

From the back jacket

On the Frontier, death runs close at hand—so close, some say the dead linger on as echoes in family heirlooms.

Armed with her late father's guns, a sharp wit, and a quick pair of paws, the gunslinger known as "Six Shooter" thought she had a bead on her way in the world. That is, until a routine bit of larceny drops her in the depths of some very unusual and dangerous schemes.

Power-mad lions, mind-bending rock, and whispers from her dead father: these a bunny can handle.

Falling in love with the local sheriff, though... That's trouble.

My Thoughts so far –

Westerns are historically not my thing. As a fan of scifi and fantasy, there are very few Westerns that I'd say have my attention. Firefly, by Joss Whedon, convinced me that there is a way to merge scifi and Western to which before I would never have believed it possible. Other than that, gunslingers, deserts, and a duel in front of the saloon never interested me. However, when I saw the cover for this book, my story sense started tingling. I can't speak for everyone, but maybe it was the way the bunny on the cover tips her hat, or the title that just 'spoke' to me, but it caught my attention and convinced me to buy it. The cover's job is done. Reading the back, I didn't know what to expect. Of course I knew it was a Western, that much was obvious. The back gave me the basics, but depending on how things went that can be good or bad. This book was a Western, which has to win my approval. Second, it suggested a love story of sorts, which made me cautious. Though my instinct to buy this book told me it wasn't a mistake, and I am rarely wrong when it comes to my personal taste for a quality story. I say the above because I want to reiterate to you how much a book like this has to overcome my natural predilection to pass such a book over, so you know my full meaning. This was going to be a hell of a read, and I hadn't even turned page one.

Overall: This is a damn fine book. Quality furry writing is not easy to find, even among the published in the fandom. This is it for sure. If you like bunnies, bats, or Westerns, or are even a fan of good writing in general, buy this book. It's one of the few I have thought about rereading on occasion, and that's a rare quality for me. I remember that it did not take me long to start reading it, and it was very hard to put down when I did. While no book is without flaw, this one is so finely polished you'd be hard pressed to find it. I liked the style of this story far more than most of the other things I've gotten

from this publisher, and I would look forward to see if they try their hand at another type of story in the future.

Characters:

Six Shooter – A wandering hare, Six Shooter is a consummate frontier gun. Never one to settle down, Six is one to move from place to place finding what she needs and taking it along. Carrying little in the way of possessions, other than the clothes on her body and the guns at her belt, she goes where opportunity takes her. She has an extreme aversion to being a ‘proper lady’, and is driven by both a fine sense of self preservation and an attraction to the last man a lawbreaking bunny should love.

Tanner Hayes – A lion whose uncle bought a mine in the area and is a well-established gentleman in town. Possessing interests on both sides of the law, he seeks to make his fortune by any means necessary. A predator both literally and figuratively, he engages in hunts out in the wild for no other reason than to release pent up steam and indulge his predatory lust.

Sheriff Jordan Blake – A bat holding the position of Town Sheriff. A straight man, one who lives by the law especially inside himself. He prefers to be seen as partial to no one and whose responsibility lies with the law rather than doing things to curry favor with any particular party. Naïve at some points on the regard to which others consider the law, he wears his badge with pride.

Doc Richards is a fox, a local country doctor. Possessing a small practice in town and a wife, he often engages the sheriff in conversation when not patching up holes in the townsfolk.

Deputy Harding is a canine, who was once up for the job of sheriff but elected to remain deputy instead. Silent and loyal, he is a solid deputy for a sheriff who has more than a few people gunning for his head.

Analysis: Since I haven’t read that many Western genre novels or seen a large quantity of movies of that type, I’ve always personally found the genre to be hard to find ideas for. With the frontier setting often requiring small towns, few things between them, and a general lack of things other than guns, stagecoaches, and cowboys (stereotypically), there are a lot of clichés to avoid. Sixes Wild does it beautifully. For one thing, the title instantly grabs attention. Not only does it make subtle reference to the female lead’s name, but the poker origin of the term implies taking chances, cards, and the general atmosphere of the west. The subtitle does its job in making the title seem stronger. History buffs will understand the term Manifest Destiny, and it’s significance to the setting of the American West.

The story rates as extremely strong, with no unnecessary characters or chapters. While the main characters species is not story critical, there is no question that this is a well designed furry novel. Often times the selection of species can seem somewhat arbitrary on the part of the author, but in this case the selections worked well. Each character acts with acknowledgement to their species traits but are not bound by the stereotypical 'mundane' assumption or even furry assumptions about these species. Their natural abilities are used well to enhance the characters, from Hayes predatory nature, to Blake's day to day activities being altered by his lack of conventional arms or hands. Indeed, at first I suspected a bat without back wings would be near impossible to write for, but in this case it was used to great advantage. I should also say that I express my personal gratitude to the author for not making the main character a fox or a cat. I acknowledge that being personal taste, however, and is merely me having that on record as a preference.

There are no easy victories, shortcuts, or incompetent bad guys here. The story does it's homework, with each advance and setback well placed and carefully prepared. Nothing seems convenient, no *deus ex machina*, and certainly no plot holes that I noticed. With deep characters, a dynamic narrative style, and a layered story that'll keep you guessing until the last page, it would be a crime for this book to never get a sequel.

Story Structure: Told in first person narration, the book is not anchored to a single perspective. Rather than simply staying with the 'protagonist' for the entire story which is a tendency I find somewhat limiting, the chapters move between Six, Sheriff Blake, and Tanner Hayes as necessary to show the reader the part of the story he needs to see. In this manner, the need to have the hero present for every major event is avoided allowing the story to have more nuance and flavor. In addition, this also solves the frequent first person problem of describing characters. In third person it makes perfect sense to describe oneself and others as one is moving about the world. In first person it is naturally illogical unless making self commentary, which can be awkward. As such, with the rotating narrative focus, each can describe the others, their description colored by their own personal perceptions as well as the requirements of the story.

It is also worth noting that the different perspectives shows that all three of the main narrators think differently and highlights their thought patterns and behavior. Sheriff Blake often looks for infractions of the law, while Six will frequently assess her situation and determine her course of action. Tanner Hayes has a very self centered world view, to which his observations fit appropriately.

The story is told like three separate threads woven together to form a complex tapestry. While the first three chapters introduce each character separately, before long their plot arcs intertwine and become inseparable. Tanner's greed and lust for power, Blake's unflinching sense of honor and justice, and Six's love for Blake and desire for a free existence leads the three into conflict, and it is only at a modest cost that the spiral between the three is broken.

It is worth noting that the finale of the third act leaves enough story intact so that a follow up is easily possible, and in fact, perhaps, expected. The audience is left satisfied, but an avenue for a sequel is clearly open.

Dialogue: Writing with any sort of accent is a finely developed skill. I've read books where the author spends so much time looking for authenticity the dialogue is practically unintelligible. This is not one of those books. The western flavor of the language is retained and distinct, without resorting to stereotypical and cliché western statements, nor does it overpower the reader with 'ya'lls' and 'dagnabits' and so on. The balance between the effectiveness of the accent and the readability of a variation of English is there in the right proportions, enhancing the story rather than making it a chore to read.

Introduction

The story begins after it ends, with Six telling her story having already been through it all. She tells it like a campfire story told to someone who's never heard it before. She cleans her gun while thinking about the other matched pistol that goes with it, and how things had been simple in the old days. Then the story really begins.

Plot

Chapter one we learn the kind of life Six leads, from people getting a bit uppity when she 'borrows' some property to the twin guns that attract the wrong kind of attention. She mosey's into the bar with her ears to the ground and orders a beer, looking for a score. Her ears pick up something going on from the back room.

The second chapter introduces in persona if not by name a lion with plans. He conspires with a group of men of various species as he relates to them his plan on how to get his money where it needs to go, making it quite clear who's in charge.

Chapter three features Blake, the third main character in the story, and finally names the lion proper as Tanner Hayes. He's been robbed, though not by the men he expected. A single rider disappears with his strongbox and the sheriff's pony. After tracking him down, he manages to get him half cuffed before being joined by a bunch of men who he quickly realizes are not on his side. He and the bunny realize they have a mutual enemy, at least for the moment, and manage to get away. The bunny pulls him out of the river and keeps him restrained for the moment and identifies herself as Six. Soon after, he realizes Six is a female. As Sheriff Blake and Six talk about the evening's events, they are located a second time by the lion's men, and Six shoots Blake.

The combined efforts of Six and Blake manage to get the tables turned on their would be attackers. He's taken to Doc Richard's office and patched up. After regaining consciousness, Tanner Hayes bursts in insisting to speak to the robbers before he is instructed to leave. Time advances four weeks. Six returns, and the two talk. Soon, their attentions turn towards each other, and it's only due to Six's skittish reaction to what she's started and the arrival of Deputy Harding that sends her running, with Sheriff Blake half naked and stuttering.

Tanner Hayes begins the fifth chapter learning how far south this deal has gone. Not one to enjoy being challenged, he must now replace the stolen money another way.