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The Legend of Lightning Larry

By Aaron Shepard

For Danny, Cate, and Ishi

Well, you've heard about gunfighting good guys like Wild Bill Hickok and Wyatt Earp. But I'll tell you a name that strikes even greater fear into the hearts of bad men everywhere.

Lightning Larry.

I'll never forget the day Larry rode into our little town of Brimstone and walked into the Cottonmouth Saloon. He strode up to the bar and smiled straight at the bartender.

"Lemonade, please," he said.

Every head in the place turned to look.

Now, standing next to Larry at the bar was Crooked Curt. Curt was one of a band of rustlers and thieves that had been terrorizing our town, led by a ferocious outlaw named Evil-Eye McNeevil.

Curt was wearing the usual outlaw scowl. Larry turned to him and

smiled. "Mighty big frown you got there, mister," he said.

"What's it to you?" growled Curt.

"Well," said Larry, "maybe I could help remove it."

"I'd like to see you try!" said Curt.

The rest of us got out of the way, real fast. The bartender ducked behind the bar. Larry and Curt moved about ten paces from each other, hands at the ready. Larry was still smiling.

Curt moved first. But he only just cleared his gun from its holster before Larry aimed and fired.

Zing!

There was no bang and no bullet. Just a little bolt of light that hit Curt right in the heart.

Curt just stood there, his eyes wide with surprise. Then he dropped his gun, and a huge grin spread over his face. He rushed up to Larry and pumped his hand.

"I'm mighty glad to know you, stranger!" he shouted. "The drinks are on me! Lemonade for everyone!"

When Evil-Eye McNeevil and his outlaw gang heard that Crooked Curt had gone straight, they shuddered right down to their boots.

Most any outlaw would rather die than smile!

Evil-Eye's men were shook up, but they weren't about to let on. The very next day, Dismal Dan, Devilish Dick, and Dreadful Dave rode into Brimstone, yelling like crazy men and shooting wild. Windows shattered and citizens scattered.

Then Lightning Larry showed up. He never warned them. Never even stopped smiling. Just shot three little bolts of light. Hit those outlaws right in the heart.