

OK, here we go! I have located the story I started way back in 2007. This was after my first Dammit Gang story and about the time Jailhouse Jim started cranking out stories like crazy! I went back in time and began stories about the original 6 members of the Dammit Gang and how they met and eventually formed the gang. It is also about Laylow's travels after being branded an outlaw and his path to redemption. This series is titled "3 Nations". It is the story of Youngblood and Jittery Jim Jonah, how they met, and their travels as they met other future members of the gang....

Now my style of writing is different from Jailhouse Jim's. I tend to put more historical context and details into the story. So here is the first in a series of stories that I hope y'all will enjoy. And I hope this will get me motivated to continue the story! Enjoy....

Three Nations,
Two Lives, One Destiny.
The Story of Jittery Jim Jonah and Youngblood:
Their Journey West into History.

Chapter One: Easy Money

An unnatural silence crept over the poker room on the "Mistress of New Orleans" steamboat as Jittery Jim Jonah slid his substantial stack of chips forward and said, "All In." All eyes were now on the table awaiting the reply of Stoker, the last remaining player of this hand of the new game called "Texas Hold'em". Of the original nine players only two remained, and the tension was high as all waited for the response of the last player. Showing on the table were two Aces, a King, a Queen, and a deuce. At stake was a pot of over \$1,800 and with Jittery's "all in" the pot grew to over \$2,200. The game had been running for over 22 hours at this point, and all were amazed at the stakes in this small port of Superior, Minnesota.

Since it's christening on a maiden cruise from the port of New Orleans 6 months earlier in the summer of 1872, no poker game had as high a pot or garnered as much attention from the patrons of this fine new floating casino. With over 20 tables for card games, and many tables featuring such games as Faro, Stud, and a European game called Baccarat, none had seen the longevity or stakes of this game in this port of a small mining town on the Northern mouth of the Mississippi River. On the mouth of the river bordering the Southern edge of Lake Superior, at the port of Superior, Minnesota, the river had given birth to a burgeoning industry known as 'Riverboat Gambling'. Steamboats had been traversing the entire length of the river from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico for many years now, unaffected by feast, famine, or war, lining the pockets of the investors and those lucky enough to be known as "Steamboat Carpetbaggers", or professional gamblers. It seemed that tonight there would be a new 'Professional' added to the ranks of the dozens of frontiersmen who referred to themselves as 'Gentleman Gamblers'.

The night was calm and still and the river seemed to favor the excitement of a high stakes game, even the temperature was balmy by local standards, a pleasant 41 degrees. Jittery Jim Jonah, a 'foreign fish' by local standards, had been giving Stoker, a local card shark, a run for his money the entire night. Frustration showed on Stoker's face as the night wore on, mainly due to the unique and unpredictable betting habits of this 'Flashy Cowboy' no-one knew anything about. What these 'locals' did not know was this 'foreign fish' knew much more about

card games and the techniques of 'card sharks' than he let on. "Time to eucher this four flusher Chisler" thought Jittery Jim as he slid his stack of chips forward and announced his intentions. Stoker had been selectively cheating on hands all night long, unnoticed by the other players, and the 'spectators' watching the spectacle.

All eyes were on Stoker as he pondered the cost of his next move. He silently counted his chips and realized he was short by almost \$200. "I'm short of your bet my friend. I would hate ta see ya win without a fair fight." "Fair my ass" thought Jittery as he looked about the room. "I'm not one ta play to the gallery, but seein' as how I'm as hot as a whore house on nickel night, I'll accept your 'call' as payment in full and call the pot good." "Well that's sound on the goose my friend" Stoker pushed his stack of chips to the pot and declared "All In". "Show'em" said Jittery Jim Jonah as his left hand moved slowly toward the Remington 1875 revolver strapped to his left leg.

"This shiester is about ta get nailed ta the counter" thought Youngblood as he watched from the bar about 12' feet to the left of the table. He had been watching the game for almost 2 hours and was bamboozled at first how Stoker could succeed at his amateurish methods of cheating. It took a while for Youngblood to realize the 'flashy cowboy' at the table knew exactly what was happening, and this Stoker character was trying ta wake up the wrong passenger on this train headed for a derailing. Youngblood loathed people like Stoker. It reminded him of the unfortunate nature of the white man when dealing with people and cultures they were unfamiliar with. He had seen this first hand after leaving New York three years earlier in his sojourn to learn about the cultures of the 'Savages' encountered by frontiersmen as they traveled West exploring the vast expanses of North America. Youngblood had been labeled as a 'White Injun' by settlers and military men since he had ventured West from New York in 1870. It amazed him how seemingly 'educated' men of this new young nation could ignore the vast knowledge and wisdom of the various indian tribes, all in the name of expansion. He excused the ignorance of 'fine Southern Gentlemen' because of their generational acceptance of slavery, but he could not accept the hypocrisy of 'Northerners' for fighting slavery and advocating the genocide of the Indian cultures.

He was puzzled by his immediate approval of the actions and demeanor of the out of place cowboy at the table, sensing his character was much like an Alaskan glacier, very little showed above the surface, but there was much substance underneath. Youngblood found himself checking his revolvers and his knives as this dance came to a conclusion. He knew this cowboy, flashy as he was, was a man you could tie to, and the time was fast approaching when he would need some help when the difficulty started. It was clear Jittery Jim Jonah would not have many friends when the opera started, and by hook or by crook, Youngblood was not gonna let him stand alone.

"Well" said Stoker, "I hate ta snow on yer funeral, but I do believe yo're gonna die a pauper." Stoker laid down his cards, showing the Ace of Spades and the King of Hearts. "Full house, Aces high." Stoker grinned broadly as he watched the face of Jittery Jim Jonah. Stoker began to reach for the pot and cheers began from his peanut gallery...

"It seems we have a situation here" said Jittery Jim as he reached out and placed his hands on Stokers. "Full house, Aces high", replied Jittery. Silence fell like a boulder on a quiet summers

day as he laid down his cards, the Ace of Hearts and the King of Hearts. Stoker froze for a moment, then grinned broadly and laughed. "Well my Ace of Spades trumps your Ace of Hearts, the pot is mine." He reached again for the pot only to be greeted by Jittery's Remington. Youngblood tensed as he realized what was about to transpire. "I SAID THERE'S A SITUATION". Youngblood slowly drew his boot dagger from his right boot. "THE POT'S MINE YA CROAKER!" exclaimed Stoker. Jittery pulled back the hammer of his Remington and replied, 'Well, unless we been playin' with a deck with 2 Aces of Spades, I'd say the pot is MINE!" Stoker looked down at his cards laid out on the table and realized he had pulled the wrong Ace from his sleeve. There were 2 Ace of Spades showing on the table, One in the river and one in his hole cards. Stokers face drained of color as he realized he had been exposed as a Bunko artist.

Stoker's right hand moved quickly toward his Colt and it was suddenly pinned to the table as he cried out in agony. A black buffalo handled dagger pierced the top of his hand as it embedded itself on the table. "I'd shut yer bazoo and back down pard If'n I was you" said Youngblood as his boot dagger did its job. Youngblood stood and walked toward the table with both hands on his S & W Model 3's in a handsome dark brown tooled double huckleberry rig. These unique handguns were a rare sight anywhere in the frontier as they were still in the proving stage. Youngblood had two of only 61 in existence. "Now unless anyone here feels a need to have their plow cleaned, I'd say the fat lady has sung." The few who had begun to move forward in defense of Stoker immediately halted in the face of the wrath of the 'Injun Trapper', as Youngblood was known in these parts. Youngblood's reputation as a fierce fighter and fair man was known to all. None would dispute his interpretation of the night's events. Besides, the evidence was laying on the table for all to see.

What the patrons of the "Mistress of New Orleans" did not know was Jittery Jim Jonah had cheated the cheater. Jittery had replaced his dealt deuce of Hearts with the King of Hearts, creating his winning hand. He had learned some time ago that sometimes you had to fight 'fire with fire' and luck sometimes needed a helping hand. The hard working miners and trappers of Northern Minnesota and Southern Canada would learn a valuable lesson tonight: Even your friends would cheat you if given the opportunity.

Youngblood walked to the table and without any hesitation smartly withdrew his dagger from Stokers hand, ignoring his screams, wiping the blood from the blade on Stokers shirt sleeve. As Jittery Jim Jonah gathered the chips on the table he turned to Youngblood, "Seems we should go see the elephant, can I pay your way?" Youngblood slipped the dagger into its cradle, "How 'bout we look for him on the upper deck by the wheel house?" He motioned to the door. Jittery walked to the bar, paid for a bottle of imported single malt Scotch, and headed for the door. "Let's start the safari my Friend." As both left for the upper deck they did not notice Stoker whispering to three of his cohorts as he bandaged his hand. "See to it those two blowhards take a trip to the 'runaways' boneyard, TONIGHT!" The three nodded and quietly left soon after Jittery and Youngblood...

To be continued....