

THE KID

Advanced
Reader Copy—
On-Sale Date
May 7, 2024



JEFF SCHILL



CHARLESBRIDGE MOVES

Charlesbridge Moves is an imprint that excites middle-grade and chapter-book readers with adventure, science-fiction, fantasy, historical and realistic fiction, mystery, and humor—sparking a curiosity to read more. Whether through traditional prose, verse, or graphic-novel elements, our stories grow and sustain an appetite for reading over the long term, especially with boys and reluctant readers.

Don't miss the other books on the inaugural Charlesbridge Moves list in Summer 2024, *Wings to Soar* and *Hum*.



THE KID
JEFF SCHILL





For fun, interactive content
related to *The Kid*, visit
www.charlesbridge.com/TheKid
or scan this QR code.

Text copyright © 2024 by Jeff Schill
Jacket illustrations copyright © 2024 by Adam Gustavson
All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole
or in part in any form. Charlesbridge and colophon are registered
trademarks of Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc.

At the time of publication, all URLs printed in this book were
accurate and active. Charlesbridge, the author, and the illustrator
are not responsible for the content or accessibility of any website.

Published by Charlesbridge Moves, an imprint of Charlesbridge Publishing
9 Galen Street, Watertown, MA 02472
(617) 926-0329 • www.charlesbridge.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Schill, Jeff, author.

Title: The kid / Jeff Schill.

Description: Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, [2024] | Audience: Ages 10. |
Audience: Grades 4–6. | Summary: In 1880s Colorado, young Henry is
trying to keep his brothers together now that their parents are dead by
writing stories about The Kid, and after he stops, his editor, Herbert, arrives
at the same time as Snake Eye Sam, who is determined to take down The Kid.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022056616 (print) | LCCN 2022056617 (ebook) |
ISBN 9781623543648 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781632893413 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Child authors—Juvenile fiction. | Editors—Juvenile fiction. |
Orphans—Juvenile fiction. | Colorado—History—19th century—Juvenile
fiction. | CYAC: Child authors—Fiction. | Editors—Fiction. | Orphans—
Fiction. | West (U.S.)—Fiction. | Colorado—History—19th century—
Fiction. | LCGFT: Western fiction. | Historical fiction.

Classification: LCC PZ7.1.S336153 Ki 2024 (print) | LCC PZ7.1.S336153
(ebook) | DDC 813.6 [Fic]—dc23/eng/20230515

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022056616>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022056617>

Printed in China

(hc) 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Illustrations done in Procreate and Photoshop

Display type set in Cowboy Western

Text type set in Adobe Jensen Pro

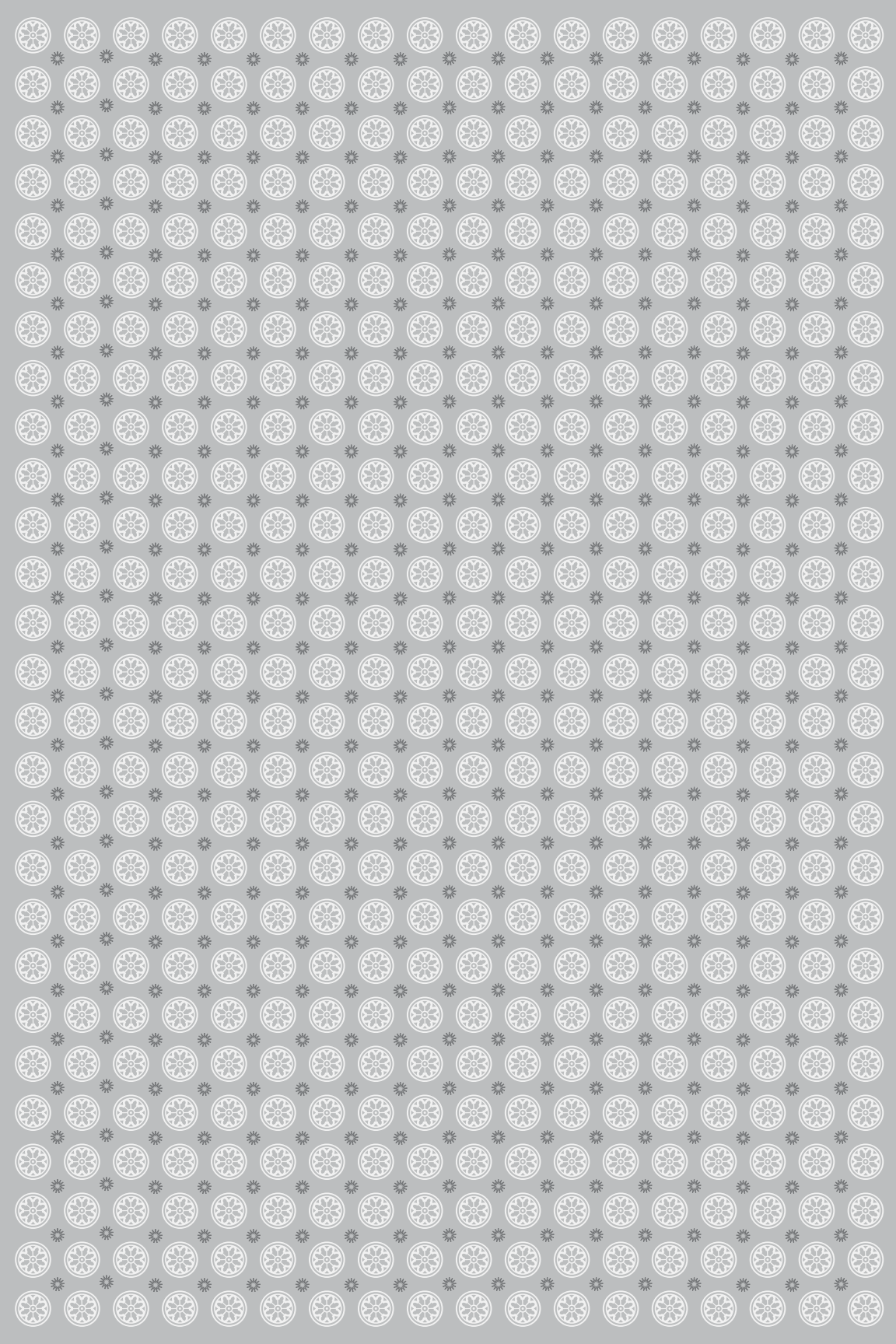
Printed by 1010 Printing International Limited in Huizhou, Guangdong, China

Production supervision by Jennifer Delaney

Designed by Cathleen Schaad

To Candy:
my Miss Jameson,
now and forever





PART

1



**Journey
to Destiny**

1

Gunslinger Magazine

September 1881

Strafford and Regal Publishing

The Gerrity Gang Meets Their Destiny

by The Kid

Four dusty marauders entered Destiny, Colorado, just as a full moon peeked from behind a thicket of angry gray clouds.

Gil Gerrity tied his spotted saddlebred to the hitching post and tipped his hat back to get a better look at the town. There's nothing to worry about in this one-post town, he thought. It was as quiet as an empty church.

Gil looked at his crew and smiled for the first time in two days. They had made out better than expected back in Westerly. And that sad little sheriff had barely stood a chance when the bullets started flying. They had galloped out of town whooping and hollering, with guns firing in the air like the wildest gang in all the West.

The Gerrity Gang had tracked the Bearpaw Trail through the rocky hills of southern Colorado ever since, taking care to make sure they weren't being followed. And now, after some hard riding, they were ready for a bit of celebrating.

"Well, boys," Gil said, putting a clump of tobacco in his left cheek. "I got me a pocket full of silver, a throat as dry as a desert creek, and an awful itch for a glass of whiskey." He lifted his hat and scratched his oily, matted-down hair. "I plan on going inside this here saloon and drinking my fill. I may even have one in honor of that cowardly sheriff lying on his back in Westerly."

The crew laughed.

"We going to drink whiskey all night, boss?" Rattlesnake Turner asked, slapping his hat against his pant leg, sending a cloud of dust into the air.

"I got enough silver in my pocket to drink for a week," the small-eared man on the end added.

No-Tongue Tony didn't say nothing. He just nodded.

It wasn't the best looking of crews. But they could all hold their own when the guns started blasting. And that's what Gerrity cared about most.

He spit a long, dark stream of tobacco into the water trough. "We'll be staying the night here, boys," he said. "We might as well do a bit of celebrating before we kick out in the morning for ole Mexico."

The crew yelped and hooted as they slid off their horses and tied them to the post.

Their boots landed heavily on the boardwalk as they sauntered their way toward the tavern, spurs jangling with every step. The loaded revolvers on their belts glinted in the light of the rising full moon. They'd be drinking their fill thanks to the generosity of the residents of Westerly.

Gerrity checked his Schofield Special and blew dust from the cartridge before spiraling the barrel into place and tucking it back into his holster.

He'd enjoyed being a stable hand in Cheyenne a few years back, but that had nothing on being a robber and running his own crew. He spit another stream of tobacco onto the boardwalk as he pushed open the doors of the saloon and strolled inside.

The boys were immediately disappointed. There would be no raucous poker game at the corner card table or foot-tapping music on the piano, and certainly no pretty dancing ladies tonight. The Destiny Saloon was empty . . . empty as a beggar's pockets.

They stood at the door and slowly took in the small round wooden tables scattered across the room, the quiet piano in the corner, and the flimsy latched back door. The only movement was a tall, skinny man in a leather vest washing glasses behind the long bar.

Gerrity scrunched his twice-broken nose and spit a stream of tobacco that hit the side of the spittoon. He had been in enough one-bottled saloons to know that as long as they had whiskey, then he and the crew would be happy. Without saying a word, he moved to a nearby chair, sat down, and put his muddy boots on the table. For emphasis, he unholstered his Schofield pistol and slapped it on the table too.

Following his lead, the gang all did the same.

Four dangerous desperados and their guns sat staring at the barkeep. If he was afraid, he didn't show it. He just stood behind the bar working a dirty rag across a dull glass.

Gerrity tapped his finger on the handle of his gun. "We been riding hard, and we need some whiskey over here, keep," he said.

"Woo-hoo," Rattlesnake yelled, slapping his dirty pant leg again.

"Whiskey!" the small-eared man called to the ceiling.

No-Tongue Tony just nodded.

The barkeep twitched his upper lip and set the glass he had scrubbed on the shelf behind him and grabbed another. He turned back and started polishing again.

"We ain't got no whiskey," he said quietly.

Gerrity nearly fell from his chair. "Ain't got no whiskey," he said. "What kind of one-stool saloon ain't got no whiskey?"

The barkeep held the glass up to the dim light above the bar. "No whiskey," he repeated.

"Did he say they ain't got no whiskey, Gil?" Rattlesnake asked, plopping his boots to the ground.

"Well, ain't that a bucket of nails," the small-eared man said.

No-Tongue Tony reached for his gun.

Gerrity held up his hand to calm his crew.

"Now, just a minute, boys." He turned his attention to the skinny barkeep. "I think you can understand our situation here," he said. "We've just ridden a long way. And the sign on the outside of this here establishment says Saloon. So I suggest you find something strong behind that bar and bring it to me and my crew right quick."

The barkeep spit on his rag and rubbed it into the glass.

"All we got is sarsaparilla," he said.

"Sarsaparilla?" Rattlesnake asked. "Is that like whiskey, Gil?"

"Ain't nothing like whiskey," Small-Ears answered.

No-Tongue Tony squinted and waited for the word from Gerrity to fill this saloon with lead.

Gerrity sat back and picked at his front tooth with a dirty fingernail.

"Keep, we ain't come all this way for sarsaparilla," he said. "I don't rightly care where you find whiskey in this one-tree town, but if we don't get us a drink, then I'm going to put a bullet through that glass you're holding, and I don't give a horse's backside if you're standing behind it or not."

The barkeep didn't move.

Gerrity stood and pounded his fist on the table with enough force to make the pistols jump. The room got very quiet as the table of gunslingers stared at the bartender who apparently could serve only sarsaparilla.

A gust of wind outside dropped a shutter against a house with a bang. A dog howled from what sounded like somewhere on the outskirts of town. The gang's twitchy trigger fingers inched closer to their guns.

"Ain't got no whiskey," the barkeep whispered.

Gerrity noticed the man's eyes glance toward the door. Noticing a man's eyes keeps you alive.

Gil heard footsteps slowly approaching on the wooden boardwalk. Steady, persistent footsteps that became louder and closer.

"What's going on, Gil?" Rattlesnake asked.

"Someone's coming this here way," Small-Ears said.

No-Tongue Tony cracked his knuckles, ready for action.

The gang turned and looked toward the swinging doors and the pair of worn boots that appeared

below. The boots pointed out toward the street, but after a moment, they turned and faced the saloon. No hat could be seen above the doors.

Gerrity spit on the floorboards. He lived for moments like this. Weren't no one going to tell him he couldn't have no whiskey. Not after all him and the boys been through.

The doors of the saloon pushed open. Gerrity put his hand close to his pistol.

In through the door walked The Kid.

"Shoot, it ain't nothing but a kid," Rattlesnake said.

"Two bits of a kid, at that," Small-Ears said.

No-Tongue Tony relaxed his fingers.

Gerrity squinted. Nobody scared him. Especially not a wee-sized kid who weighed less than his boots. But he didn't know this wasn't just any ordinary kid . . . This was The Kid.

Without so much as a glance toward the Gerrity Gang, The Kid walked to a barstool and took a seat, his steps echoing throughout the saloon. He chose a spot where he could see the gunslingers in the mirror behind the glasses.

"Sarsaparilla, Byron," The Kid said, slapping a silver coin on the bar.

The barkeep pulled a clean glass from the ledge. A dark frothy glass of brown liquid was set in front of The Kid.

"On the house," Byron said, ignoring the coin and backing away to the end of the bar.

The glass in front of The Kid reminded Gerrity of his whiskey. He wasn't about to give in. He had never given in a day in his life.

"What about our whiskey, keep?" he asked. "My crew here is thirsty."

The barkeep didn't answer. He just looked toward The Kid, who took a long swig of his sarsaparilla. The Kid wiped his mouth with his sleeve and tipped his too-big hat a bit higher on his head. He then turned on his stool and faced the four gunslingers. With his elbows on the bar, he bent his left eyebrow and stared at Gil Gerrity.

"Word is you boys killed a sheriff over in Westerly," he said. "And made off with some silver that ain't properly yours."

Gerrity's head tilted back, and he laughed.

"How he know that, Gil?" Rattlesnake asked.

"Buggers, he ain't nothing but a kid," Small-Ears said.

No-Tongue Tony slowly put his boots on the ground.

Gerrity stared at the wee kid at the bar. "That's right," he said, taking a seat. "And if you know that, then you know who we are. We're the Gerrity Gang."

"We ain't going to let this kid talk to us like that, are we?" Rattlesnake asked.

"No one talks to us like that," Small-Ears said.

No-Tongue Tony grunted.

"And if you know we're the Gerrity Gang," Gerrity continued, "then you also know we go where we want, and we take what we want. Ain't no sheriff going to stop us, and surely ain't no pink-nosed little piglet like you going to stop us. I suggest you head back home and let us finish our discussion with this here barkeep."

The Kid slowly tilted his hat even higher and kept his eyes focused on Gerrity.

Gerrity wrinkled his forehead and stared back.

"I'm taking you in, Gerrity," The Kid said.

Now, some men are about words. Others are about action. Gil Gerrity was the latter. He let his gun do the talking. He wasn't about to have this conversation with a wet-nosed kid. He reached for his revolver faster than a rattler strike. His crew was a split second behind.

But The Kid was faster. Faster than a rattler. Faster than all four members of the Gerrity Gang.

He took his Smith & Wesson out in a blur and fired four shots before the Gerrity Gang's palms had gotten off the table. The crew's hands grasped empty air as their guns spun and spiraled across the floor, where they skidded to a stop against the wall. The four outlaws stared at their guns as the barkeep unlatched the lock on the back door. In walked Destiny's Sheriff Quigley with his pistol pointing at the stunned Gerrity Gang.

"Gil Gerrity," the sheriff said, "you and your gang are under arrest for the murder of Sheriff Tuttle of the town of Westerly."

The Gerrity Gang looked back at The Kid, who was holstering his pistol. Gray smoke spiraled to the ceiling above him.

The Kid turned back to the bar and took another long drink of his sarsaparilla. He watched in the mirror as the sheriff handcuffed the four criminals and escorted them to jail.

The Kid wiped the foam from his upper lip.

"This sure is some mighty good sarsaparilla, Byron," he said.

2

The Boy

Destiny, Colorado

May 1881

Digging a grave ain't easy work. It takes a strong back, steady forearms, solid shoulders, and a full afternoon to dig a hole large enough to fit a man. A raging rainstorm blowing across your face don't help the matter neither.

Henry Upton stuck his shovel in the mud and stepped back to look at his work. How long had he been digging? It may have been hours or maybe even days. He didn't rightly know. Time kind of blends together when you're burying your papa.

Henry glanced at his brother Tommy, who was a good foot taller than the shovel he was leaning on. A stream of water rolled off the brim of his cowboy hat and puddled in the mud at his boots. He'd just turned thirteen and had enough muscles to dig most of the hole himself if he'd needed to. Shoot, Henry had seen Tommy chop enough wood with Papa to keep an entire town warm for the winter and wrestle those stubborn pigs back in their pen all by himself. But there weren't no amount of strength going to bring Papa back from where he'd gone.

Nathan, who was a few years younger than Tommy, stood at the edge of the mound holding a string with a dangling rabbit attached. Henry had sent him to check the snares while they finished filling the grave, and he'd returned just as the last shovelful of dirt was thrown on top. Papa had always said Nathan was young but could cook "one humdinger of a meal

from nothing more than a sack of flour and a flat rock out of Stump's Stream." Henry didn't know about all that, but he knew that if they didn't check the snares, then the wolves would. So he'd sent Nathan to fetch dinner, even though none of them was much hungry.

Little Ethan stood next to the grave rubbing his calloused hands. He was the youngest of the brothers, and he'd still done what he could to help. That's the way it was on the Upton farm. Everyone did their share. Papa had taught them that.

"You going to say something?" Tommy asked, turning toward Henry and removing his hat to dump the water that had gathered on top.

Tommy could fix just about anything, Nathan was good at cooking, and Ethan had a way about him that calmed the horses when they was spooked. But it was Henry who was the best with words. Mama had always made sure of that. She'd bought a used typewriter back in Cheyenne and had made Henry practice his sentences every night before bed.

Henry knew that as the oldest, he was responsible for saying something. But shoot, he was only fourteen, and finding words at a moment like this would tongue-tie even the most educated of men in these parts. He took off his hat and wiped his forehead with the back of his wet sleeve to buy himself a moment while the rain pelted his head.

He put his hat back on, wiped his nose with the back of his glove, cleared his throat, and looked at the dark storm clouds above.

"Doc Jensen said it was brain fever that took Papa—but that ain't right, Lord," he said. "It was that old stubborn mule, Bo, down in the barn, that done kicked Papa and did him in. Me and Tommy was there. We carried Papa inside, laid him on the bed, and been watching him fight the fever ever since. So if anyone'd know, it'd be us."

The wind whipped around the trees, stinging Henry's eyes. A tree branch cracked somewhere in the distance.

"Papa was a decent man," he continued. "He was fair and honest and worked the fields better than anyone in these here parts. He looked after us boys and always set us straight when we needed it. He taught us to ride horses, plow a field, never to ask for anything that ain't ours, and look out for one another. Most of all, he loved Mama with all his heart . . . even after she weren't here no more."

All four Upton boys looked at the grave next to the one they had just finished. In the center of the mound was a white cross with the word *Mama* carved on it. Henry picked up a matching cross and stuck it in the fresh grave.

This cross said *Papa*.

"Lord, take care of Mama and Papa," Henry said. "They're together now."

Ethan rubbed his eyes. Nathan shook water off his jacket. Tommy bit his lip. Henry looked at his muddy boots.

"Tell Papa we'll take care of the farm and one another, just like he taught us," Henry said. "It's his turn to take care of Mama."

Henry bowed his head, and his brothers all followed.

Thunder shook the ground and lightning danced across the dark sky. Henry grabbed the shovel he had stuck in the mud and turned toward home.

There weren't nothing more to say.

Henry never even looked back at the hill where they had just buried Papa. It was up to him to take care of his brothers now, and looking back weren't going to do anyone no good.

He knew his brothers were behind him as they marched down the path. He didn't need to check. It's just the way it was around here. None of them was ever too far from any of the others.

Ethan clomped mud off his boots before going inside, just like Mama had taught them. Nathan stayed on the porch to skin dinner. Tommy gathered the shovels and carried them to the barn.

Henry shook out his coat, hung it behind the door, and went to start the fire. He needed to dry out after all that rain. And there ain't nothing like a warm fire to shake the cold from a man's bones.

It was usually Papa who got the fire started, but Henry knew that job fell to him now. Then he went to the bedroom and took off his wet britches and hung them over a chair. In the morning he'd give them to Nathan to clean. Nathan had been doing the laundry since Mama died, and there weren't no sense changing that now. Of course, with Papa gone, Nathan would also have to pick up the milking and help with chopping wood, but he was nearly eleven, so it was time to learn anyways. Tommy was good in the fields and with the horses. He was strong enough to work the plow and haul the hay. Ethan was still small, but he had a fire in his belly that none of them could match. They'd teach him to manage the garden and fix the soup. Henry would keep them organized while also figuring a way to sell the fall crop for enough money to keep them settled through the winter. That's what Papa had done . . . so that's what he'd do now.

When Henry walked back into the main room, Tommy and Ethan were crowded on the floor by the fireplace. They'd changed into something dry and right proper hung their wet things without having been told. Henry lingered by the fire a moment but then went to the kitchen. Nathan had just come inside with the skinned rabbit but stopped in his tracks when he saw Henry grab the dusty brown bottle of sarsaparilla off the top shelf.

"Whatcha doing with that?" he asked. "That's Papa's."

But Papa wasn't here no more, and they both knew it. If they were going to survive, they needed to move on. And it was up to Henry to give them the kick that would spur them forward. It was what Papa would have wanted. He would have wanted them to drink that sarsaparilla.

Papa had bought the bottle in town after a fall of good crops. It was supposed to be a surprise for Mama. But then Mama done went and got sick, and Papa promised her they would drink it together, soon as she was out of bed. But Mama ain't never get out of bed, and that bottle of sarsaparilla had sat on the shelf collecting dust ever since.

It wasn't going to sit no longer.

Henry carried the bottle into the main room. Nathan followed behind, taking a seat on the floor by the fire near his brothers. His eyes never left Henry and that bottle, and they sprang two sizes when Henry popped the bottle open.

"Tonight we toast Papa and Mama," Henry said, taking a long drink. "Tomorrow we get at our chores and take care of this here farm like we were taught."

Henry handed the bottle to Tommy and took a seat in Papa's rocking chair. He picked up Papa's hat from the end table and tried it on. It smelled like tobacco and was a bit too big on his ears.

Tommy stared at the bottle in his hand for a moment like it was a sacred relic and not sarsaparilla. Then he took a long, deep drink, savoring the flavor. He nodded in satisfaction. "I can fix that door on the barn," he said as he pulled the bottle away from his lips. "It needs a new hinge is all."

Tommy handed the bottle to Nathan, who picked at the label for a moment.

"I'll feed the pigs," he said. "I know how it's done because I used to watch Papa." He tilted his head back and took a drink.

Tommy took the bottle from Nathan and handed it to little Ethan. "I'll sweep the stoop and wash out them barn stalls," Ethan said. "If we all do our share, then we can keep this farm running. Ain't that right, Henry?"

Henry watched little Ethan take a sip from the bottle. His youngest brother smiled for the first time in days. He ain't never had sarsaparilla before.

Ethan handed the bottle back to Henry, who sat in Papa's chair wearing Papa's hat and drinking Papa's drink. But Henry wasn't Papa. Hadn't it been only a month ago that he was on that floor with his brothers staring up at Papa puffing on his pipe and telling stories? Now it was his turn in this chair. It was his time to keep them safe.

3

The Outlaw

Arkansas State Penitentiary

May 1882

Sam could tell Frank Parker was not enjoying his first week of work. He could see this even while locked behind eighteen thick jail bars.

A few days earlier, he had overheard Frank telling the guys at the front desk how it had been his wife, Betsy, who pushed Frank to take this here job. What with a little one on the way, she felt he needed an honest job that earned honest money. No more long cattle drives through the open plains for Frank. Nope, he was going to be an Arkansas State Penitentiary prison guard.

He'd talked about how his cousin Lowell had gotten him the job. He'd said it would be a stable, safe living that would allow Frank to take care of his growing family. Frank had said it sounded boring, but Lowell just smiled and said that once that baby came, boring wouldn't be so bad.

Sam was doing his darndest to make sure things were anything but boring.

It was that little guard named Templeton who had gotten too close to the cell. Most men wouldn't have dared make a move on twelve armed guards. But Snake-Eye Sam sure as sand wasn't like most men.

He grabbed Templeton, and six guards went down in the blink of an eye. Sam was on his knees reloading bullets from Templeton's belt before the other five guards could come

running down the hall. In another flash of fire, the rushing guards fell one by one.

Eleven men down. The inmates around Sam whooped and banged on their cell bars with tin cups, making an awful racket. Sam noticed that Frank had yet to move from his spot at the prison door. Sam stared at that one remaining guard through the bars of his cell with eyes the color of thunderstorm and a demeanor as violent as lightning.

He caught Frank staring at the pistol in Sam's hand. They both knew Frank wouldn't still be standing if there had been a bullet left in that gun.

"Stop that racket!" Sam yelled. The cells around him immediately went quiet. "How's Frank here supposed to think with you boys making all that noise?"

Sam stared at Frank. The young guard looked as queasy as a sick bullfrog.

"How old are you, boy?" Sam asked. The young guard stared at the floor and appeared to think whether he should answer or not.

Sam let go of the bars and took a seat on his creaky mattress, where he checked the dirt under his nails. Frank was a coward. He wouldn't be much trouble. Sam could see that in the guard's eyes. You could see most things in a man's eyes.

"Seventeen," Frank answered quietly. "Eighteen next week."

The thought made Sam smile a crooked smile. What did it matter how old he'd be next week? Wasn't gonna see next week.

Sam was missing a few teeth. But that didn't bother him none. All he cared about was getting out of this place and heading west. He looked down at the magazine on the mattress next to him. A drawing of The Kid was on the cover. He was wearing a too-big hat drooped over his eyebrows. His pistols were drawn as if ready to shoot.

Ain't nothing but a kid, Sam thought. *He don't know spit about a gunfight. The way he held them guns was all wrong.*

Sam nodded toward the magazine. "You ever read *The Kid* stories?" he asked Frank.

"Everyone knows about *The Kid*," Frank answered, a bit too quickly for Sam's liking. "He's the fastest gun in the West."

"Only because I ain't there yet," Sam said just as quickly, and stared at Frank with a storm raging in his eyes. He was getting antsy. And Sam didn't do antsy well. Prison bars will do that to a man. He stood. It was time to break out of this place.

"Some call *The Kid* a legend," Sam said to no one in particular. He took hold of the bars and squeezed the life out of them.

The only sound on the cell block was slow, dripping water from down the hall. All the prisoners stood quiet. It was hard to find words after what they had just seen.

"He's on the cover of every magazine down at the mercantile," Frank added.

On the cover of every magazine. Sam's fingers turned white as they tightened around the bars.

"Is that so?" He stared up at the ceiling. He'd been counting them cracks for months. He returned his gaze back toward Frank. "Well, soon people will be reading about Snake-Eye Sam," he said, twitching his shooting eye. "They'll read about how he took down twelve guards and escaped the toughest prison in five states."

Frank looked at the floor around him. "Eleven guards," he corrected.

Sam smiled his toothless smile. "Well, that's up to you, ain't it, boy?" he said. "Eleven or twelve don't rightly matter to me. It'll make the magazines either way."

The inmates started whooping and hollering again.

"You'll be famous, Snake-Eye!" someone from down the

hall yelled, banging his cup against the bars and then whooping and hollering.

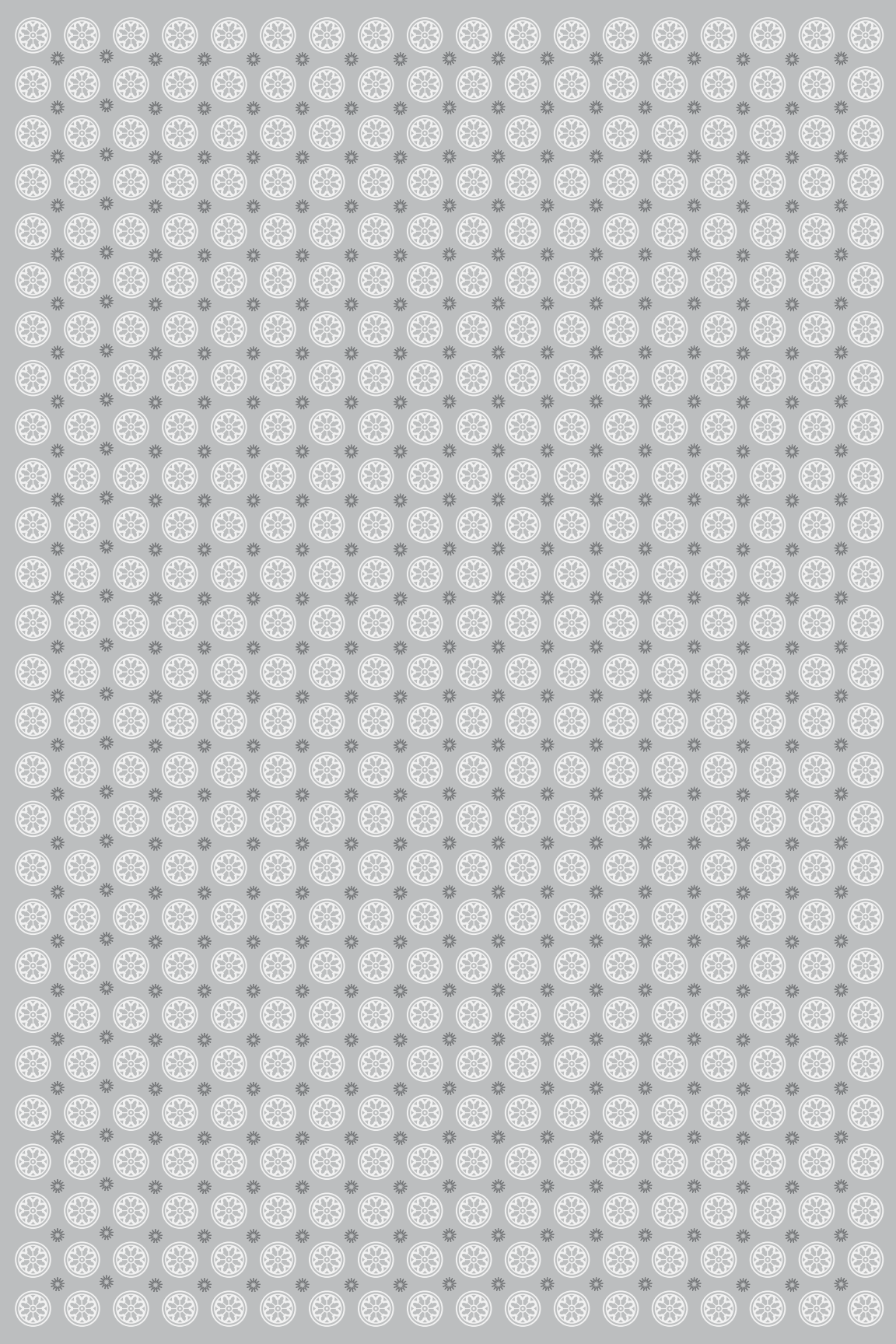
“Whooe! We going to be in the magazines,” another called.

Sam never took his eyes from Frank. He could tell the new guard was close to cracking. A bit more pressure was all that was needed—and pressure was what Sam did best.

He spit on the floor.

“Why don’t you bring them keys over here, boy, and open these here bars,” he said. “You do that, and I’ll let you go home and see that pretty little wife of yours tonight.”

Now, most men fancy themselves brave. But when you witness what Frank had just witnessed, well, let’s just say, all that bravery tends to curl up and hide deep inside your belly. And when there are fifteen dangerous inmates making an awful racket all around you and all you see in your head is your unborn child and Snake-Eye Sam is scowling at you like an angry raccoon, well, sometimes all you can think to do is toss the ring of keys toward the cell and run like the dickens.



1881

Destiny, Colorado

Fourteen-year-old Henry Upton reckons it's his job to keep his younger brothers together on the farm now that their parents are gone. Henry writes stories as The Kid, the fastest draw in the west, to keep meddling folks away from town. The stories are a major success, but the plan doesn't work. So Henry stops writing them stories.

Herbert might lose his job as an editor at Gunslinger Magazine if he can't find out why the The Kid stopped sending stories about his amazing exploits. Herbert's a sneezy Eastern city slicker, but he heads out west to find The Kid anyway.

Snake-Eye Sam sets his sights on The Kid. Sam has evil in his heart and jealousy pulsing in his veins. Breaking out of prison and taking down The Kid is about the only thing that will cure the itch running down Sam's spine.

On Main Street at high noon, a master plan is hatched at the same time Henry gets just what he needs to save his family.

Pull up a stool, have a tall frothy glass of sarsaparilla, and enjoy a tale full of quirky characters, snappy dialogue, and lots of heart.

Jeff Schill is a little bit like Henry, a lot like Herbert, and nothing at all like Sam. He has a MFA in writing for children and young adults from Vermont College. He loves peanut butter sandwiches, chicken nuggets, and jelly beans. When he's not writing, he is a teacher, trainer, runner, baseball fan, and husband. He lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which is nothing like the old west. He never had a sarsaparilla in his life until he finished this novel.

ON-SALE DATE: MAY 7, 2024

Fiction, ages 10 and up

ISBN: 978-1-62354-364-8 HC;

978-1-63289-341-3 ebook

\$17.99/\$21.99 CAN, 6x9, 240 pages

MARKETING

- National advertising campaign
- Dedicated webpage hosted at www.charlesbridge.com
- Select author appearances
- Social networking promotions
- Readers Group Guide

THE KID ONLINE

Hardcover book will have a poster on the flip side of the jacket. For more fun, scan this QR code or visit www.charlesbridge.com/TheKid.



If you've read the galley, we'd love to hear what you think. Please contact us at trademarketing@charlesbridge.com. For publicity, contact Donna Spurlock at dspurlock@charlesbridge.com or at (617) 321-2502.

