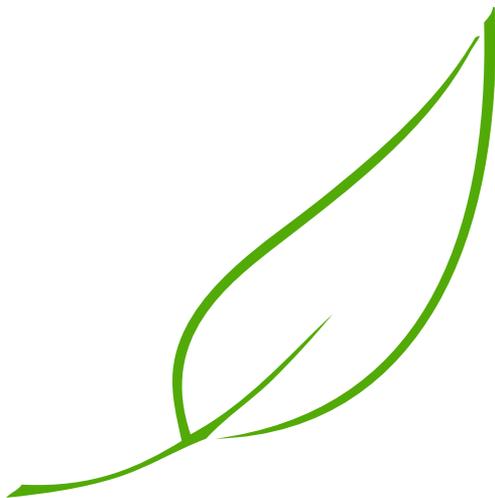


IT'S ALL IN YOUR MIND, PARTNER

by Ken Bradbury



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(A pair of old miners, Gabby and Jake, crawl into the scene. They have been crawling across the desert for weeks and are near death.)

JAKE: *(crawling in on his belly with Gabby)* I can't take it any more, Gabby! I'm just gonna die right here.

GABBY: Don't die on me, Jake boy! I know we can find water somewhere!

JAKE: Two months! Two months we been lost out on this desert without food or water! I read where a fella could only go three days without water and it's been two months.

GABBY: That's what keeps me alive, Jake.

JAKE: What's that?

GABBY: I can't read.

JAKE: I sure wish we had our horses, back.

GABBY: Me too. They wasn't even that good.

JAKE: I told you they needed salt. You can't just eat a horse plain.

GABBY: Hey! What's that up ahead?

JAKE: *(looks, then)* Same as it's been for two months. More sand.

GABBY: No! No! Lookee there in the distance! Jake, we're saved! We're saved! It's a saloon!

JAKE: I don't see nothin'. It's one of them there marriages.

GABBY: Mirage. It ain't no mirage, Jake! It's a real live saloon! *(pulling Jake to his feet)* Come on, boy! Get up! Get up!

JAKE: You're crazy, Gabby!

GABBY: Who cares? Long as they got somethin' to drink! *(The two hobble toward the "saloon," desperately leaning on each other.)* You see! It's gettin' closer! It's gettin' closer! Can't you hear the piano?

JAKE: I don't hear nothin'. I just hope they got water.

GABBY: (*entering what seems to him to be the swinging doors of the saloon*) Woowee! Just look at this place! Hey, bartender! Gimme a sarsaparilla! Make it two! Heck, make it a dozen!

JAKE: You really seein' all this, Gabby?

GABBY: 'Course I'm seein' it. Wow! Would you get a load of her! What a doll! That's Miss Kitty! (*hands Jake his drink then begins to chug his own*)

JAKE: (*looking at what seems to be an empty hand*) Huh?

GABBY: Oh, ain't that good, Jake? Ain't that just about the best sas-a-parilla you ever had in your life.

JAKE: (*holds out the imaginary bottle and dries to drip something on his outstretched tongue*) Tastes sorta dry.

GABBY: Why sure, Miss Kitty! Jake would love to dance with ya!

JAKE: Where is she?

GABBY: Ain't you something'? She's right there! Hey, she's got her arms around you! You are one lucky partner, partner!

JAKE: Is she dancin'?

GABBY: Of course she's dancin'! (*Jake begins to dance with Kitty although he doesn't see her.*) Shake a leg, buddy! Shake a leg! I think I'll have me another sarsaparilla. (*begins to turn then sees something*) Oh, no! Jake, you see who's comin'?

JAKE: You kiddin'? I still ain't seen the saloon yet. I think you're out of your mind, Gabby!

GABBY: It's Black Bart the gunslinger! The baddest man in Dead Gulch!

JAKE: We're in Dead Gulch?!

GABBY: And you're in big trouble! Miss Kitty's his woman, Jake, and he's lookin' right at you.

JAKE: He is?

GABBY: Better drop her quick, Jake! Black Bart's got that look in his eye.

JAKE: (*genuinely beginning to panic now although he has no idea what's happening. He still hasn't seen any of this*) What look!?

GABBY: That look that says “I’m about to kill the dusty cowpoke who’s got his hands on my woman!” Drop her, Jake! Drop her! (*Jake lets go of the “woman.”*) Oh, my gosh, you just dropped her!

JAKE: You said to drop her!

GABBY: I said to drop her! I didn’t mean “drop her!” He’s drawin’ his gun, Jake! Black Bart’s drawin’ a bead on ya.

JAKE: (*turning quickly and frantically*) Where? Where is he? Where?

GABBY: Right there! (*points, Jake turns, but sees nothing*) Not there! There! (*Jake turns again*) He’s gonna shoot you, Jake! He’s gonna ya kill deader ‘n a toad! Draw your gun, partner! Draw your gun!

JAKE: What gun??!!

GABBY: Right there in your holster! (*Jakes draws his imaginary gun from his imaginary holster*) That ain’t your gun, Jake! That’s your belt! Ah dern it, Jake! Your pants just fell off!

JAKE: They did!!??

GABBY: A man can’t die with his pants off!

JAKE: I’m gonna die???!!!

GABBY: He’s pullin’ the trigger! Oh, buddy, you’re a dead man!

JAKE: But I can’t be

GABBY: He shot you, Jake! Right in the gut! (*Jake screams, grabs his stomach, and falls to the floor*) Oh, buddy, it’s the end of the trail for you! The last round up! (*Gabby also falls to his face on the ground as Jake continues to moan in pain*) Boy that sun’s hot. What’s a matter with you, Jake? You got a gut ache?

JAKE: I been shot, Gabby! Black Bart killed me!

GABBY: (*crawling a bit ... he’s back on the desert now*) Jake, I think your mind’s been playin’ tricks. We ain’t seen nobody for two months. Wish I’d saved some of that horse for later. Least his tail.

JAKE: I ain’t dead?



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