

STILL THE BEST DARN PIE IN CENTRAL CITY, MAX. WHAT DO I OWE YOU?

IT'S ON THE HOUSE, LOU.



ANYWAY, HE'S A DIFFERENT BOY NOW. STAYS IN NIGHTS, DOES GOOD IN SCHOOL.

I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING. JUST SHOWED A LITTLE INTEREST. ANYONE COULD DO AS MUCH.

PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE, EVEN WHEN THEY'RE A LITTLE MISGUIDED. THEY'LL LISTEN TO REASON.

ONLY YOU!



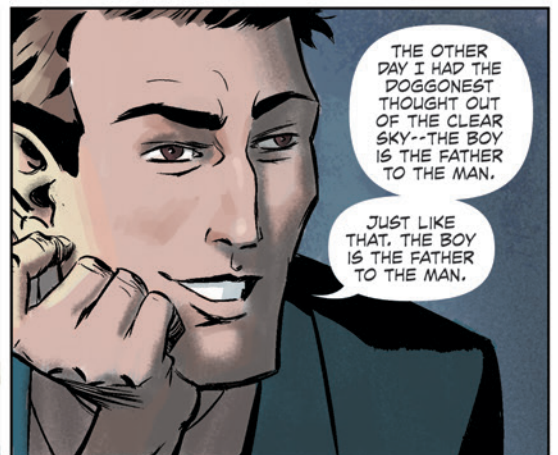
I liked the guy--as much as I like most people--but he was too good to let go.

WELL, I TELL YOU THE WAY I LOOK AT IT, A MAN DOESN'T GET ANY MORE OUT OF HIS LIFE THAN WHAT HE PUTS INTO IT.



Polite, intelligent: guys like that are my meat.

UMM... I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, LOU.



THE OTHER DAY I HAD THE DOGGONEST THOUGHT OUT OF THE CLEAR SKY--THE BOY IS THE FATHER TO THE MAN.

JUST LIKE THAT, THE BOY IS THE FATHER TO THE MAN.



If there's anything worse than a bore, it's a corny bore. But how can he brush off me? Friendly, dopey Lou Ford?

WELL, GOSH, LOU, I GUESS I GOTTA GET BACK TO THE KITCHEN...



I HAVE A LOT OF IDEAS. TAKE THE HEAT WAVE WE HAD LAST YEAR IN '51--A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK IT'S THE HEAT THAT MAKES IT HOT.

IT'S NOT THE HEAT BUT THE HUMIDITY. I'LL BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT, DID YOU?



I BETTER SHOVE OFF. GOT A LOT TO DO, AND I DON'T WANT TO RUSH. HASTE MAKES WASTE, I SAY. I LIKE TO LOOK BEFORE I LEAP.

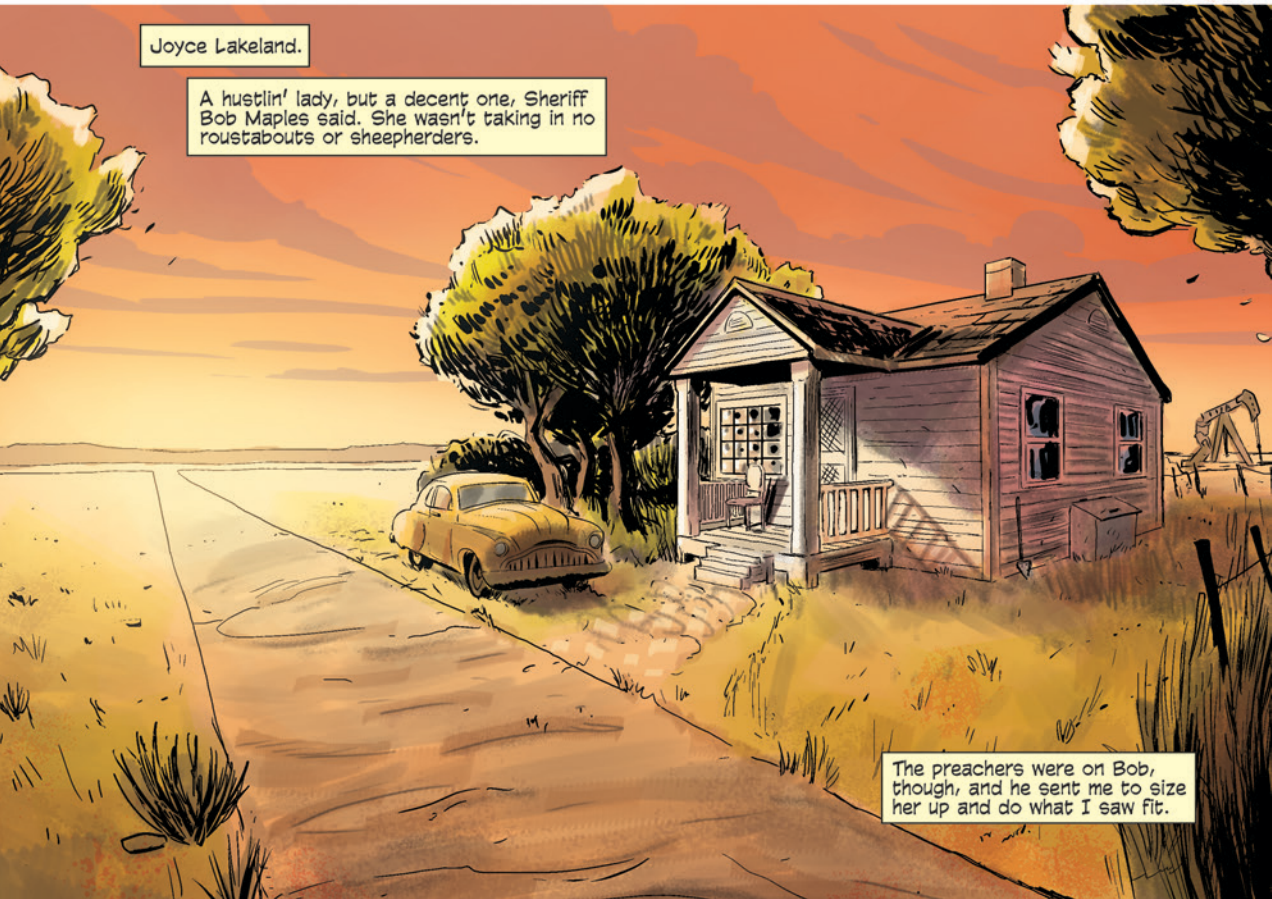
Striking at people this way is almost as good as the other way.



The real way. The way I'd fought to forget--that I had almost forgotten--until I met her.

Joyce Lakeland.

A hustlin' lady, but a decent one, Sheriff Bob Maples said. She wasn't taking in no roustabouts or sheepherders.



The preachers were on Bob, though, and he sent me to size her up and do what I saw fit.

Central City wasn't more than a wide place in a Texas road when Chester Conway made it the headquarters for his construction company.

Then the oil boom came, and almost overnight the population jumped to 48,000.

Central City may have got bigger, but our standards of conduct never changed.

Here you say yes ma'am and no ma'am to anything with a skirt--anything white, that is.

Here, if you catch a man with his pants down you apologize, even if you're arresting him.

Here you're a man and a gentleman, or you aren't anything.

And God help you if you're not.

YES?

I SAID, "YES?"

Remember, I hadn't had the sickness in almost fifteen years. Not since I was fourteen.



OH... I DON'T USUALLY MAKE A PRACTICE OF IT THIS EARLY IN THE MORNING...

I'LL MAKE SOME COFFEE. YOU GO INTO THE BEDROOM.



At first I thought I would let her ride.

But then...



Hustlin' ladies was one thing.



Hustlin' ladies with guns was something else.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT?



SHERIFF'S OFFICE, MA'AM. WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH IT?



SATISFIED, COPPER?

I RECKON IT'S ALL RIGHT, MISS, EVEN IF IT WAS REGISTERED IN FORT WORTH.

AND MY NAME'S FORD, NOT COPPER.



JESUS! NICEST LOOKING GUY I EVER SAW AND HE'S A LOUSY COPPER. I DON'T JAZZ COPS.



I had to get out of there. I felt the sickness coming back.

YOU LOUSY SON-OF-A--

I JUST CAME OUT FOR A TALK. I WANT YOU OUT OF TOWN BY SUNDOWN, OR I'LL HAVE TO RUN YOU IN FOR PROSTITUTION.

DON'T YOU SAY IT, MA'AM...