

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE BUNNIES.

There's eggs in them thar hills. That is what legend says. That is what Wild Bill Harekup used to say.

For centuries, relic hunters have taken to the dirt tracks and chasm filled mountains in search of the elusive Lost Eggs of The Bunnies - sacred eggs that are said to contain secrets so secret that no one actually knows what they are about. That, however, does not prevent people wanting to know.

But the hunters are not alone in their quest. Others also seek the ancient artifacts to use for their own gain.

And in the midst of these adventurers, the bunnies are out to claim back their lost treasures.

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The wind blew down Main Street like a close-range belch – warm and damp. A stray leaf danced along the sandy road, performing pirouettes and leaping summersaults until it came to rest with a crunch under a size ten leather boot.

“Eggs at Easter? How appropriate.”

The boot continued walking, allowing the crumpled remains of the leaf to raise itself from the ground before a second boot, this time in size nine, ground it into the dirt.

“So the timing makes it seem like a joke, but I've had it on good authority that it isn't.”

The two men turned off the road, the crunch of feet on dirt becoming a thud on wood. They walked out of the sunlight and into the clammy, dim-lit interior of the Muldoon Saloon.

“What are you drinking, Harry?” the first of the men asked.

“Would it be too much to ask for eggnog?” Harry responded.

“Yes.”

“A beer then, Bill. I'll get the table.”

By the time Bill approached the table with two very full pint glasses, Harry had unfolded a number of papers and was gripping them with knuckles whiter than an Englishman's arse.

“Come on then, Harry,” Bill said as he thumped down the glasses. “Tell me all about it before your head explodes.”

“I can't help it, Bill. This could be just what this town needs. We've been scraping together pennies here and there, but this isn't Deadwood. We need something good unless we want to end up like Range Creek!”

“Where the hell is Range Creek?”

“Exactly! I don't know and neither does anyone else.”

Bill rubbed his temple. “So if no one knows where it is, then how does anyone know it's not there?”

“I didn't think of asking that, but if anyone did find it, they'd say it was bad. Bad, bad, bad.”

“Ok, so it's bad. I don't know if you've looked around out there recently but like you said, this isn't Deadwood. It's Redwood, and it's a hole.”

“Which is why this could be just what we need!” Harry hissed, seeming to be a man very much on the edge of yelling his every word at the top of his voice.

“I'm listening.”

“Well, it’s like this...”

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“It looks like these eggs had been thought lost for centuries, maybe even longer than that.”

The smoky air in the room made it difficult for many of the occupants to breathe or see. Allowing more than a dozen people to puff on cigars in a compact, unventilated room had been something of a mistake.

One person who didn’t mind was Black Jim, the four feet tall leader of the Black Fathers. Whether he stood or sat, his head remained just below the level of the rising grey clouds.

“And are you sure about this, Black Bull?” Jim asked the six foot monstrosity beside him.

“Yes, Master Jim,” came the reply from the above the cloud. “The Lost Eggs are somewhere in Redwood.”

“So what of the legends? They say the Eggs were never found in the mountains.”

“It seems the legend was created as a diversion to keep the Eggs safe from hunters.”

“And us,” Jim said, rubbing together his sweaty little palms. “Well done, Black Bull. You have been very clever in gathering this information.”

“It was the nutcrackers that did it,” Black Bull said with a grin lost in smoke.

“I don’t need to know that,” Jim said. Being the head of a shadowy organization wasn’t a guarantee you wouldn’t be squeamish. “So where in Redwood are the Eggs hidden?”

“Well, that’s the problem,” another man said.

“What do you mean, Black Jack?” Jim asked.

“Well it seems that while the legend was created to put treasure hunters off the scent, there has been nothing written of where in Redwood the Eggs are to be found.”

“Maybe I was premature in my congratulations,” Jim said, steepling his fingers and glaring into the cloud overhead. “I trust you have thought of a way to narrow down our search?”

“We have,” said a third conspirator.

“Who is that?” Jim asked. “Is it Ball or Hole?”

“It’s Black Hole, Master Jim,” the voice said.

“And how have you managed this?” Jim asked.

Black Bull and Black Ball bent down and lifted a large metal pot onto the table. Black Bull lifted the lid.

Jim was forced to climb onto the table in order to see the inside of the pot. When he leaned over the edge, a wicked smile spread over his little, podgy face.

“Excellent,” he said. “Now all we need is to do is find out...”

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“Where they’ve taken him.”

The Council Room of the warren was crowded with furry bodies. More bunnies crammed the hallway outside. This was not a normal Council meeting. It was a Crisis gathering.

“We’re not sure, Butch,” one of the scouts said. “We lost them near the Muldoon Saloon.”

Butch Harekup, seventh generation grandson of the legendary Wild Bill, looked out across the mass of fur and ears.

“How many of them were there?” he asked.

“Three. Black Fathers by the looks of it. They’ve gone too far this time.”

A rumble of agreement rustled through the crowd.

“Quiet!” Butch bellowed, his voice echoing through the halls of the warren. “Why have they suddenly decided to go this far now?”

“I think I can answer that,” an ancient voice spoke from behind him.

Butch turned around, to find the eldest of the warren dwellers occupying the opening there.

A hundred and one pairs of fluffy ears lowered as the bunnies bowed, and many furry bottoms were tickled in the process.

“There is no need for that,” Archimedes said. He shuffled forward, resting on a crude stick. “There are more pressing matters to be dealt with.”

The crowd waited in silence for the elder to proceed.

“The reason the Black Fathers have taken Samuel is because they are seeking the Lost Eggs.”

“The Lost Eggs are nothing but a legend, aren’t they?” Butch asked. “A story one generation passes down to the next like that of the Easter Bunny. We all know we are the ones who put the chocolate eggs in the baskets, and we do it to keep the legends alive, right?”

“All legends have to start somewhere, young Butch,” Archimedes said. “The Lost Eggs are real, and contain the secrets of the first of our kind. The secrets that have helped us survive this long. If the Black Fathers or anyone manages to get their hands on the Eggs, then I cannot begin to imagine what will befall our kind.”

“That really doesn’t sound good,” Butch said to the mumbled agreement of the gathering. “I guess this means we have to do what we have to do?”

“It does,” the elder said with a half smile.

“I thought I was past all this,” Butch said with a sigh as he turned to face the crowds. “Sundance, where are you?”

A small furry body bounced up and down in the middle of the throng.

“Hoi hoi, a’m here Butch, my old pal, my old buddy!”

Butch rubbed his hand over his face. This was going to be just like old times.

Why me? Butch thought. *Of all the rabbits in all the world, why me?*

He addressed his partner, along with what amounted to an army of rabbits.

“Open up the store hold, Sundance, and hand round the artillery. We’ve got a hostage to save and our heritage to fight for.

“Bunnies! Today we fight to keep our freedom!”

The story continues in “A Fistful of Bunnies”.