND OF YOUNG YET TO DIE.

I WOULD LIKE TO GO WITH YOU SENOR. WILL YOU TAKE ME ALONG ON THIS HUNT FOR JOAQUIN? YOU REALLY SHOULD, BECAUSE, YOU SEE, I AM JOAQUIN, HIMSELF.



I DO NOT LIE, SENOR. I NEVER LIE. I AM INDEED THAT JOAQUIN FOR WHOM THERE IS A REWARD OF \$10,000. BUT YOU, SENOR, WILL NEVER COLLECT IT. YOU WILL HAVE LITTLE USE FOR MONEY WHERE YOU ARE GOING.



SUCH SHOOTING. YOU CANNOT HIT THE SIDE OF A BARN, LEAVE ALONE JOAQUIN, WHO LEADS THE ENCHANTED LIFE. I SHALL BE BACK TO MIX IT UP WITH YOU YET, WHEN THE ODDS ARE NOT SO MUCH AGAINST ME. BUT TAKE HEED. YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO WILSON.



ANOTHER SEEKER AFTER THE REWARD WAS GENERAL JOSHUA BEAN OF SAN GABRIEL.

WE MUST WIPE OUT THIS SCOURGE. I AM TO ORGANIZE TWO COMPANIES OF GUARDS TO SCOUR THE COUNTRY AND FIND THIS MURIETA.



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ONE DAY IN LOS HORNITOS...

YOU'RE MURIETA. WE USED TO MINE TOGETHER UP ALONG THE STANISLAUS RIVER, REMEMBER?



IT IS BEST YOU FORGET IT. I WARN YOU NOW, SAY NOTHING OF MEETING ME HERE, I HAVE BUSINESS, GOODBYE, JOE

BUT JOE TALKED...

I SAW MURIETA HERE ONLY YESTERDAY, WITH MY VERY OWN EYES...



I THINK IT'S YOUR DUTY TO INFORM THE SHERIFF, DON'T YOU?

I AM JOAQUIN AND YOU HAVE BETRAYED ME. NOW I MUST KILL YOU. I WILL KILL ANYONE WHO BETRAYS ME. I WARNED YOU NOT TO SAY ANYTHING NOW EVERYONE IN TOWN KNOWS I AM HERE.



SOON A SUBSTANTIAL REWARD WAS OFFERED FOR THE CAPTURE OF MURIETA. IN THE CENTRAL PLAZA OF STOCKTON

WHAT IS THIS? THEY THINK MY LIFE IS WORTH SO LITTLE? IT IS AN INSULT, AND I WILL NOT FORGIVE THEM



I WILL RAISE THE AMOUNT MYSELF, I MIGHT OFFER ONLY \$10,000 FOR THE GREAT JOAQUIN MURIETA.

DEAD OR ALIVE

I TOO WILL GIVE 10,000 JOAQUIN



BY NOW JOAQUIN HAD AVENGED HIMSELF ON EVERYONE OF THE MINERS WHO HAD HANGED HIS BROTHER. BUT THE LUST OF KILLING WAS ON HIM, AND HIS MURDEROUS CAREER HAD JUST BEGUN. HE GATHERED ABOUT HIMSELF A GANG OF EIGHTY CHOICE CUTTHROATS AND HE KILLED ONLY GRINGOS, HE BECAME HERO AND PATRIOT TO THE MISTREATED MEXICANS OF CALIFORNIA. HIS RECRUITS CAME FROM FAR AND WIDE.



I AM JACK THREE-FINGERS, AND YOU NO DOUBT HEARD OF ME. THAT IS NOT THE NAME I WAS BORN WITH. I WAS BERNARDINO GARCIA. I AM EXPERT WITH THE KNIFE

I HAVE HEARD MUCH OF YOU. STAY WITH US AND BE WELCOME. I WILL MAKE YOU MY LIEUTENANT

