Badlands: Gold Rush

Reading this took me back to my days in a small branch library where there were some dedicated readers of western novels who used to mark the ones they had read with a brand sign, such as is put on cattle! Even the author?s name sounds familiar.

This is the third in a series of novels about Billy Joe Ford and the Drygulch gang in which they are camping out amongst many other prospectors, panning for gold. But there is trouble in the camp as Sam Farley has set up a protection business run by Duke Rixon, a gunfighter. Some of the prospectors do not want to pay exorbitant amounts to Farley and send for a gunfighter, name of Kelly. But Kelly turns out to be a woman, and what is more she has a small daughter and is Shane?s long lost mother. Kelly proves to be a resourceful woman and when Shane and her daughter are kidnapped, she has a cunning plan to outwit Farley and Rixon. This does involve some violence ? this is a western after all, but all ends well.

The protagonists are young but not cowed by moving in a violent adult world where the gun is law, and this makes for an exciting read. There is the odd body but the whole story has an air of unreality and I suspect that the boys who read this will suspend disbelief and just enjoy a fast-paced story set safely in a past which is often depicted on cinema screens. The boys are very resourceful and Shane?s reunion with his mother is touching. Good triumphs over bad and leaves the scene set for another story.

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