

Marty Robbins, The Ballad Of Bill Thaxton

Bill Thaxton was an ex-ranger
One of the bravest by far
It's said that old Bill was the fastest man ever
To pin on a ranger's star
Stories about him were legends
Bill was the best of the bold
Bad men all feared him way back in his day
But he was now growing old

Into Bill's town rode an outlaw
He wore his gun low and tied down
He reined in his horse and announced to the crowd
"If you speak to me call me Sundown"
His clothes were all dark and fancy
And topped by a black leather vest
Somebody asked how he came by his name
And if he was one of the best.

The eyes of the tall stranger narrowed
He grinned like the devil possessed
"I never fight till the sun's going down
And my back is facing the West"

Said he wouldn't be with us tomorrow
He only rode in for one thing
He only stopped by to make Bill Thaxton die
So he could add to his fame.
"Go give Bill Thaxton a message
And tell him a killer's in town
Tell him we'll meet at the end of the street
Just as the sun's going down"

Somebody said it had been years
Since old Bill had toted a gun
Sundown replied that it wasn't his hide
Killing old Bill would be fun
The old ranger sent back his answer

"Tell him that I'm on my way
I've never ran and I'll meet this young man
At any time of the day"

Bill got there just about sunset
It still hung like fire in the sky
In just a few moments out there in the street
Old Bill or the outlaw would die

Slowly Bill slid from the saddle
And started to make his advance
The sun hit the old ranger square in the eyes
The shadows had started to dance
Bill started talking to Sundown
Judging his distance that way
Their stride was the same and at just thirty feet
Both of the men made their play

Bill's gun slipped leather like lightning
His forty-four spoke with a whine
The sun didn't bother Bill Thaxton at all
Because the old ranger was blind
Six shots delivered their message
The ranger had emptied his gun
Bill gave a sigh when there was no reply

He knew that once more he had won

The old ranger lowered his six gun
He just stood there starting ahead
Watching you'd think that old Bill didn't know
In front of him Sundown lay dead

Bill has been gone for a long time
But old timers still can recall
The day the old ranger stood up to the test
And proved he was best of them all