



THE SHACK

Robert L. Bezy

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Introduction.

This story was inspired by my life-long experiences flipping boards for herps around abandoned shacks in the desert. Looking at the artifacts left behind by the former inhabitants of the shacks I came to wonder what kind of life they had and why they abandoned the place.

Hank Williams said it best

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGNsRG1H4Co>

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“Billy, my canteen is drained.”

“Soz mine, Bobby.”

“What we gunna do? We'll never make it all the way back without some water.”

“I dunno, Billy.”

“I see a tree and a shack way over yonder. Maybe there is some water there”

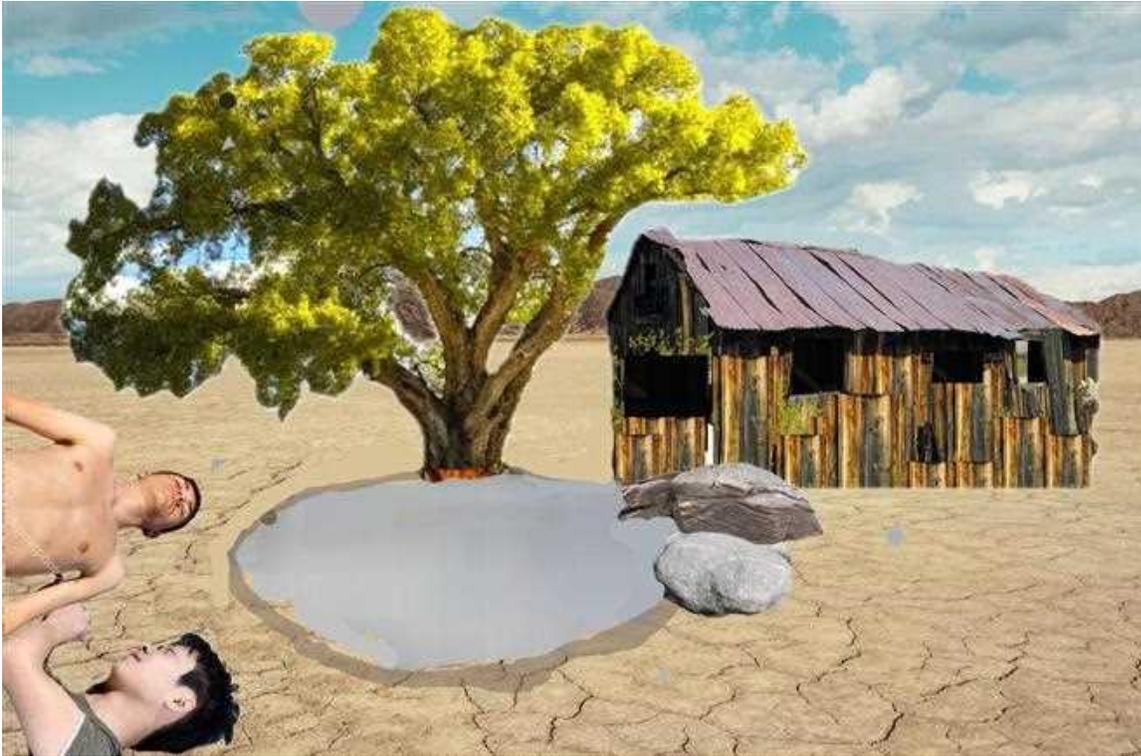
We were crawling on our hands and knees when we reached the shack and were delighted to find a pool of water.

We gulped and gulped.

“Bobby, this water tastes bad,”

“Sure does, Billy

Then suddenly we lost consciousness..



I do not know how long Billy and I lay there beside the pool. Eventually I opened my eyes and stared up at the massive Cottonwood branches. I saw them differently now and thanked them for shading me from the hot sun. The sun sank across the parched dry lake bed I appreciated that it was giving us some rest.







“Howdy, boys,” the old prospector said, as he walked up.

“Howdy, man are we ever glad to see ya. We are in desperate need of water,” I answered.

“I hope you dint drink the water from that there pool.”

“We did, and it made us very sick.”

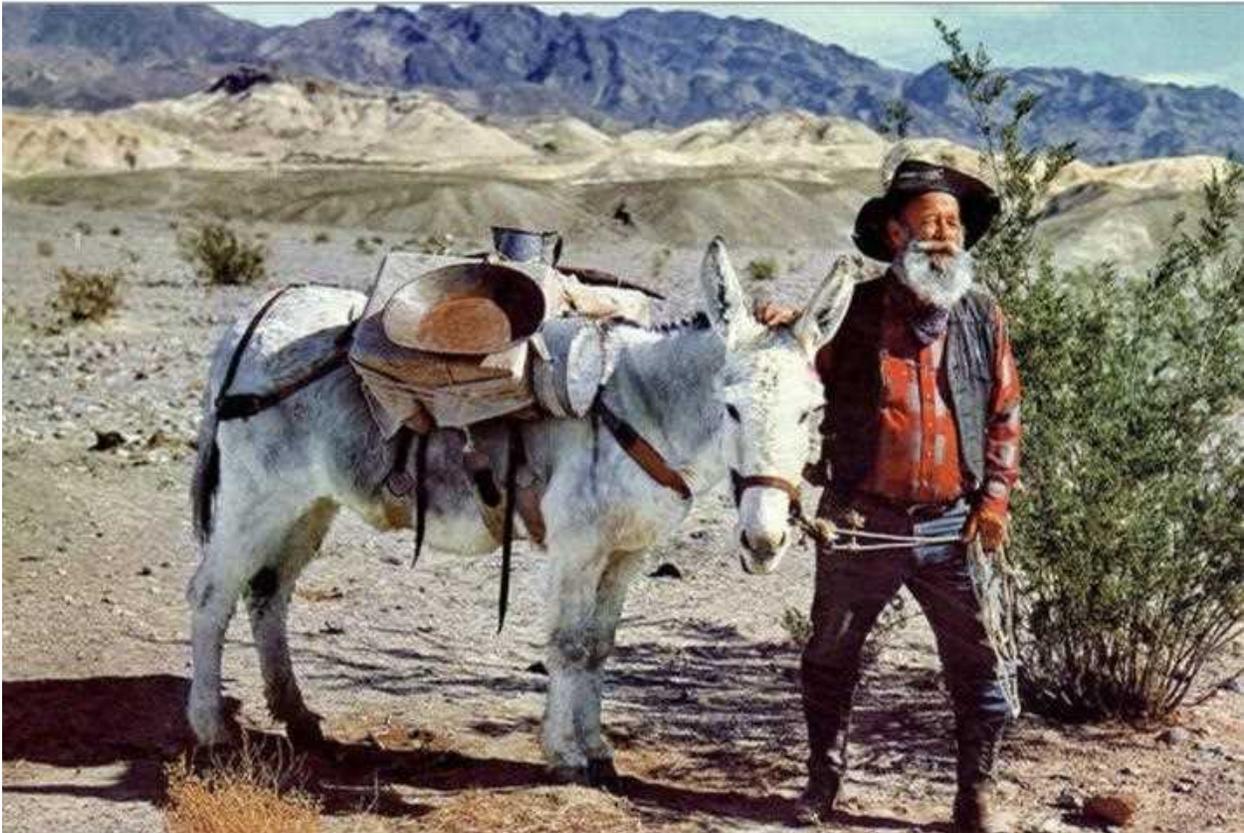
“Its bad water, an the pisin dun kilt both my boys when we lived here. I have a canteen full of good water I can share with ya.”

He handed us the canteen and Billy and I took turns guzzling

“You said you used to live here?”

“Yup. I’ll tell ya the whole damn story. When the boys and I come up on this spot, it was a paradise with big green trees all round. It werent no desert like today, an we decides to settle rit chear.





“The boyz was real brok up since we lost Maw. I told her not to try n walk to the pottyhouse at nite. But that dang gal, she ne’er listened ta eny thin out me. We heard her scream and me an the boyz went runnin. It was the meanest dam rattler I ever seen and it nailed her twice in the chin.

“Me an the boyz, we did ever thin we could, but she was a gonner. There was nuttin ta do but dig her grave. Bud, the oldest, mostly did the diggin. We took turns shovelin the dirt on her. But young Boo nar got over it. He cried himself to sleep ever nite after she was dead, andBud hugs him until he stops,



***Crotalus scutulatus* by Erik Enderson**



“What with the loss of Maw an all, we wanned ta start over in an nu place, an we tuk a shine to this spot, big shade trees an plunni a water an deer meat. Me an the boys, we set bout getting a roof or ar heads. We wen roun ta all the shacks in these parts and tuk the old boards and nails, even sum tin fur the ruf. It tuk us prakly a year, but we got the ruf up bafor the drenchins set in.. Them boys wer big a nuf to be a real help.



“Ta look at this spot now, you’d never know it was paradise once, pleni a water an deer. But when I shot the first buck, problems set it. Boo went into one of his cryin spells and it took Bud a long time ta settle him down.



“Boos’ cryin was goin on ever since that rattler kilt Maw. But Bud done good at quietin the lil’n down. We needed meat so I gone huntin far away from the boys. A big buck came to drink an I bagged it. I jerked the meat an dried it over a fire befo headen back ta the boys. Boo ate the jerky without cryin, an we was real happy bout that.



“Things started ta git better thanks to Bud. He knew just how to comfort Boo. An he taught the liln one to how to swim and they spent some time ever day in the water. An he sat with his arms around Boo ever night an he snapped out of it. They was real bros.



“When bud was in the water with Boo he caught a snake. An that was the beginin a whole new thing for the boys. They began spendin lots of time together lookin at snakes in the pond an they was real excited seein one eatin a toad. They did not hold it agin snakes that a rattler done kilt Maw.





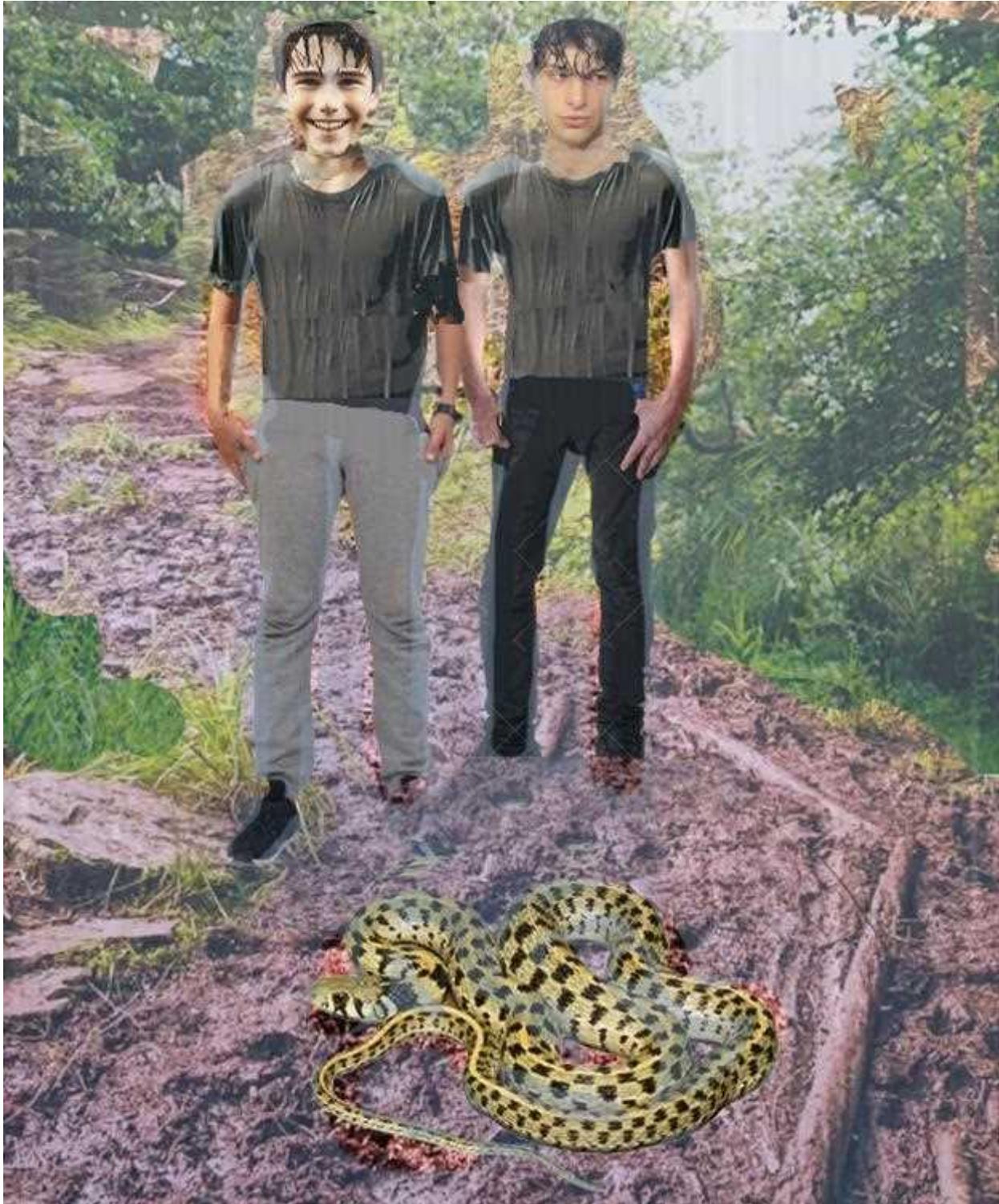
“Things was lookin purdy good for me n the boys. Deer kept coming in ta drink an it was easy ta bag one wen we run out a meat. An the boys was happy lookin for snakes in the water.

“But it were sure hot n dry an wes hopin fur rain. Thunder am lightning was startin in an we had our hopes up.



“Ya know the ol sayin, ‘be careful whatcha ask fur.’ This was it. We asked for rain an got a deluge. It poured for dam near three days. The shack was completely flooded an the boys an me, we held tin sheets over our heads to keep the hail from pounded our brains out.

“When it finally let up the boys went on a mud walk to see if the deluge flooded out some snakes. The was real happy ta find a garter snake that looked like a checker board.



“I dunno why, but the boys kept on going out in the mud lookin for snakes. They went wild when they found what they called a mud snake.



“Things started into a nose-dive after the big deluge. It jus got hotter n hotter an nari a drop a rain fell. The pond was drying up fast and turned ugly green, an the deer would not drink from it enny mo. I had to go out lookin fur the deer and shoot from afar n I missed often n soon ran out of bullets.

“The boys saved us by makin a bow n arrows for hunting.



“An them boys, werent nuthin they couldnt do. In no time flat they was back from their their bow huntin with two squirrels.



“The boys got way in ta huntin for squirrels with their bow. While they was in the woods they caught what they called a bull snake n a king snake.



“We was gittin mighty tired of squirrel meat ever day an the boys went huntin fur deer. In the woods. But weren’t no deer left. The boys was huntin all day an then they seen a pig, what they called a javelina. Some how they managed to bring it down with several arrows.





“The boys was real proud when they came carrying the pig to the shack. They had been sweating all day in the hot sun and gulped their fill of pond water They put a

stick through the pig an built a fire an roasted it. What a feast, we ate an ate. We didn't know it was the boys' last supper. As they finished eating they got sick as a dog n started pukin their guts out.



“I figured it was the rich fatty pig that was makin the boys so sick an I gave them pleni a water. But they jus kept vomitin an was losing conscious. Then I took a drink of the water myself an passed out.



“I dunno how long I was out, but when I came to I realized it was poisons in the water that was killing us. The boys were barely breathin an I had to get some good water for em, somewhere, somehow. There was a spring a few miles away that was surely good. I tried to get up but fell to my knees. So I just started crawlin towards the spring.



“I crawled in the scorching sun for hours to get to the spring and I gulped the water and filled my canteen. The water gave me some strength and I was able to walk instead of crawl and I headed back to the boys with the canteen of good water to save them.





“When I got back to the shack an seen the buzzards my heart sank. They had already picked Bud’s body an were bout to start on Boo. I cried n cried. First the poison rattler took Maw, an now the poison water took my boys. I had nothing left to live fur n decided to gulp the poison water an end it all.



“Wow, Pancho, that is some story. How come you are still alive?” Billy asked.

“Well, as I was bending down to take the gulp poison water to end it all, I glimpsed my reflection in the water. I realized I wasn’t Maw, an I wasn’t the boys, I was me an still had a life.. I decided to never live in a house again and jus wander the desert lookin for gold. I remembered seein a nugget at the spring when I was fetchin the water to try n save the boys.

“ I went back ta the spring an found it. In town I sold the nugget an got me ol’Dan my burro, an all the prospecting stuff, an I walked into the desert an never looked back.

“Bobby n Billy, you set me in mind of my boys. Inny chance you’d like to go wonderin the desert with me?”

“You’re on, I immediately responded.



