

Bud Bottoms



Bud Bottoms always slept with his boots on. He said it improved his posture when he got up in the morning and also discouraged Elsie, his mule, from nibblin' on his toes when they shared a bunk. The ol' gunslinger awoke on this mornin' convinced that all the stuffin' had come outta his mattress. It was plum uncomfortable, and hard as nails! But then he relaxed as he felt the soft, cool hands o' Miss Lulu Belle (with whom he'd spent a dang fine evening!) caressing his back. She interspersed her tender rubs with quick nips and pecks. How it did tickle! He longed to roll over an' gaze fondly into her eyes, tell her again how durn much he *liked* her, and how he might even take off his boots the next time they spent a night together – if Elsie could get her own room. His back was tweaked again, harder this time, and it hurt. He jerked, sat up ... and gaped into the most malevolent, suppurating red eyes he'd ever seen. Either Lulu Belle had turned into a horribly smelly large bird of the family *Cathartidae* with dark plumage and a featherless head, or else she looked pretty dang appallin' in the mornin'!