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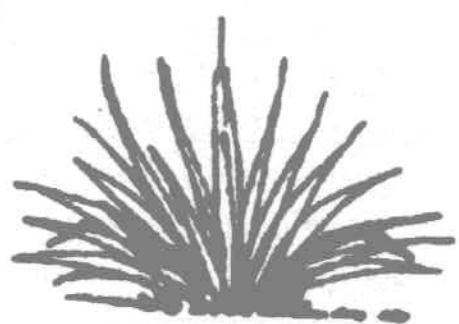
# LOUIS L'AMOUR

AMERICA'S FAVORITE STORYTELLER



# WEST OF DODGE

# WEST OF DODGE



Frontier Stories by  
**LOUIS L'AMOUR**



BANTAM BOOKS  
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NOT ONE WORD HAS BEEN OMITTED.

WEST OF DODGE  
A Bantam Book

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## TAKING A STAND

Hurley walked back to the house. On the steps he paused to stomp the snow from his boots. As he did so the door swept open and Benton stood there with a leveled rifle.

Only the rifle was held steady against the door-jamb, and it was pointed past his head at the ranch yard behind him.

Hurley looked up and saw the grim look on the old man's face. Benton was looking past him and Benton said, "*Hold it! Hold it right there!*"

Hurley knew death then. He knew the Talbots were behind him, and he knew there were four of them, and he knew he was fairly caught.

But he was calm.

That, of all things, was the most astonishing. There were, he knew in that moment, worse things than death, and there were few things worse than fear itself.

He turned slowly. "It's my fight, Benton," he said. "You get back in bed."

He stepped down off the step. He was scared. He was really scared, and yet somehow it was not as bad as he had expected. He looked at the four shivering men on their horses, and he smiled. "Are you boys looking for me?" he asked.



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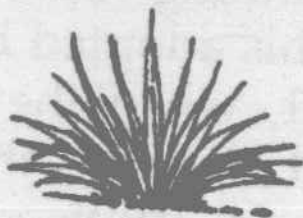
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### POETRY

SMOKE FROM THIS ALTAR

# INTRODUCTION



For the past couple of years I have been working on a biography of my father. It is a long and complicated process; he left behind no single document that explains the where or when of his life, let alone the reasons why he did many of the amazing things that he did. What little correspondence he was able to save over the years paints one picture. His personal journals, many of which were lost or not kept up on a regular basis, fill in some other areas. The writing he did in *Yondering* and *Education of a Wandering Man* I have found to be very useful but slightly slanted in the direction of whatever message he was trying to deliver at the moment.

I have tried to get as close to the story that I will be telling as is feasible. I have also tried to remain objective: Dad was fifty-three when I was born; when he was in his twenties he was a different—sometimes almost unrecognizable—character. The world that he lived in, the world that formed him, was a different—almost unrecognizable—world.

So far, I have traveled the trail that he followed when he was forced to walk out of the Mojave Desert. I've searched out the houses, hotel rooms, boarding-houses, auto courts, lumber piles, and hobo jungles



where Louis slept as a youth. I've talked my way through the security gates that now seal the waterfronts and rail yards. I've turned off the interstate and driven miles on the forgotten dirt roads that our nation had instead of highways seventy years ago. I have followed the winding route that my grandparents, my father, and his adopted brother traveled between 1923 and 1931, when they packed their last possessions in an old touring car and set out across the American West on a fruitless search for a better life.

One of the first steps in getting a handle on this project was going through every single thing my father left behind and examining each one carefully for clues. After he died I had spent quite a few weeks sorting out all of the stuff he left behind. That process had simply amounted to packing everything away in boxes labeled with one of five or six different categories, like "Fan Mail," "Pieces of Manuscripts," "Film and TV Treatments." Now I had to go back to those boxes and sort through everything page by page. It was sort of like being an archeologist digging a hole in the ground with a spoon and a toothbrush.

I found a tiny yellowed date book from 1924 that briefly documented the period when he became separated from his parents and walked and hitchhiked across New Mexico and Arizona trying to find them. Stuffed in the back of one of his 1960s-vintage journals were six pages that covered a different time period, about two weeks in June and July of 1936 when he was working as a mercenary fighting bandits and the Japanese in Shansi Province, China.

To find treasures such as these and many others, I have gone through Louis's papers carefully, examining everything I have in my possession. I've made it a point to read through every manuscript, notebook, letter, and file that he left behind, no matter how far afield the subject seemed to be. That is how I happened to find this collection of stories.

I'd finished months of checking old documents page by page and was starting to go through his other belongings, long disused briefcases, camping gear, anything that might give me a clue—like the name of a bookstore in Portland, Oregon, stamped on the inside cover of a book along with, miracle of miracles, the date. In one closet in Dad's office I found a treasure trove of artifacts that I myself had stashed there years earlier when cleaning up the office after he died. A ceremonial shield from New Guinea, a marvelous machete in a sheath of carved wood that Louis had taken from an Indonesian pirate, and several boxes of old carbon paper. The writing on the boxes was in German, and I now know through examining his journals from the World War II period that he "liberated" this carbon paper from an office in a German aluminum factory where he was quartered near the end of the war. I was methodically going through everything, so I opened the first box to find it still half full of disintegrating fifty-year-old carbons. The second box, however, seemed to contain blank typing paper. I was about to put it down when I saw the rusty outline of a paperclip on the top sheet. It wasn't old unused paper. . . . The box was full of short stories that had been dropped in facedown. And as I looked through them I realized that they weren't like the stories in most of the other L'Amour collections, old stories that had been published in the pulp magazines at one time or another—these were stories I didn't recognize, they were stories that had never been published before!

As I read them over carefully I began to put together the mystery of how they had come to be there. I'm guessing, but the story makes the most sense if it unfolds thus: In the 1950s the fiction magazine business was dying out, replaced by paperback books and television. Luckily for Louis, he was able to break into writing paperback originals in the mid-fifties, but there was a period of transition, a time when, al-



though he was beginning to have some luck with the novels, he was still trying to sell short stories in a dying market. The majority of these newly discovered stories are a little less violent (several make it a point to avoid the typical kill-all-the-bad-guys-in-a-final-shootout ending), more character oriented, and have less lurid titles. This suggests to me that he was aiming more toward the slick-magazine market (like *The Saturday Evening Post*) than the rapidly failing pulps. He'd had some success in this area ("The Burning Hills" was first seen as a *Post* serial), but the slick market was becoming more and more crowded with ex-pulp authors and was publishing a good deal less fiction itself, and so my theory is these stories were never sold.

What all this means to you is that what we have here is a collection of Louis L'Amour's western short stories that have never before been published. They are stories of higher quality than we have been able to release in quite a few years both because they were aimed at the more literary slicks and because they were written at the end of Louis's career in short stories and so were created by a writer at the top of his form.

I found enough new stories for two or three collections. Following *West of Dodge*, the next two books (*End of the Drive* in the spring of 1997 and *Monument Rock* in 1998) contain a group of fine western short stories and novellas that were the genesis of some of Dad's novels, like *Tucker* and *Kiowa Trail*. These are not stories like the ones that we published in the previous collections, *The Rider of the Ruby Hills* and *Trail to Crazy Man*, where the novel version was an almost identical story, only longer. These new stories are obviously experiments with the plots and themes that later became novels, but the story lines are quite different—in some cases better than the later novels.

The other group of stories that I found in that dusty box was the most exciting group for me. It was

several adventure stories, but not in the comic book style of "Night over the Solomons" or "West of Singapore." Some of these stories are more or less dramatized accounts of adventures from Louis's life, like the stories in *Yondering*, or they are pure fiction but are drawn from places he'd been or people he'd known. Not only did I find these to be interesting reading, but occasionally they contained clues to Louis's life and the people he knew.

That leads me to the last subject for this foreword. I have been traveling around interviewing various people for Louis's biography. I have been fortunate enough to have talked to several members of his family, people he knew in Oregon in the 1920s, Oklahoma in the 1930s, and Paris, France, and outlying areas in the 1940s. All have been most warm and gracious, very helpful and generous with their time. All have also been blessed with extraordinary memories, a true miracle, as I am asking them to remember back fifty, sixty, sometimes seventy years. Finding these people has been difficult, and now as I have been slowly working through all the easy ones, I am having to get more and more inventive about seeking these people out.

I am hoping that you, Louis's faithful readers, can help me out. In the back of this book I am going to place a list of names. These are people who were an important part of Louis's life at one time or another, but now all I know are their names and where and when he knew them. If you know any of these people, please ask them if they would write to me at the address in back.

Many of the people on this list may be deceased, but if there is a family member or acquaintance who knew the person well I would also like to hear from them. I would be very grateful for any help anyone could give me. If you are one of these people on the list, please don't be shy or feel like you don't really know enough about Louis. I am very good at asking



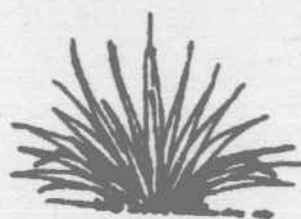
questions and I am only interested in the time period in which you knew him, nothing more.

So check out the names in back if you want to help and drop me a card at the address at the end of the list. I'll enjoy hearing from you. I hope you all enjoy this collection of stories—it surely was a find and we are proud to present it to you.

Until we meet again . . .

—BEAU L'AMOUR

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# BEYOND THE CHAPARRAL



Jim Rossiter looked up as the boy came into the room. He smiled, a half-nostalgic smile, for this boy reminded him of himself . . . fifteen, no . . . twenty years ago.

"What is it, Mike?"

The boy's eyes were worried. He hesitated, not wanting to tell what he had to tell, yet knowing with his boyish wisdom that it was better for Rossiter to hear it from him, now.

"Lonnie Parker's back from prison."

Jim Rossiter did not move for a long, long minute. "I see," he said. "Thanks, Mike."

When the boy had gone he got to his feet and walked to the window, watching Mike cross the street. It was not easy to grow up in a western town when one wanted the things Mike Hamlin wanted.

Mike Hamlin did not want to punch cows, to drive a freight wagon or a stage. He did not want to own a ranch or even be the town marshal. Mike was a dreamer, a thinker, a reader. He might be a young Shelley, a potential Calhoun. He was a boy born to thought, and that in a community where all the premiums were paid to action.

Jim Rossiter knew how it was with Mike, for Jim

had been through it, too. He had fought this same battle, and had, after a fashion, won.

He had punched cows, all right. And for awhile he had driven a freight wagon. For a time he had been marshal of a trail town, but always with a book in his pocket. First it had been Plutarch—how many times had he read it? Then Plato, Thucydides, Shakespeare, and Shelley. The books had been given to him by a drunken remittance man, and he had passed them along to Mike. A drunken Englishman and Jim Rossiter, bearers of the torch. He smiled wryly at the thought.

But he had won. . . . He had gone east, had become a lawyer, had practiced there. However, memories of the land he left behind were always with him, the wide vistas, the battlements of the mesas, the vast towers of lonely cloud, the fringing pines . . . and the desert that gave so richly of its colors and its spaces.

So he had come back.

A scholar and a thinker in a land of action. A dreamer in a place of violence. He had returned because he loved the land. He stayed because he loved Magda Lane. That love, he had found, was one of the few things that gave his life any meaning.

And now Lonnie Parker was back.

Lonnie, who had given so much to Magda when she needed it, so much of gaiety and laughter. Lonnie Parker, who rode like a devil and fought like a madman. Lonnie, who could dance and laugh and be gay, and who was weak—that was Magda's word.

Rossiter, who was wise in the ways of women, knew that weakness had its appeal. There was a penalty for seeming strong, for those whose pride made it necessary to carry on as best they could although often lonely or unhappy. No one realized—few would take the time to look closely enough. The weak needed help . . . the strong? They needed nothing.

Sometimes it seemed the price of strength was



loneliness and unhappiness . . . and the rewards for weakness were love, tenderness, and compassion.

Now Jim Rossiter stared down the dusty street, saw the bleak faces of the old buildings, lined with the wind etchings of years, saw the far plains and hills beyond, and knew the depths of all that loneliness.

Now that Lonnie was back it would spell the end of everything for him. Yet in a sense it would be a relief. Now the threat was over, the suspense would be gone.

He had never known Lonnie Parker. But he had heard of him. "Lonnie?" they would say, smiling a little. "There's no harm in him. Careless, maybe, but he doesn't mean anything by it."

Rossiter looked around the bare country law office. Three years, and he had come to love it, this quiet place, often too quiet, where he practiced law. He walked back to his desk and sat down. He was supposed to call tonight . . . should he?

Lonnie was back, and Magda had once told him herself, "I'm not sure, Jim. Perhaps I love him. I . . . I don't know. I was so alone then, and he understood and he needed me. Maybe that was all it was, but I just don't know."

Jim Rossiter was a tall, quiet man with wide shoulders and narrow hips. He liked people, and he made friends. Returning to the West he had come to this town where he was not known, and had brought a new kind of law with him.

In the past, the law had been an instrument of the big cattleman. The small men could not afford to hire the sort of lawyers who could fight their cases against the big money. Jim Rossiter had taken their cases, and they had paid him, sometimes with cash, sometimes with cattle, sometimes with promises. Occasionally, he lost. More often, he won.

Soon he had cattle of his own, and he ran them on

Tom Frisby's place, Frisby being one of the men for whom he had won a case.

Rossiter made enemies, but he also made friends. He rode miles to talk to newcomers; he even took cases out of the county. He was a good listener and his replies were always honest. There had been a mention of him for the legislature when the territory became a state.

He had seen Magda Lane the morning he arrived, and the sight of her had stopped him in the middle of the street.

She had been crossing toward him, a quiet, lovely girl with dark hair and gray-green eyes. She had looked up and seen him there, a tall, young man in a gray suit and black hat. Their eyes met, and Jim Rossiter looked quickly away, then walked on, his mouth dry, his heart pounding.

Even in that small town it was three weeks before they met. Rossiter saw her box handed to a younger girl to smuggle in to the box supper, and had detected the colors of the wrappings. He spent his last four dollars bidding on it, but he won.

They had talked then, and somehow he had found himself telling her of his boyhood, his ambitions, and why he had returned to the West.

Almost a month passed before she told him of Lonnie. It came about easily, a passing mention. Yet he had heard the story before. According to some, Lonnie had held up a stage in a moment of boyish excitement.

"But he didn't mean anything by it," she told him. "He isn't a bad boy."

Later, he was shocked when he discovered that Lonnie had been twenty-seven when he was sent to prison.

But others seemed to agree. Wild, yes . . . but not bad. Not Lonnie. Had a few drinks, maybe, they said. He'd spent most of the money in a poker game.

Only Frisby added a dissenting note. "Maybe he



ain't bad," he said testily, "but I had money on that stage. Cost me a season's work so's he could set in that game with George Sprague."

The stolen money, Rossiter learned, had been taken in charge by the stage driver to buy dress goods, household items, and other odds and ends for a dozen of the squatters around Gentry. A boyish prank, some said, but it had cost the losers the few little things they needed most, the things they had saved many nickels and dimes to buy.

Yet, on the evenings when he visited Magda, he thought not at all of Lonnie. He was far away and Magda was here right now. They walked together, rode together. She was a widow—her husband had been killed by Indians after a marriage of only weeks. At a trying time in her life, Lonnie had come along and he had been helpful, considerate.

Now Lonnie was back, and he, Jim Rossiter was to visit Magda that evening.

It was not quite dark when he opened the gate in the white picket fence and started up the walk to the porch. He heard a low murmur of voices, then laughter. He felt his cheeks flush, and for an instant debated turning about. Yet he went on, and his foot was lifted for the first step up the porch when he saw them.

Lonnie was there and Magda was in his arms.

He turned abruptly and started back down the walk. He heard the door open behind, then Magda called, "Jim! Oh, Jim, no!"

He paused at the gate, his face stiff. "Sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt." He heard Lonnie's low chuckle.

She called again but he did not stop. He walked down the street and out of town, clear to the edge of the mesa. He stood there a long time in the darkness.

Leaving the restaurant at noon the next day, he