

BILLY VENERO LYRICS

Bill Venero heard them say,
In an Arizona town one day,
That a band of Apache Indians were upon the trail that way;
Heard them tell of murder done
Three men killed at Rocky Run.
"They're in danger at the cow-ranch," said Venero under his breath.

The cow-ranch, forty miles away,
Was a little place that lay,
In a deep and shady valley of the mighty wilderness.
Half a score of homes were there,
And in one a maiden fair,
Held the heart of Bill Venero: Bill Venero's little Bess.

So no wonder he grew pale,
When he heard the settler's tale,
Of the men that he'd seen murdered yesterday at Rocky Run.
"Sure as there's a God above,
I will save the girl I love;
By my love for little Bessie I will see that something's done."

Not a moment he delayed
When his brave resolve was made.
"Why, man," his comrades told him when they heard of his daring plan,
"You are riding straight to death."
But he answered: "Save your breath.
I may never reach the cow-ranch, but I'll do the best I can."

As he crossed the alkali,
All his thoughts flew on ahead,
To the little band at cow-ranch thinking not of danger near;
With his quirt's unceasing whirl,
And the jingle of his spurs,
Little brown Chapo bore the cowboy o'er the far-away frontier.

Lower and lower sank the sun.
He drew rein at Rocky Run.
"Here those men met death, my Chapo"-and he stroked his glossy mane.
"So will those we go to warn,
Ere the coming of the morn.
If we fail--God help my Bessie." And he started on again.

Sharp and clear a rifle shot,
Woke the echoes of the spot,
"I am wounded," cried Venero, as he swayed from side to side.
"While there's life there's always hope;
Slowly onward I will lope.

If I fail to reach the cow-ranch, Bessie Lee shall know I tried.

"I will save her yet," he cried. ,
"Bessie Lee shall know I tried."
And for her sake then he halted in the shadow of a hill;
From his buckskin shirt he took,
With weak hands a little book;
Tore a blank leaf from its pages saying, "This shall be my will."

From a limb a pen he broke,
And he dipped his pen of oak,
In the warm blood that was spurting from a wound above his heart.
"Rouse," he wrote. "Before too late.
Apache warriors lie in wait.
Good-by, Bess, God bless you darling," and he felt the cold tears start.

Then he made his message fast,
Love's first message and its last;
To the saddle horn he tied it, and his lips were white with pain.
"Take this message, if not me,
Straight to little Bessie Lee."
Then he leaned down in the saddle and clutched the sweaty mane.

Just at dusk a horse of brown
Wet with sweat came panting down
The little lane at the cow-ranch, stopped in front of Bessie's door;
But the cowboy was asleep,
And his slumber was so deep
Little Bess could never wake him though she tried for evermore.

You have heard the story told
By the young and by the old,
Away down yonder at the cow-ranch the night the Apaches came;
Of that sharp and bloody fight,
How the chief fell in the flight
Of the panic-stricken warriors when they heard Venero's name.

In an awed and reverent way
As men utter, "Let us pray,"
As we speak the name of heroes thinking how they lived and died,
So the heavens and earth between
Keep a little flower green
That little Bess had planted ere they laid her by his side.