



# **PICCADILLY PUBLISHING**

*The Home of Great Western Fiction!*

The Bannerman business empire spread right across the west, but Yancey Bannerman, the oldest son of magnate C.B. Bannerman, wasn't interested in all that wealth—at least, not if he had to sit behind a pile of ledgers and accounts to earn it. Yancey preferred the wide-open, adventurous life ... and that was why C.B. disowned him.

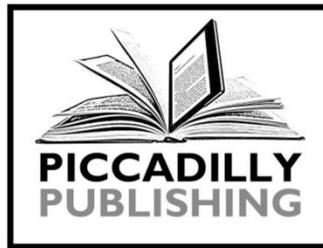
To C.B.'s way of thinking, Yancey was little more than a black sheep. And anyway, he had another son, Chuck, and a daughter named Mattie, to rely on.

But C.B. should have looked a little closer to home to find the real black sheep of the family. Chuck was up to his eyes in gambling debts, and that made him a desperate man ... just desperate enough to try robbing the Governor of Texas himself!

Before he knew it, Yancey and his gun-swift partner, Johnny Cato, found themselves involved a plot to oust Governor Lester Dukes from power ... and by the end of it, each man had himself a new job—as one of the Governor's go-anywhere, fight-anyone peacekeepers ... the Enforcers.

**KIRK HAMILTON**

**BANNERMAN  
THE ENFORCER I:  
THE ENFORCER**



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## *One – The Brothers Bannerman*

THE DESERT stretched for a hundred miles in one direction and thirty in the other. It was sun-blasted, scoured by blistering winds, and inhabited only by lizards, Gila monsters and rattlesnakes.

It was an ideal hideout for banditos and, if a man didn't know about the banditos, a good way to move north towards the border of the United States undetected. If he was lucky, a man might dodge the banditos entirely. If he wasn't, he could well run into the bandits and more trouble than he could wish for.

Yancey Bannerman, it seemed, was unlucky.

He had come over three hundred miles south from Austin, pushing a spooky herd of two thousand longhorns on behalf of the Capitol County Cattlemen's Association, hoping to find a ready market in Mexico for beef that was bringing barely five dollars a head in Texas. The Lone Star State was in the grip of the longest drought in its history and the hide-and-tallow men were making their fortunes, buying up beeves cheap. But the hardheads from Capitol County dug in their heels and figured they would rather risk pushing the herd south, hoping for a better market, than hand over their steers to the hide-and-tallow men.

Not many trail herders would even consider driving two thousand longhorns down into Mexico at that time of the year, with all the troubles south of the border, but there were a few adventurers available, soldiers of fortune, ready to accept any challenge.

Yancey Bannerman had been available at the time, at a loose end and, over a couple of glasses of redevye in the Waco Saloon, he amiably agreed to make the drive. He would round up his own crew, purchase his own chuck wagon, all for eight dollars a steer. Or, if the Association wanted it that way, he would take the herd off their hands at a price almost double that which the hide-and-tallow men were paying, and take his chances on what he could get at the other end. But the Association men were too hardheaded for that. They knew that there was every chance Yancey might get through and sell the steers at twenty dollars a head, regardless of condition. They were willing to gamble on it. He had that kind of reputation and so the big man had sealed the deal and the herd had begun its long drift south ten days later.

The Association stood to make a nice profit. Yancey had brought the herd through with

minimum losses and had sold them to the Mexican army for eighteen dollars a head, payment in gold. He was content with his own profit, after paying off his crew, but he didn't like putting at risk gold that didn't belong to him. Instead of riding back to the Rio with his hard case crew, Yancey cut out of the army cantina town one night without saying adios to anyone and figured to cut across the desert, making his own way to the Rio and Austin, toting the gold.

Unfortunately, someone had either seen him ride out and noted which trail he took, or he had had the bad luck to be spotted by a bandito lookout. Either way, he was in trouble.

He was in the middle of the desert when he knew he had a bunch of maybe ten Mexican cutthroats dogging his trail. It was no use trying to throw them off; they knew he would head north, and they knew this desert a lot better than he did. Their mounts were desert-bred ponies which could run the little, stubby-legged Texas cowpony into the ground. The way the bandits were hanging on, Yancey figured they knew he was carrying gold. They would kill him for the boots on his feet, of course, but there seemed to be something especially dogged about the way they rode behind him, just out of rifle range.

Yancey wasn't a man to let circumstances get him down. He acknowledged he was in trouble and all his mental efforts now were directed at getting out of it with a whole skin if possible. One thing did bother him though, and that was his ammunition. His rifle was an old Spencer repeater in .52 caliber. It was ex-army and the butt-loading magazine held seven rimfire cartridges, the No. 56 Spencer Specials. It was a heavy, thunderous rifle that placed his shots where he wanted them to go and could handle all game up to and including a grizzly bear. He knew the rifle was out of date, with the new lever-action Winchester taking on in popularity, but he was partial to the gun although Spencer ammunition was hard to come by south of the border, and the result was he only had whatever bullets were in the magazine, plus one Blakelee loading tube that held only seven cartridges. His six-gun was a Colt .45 Peacemaker, and he only had half the loops in his shell belt filled. If it came to a pitched battle he would have to make every bullet count.

But he had a sound horse, still in pretty good shape, and the sun was westering. A couple of miles away there was a jagged purple butte. If he could hold his lead, get there ahead of the bandits and dig in, he reckoned he could hold them off till dark. Then, with the black desert night and, hopefully, a wind to blow away his tracks, he might just be able to pull off this desperate deal.

The banditos weren't fooled. When Yancey spurred his little pony on and veered away towards

the purple butte, they turned after him and whipped their desert ponies to greater speed. Two of them unslung their Snider bolt-action rifles and tried a couple of ranging shots but they had no effect. Yancey was well clear of the Mexicans and their leader, a broken-toothed man with a notched knife scar tracing a deep purple line down one cheek, yelled curses as he urged his men on. But the spunky little cowpony made it to the shadow of the butte, yellow dust from its hoofs spiraling in the fading sunlight.

The trail up the butte was steep and Yancey dismounted without slowing the pony as it fought its way gallantly up the steep slope. He had time now to look behind and he saw that the Mexicans had gained some ground and, even as he watched, three of them got rifles to their shoulders and cut loose with a ragged volley. The bullets spanged harmlessly against the rocks at the foot of the butte, but Yancey knew that the bandits would get him in range before he reached the top. Minutes later, a bullet smacked into the rock above him and his pony reared as a ricochet screamed past. Dragging the heavy Spencer from the saddle scabbard, he smacked the pony on the rump, sending it higher up the trail, while he dropped into a cleft in the rocks, worked the trigger-guard lever, jacking one of the heavy cartridges into the breech. He thumbed back the mule-eared hammer, which had to be cocked separately, sighted along the round barrel at the bandits below.

The Spencer thundered and the heavy caliber bullet smashed into the leader's horse and killed it instantly. The Mexicans scattered, hunting cover. Yancey levered, cocked the hammer, sighted and squeezed off a second shot. One of the riders left the saddle as if he had been plucked off and sailed through the air before crumpling to the ground. The horse ran on, riderless, and Yancey coolly shot it through the head. Putting as many of the bandits as possible afoot would be just as good as killing them, he figured.

A ragged volley from the Sniders raked the rocks above him, bullets spattering and whining. He straightened from where he had crouched, took time to glance up at his mount and was glad to see it disappearing around the next bend in the trail. That would at least protect it from bullets. Then he drew a bead on one of the Mexicans clambering over the rocks for better protection. The Spencer's heavy bullet smashed the man flat as if an avalanche had fallen on him. Yancey levered, cocked, sighted, swung the smoking barrel through the heavy gray-white cloud of gunsmoke and picked off another man, but only wounded him.

The Spencer's load of black-powder was a big drawback to any man who wanted to keep his

position hidden from the enemy. It made a thick, heavy cloud which hung in the air, pinpointing his position. Yancey figured he would move after one more shot. But the hammer fell on an empty chamber and he pulled out the loading tube, flicked up the trapdoor in the butt and funneled his last seven cartridges into the Spencer. He crawled out of the cleft, crouching on the trail as more lead smacked into the rocks around him. Yancey made a run for the bend in the trail, heard a wild yell and was surprised to see one of the bandits riding hard up the steep trail below him. He notched back the Spencer's big hammer and braced the steel butt plate against his hip as he fired. The recoil sent him staggering but he had reloaded and had the hammer cocked for a second shot before the echoes of the first had died. It wasn't needed. The Mexican was slammed out of the saddle over his horse's rump, hit the edge of the trail and tumbled over. The riderless horse ran on and Yancey sprinted after his own pony.

Panting, he made it to the top of the butte, ground-hitched his mount with a rock on the reins and settled down inside a ring of boulders that gave him command of the trail and the desert around the butte. They couldn't jump him now, that was certain.

But it was a pitifully small pile of .45 cartridges he placed on the rock beside him, shucking all but five from the belt loops. Fifteen or sixteen rounds at the most ...

Yancey Bannerman glanced at the sky. The sun was sliding down behind the mountains in the west, but it would be quite some time before the top of this butte would be in darkness. The land below would be shadowed first and that could work against him. He might not be able to see what the bandits were up to.

Yancey figured he had been in happier positions than this. He only hoped he would live long enough to see the setting sun rise again ...

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A thousand miles to the north and the west, another Bannerman was also in a grim situation, every bit as dangerous and deadly, even though he was in a plush gambling room upstairs in the Barbary Queen, one of the fanciest saloons on the Barbary Coast and the center for San Francisco's most reckless gamblers.

Charles 'Chuck' Bannerman was Yancey's elder brother only by a couple of years, but he looked at least five years older. But the way the four men in the office were looking at him now, Chuck was beginning to wonder if he would grow much older at all. Fleetinglly, he figured he could use Yancey's know-how with guns and fists right now, but the hard fact was that he was

alone against three bleak-eyed men and he had only his wits to get him out of this latest scrape. Hank Boden had already taken the pearl-handled, plated derringer from the secret pocket of his frockcoat.

Boden was Hub Landis' bodyguard and he lounged against the ornate doorway with the derringer in his palm. Landis, fat, soft-looking with mean eyes, sprawled behind his desk, puffing on a cigar as he looked at Chuck, one hand fiddling with a small stack of IOUs on the desk. The two other men in the room stayed back in the shadows where Chuck could not see them clearly, but one of them was a gunfighter, he figured, by the way he wore his six-gun tied down low on his right thigh. He was a tall, lean man and Chuck thought he could see an eye patch in the shadow line cast by his hat brim. His face looked tanned and he had a pointed jaw: a man Chuck would recognize again. The other was not so discernible, but from what Chuck could see of the man he was well-fed and his clothes were expensive; gray broadcloth with a brocade vest. The chubby hands folded across his stomach glittered with two gold rings, one of which was set with a ruby. But his head was in shadow and he did not speak. Chuck would know him by the rings, if they ever met again, but that was all the identification he could rely on.

Chuck himself, like all the male Bannermans, was tall and wide-shouldered, narrow-hipped and didn't carry any spare flesh. Women called Chuck a handsome man, but he had a weak mouth, that tended to pout. Right now, he was trying to look Landis in the eyes as the pudgy saloon-keeper picked up the pile of IOUs and slapped them down on the desk again.

"Too many, Chuck," Landis said in a surprisingly high voice for a man of his bulk. "Far too many. My accountant's latest tally is six thousand dollars and that's a thousand over the limit I allow you—uh—gentlemen gamblers."

Chuck flushed a little at the inflexion on 'gentlemen' but knew he couldn't afford to show anger at the moment. So he forced a smile and tried to shrug it off. "You know I'm good for any limit, Hub."

Landis arched his thin eyebrows. "Well, now, that don't necessarily follow, Chuck, my boy ... I know your father has six thousand, in fact six million, I guess, if you count all his assets in banks and land and other property, but Curtis Bannerman ain't you! And it's your signature on these here IOUs." He shuffled the slips like cards. "I've let you run up that much but I don't aim to let you run up a cent more until I'm paid my six thousand ... I'm giving you a week to settle."

"A week!" echoed Chuck, staggered. "Hell, Hub, you know I can't do that!"

Then he gave a grunt of pain as something slammed hard into his kidneys and he cannoned into the desk, grabbing at the edge as pain and nausea flooded through him. His knees buckled and he felt sweat pricking his skin as he gagged for breath, fought upright and turned his head to see what had hit him. Hank Boden, blocky, thick-chested and craggy-faced, stood there, looking impassive as he rubbed his knuckles gently. Chuck looked back to Landis, and when he spoke there was indignation as well as pain in his voice.

“What is this, Hub? No need for rough stuff! You know that!”

Landis shrugged. “That’s your judgment, Chuck ... Now, have I made myself clear? I need the six thousand dollars you owe me. In one week. If you don’t pay up, I’m taking these IOUs straight to your father.”

Chuck swallowed painfully. He was more afraid of old ‘C.B’ than he was of these cold-eyed gamblers. He would sooner face Boden’s hard-knuckled fists than have his father learn that the money he had lost at the gaming tables had belonged to an investment account administered by the main Bannerman Bank on the bustling corner of Union and Alameda Streets. In a desperate attempt to win back enough to pay off his debts, Chuck had ‘borrowed’ the trust money. He had lost again and now he was in deep trouble—two ways.

“One week, Chuck,” Landis said, in his piping voice, breaking in on his thoughts. “Maybe I should save myself a lot of trouble by going directly to your father. What do you say?”

“For God’s sake, don’t do that!” begged Chuck, rubbing at his aching back. “You said a week. Give me at least that!” He added desperately, “I’ll get that money—somehow!”

Landis’ moist mouth opened in a cold smile, as sinister as a gargoyle’s. “You do that, Chuck.” He nodded to Boden. “See him out.”

Boden grabbed Chuck by the left arm and swung him round to the door. Before Chuck could protest, the bodyguard wrenched open the rear door and walked him out on his toes. Chuck felt cold night air out on the wooden landing. Stairs ran steeply down to an alley between the Barbary Queen and the building next door, another saloon and whorehouse. As Boden fumbled to close the door with his free hand, Chuck twisted around in time to see Hub Landis handing the IOUs to the man in the shadows. Chuck could see the hand with the ruby ring take them and, just as the door closed, he heard Landis say:

“Here you are, Mr. Magnus. I figure we’ll get some action now.”

Then the latch clicked and Boden came up hard behind Chuck, applying pressure to his arm,

wrenching it up his back.

“We’re going downstairs, Bannerman,” Boden growled. “You first!”

He shoved hard and Chuck yelled as he was heaved forward, losing his footing, crashing down the stairs, tumbling over and over until he hit the ground.

Above him, the stairs trembled under the heavy tread of Hank Boden as the craggy-faced man came down unhurriedly, fists balling up ...

Chuck, dazed, hurt, tried to struggle up but knew it was no use. He would never make it.

