

BITTER SWEET

Each year in September the gather begins
Of herds in the north when the grass starts to thin.
So Cody and Ike trot along with their skill.
To better the odds will ride Burbank and Bill.

That old apple tree that I still can recall
Sure chewed bitter sweet on the round up last fall.
The one that grows old on the rugged east bluff,
Where riders don't prowl 'cause the going is rough.

Ride slow through the Narrows. The only way to
Pass under the tree with the cliff sided view.
Brown leaves hide the slope where the grass hardly grows.
The rocky drop off and the wind always blows.

Why surely no cows could be grazing up there.
It was the driest of years, could only be bare.
So me and the boys punched our gathered on in.
We're short just a few well I'd guess maybe ten.

We 'lected to eat before we rode back out.
We're waiting for grub and just jawing about
While Cookie fired up that old stained blackened grate,
Why those few ol' mavericks will just have to wait.

The brand boss drove up without making a sound.
Got out with a smile said, "Looks like they're all found."
Approached him with caution and said with a sigh;
"We're missing a few and they must be up high."

"Why are you boys here and not ready to mount?
There'll be time for grub when you balance the count."
So Cody and Ike rattled hocks for the hill,
Did not return soon, so went Burbank and Bill.

Ol' Bill rode in crazed as a sane man can get!
I joked with ol' Cookie, "He has some news I'll bet".
Rambled off a story one heck of a tale.
So Bill, Cookie, and I started up the bluff trail.

Then Cookie said, "Wait" and grabbed his big apple pie
To use as a tool when he confronts the guy
That was raising ruckus and causing disrupt
Of cowboys and cows that are now all corrupt.

Arrived at the narrows and looked at the site.
One wrong move could put this whole bunch into flight.
The stock and the cowboys had ridden on through
Not 'ware of the bear with the apple-stocked view.

I lifted my hat and confirmed that the tree
For sure lodged the biggest brown bear you could see.
No horse nor a cow with the nerve would ease out
Not 'neath the stuffed bear who kept lounging about.

Any shot fired would cause a stampede for the cliff,
They were all so stiff legged and feared danger they'd sniff.
We then coaxed the bear down with that great looking pie
Smelling so fresh there with sweet apples and Chai.

The adventure was over. We rode to camp
The tally all balanced and 'hands' could revamp.
No one looked at Cookie nor their thanks would they share,
Still mad 'cause he fed their whole pie to that bear.

Dennis Russell

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