

## 2d- Goodies and Baddies, Charles Portis, *True Grit*, 1968

Mattie Ross, aged 14, hired Marshal Rooster Cogburn to chase Tom Chaney who murdered her father. Both Rooster and Mattie, together with the Texas Ranger LaBoeuf, are on Tom's track. On the way, during a pause, Mattie is going down a slope to fetch some water.

### Part 1

As I neared the bottom, dreading the return climb, I heard splashing and blowing noises. My thought was: *What on earth!* Then I came into the open on a creek bank. On the other side there was a man watering some horses.

*The man was none other than Tom Chaney!*

5 You may readily imagine that I registered shock at the sight of that squat<sup>1</sup> assassin. He had not yet seen me, nor heard me either because of the noise made by the horses. His rifle was slung across his back on the cotton plow line<sup>2</sup>. I thought to turn and run but I could not move. I stood there fixed.

10 Then he saw me. He gave a start and brought the rifle quickly into play. He held the rifle on me and peered across the little stream and studied me.

He said, "Well, now, I know you. Your name is Mattie. You are little Mattie the bookkeeper. Isn't this something." He grinned and took the rifle from play and slung it carelessly over a shoulder.

I said, "Yes, and I know you, Tom Chaney."

15 He said, "What are you doing here?"

I said, "I came to fetch water."

"What are you doing in these mountains?"

I reached into the bucket and brought out my dragoon revolver. I dropped the bucket and held the revolver in both hands. I said, "I'm here to take you back to Fort Smith."

20 Chaney laughed and said, "Well, I will not go. How do you like that?"

I said, "There is a posse<sup>3</sup> of officers up on the hill who will force you to go."

"That is interesting news," said he. "How many is up there?"

"Right around fifty. They are all well armed and they mean business. What I want you to do now is leave those horses and come across the creek and walk in front of me up the hill."

25 He said, "I think I will oblige the officers to come after me." He began to gather the horses together. There were five of them but Papa's horse Judy was not among them.

I said, "If you refuse to go I will have to shoot you."

1. *trapu* 2. (*ici*) *bandoulière / bretelle en coton* 3. *détachement*

### Part 2

He went on with his work and said, "Oh? Then you had better cock<sup>4</sup> your piece." 30 I had forgotten about that. I pulled the hammer back with both thumbs.

"All the way back till it locks," said Chaney.

"I know how to do it," said I. When it was ready I said, "You will not go with me?"

"I think not," said he. "It is just the other way around. You are going with me."

35 I pointed the revolver at his belly and shot him down. The explosion kicked me backwards and caused me to lose my footing and the pistol jumped from my hand. I lost no time in recovering it and getting to my feet. The ball had struck Chaney's side and knocked him into a sitting position against a tree. I heard Rooster or LaBoeuf call out for me. "I am down here!" I replied. There was another shout from the hill above Chaney.

40 He was holding both hands down on his side. He said, "I did not think you would do it." I said, "What do you think now?"

He said, "One of my short ribs is broken. It hurts every breath I take."

I said, "You killed my father when he was trying to help you. I have one of the gold pieces you took from him. Now give me the other."

45 "I regret that shooting," said he. "Mr. Ross was decent to me but he ought not to have meddled<sup>5</sup> in my business. I was drinking and I was mad through and through. Nothing has gone right for me."

There was more yelling from the hills.

50 I said, "No, you are just a piece of trash, that is all. They say you shot a senator in the state of Texas."

"That man threatened my life. I was justified. Everything is against me. Now I am shot by a child."

4. *armer* 5. *interfered*

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