Screaming Woman - Excerpt

by Jason W. Stuart

Culloden County, MS, 1867

Ackley Finch was bad to whore his wife to pay his debts 'til she finally died that winter of ‘66 of consumption. 'Bout that time his girl, Bree, was just past seventeen and not a bad looker herself, though a sight bigger than her ma was. She'd been the only one to work the mule during the planting seasons and ate her fair share pretty much all her life, so when she hit that growth spurt and shot up to near six feet, folks were impressed but not terrible shocked.

Bree was mean as a bag of snakes and had done laid out most of the eligible bachelors in Culloden County at one time or another to the tune that at this point no man who'd heard of her wanted much truck with her. That and seeing she'd split his lip the one and only time he'd come after her--it was right after her ma died--Ackley decided he'd broker up a deal to pay off his last big debt outstanding which he owed to Old Jack Creed.

Creed was a gumsucker of about sixty made famous during the war for ripping out Yankees' intestines and force-feeding 'em back to 'em. Ackley was into him for over eighty dollars from a bad game of stud last August and had little intention of eating any pan-links made of his own innards. So, he offered him Bree at a cut rate which left him only ten dollars still in the hole. Of course, breaking the news to Bree was a whole other affair.

First she bit a hunk out his face and spat that in his good eye. Whilst he was fingering that out, she give him a reasonably hard shot to the loins and then laid into him with fisticuffs--which had she been born a man and eligible to compete, she'd've taken the county

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bareknuckle prize in a walk any year she pleased. Ackley finally got hold of himself and shot her a good one to her left titty. That got her breathing a little harder at least. He would've liked to push his advantage a little more but she picked him up over her head and threw him against the opposite wall which cleared the fight for the time.

Bree snatched up a kneckerchief and threw in some biscuits, planning to high-tail just in time to have Ackley pop a sack over her head from behind. Served her right for leaving him be without seeing the job done, she told herself as Ackley clocked her with a fire poker. That sent her to bed a bit and gave Ackley the time to drag her heavy ass to the cellar and lock her in.

Ideally, Ackley would have left her down there to get hungry and weaken up a few days so she'd be more docile for Old Creed. But, as things will go, Ackley instead folded over and died from the beating Bree had give him...