

The SON Silas Rising - preview

Prologue

The wire would normally shine from the moonlight. This night there was barely a sliver of moon, so they rode with caution as they neared the fence. A shrill whistle from the left carried well in their direction. Three horsemen pulled up sharply and looked to the south where now emerged the flickering beams from a flashlight. Their leader glanced around; assuring himself that the others had also heard it, then all three recklessly spurred their mounts down the fence line in the direction of the light.

They had found what they sought, the missing patriarch of the family, but not at all as they expected. The body was clearly that of the senator and it draped limply from the top strands of barbed wire fencing. Its hands touched the ground, as did the legs below the knee, but nothing else. The face, now ashen, clearly reflected both shock and fear.

The whistler, a Hispanic ranch hand, had lowered his light and stood in silence over the body. He looked up at the approaching riders and shook his head. Dust rose from the dried ground and swirled around the body as the riders stopped abruptly at the scene. Two of them stayed mounted and shone their lights on the scene. The third, another hired hand, jumped down and began looking around in silence, for what he did not say.

No one spoke. The rescue party appeared struck dumb by inward reflection at what they had found. Within a minute, all but their leader had their hat in hand as they stared at the corpse. The scene became a strange silhouette, two on foot, two on horseback and a body in the wire.

They stayed as they were until the headlights of a vehicle approaching from behind stirred them into action. They knew who that had to be.

“Stop ‘em back there,” the head of the rescue party ordered as he twisted around in his saddle to point at the oncoming vehicle. “Mom doesn’t need to see this. Not this way.”

The other man who was still mounted, pulled hard left on his reins and kicked his horse into motion. He rode directly into the oncoming lights, waving his hat for them to stop.

The group’s leader steadied his horse with one hand and reached into a vest pocket with the other. He flipped open a cell phone and punched in 911.

“Yeah,” he told the operator, “this is Murray Bilstock.” He paused for the operator to acknowledge him while adjusting the front of his hatband high on his forehead. “I need the sheriff and the coroner out here right away,” he continued.

“We’re,” he paused again as he thought for a second, looking around, “about three miles southwest of the house. It’s along the fence line.”

He listened to the person on the other end for a couple of minutes and then added, “Tell Wilbury it’s the old man.” There was no real emotion in his voice. “Yeah, the senator. Get ‘em out here, quick,” he concluded and pushed the end-call button.

The caller put his phone away and momentarily looked back at the Jeep. It was now stopped yet continued to flood the area with its headlights. Crossing his arms over the horn of his saddle, he stayed where he was, opting to neither dismount, nor approach the vehicle. He could hear wailing and sobbing coming from behind the headlights, but that soon subsided.

Sheriff Wilbury was on the scene within an hour. He was a tall, heavysset man with a large hat and a quiet demeanor. Stepping out of his vehicle, he glanced toward the man on the horse, walked around the scene in a wide path, and said very little to anyone. The county coroner arrived shortly after that with a small entourage of investigators and then, of course, came the FBI, the Homeland Security people and a reporter from the

local newspaper. They looked at the scene from every angle, made notes and took pictures. They gathered in pairs and then small groups to discuss their theories all before interviewing any of the witnesses. The sheriff stayed to himself.

Then, as Wilbury finished his tour of the area, he walked up to the man who had called for him. Though on foot, the sheriff was nearly eye-to-eye with the other man who was still astride his horse.

“You boys see anything unusual when you got here?” the sheriff asked.

The man he addressed leaned back hard in his saddle, turned his head away and spit.

“Naw,” he replied as he sat back forward, never really looking directly at the sheriff. “Charo found him,” he continued as he nodded his head towards one of the Hispanic ranch hands, “we were spread out north along the fence line. Got here pretty quick when he signaled.” There was a pause as he shifted in the saddle. “This is what it was,” he raised his arm slightly and pointed to the body in the wire, “nothing else.”

The sheriff dipped his hat in silence and turned to walk away. After two steps he glanced back at the unimpassioned cowboy.

“Sorry ‘bout yer loss, son,” he offered. He did not receive a reply.

Agents from the different authorities approached the cowboy as others began firing questions at the two Hispanics. The other man from the rescue party stayed at the Jeep with the widow. An FBI agent found him there and they spoke briefly. The story was consistent. There really was no story.

The coroner established the time of death at approximately 5:00PM and issued his opinion of “asphyxiation due to self-induced strangulation. Death by accidental causes.” No one on site disagreed or offered any other opinion. Within twenty minutes of their arrival the body was cut loose and loaded in the ambulance.

There were handshakes and nods as the assembled dispersed. That was that.

The scene of the death though, was not at all as it appeared and that was no accident.

The man responsible was very good at what he does. So good, that no one yet understood any crime existed.