

**JUDGE
ALVIN
WONG**

MATT SHEA

Judge Alvin Wong

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This book is dedication to Jan!



True to form, our Jan naturally blends in with everyone. Here she's captured, almost front and center wearing a white top, with her ever-present smile. Another fantastic Christmas!

To Jan!

I'm proud to say that Jan Shea has been winning her battle with cancer! Her courageous battle has inspired all of us and made everyone take a closer look at the gift of life.

The story you are about to read depicts having a second chance at life, with hope and prayer being a definite factor.

Jan, you did your part in allowing our prayers to be answered, and we'll always love you for that!

Love, Matt

A SPECIAL THANKS TO RENÉE KLAUSE!



Renée sitting at the desk of the Burien Art Gallery during her shift. Writing a report and pricing one of her abstract floral paintings.

For a second time, she has utilized her brilliant artistic skills and crafted a cover that perfectly represents my story line. The first was *The Meadowdale Community Project* (a book that was actually dedicated to her). That, along with her strategic input including many pictures, has assisted me periodically throughout my writings.

If you would like to see more of her artistic ability, which includes modern abstract and impressionism, you can contact her on Facebook under:

Artistic Xpressions by Renée Klause and thru
www.artistsunitedclub.com

Renée, thank you for another job well done!

Matt

It's Not A Party Without Ric!



My friends and I have always listened to “This Week In America” whenever the opportunity presented itself. One reason for our devout loyalty was based on the wonderment of what legendary radio talk show host, Ric Bratton, was going to do next. His show is only predictable when it comes to airtime, but from there—watch out!

We would listen to his traditional “larger-than-life” introduction with great anticipation. We would then begin to guess what icon he might interview, what cause he would possibly serve—or if he discovered another unknown whose story was about to be told, an “only-in-America” success story where someone’s life was about to change forever with a dash of fame guaranteed.

There’s far more to our man, Ric:

He has received numerous awards throughout the decades from both radio and television. Among other things, his jubilant personality served greatly as he was master of ceremony for Orlando Florida’s *Ms. American United States Pageant*. There are also many worthy causes that deserve mentioning, such as being a chapter president for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital for

twenty-eight years and being their 1990 Man Of The Year.

He did all of this while being the longest-running and highest-rated radio personality in America.

It is our honor to grab hold of Ric and take him a *different* direction. We have gone beyond adopting him as friend and family. This time, he has been kidnapped and incorporated as a character throughout this book! It is what we consider to be a 'brilliant move' that guarantees to keep the good times rolling with values in check.

Ric, yer *totally awesome*, and we love you!

Your friends from the West Coast:

Laura, Ella, Renée and Matt

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



What about Ella?

Ella Jane Ray (yes—*that Ella*) has been my “right-hand man” ever since my first publication.

It all started years ago when the apartment next door was vacated—and I prayed to get a decent neighbor.

Prayers do get answered! I was gifted a 'natural friend' who was the perfect fit to read my manuscripts to. A friend who loved the old Alfred Hitchcock and Twilight Zone reruns, liked spur-of-the-moment road trips and a good hamburger. In essence, she was truly a godsend and just what the doctor ordered!

Everything I have published so far has been thoroughly proofread and fine-tuned with Ella's steel-trap mind and great humor. Often, the midnight oil burned long until daybreak. I can honestly say that I would not have found the path I discovered in writing if it wasn't for my pal, Ella.

Ella, ya did it again, and we got this book done. Let's hit the road, and lunch is on me!

Matt

PROLOGUE

A dry, howling wind is ravaging the sunbaked prairie.

In the midst of its blistering destruction, a lone tumbleweed bounces. The dried-out vagabond scurries about, mindlessly skipping over dirt, stone, and brush. Within its awkward silence, it keeps rolling in an unorthodox path, stumbling precariously while at the mercy of nature. It is inevitable that the disregarded weed will eventually deteriorate into dust and dissipate in the unforgiving winds—only to be forgotten.

Ironically, the dried bush's wayward path personifies a life in the very town it is passing through—one that is being stripped of a false image held for decades. It is high noon, in a settlement known as Hangman, with a modern-day showdown about to start.

Our setting continues where the very tracks left by the town's first settlers can still be seen—parallel grooves that stretched across the plains, through the mountains, and off into infinity. In town, the main drag shows telltale signs of its proud heritage. This ranged from original storefronts with their wooden sidewalks- to hitching posts that stood the test of time.

True, advance technology does throw in a few tidbits like paved roads and electricity to this frontier community. Lest no forget however, that this township is always just one storm away from being thrown back over one-hundred-fifty years.

On more than one occasion it has.

Our story begins inside the town's courthouse where its path through history has always been defined.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1	1
Chapter 2	8
Chapter 3	15
Chapter 4	18
Chapter 5	24
Chapter 6	28
Chapter 7	34
Chapter 8	38
Chapter 9	43
Chapter 10	50
Chapter 11	54
Chapter 12	59
Chapter 13	63
Chapter 14	66
Chapter 15	69
Chapter 16	72
Chapter 17	75
Chapter 18	78
Chapter 19	83
Chapter 20	92
Chapter 21	96
Chapter 22	101
Epilogue	109
Author Bio.....	111

1



Dusty beams covered a floor that resembled a cat's scratching post. Resting on the frayed wood was a series of benches that matched the pews across the street. Collectively, they faced a platform that bolstered the state's flag on one side and the stars and stripes on the other. Perfectly centered was an oak desk with a Bible and a law book in plain view.

It was there where a composed Judge Alvin Hershel Wong sat.

Alvin was the town's first nonwhite citizen. Standing at five-foot-seven, he was of a traditional Asian descent. His short, black hair was combed back, allowing the natural beauty of his heritage to prevail. High cheekbones and intense dark eyes showed perception surrounded with intelligence. A grand smile illustrated compassion for his fellow man. He was a credit to the black robe he wore.

It would be an understatement to say that there were many selling points to this forty-six-year-old judge. One was his easygoing demeanor that would brighten anyone's day. Another was his informal approach to serving justice. Often, he was affectionately referred to as 'Judge Alvin'. Typically, the good man always inaugurated a suit by gathering all who were involved and initiating a listening session. Often, such procedures resulted in old friendships being rekindled with a barbecue to follow. He was clearly a godsend, who listened with his modern-day ancient wisdom.

Silence continued to rule the proud landmark fueled by firewood and lanterns. If this stalemate were to go on any further, an eerie

sensation would certainly unfold; the portraits of past judges and governors would give one the feeling that he was being watched.

This hall of justice had its moments when one could hear a pin drop. It was also known to change in a heartbeat—becoming a volatile echo chamber. Those present remained calm as they matched eyes with the good judge.

More time passed...

In bewilderment, Judge Alvin finally spread his arms as if to say, *“Okay, who wants to go first?”*

One by one, all heads turned to an imposing figure sitting up front. The broad shoulders and thick neck needed no introduction. It was the plaintiff, Blaine Harold Wolf.

Blaine Wolf was a fifth-generation rancher. The Wolfs were among those who initially homesteaded in this town. Blaine’s last name and imposing figure made him dignified. He was big in stature, standing at six foot four and tipping the scales at over 270 pounds. Wavy, sandy-blond hair matched the weathered face and wild blue eyes that hinted of someone who stayed focused and never backed down from a confrontation. His overbearing baritone served as an additional tool used by the forty-one-year-old man to force his way through life.

The man was also married with two children, who seemed to be stranded on an island. Socially, the price paid for living on the outskirts of town with their father’s overbearing character. The man who wouldn’t allow his pretty wife to have a driver’s license. Outside of school activities, the family usually restricted their social activities to the company of relatives.

It was time to get the show on the road, with Alvin gesturing to Blaine to speak first. Tension mounted as the big man wearing a white cowboy shirt stood up.

Using his firm, rumbling voice, Blaine addressed the judge. “Do you want me to take the stand?”

“No, where you’re standing is just fine,” replied Alvin. “Now tell us what’s bothering you, Blaine.”

The notable rancher looked down to gather his thoughts. With eyes closed, he involuntarily clenched his fists while searching for the right words to say. A few more seconds passed, then he stood

tall and began to plead his case. “I have always considered myself to be a fair businessman,” he said. Alvin was relieved that his opening statement was delivered in a polite manner and nodded with approval.

It was there where the tempo changed. Blaine became more assertive and raised his voice a bit. The room was now an amphitheater, with everyone witnessing the tenacity of Blaine Wolf.

The cattelman went on to explain about the business arrangement he had with Gavin Woodley—and how he failed him. “I paid him a man’s wage to do a man’s job,” Blaine said with conviction.

Gavin Woodley was a polite, harmless man who was loved by everyone. His tall, lanky frame was dressed in the traditional blue coveralls and red flannel shirt worn by his forefathers. His dark-brown hair and eyes were accented by his signature smile. He was a farmhand during the harvest season and transported livestock as a side job. He was known for being an honest, reliable worker who always arrived early and had the time of day for his neighbors.

A closer look shows that there was more to this man than his graceful presence; he was also the consummate family man who came home every night. Gavin, along with his wife, Tammi, and their nine-year-old twin daughters, Mary and Tanya, were involved with practically every community service the town offered and never missed their weekly church services. Gavin was that dad who would gladly play any role in a school play and who gives out the best candy on Halloween.

Gavin was deeply respected by all, because he loved everyone, but it was the Lord and his family who came first.

It was obvious that Judge Wong’s desire to resolve the situation in a neighborly fashion would not take place. Blaine Wolf was far too arrogant for that. The big man would much rather prefer a public display.

From there, Blaine continued to strategically assassinate the character of the defendant up one side and down the other. Mild insults, analogies, and for-instances were all used as tools to further embarrass his hired hand.

Finally, the rancher seemed to be satisfied with the payload he

delivered and quietly said, “That’s all I can think of.” Blaine Wolf sat down with the courthouse, digesting his wrath.

“We’ll take a five-minute break,” announced a disappointed Judge Alvin. A soft shuffle of feet could be heard as everyone left their seats to prepare for the second half.

What was meant to be five minutes was more like twenty. Regardless, in time, all were in their original seats, with Gavin Woodley on deck. It was now Gavin’s floor, as Judge Alvin Wong motioned to him to stand up.

Without hesitation, the wholesome country boy stood up. In a quiet, clear voice, he began to speak. “I have always appreciated working for Blaine Wolf, and as far as I’m concerned, he has always been good to me. In regards to the record, I do owe him two hundred dollars. Let me explain.”

Gavin continued to speak freely, using his hands and facial expression.

“I do miscellaneous work for Mr. Wolf that ranges from maintaining his property to hauling livestock. He has always paid me two hundred dollars in advance whenever he sold cattle to a meat company. This was so that my truck would be serviced and ready to go.”

The thirty-two-year-old worker had more to say. “Up until now, our business has always worked out, until my truck broke down. I contacted him the moment it happened to let him know the situation. Blaine stressed that he had a deadline to make and paid another trucker to transport his livestock from my trailer to theirs. He paid them the same rate I was getting paid, so I do owe him a refund from the last load.”

Lowering his head, he volunteered defeating news. “The problem is that I don’t have the money now, but I will in another month.” Gavin looked over to the man he worked for and proposed an offer. “As I said before, I’d gladly work it off on your ranch.”

The entire courtroom, including Judge Alvin, was greatly impressed with Gavin. Everyone, that is, except for Blaine Wolf and a somewhat-obscure relative who had accompanied him.

It is popular theory that all families have that odd member who can be a source of embarrassment. In the case of the prominent Wolf family, things were no different, for Blaine’s nephew, Grant, was sitting alongside him. The family member who definitely fit the bill. The partially-hidden twenty-year-old was allowed to attend

that day *if he promised Uncle Blaine that he would remain quiet.*

Grant Wolf was an enthusiastic young lad who held no interest in sports. In fact, he had few friends to speak of and was content to stay at home and watch old detective shows. True, he was clearly a Wolf, with his blond hair and striking blue eyes, but he showed interest only in things like drama and literature. He led the sheltered life of a boy who was the farthest thing from being a cowboy and who never held a girl's hand. He even possessed a butterfly net, with reports of using it.

Grant was a harmless problem child for Blaine's sister, Donna, because he was out of his element. The question was: what was his element? One day, his mother asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. Like Jethro Bodine, who wanted to be a brain surgeon, he had an answer: Grant wanted to be a high-profile FBI agent like the ones on *Criminal Minds*.

All of this came from a struggling student who never pursued any form of higher education. The outcast who was lacking the single accomplishment needed to be labeled an idiot savant.

Alvin looked at Blaine and motioned with his fingers as if to say, "Well, what do you think about Gavin's offer?"

Blaine began to stew over the battle he would rather have. To him, Gavin's suggestion was just too easy.

Alvin dropped his arms in frustration and looked at the audience. "Does anyone have any ideas?" he called out. There were no takers, which set the stage for Grant Wolf. The well-behaved nephew stood up and looked at his uncle in hope that his leash would be extended.

Blaine didn't know what to think. True, he briefly explained to him what the case was about, but didn't know if the boy was up to anything. All he knew was that his nephew asked a lot of questions that week and brought a briefcase for whatever reason. Realizing that those present were at a minimum and that the hearing was almost over, he justified giving clearance.

It was the biggest moment in Grant Joseph Wolf's life. A dream coming true! He was now on center stage and on prime time. With a confident look of determination, he spread his arms for all to see as he walked up to the bench.

Standing just a few feet away from Alvin, he asked in a high

pitch, “*Justice?*” He turned around with authority and faced those sitting- as to include them. “We are all here to find justice.”

The entire town knew who Grant Wolf was and never questioned his good intentions. The good judge winked at Blaine with the understanding that his nephew would have to be pacified. Blaine returned a slight nod in appreciation. Grant went on to quote famous lines and clichés from television shows, amusing his audience. Finally he got into original material, making everyone lean forward and listen closely. With a perfect delivery, he said, “To have the defendant claim to be innocent would be like meeting someone who actually attended Woodstock- but never mentions it.”

Grant knew from watching television, that it was time to pause and let his point sink in.

Alvin’s face contorted as he watched eyes roll throughout the room. It was obvious that many have survived a situation where a loudmouth felt the need to display the *Woodstock Card*. The room began to question if Grant was actually going somewhere with his presentation and was willing to hear more. The misfit knew that he was on a roll and methodically marched forward.

Grant continued with his unorthodox style by throwing in another example: “It would be like arriving at a crime scene and forgetting to bring an ample supply of luminol.” The detective shows taught society what that product was, and sadly, it didn’t remotely apply to this case. Heads started to shake as people realized that their time was being wasted.

Grant seemed to have done his homework and came prepared. In a last-ditch effort, he threw them a fastball: “Let’s equate the plaintiff and defendant to the binding of two cultures. For example: if there was not an influx of Portuguese migrating to Hawaii, this instrument would have never been conceived.”

Immediately, he stepped over to where he was sitting and pulled a ukulele out of his briefcase for all to see. Holding it high above his head, he slowly turned it from side to side, proclaiming: “If those two cultures didn’t unite, the world would *never* have known who Herbert Buckingham Khaury was!”

All at once, everyone got out their cell phones and started to google the famous name from the past.

Grant continued to hold the instrument while folding his arms with pride. He watched his subjects frantically push keys to enhance their education. Within seconds, everyone was focused on a website that told about the man he mentioned with his familiar picture displayed.

Groans filled the room, with a dejected Grant Wolf calculating

his next step. Alvin looked at Blaine's beet-red face with pity. The courtroom was becoming a mockery, with the uncle knowing that his nephew was just getting warmed up. Blaine knew that he had to act fast and made his move. "Okay, let's just forget the whole thing, and he can keep the money!" shouted the rancher.

Gavin immediately responded to Blaine's statement and cried out, "Blaine, I can pay you within a month. I can also work it off, starting this very moment."

"Just keep it!" yelled the stock grower. "We wouldn't even be here today if it wasn't for you!" Blaine Wolf had enough and stormed out of the courthouse, leaving a bewildered Gavin Woodley feeling shamed.

The ultimate wound was created: Blaine Wolf had successfully deprived a good man of his dignity in front of others. All over two-hundred dollars.

2



Sometimes a small town's judicial system reaches a dead end. Such towns are known to improvise with an alternative forum where justice can be achieved. In the town of Hangman, the Lazy Trail Saloon would be such a place. It was lunchtime, and those left in the courtroom unanimously agreed that it was time to cash in on the Dollar A Hotdog Day down the street.

It went without saying that the absence of Blaine Wolf and his nephew would promise good times.

The good judge had replaced his robe with his white good-guy cowboy hat. He, along with the husband and wife team of Gavin and Tammi Woodley and a few others, left for the town's hotspot.

There are many benefits to living in a small town; one of which is the business districts they are known for.

Hangman was no exception, having everything within walking distance. From the steps of the courthouse, one could wave to a friend spotted entering the legendary saloon. In moments, Alvin and his party were in front of the frontier gin mill turned bar and grill; the only building in town that sported a few bullet holes and remained open past midnight.

Despite the many horror stories that encompassed its history, the establishment had been tame for decades. In fact, it was now the most fun place in town that offered a section where families could enjoy a good pizza and celebrate birthdays.

Alvin pushed his way through the western-style shutter doors and entered with his friends. In the far corner window, a vacant booth with plenty of seating seemed to beckon to them. "We got here just in time," said Alvin. Hats were immediately hung on a brass coat rack that stood by the door, and soon all eight were

seated.

It didn't take long for the prestigious judge to be detected. Sixty-six-year-old Edna O'Brien couldn't help but notice him and called out. "Judge Wong, it's so good to see you!"

Alvin had many good attributes, and being able to laugh at himself was one of them. "*Judge Wong?*" he asked. "You must be referring to that funny looking guy who wears the black robe. I'm afraid he was left behind in the courtroom. Here, I'm just Alvin..."

As always, the Chinese American won over the entire room, with laughter ensuing. The result? Many began to scoot their chairs around the booth, knowing that everyone was welcome.

In time, the table was covered with pitchers of iced tea and hot dogs, with every imaginable condiment there for the taking. Alvin wasted no time in dressing his bun with plenty of mustard and sauerkraut. Using both hands, he held his creation up high and exclaimed, "This is just like being behind home plate and watching my team play!"

Despite the hearing ending on a sour note, it was good character spawning humorous stories with ridiculous ideas that circulated. Everyone took turns sharing the spotlight, with more neighbors gathering around. In a simultaneous rhythm, the room became a constant rumble of laughter. Finally, seventy-year-old Buck Thomson asked Alvin a personal question that also served as a compliment: "How come a good man like you is still single?"

Alvin leaned back in his chair and, with the face of an angel, rolled his eyes saying, "Well..."

All remained quiet to hear his reasoning.

Finally, he sat up and looked at Buck. "We're guys, right?"

Buck was no stranger to Alvin's brand of humor and tried his best not to laugh. In a quivering voice filled with anticipation, he responded, "Yes..."

"Do you remember when there were shows like *The Dating Game?*" asked Alvin.

"I used to watch that show all the time on rabbit ears," replied the feisty old man with gray hair.

Alvin moved closer and lowered his upper body as if he was going to tell a secret. Whispering loud enough for all to hear, he asked, "Weren't those women beautiful?"

"They certainly were," agreed Buck. "I couldn't watch that show unless Becky was in the other room." The married man of fifty years forgot who he was sitting next to and received a sharp elbow below his ribs. Nodding husbands were also delivered a warning shot, with the topic allowed to continue.

“Then there was The Newlywed Game,” said the bachelor. “Things seemed to change at that point because sometimes, a significant other would reveal an intimate secret to gain more points...” Standing up, he pointed at Buck and said, “There were episodes where you could see the embarrassment on their faces—just to win a set of Samsonite luggage!”

Those gathered recalled such airings and chuckled.

The table grew quiet as Alvin sat down and leaned back, placing his arms behind his head. He continued, “Then came Divorce Court...” Gesturing at the sky, he added, “They were all so young...” He pounded his fist on the table and elaborated further. “Then there were those who just wouldn’t learn, and they ended up on Judge Judy!” Alvin winced over the destructive domino theory common in western relationships and covered his face.

Everyone was laughing hysterically.

Looking at his friends, he exposed his hands while admitting, “Hey, I’m not perfect either, but this guy is just fine staying home and ordering a pizza.”

“I can see your point,” said Buck as he received a second jab. “Ouch!”

No one ever accused Judge Alvin of being blind.

The lunch crowd was satisfied and thoroughly entertained. In time, it began to thin out with those choosing to hang with Alvin sticking around. It was then that the room encountered an astronomical mood swing; Blaine Wolf came in off the street. He was alone this time, and obviously hungry. In true gentlemanly fashion, Alvin got his attention and motioned him to sit at their table.

Blaine accepted.

Floorboards breathed with a mild chime from worn heel plates. Together, they grew louder as the massive soles approached where Judge Alvin and company sat. Blaine pulled out an empty chair, while acknowledging everyone and took a seat.

“It’s good to have you here,” said Alvin with a sincere tone.

“I appreciate that,” replied Blaine. The big man found it difficult to talk because he was surrounded by the very faces he saw earlier that day. Despite all present being cordial, he still didn’t know what to say.

It was Gavin who finally broke the ice. “Can I get you a hot dog?” he offered in a polite tone.

The act of kindness did not sit well with Blaine. The rancher turned to Gavin and in a calm voice, gave his response. “No, I can pay for my own...”

“Well, I can get another one down,” said Alvin as he got the server’s attention. In moments, a few more dogs were ordered, with another round of tea on the way.

Blaine continued to show signs of feeling uncomfortable throughout his meal. In time, he swallowed his last bite, looked at everyone and abruptly addressed the table. “Look,” he said, “I know there are times when I look bad to everyone, but I just want it understood that I am law abiding and simply do what I think is right—just like everyone else here. I never mean to hurt anyone.”

Gavin made another attempt to mend his relationship with the man who just tried to sue him. “At one time or another, we’re all misunderstood a bit,” he commented.

Immediately, everyone looked at one another while nodding in agreement. That moment made Blaine feel more accepted and less of a pariah. He began to loosen up and specifically addressed Alvin. “You probably don’t even like me,” remarked the cocky rancher with laughter in his voice. “That doesn’t bother me a bit, though—because I’m used to that!”

“I don’t have a problem with you,” replied Alvin. “Unless you got the last hot dog!” Everyone laughed with Alvin, including Blaine.

The former plaintiff began to mellow and affectionately patted the judge on his shoulder. “I respect your fairness,” he said. “I also realize that you are restricted by law and have your hands tied.”

“What do you mean by that?” asked Alvin.

Blaine spread his arms with open hands and faced the public servant and explained in better detail, “You aren’t allowed to actually sentence someone the way you’d like to. If you could, how would you sentence a guy like me? In fact, I grant you permission to give me any type of sentence you feel I’m deserving of, and I promise to carry it out in full.”

“I still don’t understand,” remarked Alvin.

Blaine got more assertive. “What I am trying to say is that there is a bit of sense that comes from those small town sheriffs that have sentenced minor offenders from a barber chair. Those situations are quick and to the point, without any interference. I have always appreciated that approach the best.”

“At this table, I am not a judge,” said Alvin. “I am just *Alvin*.”

Blaine continued to push his luck and essentially gave Alvin consent to sentence him right then and there—in front of half the town. “Show me right now how you would judge me if you were allowed to,” he challenged.

“Okay, okay,” answered Alvin, “if that’s what you want...” He

positioned his chair directly toward Blaine, realizing that the whole room was listening. “I need to ask you a few questions first.”

“Shoot,” said Blaine.

“What is your most prized possession?” asked Alvin.

It took Blaine a microsecond to respond. “My friends and family.”

“Who would you consider to be your best friend?” asked Alvin.

Blaine knew that everyone was aware of the answer to that question. With pride, he identified who his best friend was: *Gary Harris*.

Gary Harris was arguably the most successful and respected man in the county. He was the equivalent of being what Blaine Wolf was as a rancher—including a stand-up reputation that wasn’t limited to his trade.

Gary was handsome, with black hair parted off to one side. He was six foot even, with medium build, dark eyes and puritan light skin. He always walked with a smile and gave one the impression of being a preacher. Naturally, this package came with his charming wife, Penny, along with his son, Ben and daughter, Mary Beth. The children attended the local elementary school where their mother was a volunteer.

Gary was regarded for being a great family man and upstanding citizen who showed unlimited compassion for others. He served as an important friend who was not only allowed to see Blaine’s good side, but who also gave that political pull that made him look better than he actually was.

The age-old adage about being judged by the company you keep applied here for Blaine Harold Wolf. One that actually enhanced his overall image a bit.

“I have another question,” continued Alvin.

“Shoot,” replied Blaine.

“What is the most expendable item that you can think of that he could afford to lose?” he asked. The Chinese American judge elaborated further: “Something that is useful to anyone, something that he has an excessive amount of. An item that he would never miss if he parted with *just one*.”

Blaine loved the moment. He could now inadvertently brag

about how wealthy he and his best friend were. After all, it was well known that they were the two most successful ranchers in the county. Usually, the arrogant man had to resort to more subtle means to draw such attention to himself.

“Money,” replied the smug rich man.

Alvin probed deeper. “Would he ever do you a favor?”

Blaine was insulted. “That man would do *anything* for me. All I would have to do is ask!”

Alvin questioned further. “Would he value your friendship to the point where he would be willing to part with one of his dollars if you asked for it?”

“He would do that without hesitation!” answered the defensive rancher.

“How about making this favor even less of a sacrifice by simply borrowing a single dollar for one day?” challenged Alvin. “Then you can give it back to him the next.”

“Oh, forgive me,” said Alvin as he excused himself. “I meant to say, *one dallah*.”

That comment made Blaine blush with embarrassment. When Alvin first arrived in Hangman, Blaine anticipated broken English. With cruelty, he would mimic his rendition of how he thought the new judge would enunciate the English language, while the others laughed. Blaine looked up and uttered, “I’m sorry.”

“That’s okay,” said the judge while leaning over and patting him on his shoulder. “We’re all friends around here.”

Blaine mentally got back on track and realized that Alvin had just issued him what seemed to be a petty assignment. “Is that my sentence?” asked the big man. “You only want me to borrow *a dollar* from my best friend and pay him back the next day?”

“Yes,” answered Alvin.

Blaine sat back deep in thought. The task seemed too easy. Then his brash character took over. “Consider it done!” he said. “I will be back soon to show you the dollar, then I’ll give it back to him tomorrow.”

Blaine Wolf placed a twenty-dollar bill on the table; an oversized payment for all to see. A silent tactic used to emphasize that he had plenty. The proud man in the classy western outfit stood up like a gentleman. He departed graciously to the coat rack, put on his hat, tipped it to everyone and walked tall out of the bar.

Alvin’s eyes remained focused on Blaine as he left. With pity, he slowly shook his head back and forth knowing what his future would hold.

Alvin knowingly played Blaine Wolf like a vintage type-writer.

The clever judge simply used what could be considered a pencil and placed the ribbon off its track. The overconfident rancher would blindly use his fingers in an attempt to position the ribbon back in place. Judge Wong knew that Blaine's ego would not allow him to foresee the consequences of permanent stains.