

Sheriff Ward Barnes

“First you take a drink, then the drink takes a drink, then the drink takes you.”
-F. Scott Fitzgerald

You know, most people seem to think that being the sheriff of a little town like San Inguon, Arizona is a simple job. Occasionally catch a few juvenile delinquents, throw a couple drunken bums out of town, and write a few speeding tickets to annoy out-of-towners. If only they knew. Things happen here. Bad things. These last two weeks... oh, God, they've been tough. The stress just piles up on you, feeding on you, gnawing at your brain. You start getting headaches, headaches that feel like your brain was trying to push itself through your skull, a pain that throbs and doesn't go away and a voice in your head says *just have a drink, Ward, just a little nightcap to ease the pain, it can't hurt, now can it?* and you grab a bottle of whiskey from your bottom desk drawer and drink until the headache goes away, until you feel loose and happy and nothing will bring you down.

You've been through eight bottles these past two weeks.

Things have.. well, things haven't always been *this* strange, but things have always been a little strange. Take Harold Sturvin, for example. When you first ran for Sheriff, you had been deputy under Sheriff Otis Needlemyer for three years. Otis retired, and you threw your hat in the ring. A couple of others put their hats in, too, and Mayor Cunningham told you that he wanted to see you elected. And in order to get elected, you had to see Luke Sturvin.

Now, Luke was Harold's father, and Luke was the richest man in San Inguon; possibly one of the richest men in Arizona. And Luke had a playboy reputation, so you were a bit surprised when, in your meeting with him, he seemed totally knowledgeable about how the town worked and what sort of things a Sheriff needed to do. He told you he'd give you his support, on a single condition to be named later. And if you accepted his support and didn't uphold that condition, he'd run you out of town. Now, Luke had lots of money, so you knew his support guaranteed the election. And you knew he had the power to run someone out of town. You had no idea what his condition was, and he was awfully coy on the issue. But you realized that whoever became Sheriff was going to have to agree with Luke; and if you dropped out of the race, you'd know that the new Sheriff had made a deal but wouldn't know what that deal was. So you shook Luke's hand, promised him you'd uphold whatever condition it was, and left with a bag full of campaign funds. Needless to say, you won the election in a big way. Now you were the Sheriff of the town your family had called home since your grandfather moved here in '78 to work at the Sturvin Mining Corporation.

A week later, you got a call from Harold. He told you to come by the warehouse on Market Street, and wait there. Well, you got there at about sunset, and Mayor

Cunningham, Dr. Ferngreen (the town doctor), and C.J. Nickels (who runs the 5 & Dime) were waiting there for you. You wondered what they were doing there. The mayor pointed at the window of the warehouse, and you saw Luke sitting in the middle of the warehouse, eyes closed like he was meditating. You were about to ask what the deal was, when the full moon started to rise.

You had never seen anyone turn into a wolf before. You hope to God you never see it again. Luke writhed in pain, hair growing all over his body, until he became a half-man, half-wolf beast that threw itself with relish on the raw meat hanging inside the warehouse. C.J. explained that this was Luke's "condition." You were to know about it, help him hide it, and make sure he didn't get loose and hurt someone. In return, you'd be re-elected for as long as you liked.

You really didn't have much of a choice. Besides, what were you going to do? Let him loose? Sure, that'd be heroic. And if you tried to tell anyone, they'd have written you off as a loon. Nowadays, they'd probably write you off as a souse. *But it's not that bad, Ward. It helps to take the pain away. It's good for you. Keeps you loose. Keeps you happy.*

In any case, things worked out fine for Luke. And when he passed away, his son Harold became the werewolf. You're not sure why, but C.J. explains that it's the way of things. He knows a hell of a lot more about this than he lets on. But you don't ask him; you'd prefer not to know. In any case, Harold has shown a lot more discipline and will than his father; Luke would always turn on the full moon, and always rage uncontrollably. Harold, on the other hand, has been able to control when he changes, and remains calm and in control after he's changed. You remember the first time he found this out. He let himself out of the warehouse while still in werewolf form, snuck into your bushes, and when you drove up the driveway and walked to your front door, he jumped out and yelled "Boo!"

Well, it proved that it'd take a silver bullet to hurt him that night, because by the time you realized it was Harold playing a prank, you had emptied four shots from your revolver into him. You helped him up, bandaged him a little, and he apologized by buying you a beer the next time you two got together. He's not that bad a guy, really.

And if it were just this werewolf thing, you probably wouldn't get these headaches. But it's been more than that. So much more. Sometimes, you just want to crawl into bed *and have a couple more beers and just lie there, hoping it'll all go away, hoping that everything will work out if you just sit in bed and drink a little bit more.*

Take the pillow, for example. Edwood High has, or used to have, a glass case holding what people called The Ceremonial Throw Pillow. It was this cheesy little throw pillow that the D.A.R. had stitched the names of all the Edwood High Alumnis who had perished in World War I into. Sure, it was silly, but it was a heartfelt gesture, and a lot of people think the town wouldn't be the same without it. So, of course, it got stolen two

Sundays ago. You're sure J.D.'s behind it. J.D.'s the leader of this teenage gang that calls itself "The Killers." J.D. Koln and Nick Kerensky are the two big delinquents in it, and they're helped out by Robert Sherman, a good kid who should know better. It seems like every week they play a new prank, some sort of little joke like breaking a storefront window, or letting the air out of your tires, or something like that. One of these days, you're going to catch those boys in the act. Until then, you don't have really enough evidence to put them in reform school like you'd like to. Take the stealing of the pillow. When you came in the next morning, the only thing they had left behind was a silver steak knife with a stylized "S" in the hilt. You're sure Robert stole it from his parents, but they insist they've never seen it before. They're probably just covering for him. You called the Charles Glass Company to replace the case and held onto the knife as evidence. Meanwhile, the mayor and the D.A.R. are breathing down your neck to find it fast. And you're sure the LSD is going to call you a communist.

Yeah, the LSD. What a joke. The "Legion of Social Decency" shows up wearing red, white, and blue domino masks in front of the house of a suspected communist, and starts hurling curses and generally threatening violence. They have yet to do more than scare a few reds out of the neighborhood, so you really haven't bothered to investigate them, and besides, you're pretty sure that some of the more influential citizens in San Inguon are members of it.

And then there are the murders. Well, you're not really sure they're murders; there are a lot of wild animals out in the mesas, pumas and the like, and they could mess someone up as bad as some of the bodies you've found. You remember the first time you came across one of the bodies, its stomach ripped open like a side of beef, blood flowing out everywhere, it made you just want to drive home and open that cabinet *and pour every drink you've got into one huge barrel and just stick your head in and drink, drink, drink until the image got out of your head and you could relax and this damned headache would go away.*

Another beer will help. Yeah, that'll do the trick.

So, anyways, there've been ten suspicious deaths in the last week. Ten. That's more than you've seen in your twenty-one years as Sheriff here in San Inguon. It's damned scary. You've asked Dr. Rourke, who took over Dr. Ferngreen's practice when Dr. Ferngreen decided he had enough money to go to Florida and golf full-time, to look into these things. Thank God he agreed; otherwise, you'd have to send them off to the hospital to be examined, and it'd take days for you to get anything out of them. They're still swamped from the Abigail Frapp case, that crazy girl who axed twenty-four people at least in Phoenix alone. Thank God she never showed up in your jurisdiction. You've got enough to worry about. And thank God Dr. Rourke has those bodies. The last thing you need is to have them stored down in the cooler in the basement, where you would always know they were there, always think about them while you do your paperwork, always think about the flesh, mutilated and torn, ripped to pieces and *another drink. Just have another beer. That's all you need.*

And even if those ten aren't murder victims, you do have one definite murder to solve. Two Thursdays ago, Rachael Forbes was driving to the grocery store, and she swerved out of her lane and hit a Mack truck head-on at sixty. After they cleaned it up, you spent some time looking over the wreck (this was before the bodies started showing up, back when you had free time to look into things and weren't spending your evenings getting soused). And you found that the brake lines had been cut. Well, brake lines snap, they twist, and they break all by them selves from wear. But they don't cut themselves cleanly, like they were on the Forbes' car. Someone wanted to do her in. Or her husband, Gerald. Gerald's a big researcher over at the Research Labs. He took the news of his wife's death pretty badly. You still haven't told him that it was definitely murder; he's in bad shape enough. Unfortunately, you'll never get anywhere on the case unless you can get information from him about who would want to kill her. Or maybe him.

Unless it's the Communist spy at the Labs. Yep, General Cork confirmed to you the age-old rumor that someone in the Labs is a Communist spy, and explained that he was having someone from the CIA show up to investigate. The CIA arranged it all with you later. The agent's name is Tom Madden; he'll be coming into town disguised as Steven Gilliam, and will claim to be your cousin, dropping by town on his way to San Diego. You're supposed to help him out with his investigations.

As if you didn't have enough to do already. Christ, you know you're going to be hitting the bottle early tonight.

Stock Quote: "Well, seems what we have here is a failure to communicate."

Mannerisms: Ward is the typical Andy Griffith small-town sheriff type. Happy-go-lucky with an aw-shucks demeanor, he is being eaten alive by the pressures of his job and is crawling into a bottle for solace.

People You Know:

J.D. Koln: Leader of The Killers. The main juvenile delinquent in San Inguon. Definitely a kid to keep your eye upon.

Nick Kerensky: A member of The Killers. Big, strong, and possibly dangerous.

Robert Sherman: A nice kid from a solid middle-class family who has joined up with The Killers. You don't know why he'd be so stupid.

James Daniels: Class President at Edwood High. A nice kid, devoted to be kind and caring. He occasionally helps you out with picking up trash from the park and other little jobs. A good kid.

Timmy Carroll: A student at Edwood High who is absolutely devoted to science. He keeps his nose clean, and is a good guy.

Tony Turrelli: Another student at Edwood High. A bit of a loud-mouth, but at least he's not destructive like The Killers.

Mark Sturvin: Harold's son. A good kid. He doesn't know about the family curse. You won't tell him; it's Harold's call on whether to tell him or not.

Mary Jenkins: J.D.'s girlfriend. She seems like a nice girl; why does she hang around with a good-for-nothing like J.D.?

Teresa Kerensky: Nick's younger sister. She seems the exact opposite of Nick. She hasn't caused any trouble yet.

Catherine Thomas: One of the students at Edwood High. You've occasionally come across her sneaking around the mesas after dark, and sent her home to the Hines Orphanage for being out in a dangerous area without supervision.

Margaret Smith: A nice girl, if a bit empty-headed.

Laura Fetner: Cheerleader at Edwood High. Boy, if you were thirty years younger...

Wendy Mitchell: Reporter for the school newspaper. She's always getting in your way, asking you embarrassing questions about cases you're working on, which is kind of silly given most of the cases you work on involve finding lost dogs. You hope she doesn't find out about some of the things that have been going on recently; she'll only make your headaches worse.

General Hiram Cork: Commander of the Fort Lucas Rita base and the adjoining Research Labs. A pretty good guy, you occasionally have a beer with him while he talks about things he did in the wars.

Colonel Fred Daniels: Military commander at Fort Lucas Rita. Pretty non-descript. Your standard army lifer.

Dr. Marshall Fields: Head of the Chemistry Department at the Research Labs. A very secretive man. You're pretty sure he's hiding something, but you haven't been able to figure out what.

Dr. Lawrence Bates: Head of the Physics Department and Lead Scientist at the Research Labs. The standard absent-minded professor.

Mayor Edward Cunningham: Mayor of San Inguon for nearly thirty years now. Not a bad guy, although he's a bit slimy and hypocritical for your tastes. Still, he runs the town pretty well. You think this entire "Iguanafest" is a tad bit overdone, thought.

C.J. Nickels: Proprietor of the local 5 & Dime. Some say he came here with the original settlers back in 1859. You know there's a hell of a lot more to him than meets the eye. And you're not sure how much of that you really want to know.

Harold Smith: Insurance salesman. A nice guy, unless he's trying to sell you something. Then he becomes unbearable. You've learned that if he starts to do his routine on you, just agree with what he says and buy what he wants you to.

Dr. Randall Rourke: The young idealistic town doctor. You wonder how idealistic he'll stay after looking over those bodies. Who knows? Maybe he'll become a drinking partner.

Giovanni "Pops" Turrelli: Came here from Italy after surviving the war to start his own Malt Shop. Well, everybody has their dream. Some are just a lot stranger than others.

Adele Siegelski: Principal of Edwood High. She'd like to see J.D. and his friends sent off to reform school as much as you would.

Ivan Kerensky: Runs the gas station in town. A rabid anti-communist. You're pretty sure he's in charge of the LSD, but until he does something outright illegal with it, you won't really do anything about it.

Reverend Samuel Hines: Runs the local orphanage. A nicer, kinder man you can't imagine.

Dr. Gerald Forbes: Head of the Biology Department at the Labs. You sometimes worry that whoever killed his wife might be after him, too.

Harold Sturvin: The richest man in town, your benefactor, and the werewolf.

Irving Thorton: The town drunk. Some people want you to throw him out of town. You can't do that- he completely harmless. Besides, you might end up like that soon enough. *Nah, it'd never happen. You've got too much self-control, Ward. You'll be fine. It'll all work out fine. Have another drink.*

Dr. Sarah Carroll: Head of the Astronomy Department at the Labs. A nice woman, if a bit head-strong. Still, she's kind of attractive. And while you might be a bachelor, you're not necessarily a confirmed one, right?

Bess Smith: Harold's wife. The ultimate homemaker. Always wears an apron, is always full of good advice, and is always cooking something. Sometimes, you catch yourself about to call her Mom.

Darla Hotchkins: Now, if this town truly has any fine looking women, Darla is one of them. You'd do nearly anything to get her back to your place for a few drinks. Of course, she being the school nurse, she's probably head over heels for Dr. Rourke.

Goals:

1. Preserve Law and Order. Keep things from getting too messy. Arrest law-breakers, stop criminals, and keep an eye on the kids. Yes, we realize that you're basically standing on the beach, trying to tell the ocean to stop throwing waves at you. You have our sympathies.